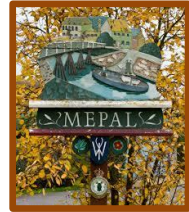


Mepal Parish Council

Business Plan 2019-20

Adopted at Full Council Meeting 11th March 2019.



About Mepal

Mepal is a village located 6 miles west of Ely. It has a population of roughly 1,000 people living in 415 households. It has a good range of services, including shop and post office, church, public house, village hall and primary school. Roughly a quarter of its residents are aged over 65 and just under a fifth of its residents are children aged under 16.

Introduction to this Business Plan

This is Mepal Parish Council's Business Plan. The aim of the Business Plan is to give Mepal's residents a clear understanding of what the Parish Council does on their behalf and what it is trying to achieve. It details what the Parish Council intends to focus on over the next two years.

Table 1: What is the Parish Council?

The Parish Council has seven elected (non-political) and co-opted councillors who live within the parish boundary. Parish Councillors do not receive payment for their services. The Council is supported by a paid clerk who works 45 hours per month and a paid handyman who works 20 hours per month.

The Parish Council holds monthly meetings, which the public are welcome to attend. The Parish Council uses a system of working groups to help deliver its activities. The Planning Working Group offers up comments on planning applications affecting the parish. The Recreation Field Working Group has oversight over the activities being taken to improve the playing field and meets on an as-needed basis. The Parish Council may also set up other ad hoc working groups when needed. Community members may be invited to join these groups if they have skills or experience that the group might benefit from. All Working Groups must report their activities back to the main Parish Council meetings.

Why has Mepal Parish Council decided to produce a Business Plan?

Having an agreed framework for the Parish Council to work within, will enable it to operate in a more consistent and co-ordinated way, and to be proactive rather than reactive in its decision-making. We held two workshop sessions to discuss our ideas for the Business Plan and to shape its content. We have based the Plan on our understanding of our community's needs gathered from our day-to-day involvement with residents and other key groups within Mepal Parish. The Business Plan concentrates on the assets owned and services managed by the Parish Council and aims to ensure they are maintained and managed for the longer term.

We are fully aware of the Mepal Community Led Plan that is under development and Table 2 below notes how the outputs from this exercise will be incorporated into our Business Plan in due course:

Table 2: The Mepal Community Led Plan – how does this Business Plan relate?

Residents will know that a Mepal Community Led Plan (CLP) is under construction. Whilst fully supported and funded by Mepal Parish Council, CLP production is being led by a Steering Group of volunteer residents who are keen to understand the needs of the community.

The Steering Group have identified several areas of concerns to residents including traffic concerns, future housing developments, village maintenance, village facilities, recreation, dog walking, new and existing social groups and opportunities at bringing the community closer together. To date, the Steering Group have undertaken a specific survey of traffic concerns and are shortly to undertake a survey on other areas of concern.

We believe that many of the issues identified as being of concern to residents are already recognised by the Parish Council as areas where more action is needed. This Business Plan has been put together ahead of the CLP resident survey taking place, but we will review the results of this once published and understood and add in any additional actions that we believe need to be led by the Parish Council.

At the same time, the Business Plan will help residents to have a better understanding of what the Parish Council does and clarify what it doesn't do; in other words, to explain what issues fall under the responsibility of other delivery bodies such as East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council or the Combined Authority.

Table 2 below sets out the different delivery bodies in local government for anyone who requires a further explanation.

Table 2: Where does the Parish Council fit in local government?

There are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities.

Mepal Parish Council is the first local tier with an important role to play in promoting the village, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups within the community.

East Cambridgeshire District Council is the second tier and responsible for services including housing and environmental services, planning applications, street cleaning and litter collection, leisure, tourism, recreation and events, pest control and road closures.

Cambridgeshire County Council is the third tier. They are responsible for educations, highways, health and social services, public rights of way and libraries.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is the newest and highest tier. It is funded under a 'devolution deal' to work on the strategic issues that cross council borders and span the entire Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area, like housing, travel and infrastructure needs.

The Business Plan is a statement of intent; however, Mepal Parish Council may have to make decisions contrary to our stated commitments if events such as budget constraints, new legislation or changes in our policies make that necessary. Any changes will, however, be reflected in an updated plan.

It will be a 'living' document, which the Parish Council will update regularly, enabling it to track, and monitor its progress against the key priorities. As the Business Plan will be publicly available, Mepal residents will also be able to monitor progress by visiting the Business Plan page on our website.

The following pages set out our vision and ambitions for the coming two years.

How we will work

How we will work

Mepal Parish Council represents Mepal residents and will work with them, to give a voice to the community and to maintain that community voice with the District and County authorities.

We will encourage a greater sense of community for all who live in Mepal and to encourage involvement and pride in the Parish of Mepal.

We will encourage people to get involved in activities within the community.

The Parish Council will conduct its business by means that are transparent and that present the best value in achieving the actions laid out in this Council Business Plan whilst complying with the rules and obligations of a Parish Council.

Ambitions for 2019 - 2020

Housing and Development

Mepal Parish Council will work to represent the needs of the Parish for suitable housing for residents, particularly those looking for their first home in the parish they grew up in /work in or those wishing to downsize without having to leave the parish that has been their home for a long time. We will therefore:

- Investigate with CLT East to explore the feasibility of a Community Land Trust for Mepal and assess whether it is the right community-led housing solution for the community's needs.

Highways, Traffic and Transport

The Parish Council shares residents' concern over the junction at the A142 and speeding on that stretch of road. It has also familiarised itself with other related concerns within the village over speeding, parking and driving the wrong way along the one-way street. We will therefore:

- Continue to consult residents and lobby for solutions that address residents' concerns over traffic.
- Research available community transport schemes and promote to Mepal residents so they understand the options available and can make best use of them.
- Work with other Parish Councils to try to fill gaps in transport provision.
- Follow up by surveying the improvements made on the A142.

Play Areas/Sports Areas

The Parish Council is committed to continuous improvements to the children's play area, Sports Area and Basketball pitch on the recreation field. We will therefore:

- Continue to manage the play area through routine maintenance and safety checks.
- Seek to establish a consultation group to engage residents in managing the play area and deciding on improvements.
- Support the design and provision of new or replacement equipment from time to time.

Recreation Field and Pavilion

The Parish Council is committed to returning the recreation field to a state where local sports groups will feel able to make use of it once again. It has also taken on responsibility for the running and maintenance of the Pavilion, following the closure of the charity that was previously running it. We will therefore:

- Work with the Football Foundation and specialist contractors to resolve drainage issues on the Recreation Field.
- Draft, agree and implement a Business Plan for the Pavilion to stimulate future usage.
- Work with the Football Clubs effectively.
- Better communicate work being done on the Recreation Field and Pavilion to the community so they understand the effort being made to make these usable and vibrant community facilities.

Community Activities

The Parish Council is strongly supportive of any community led social activities that help bring the community together and help to prevent loneliness and isolation. We will therefore:

- Encourage and stimulate social events (or series of events) to help bring the community together on an informal basis.
- Provide grant funding to community-led groups providing social activities to residents and make it available to any group within the Parish.

Education

The Parish Council is keen that the community continue to benefit from local pre-school and primary provision. We will therefore:

- Work to maintain pre-school provision within the village.
- Work with the Primary School to understand their needs.

Communications and Engagement with the Community

The Parish Council is aware that it could do more to communicate better with residents and to engage them more in its work to support the people of Mepal. We will therefore:

- Draft, agree and implement a Parish Council Communications Plan to address how the Parish Council can engage with as wide an audience as possible (outside of formal meetings) so that local people understand what the Parish Council does.
- Respond to actions or needs arising from the Community Led Plan findings.

Governance

The Parish Council is committed to ensuring effective governance and good employment practices. We will therefore:

- Develop clear procedures and record-keeping requirements relating to the clerk's responsibilities.
- Continue to elect and induct new parish councillors when required from amongst the residents of Mepal and aim to retain their skills for as long as they benefit the parish.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Parish Council will review the Business Plan every 3 months and report the findings at a Full Council Meeting.

The Parish Council will update the Business Plan annually to ensure the contents are relevant.

The Parish Council will update the residents annually as part of the Annual Report.