

## **MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S SPEECH 2023**

Since our last Annual Parishioners’ Meeting another twelve months has passed with alarming speed, and it is a pleasure to be able to report some of the key successes and highlights for Mistley Parish Council.

I’d like to start by highlighting one of the Council’s most recent achievement; the roll-out of 40 new allotment plots at the River Reach site, adjacent to the Hopkins Homes development. Thanks to our Allotment Working Group (Jenny, Steve, Faye and Willy) the new allotments are up and running and the new tenants working their plots with enthusiasm. The site is very smart with its own car park and water supplies. This has been a work in progress for several years and the new plots, in addition to those at the Railway and Brunswick sites, mean that Mistley is able to offer allotments to a much larger number of parishioners.

Meanwhile the car park at Furze Hill was resurfaced and the white lines re-marked, thanks to Section 106 funds and a generous donation from Mistley Kids’ Club. The redesign of the car park spacing means that more cars can be accommodated which is timely given the busiest days when the Rugby and Football Clubs are both playing, when space is at a premium. Some of the pressure on our car park should be relieved when the Rugby Club are able to formally take occupation of the newly-named Paddock at which point the Club plans to use some of the land for parking alongside a new rugby pitch. The Parish Council and Rugby Club are in advanced stages of negotiation regarding the lease on the new space and we should be in a position to formalise the agreement soon.

Meanwhile arrangements for a new lease between the Bowls Club and the Welcome Home Field Trustees are also in hand, following which the Football Club’s lease on Furze Hill will also be renegotiated.

We are fortunate to have the support of many members of our community; too many to list individually but I’d like to thank Mr Bob Horlock for his work on the District Council’s proposals to extend the Conservation Area, along with Keith Garwood who continues to be the most diligent of footpath wardens (and who regularly litter picks our village without fanfare or asking for thanks). Thanks too to Brian Forrester who looks after our village with such cheerfulness and a willingness to go the extra mile.

Compliance and training are important to the Parish Council and in the last 12 months we have adopted Civility and Respect and Dignity at Work policies and started recording our meetings. We have also undertaken bespoke Parish Councillor training with the EALC and with Tendring District Council to ensure that everyone is aware of protocols. I am also pleased to report that every

Councillor now has a Disclosure and Barring Certificate to reassure the community of our suitability to interact with children and the vulnerable.

In June 2022 we celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, with our Party in the Park on the Welcome Home Field. The event, which was arranged jointly by Mistley and Lawford Parish Councils, was a huge success and the feedback very positive. Geraldine, Ruth, Derek, Stephen and I were delighted to work together on the committee, along with Terry Barrett from Lawford Parish Council. I would particularly like to thank Corinne West for her tireless work on the event which, thanks also to grants and sponsorship from local businesses, we managed to bring in under budget, returning 50% of the net surplus to Lawford Parish Council and retaining the remainder towards our forthcoming Coronation party.

While we, along with the rest of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, were truly saddened by the death of Her Late Majesty in September 2022, we are looking forward to commemorating the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla in May, and the Parish Council, together with the Rugby Club, are delighted to be together holding the first Pram Race in Mistley since the 1970s. The event, which will take place on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> May, will be held at Furze Hill and will feature pop-up bars thanks to local pubs, a dog show, children's fancy dress and drawing competitions, and live music from Keystone in the evening. And of course the Pram Race itself which should prove entertaining.

Turning to our finances, despite the high inflation environment which has led to a significant increase in costs, the Parish Council's Finance Committee was able to identify some areas where economies could be made, which in turn enabled us to keep our precept for 2023-24 flat on last year. This, coupled with the additional revenue received by Tendring District Council from new properties in our village, means that for the coming financial year each household will actually be billed approximately 5% less for the Parish Council's portion of the overall invoice. Meanwhile we continue to achieve clean audits thanks to Susan, our Parish Clerk.

Staying with finance we achieved some other successes together. Thanks to the diligence and tenacity of our Parish Clerk, the Parish Council was able to renegotiate its power supply for street lighting with npower at a rate flat on the previous agreement, despite the recent surge in power prices.

In April 2023 we achieved a significant cost saving for the Parish Council by changing our grounds maintenance supplier when the tendering process came up for its 3 year renewal, and we are looking forward to working with Great Oak

Tree Land Services for the next three year period. Our sincere thanks to Marvens for looking after our grounds and green spaces for the last three years.

Turning to planning; like many villages in our District we feel we have been awarded more than our fair share of developments and hope that the adoption of the Local Plan will see a halt to our green spaces being gobbled up by housing. Work has begun on the so-called Manningtree Park and continues at River Reach. The Cala Homes development off New Road is nearing completion. Meanwhile the building of the additional houses off Stour View Avenue will shortly commence. While we are saddened to lose some of our valued our rural space, we welcome our new residents and hope they will love life in Mistley as much as our long-standing parishioners.

As we are all aware local elections will be held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May. We have 11 Parish Councillor vacancies and only 9 candidates standing so our election will be uncontested. To that end we are sorry that our colleagues Councillor Geraldine Carter and Councillor Derek Bell have decided not to re-stand in the forthcoming election. They will both be greatly missed. And we were of course sorry that another long standing councillor, Iris Peacock, resigned earlier this year due to ill health. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Iris, Geraldine and Derek who have done so much for our village over so many years.

In 2009 my predecessor, the previous Chairman of the Parish Council, Martin Rayner, introduced the annual Chairman's Award which is given to a parishioner, or parishioners, who have gone the extra mile for Mistley and I am delighted to have been able to continue this tradition. This year I am especially pleased to make two awards for service to Mistley. Firstly, I mentioned earlier that Councillor Geraldine Carter has decided, after 25 years' loyal service to Mistley, to hang up her Parish Councillor hat. We are hugely indebted to Geraldine for her long service to the Parish spanning across two centuries and four different decades. While we will miss Geraldine hugely, she takes our sincere and grateful thanks for everything that she has done for the Parish Council, and I know that she will continue to do for the other clubs that she supports so tenaciously; the Rugby Club and the Bowls Club. So my first award is to Geraldine for over 25 years' service to the Parish Council.

The second award is to Rosemary Smith, whose list of contributions to Mistley knows no end. Previous Parish Councillor (in both Mistley and Manningtree), District Councillor, Chairman of Mistley Kids' Club, Chairman of the Village Hall; friend and counsellor to many in our community, and those are just some of the ways in which she has supported our village. So my second award is to

Rosemary for the decades of service she has given to Mistle in so many difference capacities.

Geraldine and Rosemary, we cannot thank you enough for everything you have done for us all.

We shall have a new Parish Council next month; we start with two vacancies so will be looking for some new Councillor colleagues to join our happy bunch. I am sure the next twelve months will bring opportunities for laughter as we continue to work to serve our community together. Lastly I would like to pay tribute to our wonderful clerk, Susan Clements, without whom we would quite simply be lost.

Cllr Charlotte Howell

24<sup>th</sup> April 2023