

Annual Report of the Council for 2008/09

1. **Membership**

The elections of new Councillors took place in May 2007. However as there were 11 nominations for 11 places no election was required. Two former Members, Graham Potter and Rosemary Smith, decided not to stand and were replaced by Martin Rayner and Fredrick Thompson.

During this year two other Members have resigned due to business commitments and have been replaced by Angela Kilmartin and Joy Frascinella. At the May 2008 Annual General Meeting Ian Rose was elected Chairman and Martin Rayner was elected Vice Chairman.

D/Cs Michael Dew and Carlo Guglielmi represent the Parish on the District Council and C/C Sarah Candy on the County Council

2. **Finance**

The Council's precept for the year was £53000 which represents a Council tax of £53.37 per Band D property and was almost identical to the tax for the previous year. The precept for the coming year has been reduced to £49000 which represents a Council tax of £50.42 per Band D property, a decrease of about 9 %.

At the beginning of the year the Council's reserves stood at £28134.66 and at the end of the year stood at £26139.37. This reserve is made up of a General Reserve of £14915.08, Village Hall Reserve of £6457.97 and the Clerk's Superannuation fund of £4766.32. These last two items are "ring fenced" and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Total income during the year, including balances brought forward, was £114768.16 and total expenditure £88628.79

The accounts are subject to a quarterly audit by an Internal Auditor and a yearly audit by External Auditors.

3. **Major Items of Expenditure**

a. **Police Community Support Officers**

The Council, in co-operation with Manningtree and Lawford Councils, contribute 50% of the cost of two PCSOs. These Officers are dedicated to work only within the three parishes and the Council consider have made a very good contribution to neighborhood policing in the area. The cost during the year was £27583.00 of which £13405.08 was recovered from Manningtree and Lawford Councils with an estimated £4558.93 still to be received

b. **Street Lighting**

The Council owns and maintains 108 street lights within the parish one of which has been added during the year. The cost of energy during the year was £3430.05 and the cost of repair and maintenance was £3901.28. The Council sought competitive tenders for this work for the next three years and the contract was awarded to A and J Lighting Solution.

The Council is seeking to provide two new lights in Clacton Road to assist residents of Acorn Village but is experiencing problems with EDF Energy in obtaining a power supply

c. Recreation Grounds and Open Spaces

The Council owns Furze Hill Recreation Ground which contains the Village Hall, car park, children's play area, three sports pitches and a large wood containing many ancient trees. The total area of the Recreation Ground is about 50 acres. The total cost of maintaining the Ground, excluding the Village Hall which is maintained by a Management Committee, was £3266.96 Major items of expenditure were £2794.00.00 for resurfacing the access road, and £1910.00 for grass cutting.

In addition to the Recreation Ground, the Council maintains three areas of common land and cuts highway verge grass on behalf of the County Council. The total cost of grass cutting was £2812.26.00.

During the year our Warden at Furze Hill decided to retire and, after re-advertising, Mr Brian Forrester was appointed. Part of the Warden's duties are to regularly check the safety of the play equipment. In addition to these safety checks monthly checks are undertaken by Bruce Landscapes and a yearly one by ROSPA

d. Employment of the Clerk

The Clerk to the Council is employed under the terms and conditions of the National Agreement drawn up by the Society of Local Government Clerks and National Association of Local Councils. His salary and expenses during the year amounted to £9611.47.

e. Administration

The cost of administration, including insurance, audit fees, stationery, training fees, hiring of premises etc was £6472.89. Included in this is a sum of £492.00 claimed by Councillors in allowances and expenses.

f. Grants and Subscriptions

The following grants and subscription were paid during the year:-

First Aid Responders	£150.00
Council for the Protection of Rural Essex	£28.00
Essex Association of Local Councils	£429.12
Friends of Foundry Court	£30.00
Manningtree Festival	£70.00
Open Space Society	£30.00
Manningtree Museum	£30.00
Tendring Association of Local Councils	£15.00
Rural Community Council of Essex	£55.00
Royal British Legion	£50.00
Mistley Church	£840.00
Autumn Days Club	£25.00
Citizens Advice Bureau	£200.00
Community Bus	£200.00
Essex Wildlife Trust	£40.00
English Heritage	£10.00
Society of Local Government Clerks	£150.00
Tendring History Recorders	£25.00
Essex Playing Fields Association	<u>£25.00</u>
Total	£2402.12

In addition grass cutting of the Welcome Home Field, costing about £500, was carried out in lieu of a grant to the Trustees of the Field.

4. **Other Facilities and Services Provided by the Council**

a. **Planning**

Every planning application is forwarded to the Council for our comments.

b. **Cemetery**

In conjunction with Manningtree Town Council the Council owns and maintains a public cemetery situated next to St Mary's Church yard. It is coming into increasing use and the fees received during the year amounted to £3565.00 and expenses amounted to £889.25. Most of the excess of income over expenditure is being put into a reserve account to be used for a future extension.

c. **Roads and Footpaths**

Various extensions to no waiting restrictions have been agreed with the County Council over the year and most are now in place.

Of continuing concern is the inadequate footway in New Road from the Church Hall to the Church and we will continue to press for this to be upgraded.

Restricted access signs for Shrublands Road and Green Lane have been erected dissuading drivers, other than those needing access to properties, from using these unmade up roads.

The Council continues to report to the County Council any road defects in considers need repairing.

d. **Village Hall**

The Village Hall is owned by the Council but we have no say in the management or maintenance of it. It is leased to a Management Committee who are suffering from a lack of volunteers although many thanks are due to the few members who remain. Part of the Hall is sub leased to the Mistley United Football Club and we are seeking a meeting of all interested parties in a bid to solve the problems. A grant of £6595.10 was given to the Hall and various other work costing £9921.57 has been carried partly with the aid of grants obtained by the Kids Club.

e. **Trees**

The Council owns many trees on our land particularly at Furze Hill. Much work, costing £1000.62, has been carried out for safety and aesthetic purposes during the year.

5. **Swans and Geese**

The Council continues to be concerned about what we consider is the over feeding of swans along The Walls which is turning parts of the greensward in a boggy grassless mess. We welcome the swans, which are part of Mistley's heritage, but the overfeeding, against the advice of the R.S.P.B. and English Nature, attracts hundreds of Canada Geese which are not natives of the area.

6. **Affordable Housing**

In conjunction with the English Rural Housing Association and the Rural Community Council of Essex, the Council undertook a housing needs survey throughout the parish to ascertain whether there was a case to build affordable housing for rent or part ownership be local people. The results of the survey was that a case can be made for up to 15 houses and talks are now taking

place with Tendring District Council's Housing and Planning Departments to find a suitable site on the edge of the parish and a public consultation meeting is being arranged, probably in July.

7. **Health and Safety**

A Health and Safety Policy was commissioned last year and is being adhered to by the Council during the year.

8. **Access to Information**

All agendas and minutes are available from the Clerk or via the Council's web site. Copies of all non confidential correspondence and accounts are also available from the Clerk.

Ian C Rose - Chairman of the Council

Richard J Ling - Clerk to the Council

1st April 2009