

MILTON ERNEST PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes - Meeting 12th February 2026

Started at 8pm

All 5 Cllrs present- Cllr Ross-Chair, Cllr Goldwin- Vice Chair, Cllr Lane, Cllr Dipple, Cllr Sizer.
8 residents present.

1	Apologies for Absence- none
2	Declarations of interest in items on the agenda- Cllr Ross- Church clock and yard maintenance
3	Presentation of Church Grant request by Church Treasurer – Paul Goldwin described spend of £1,307 to year end 2025 for which they are seeking a grant. They last received funds from MEPC in calendar year 2024 not in calendar year 2025. They are funded entirely by church goers- they need to raise £22,013 each year to enable their church to function including a contribution to the Church of England. £1250 sought as a grant as in previous year
4	To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 15th January 2026- approved with several minor amends to improve clarity for non-attendees.
5	Clerk's report on actions <i>For items not included on the agenda.</i> - Submitted precept request - Grass Cutting tender document issued- expressions of interest sought from several local providers. Cllr Dipple highlighted the recent acquired plans showed parcels of land that that the Parish Council may additionally be liable to cut. Tenders to be received by March PC meeting to be opened in front of Cllrs. - Submitted MEPC insurance claim from BBC insurers for damage to gate pillar- field entrance Radwell Road. (post meeting BBC contractors have made safe and are arranging repairs)
6	Correspondence received since the last meeting (requiring council attention) Village Volunteer group approached Clerk to ask about cutting back ivy on private land- discussed later.
7	Finance Payments approved and income noted as follwos - Payroll bureau processing invoice Q1 to pay in March - Payroll- Clerk & Litter Picker February and all future months as per contract - Warners- £600 - IONOS- £4.20- to investigate how to stop this. - Village Hall February and all future months as per contract - HMRC PAYE as advised by payroll bureau at end of Qtr and all future quarters as per contract - Cllr Goldwin reimbursement £21 Quiz drinks licence - Donation for Every Voice's Charity- sang at Xmas Tree lights switch on- £100 was agreed- £50 to Sick Children's Trust and £50 St Peter's Church Thurleigh- Clerk suggested it needs to be on March agenda to be approved. To note the budget variance report: See appendix Precept recommendation for FY26/27 based on proposed budget 26/27 of £18k submitted

Saqhib Ali, Clerk, Milton Ernest Parish Council

E-mail: clerk@miltonernest-pc.gov.uk

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	• To discuss and approve Church grant £1250 Grant of £1,250 considered- 4 Cllrs supported- Cllr Ross abstained as conflicted. Tender for grass cutting- bids invited- Lloyd's visited 5th February with Cllr Goldwin, Warners sought clarification to specification, no response from Maddison's, plus one other invited
8	Village welfare Cllrs Ross and Sizer made a presentation on the direction regarding preferred supplier/working partner for playing field and next steps. Presentation to be added to the minutes. Grants to be sought and further work on clarifying spec and items- such as disability access and variety of items for all ages. Bedfordia is landowner so permission will need to be sought – Working group to contact Bedfordia
9	Police Matters • Discussion about how useful PCSO presence is when they can not arrest when in the village. • Feedback Cllr Lane from Community Priority Setting event- discussion followed about cakes stolen on 16th July 2025 where no action was taken, proposal to meet with Sharnbrook PC Chair to consider initiatives for Milton Ernest PC at Queen's Head, ME – Cllr Lane to arrange
10	Reports by Representatives • To receive feedback from the working groups ○ To receive a report from the Finance Working Group- met in December- to meet in March for standard quarterly review ○ To receive an update on the Biodiversity Plan- Cllr Sizer had prepared and circulated as draft before meeting. To seek advice from CPRE and BRCC, to approve in March. ○ Environmental Volunteer Group- to extend thanks for additional work done since the last meeting. Cllrs agreed not to approach Village Farm regarding possible Ivy removal offer from EVG - risk of damage to wall. ○ Update from the NDP Working Group- met with Thurleigh PC Chair to consider how they are updating their NDP. Recommendation from Thurleigh PC was to consider Chapman Planning for support with updating Neighbourhood plan due to considerable local experience. Cllr Ross to set a meeting with Chapman planning to evaluate how they might support our update. ○ To receive an update from the Events Committee – Fundraising quiz for 19th Feb all on plan with significant donations received towards drinks for selling on the night
11	Parish Events • Defibrillator Training – Monday 2nd February- well attended. Clerk discussed the Wingman bleed kit that is being obtained by Bolnhurst & Keysoe Parish Council. • Need to add defib at garages on Radwell Road, date of commissioning to databases for emergency services. Cllr Ross and Dipple to install before the next meeting • Quiz night - Thursday 19th February- All on plan (as above), Cllr Goldwin to arrange float money
12	Planning matters • To consider any planning applications received since the last meeting – includes any received after the agenda is issued up to the date of the meeting. To note any planning applications decided by the Borough Council since the last meeting. • Milton Ernest Hall TPO update- Cllr Ross- Borough decision made – Large tree alongside care home to be felled, despite PC objection

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	Old Maltings Update • Occupation was due for take up last October which has not happened, still awaiting an occupation date. • The Parish Council have not been advised that the outstanding Planning issues i.e., the positioning of the Bin Store or the opaquing of the glazed windows overlooking the adjoining property have been completed. • Bedford Borough Council have confirmed that they will clear the culvert at the end of the access route adjacent to the Old Maltings to minimise any future risk of flooding onto the A6. • Retrospective car wash application- no objections Bedfordia Barn update • The Planning Application to convert the large barn at the Bedfordia Head office site on Bedford Road to multi use being B2 and B8 use along with access and egress amendments to the A6 junction was rejected by Bedford Borough Council. • Bedfordia have appealed this rejection and it is now with the Planning Inspectorate for a final decision. • MEPC objections to the original application related to the change of use to B2 which would allow any form of industrial activity to take place which could have noise and environmental issues and also the creation of changes to the access and egress onto the A6 would cause issues to traffic entering or leaving the village.
13	Borough Councillor Report To receive a report from Borough Councillor Martin Towler- read out- £55m sought from central government- government inspectors have been sent in to BBC to review finances.
14	Parish Council Updates • Highway Issues- need to reinstate camera on Thurleigh Rd. No funding- need to build case for it. Rushden Rd speeding data received from Police to be circulated. Speeding traffic on Radwell Road discussed – New Speed indicator device needed to replace current and could be used to cover both directions: Cllr Ross and Clerk to investigate possible costs and means to procure one. One resident mentioned speed limit should be dropped to 20 mph. • Litter Picker contract- update- to be considered under closed HR session. Glass sweep up to be added at Glass Recycling point and new map to be issued. • Update on Parish Councillor Recruitment- one enquiry- interested in co-option from April if vacancy still exists. Two vacancies remain.
15	Public Open Session (15 Minutes) There were 8 residents. One questioned why she had not received a response to Site 518 objection sent 24/12/25 and 22/1/26, jointly from several residents. The Clerk and Chair confirmed email was received and understood with thanks. One resident asked if the budget variance report could be added to the minutes. Also asked for bank balances to be included. One parishioner questioned why of the £80k to be raised for the new playground only 6% was to come from businesses and 20% from fundraising. Suggested school input should be sought and that 2 year timeline was too long. Asked what the return on investment was on all fundraising activities as they required public money to be invested – Chair agreed this would be made available She also explained oil had been stolen from her premises- was reported to police- culprits found in the North, but not prosecuted.

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	Public meeting finished at 9.45
16	Business for future agendas (No actions can be taken on items not on the agenda) To consider adopting Model NALC 2025 Standing Orders and Financial regulations.
17	Closed session- not for public minutes HR Matters • Clerk Pension & Probation period update • Litter picker contract review plan

Request for Parish Council Grant from Milton Ernest Church Treasurer – Paul Goldwin

Milton Ernest Parochial Church Council (PCC) has in the past on an annual basis received a grant from Milton Ernest Parish Council in the sum of £1,250 and comprising of :

- £250 towards the upkeep of the church clock and
- £1,000 towards the general upkeep of the churchyard.

No grant was received in 2025 – the last grant was received on 20 November 2024 and in respect of the church's financial year ended 31 December 2024.

As a matter of course and as usually requested by the parish council, a member of the PCC would email the parish council clerk at their request with a summary of the clock/churchyard expenditure incurred in the past year to provide justification for grant in terms of the costs incurred. It must be noted that these costs did not always equate exactly to the amount of the grant requested, but were in the correct ballpark, and provided evidence that the grant funds were being utilised for their intended purposes.

In respect of the year ended 31 December 2025, and being the period since the last grant was received, we have incurred :

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------|
| • Tree work : | £696 |
| • Clock maintenance costs | £318 |
| • Lawn mower service/repairs | £293 |
| • Total | £1,307 |

Please note that exact invoices/receipts are available for inspection on request. Additionally, please note that all labour and other incidental costs incurred in keeping the churchyard maintained and tidy are provided on a pro-rata basis by a group of volunteers.

By way of background please note that Milton Ernest, All Saints Church is funded entirely by parishioner giving, donations and fund-raising – with no external grants or precepts/stipends received from any third party. In addition, the Church is required to pay an annual 'parish share' to the Diocese of St Albans which for the last few years has remained steady at £22,013 (a monthly commitment of £1,834) which it can ill afford.

The latest church accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025 prepared by myself in my capacity as Treasurer and which are currently subject to independent examination reveal a very significant loss – and the parish council grant has always been an item that we depend on and is included in our annual budget and for which the PCC is very grateful.

To finish, the church remains a central part of Milton Ernest Village – and the churchyard and memorial garden are an integral part of the village where many loved ones are buried and remembered – and we would therefore respectfully request that the latest grant be considered and approved.

Milton Ernest Parish Council

PLAYING FIELD PROJECT

Introduction

Feb '26



MEPC – Playground Project

Background (Reminder):

- An attractive playing field with a range of play equipment is a key factor in quality of life for families living in our village
- ME Playing field is popular with families and offers a good range of options for play through open space or play equipment, although there is limited provision for younger children
- Majority of our current playground equipment is 20-30 years old. Condition of many elements is poor, confirmed by the recent ROSPA audit, despite no safety concerns

MEPC conclusion is that we need to replace the current equipment with new, attractive equipment developed to the latest standards, appealing to a wider age range

Draft proposal for playground items:

Playdale
Playgrounds

Key points

- Proposal includes balance of play equipment for children of different ages
(Adult exercise equipment under study as an additional opportunity)
- **Costs ~85k (inc. VAT)**
- 20 Year Guarantee
- All equipment to the latest standards
- Costs include removal and replacement
- ZIP Wire is not affected and will be maintained/ refurbished as required

Milton Ernest Parish Council
New Playground Equipment

Jukebox Plus Twist Plus

Gravity Bowl

Little Hamlets Plus Glenduckie Plus

Quad Rider

Team Swing

Liberty Bells

Harmony Bells

Noughts & Crosses Panel

Ladybird Springer

Adventure Trail Playspace 5

20 YEAR Laminated Timber
• Low maintenance
• Easily recycled
• High durability against vandalism
• Lamination process vastly reduces splits in timber
• 20 year guarantee

20 YEAR Coloured Panels (HPL)
• Highly durable
• Vandal resistant
• Wear resistant
• Chemical resistant
• Fire resistant
• Does not rust
• 20 year guarantee

25 YEAR Stainless Steel
• Low maintenance
• Robust
• Graffiti can easily be removed
• Can withstand extreme weather
• Sustainable
• 25 year guarantee

20 YEAR Steel Ground Fixings
• Timber lifted away from surfacing preventing rot and corrosion
• Increases life of timber
• Makes replacing timber poles easy
• 20 year guarantee

MADE IN THE UK **TUV** **BSI** **API Member**

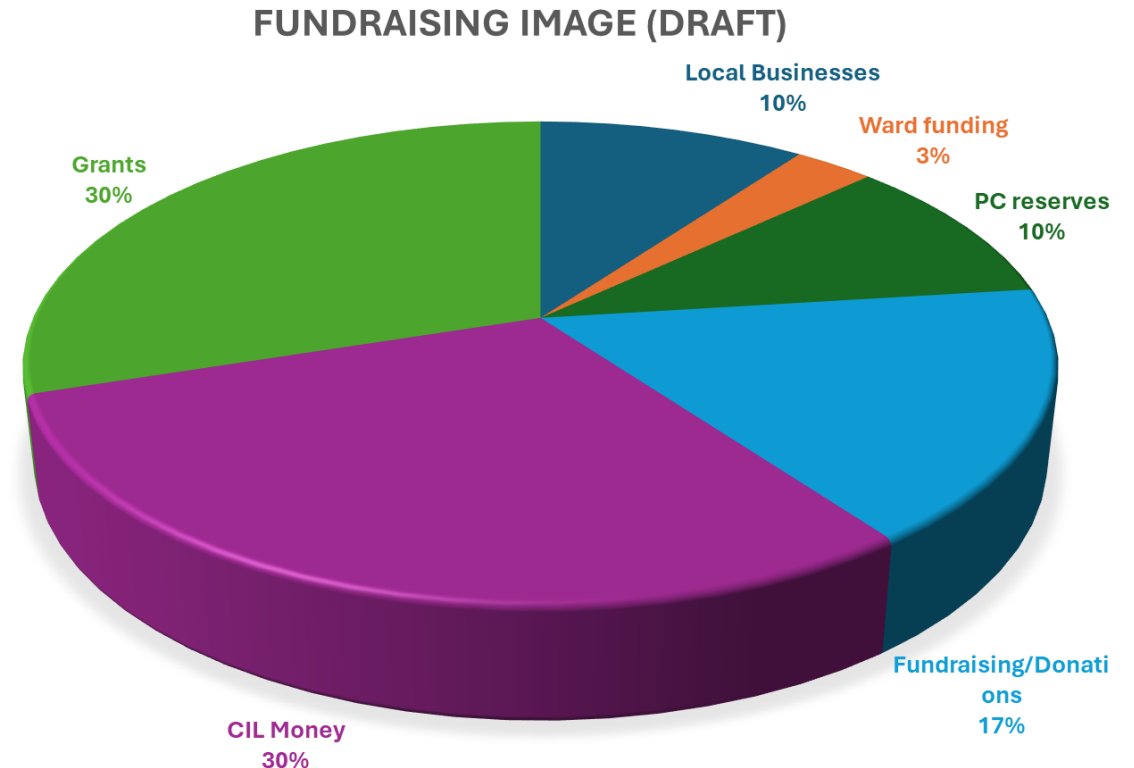
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Playdale
Playgrounds

Funding the project: Initial image only – for feedback purpose

From reviewing potential funding options through benchmarking and consulting, we anticipate the following as reasonable targets for fundraising towards the £85K budget

- Local businesses ~10%
- Ward funding contribution ~3%
- PC reserves ~10%
- General fundraising and donations ~ 17%
- CIL money (from new properties) ~ 30%
- Grants ~ 30%



Above is subject to additional discussions with stakeholders and will be update accordingly as information is updated

MEPC – Playground Project

Next steps

- Current equipment is in a poor condition, so we need to start fundraising NOW to be ready as soon as possible - **Estimated timing = 2 years with ambition to do earlier**
- Consultation with Villagers on Playground proposal – March/April '26
- Update Design as required May '26 with feedback from Villagers

MILTON ERNEST PARISH COUNCIL

Financial Year 2025/26

Balances - February 2026

Income	YTD (Actual)		Annual Budget 2025/26	YTD plus Feb-Mar	As at February 20 Variance
	Gross	Net			
Precept	17,156	17,156	17,156	17,156	
VAT reclaim	1,896	1,896			
CIL Income	0	0	0	0	
Community Initiatives					
Bank Interest	0	0	0	0	
Other income Grass cutting grant	891	891	849	849	-42
Other income Other grants	10,000	10,000	0	0	-10,000
Other income Bank compensation	300	300	0	0	-300
Other income Book sales	0	0	0	0	0
Other income Summer fete	1,625	1,625	0	0	-1,625
Other income Events	0	0	0	0	0
Other income Ward fund	0	0	0	0	0
Other income Play equipment donations	10	10	0	0	-10
Other income Glass recycling	1,108	1,108	1,625	1,625	517
	13,934	13,934	2,474	2,474	
Total Income	32,986	32,986	19,630	19,630	
			19,672	19,672	
Outgoings					
Staff Costs - Clerk	4,070	4,070	4,000	5,006	-70
Clerks Office Allowance	0	0	312	78	312
Staff Costs - Litter Picking & Playing Field Checks	500	500	1,200	600	700
Staff costs	4,570	4,570	5,512	5,685	1,449
Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	6,528	5,440	5,225	5,440	-215
Annual Cut (Riverside Meadow)	600	500	499	500	-1
Clock and churchyard maintenance	0	0	1,000	0	1,000
Playing field inspections	224	203	600	203	397
Playground maintenance	0	0	0	0	0
General Maintenance	1,797	1,497	200	1,497	-1,297
Tree works	0	0	800	0	800
Open spaces & community facilities	9,149	7,640	8,324	7,640	
Internal Audit	160	160	150	160	-10
External Audit	0	0	210	0	210
ICO Annual Fee	0	0	35	0	35
Insurance	955	955	700	955	-255
Playing field rent and insurance	0	0	650	0	650
Payroll fees	0	0	380	120	380
Hall hire	308	308	120	308	-188
Bank Charges	33	33	0	33	-33
Information Technology	273	137	351	145	214
Stationery/expenses	0	0	144	0	144
Memorial wreath	0	0	20	0	20
Membership/Affiliations	186	186	186	186	0
Training	45	45	200	45	155
Admin	1,960	1,824	3,146	1,952	1,322
Neighbourhood Watch	135	135	250	135	115
Volunteer Group	0	0	200	0	200
Village Xmas Tree	3,609	3,033	1,440	3,033	-1,593
Events	65	65	250	65	185
Ecology study	0	0	0	0	0
Contingency (VAT)	0	0	0	0	0
Other	3,809	3,233	2,140	3,233	-1,093
The Villager	0	0	250	0	250
Community Initiatives	1,081	985	300	985	-685
Grants					
Bedford BC Rural Grant	10,000	10,000	0	10,000	-10,000
Donations transfer	30	30	0	30	-30
	11,111	11,015	550	11,015	-10,465
Total Outgoings	30,599	28,282	19,672	29,524	-8,787

Cashbook 14th December 2025 to 2nd February 2026

Date Paid	Category	Payee/Payer	Desc	Type	Transfer	Receipt	Payments Gross	VAT	Payments Net	Balance
31/03/2024			start of year b/f							£25,989.07
14 December 2025	Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	Warners	Warners of Bedford Invoice 18430	Payment			£ 450.00	£ 75.00	£ 375.00	£28,733.88
24 December 2025	Grass Cutting and hedge Riverside Meadow	Village Hall	ME Village Hall	Payment			£ 84.00		£ 84.00	£28,649.88
24 December 2025	Village Xmas Tree	The Christmas Decorators	Xmas Tree	Payment			£ 1,728.00	£ 288.00	£ 1,440.00	£26,921.88
30 December 2025	Litter picking	Lily Tolley	Litter picker	Payment			£ 50.00	£ -	£ 50.00	£26,871.88
30 December 2025	Staff Costs- Clerk	Saqhib Ali	Salary	Payment			£ 299.81	£ -	£ 299.81	£26,572.07
31 December 2025	Information Technology	lonos	lonos - Internet	Payment			£ 4.20	£ 0.70	£ 3.50	£26,567.87
26 January 2026	Village Hall	ME Village Hall		Payment			£ 84.00		£ 84.00	£26,483.87
27 January 2026	Good Neighbours	Good Neighbours		Payment			£ 250.00		£ 250.00	£26,233.87
30 January 2026	Litter picking	Lily Tolley	Litter picker	Payment			£ 50.00	£ -	£ 50.00	£26,183.87
30 January 2026	Staff Costs- Clerk	Saqhib Ali	Salary	Payment			£ 300.01	£ -	£ 300.01	£25,883.86
02 February 2026	Information Technology	lonos Cloud	lonos - Internet	Payment			£ 4.20	£ 0.70	£ 3.50	£25,879.66

MILTON ERNEST PARISH COUNCIL

Balances -February 2026

HSBC Current (Forecast)

Total funds held

£

25,815

25,815

Allocation of Balance Sheet

Community Initiatives

Precept Reserve (3 months)

Riverside Meadow Plan Reserve

Tree Maintenance Reserve

Village Entry Gates Reserve

Defib reserve

Village Celebrations Reserve

General reserve

Total allocation

8,000

4,222

2,000

1,000

1,000

500

1,000

8,092

25,815

Balancing figure