

# MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual Report of the Council for 2011/12

### 1. Membership

Elections for the Council were held in May and resulted in five new Councillors and six existing Councillors being elected. At the AGM in May Martin Rayner was elected Chairman and Frances Fairhall Vice Chairman.

During the year two Councillors, Aggie Forrester and Karen Young, resigned for either personal or work commitment reasons. They were replaced by Andrew Norman and Iris Peacock who were co-opted after the vacancies had been advertised.

Elections were also held for the District Council which resulted in Carlo Guglielmi and Sarah Candy being elected to represent the parish. Sarah Candy continued to represent the parish on the County Council

### 2. Finance

The Council's precept for the year was £52000 which represents a Council tax of about £52 per Band D property. The precept for the coming year has been set at £57000 which represents an increase of 9%. This increase was necessary to replenish the reserves following unexpected expenditure during this year and to cover commitments in 2012/13.

At the beginning of the year the Council's reserves stood at £25574 and, subject to the submission of final audited accounts, at the end of the year stood at £23063. This reserve is made up of a Working Reserve of £3834, a General Reserve of £10017, a Cemetery Reserve of £2735 and the Clerk's Superannuation fund of £6476. These last two items are 'ring fenced' and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Total income during the year, excluding balances brought forward, was £83443 and total expenditure £85954.

The unexpected expenditure during the year was largely made up of the cost of holding an election (the first one in over 20 years) which amounted to just over £2000, carrying out urgent repairs to the Swan Basin which cost approximately £4500 and repairs to the Pound being £1500 over budget.

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 neighbourhood policing in the area. The cost during the year was £23552 of which £20290 was recovered from Manningtree and Lawford Councils which included nearly £6000 brought forward from the previous year.

#### b. Street Lighting

The Council owns and maintains 110 street lights within the parish. The cost of energy during the year was £3445 and the cost of repair and maintenance was £2825.

#### 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 including 'Old Knobbly' an ancient oak. The area of the Recreation Ground is about 50 acres. The total cost of maintaining the Ground, excluding the

# MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Village Hall which is maintained by a Management Committee, was £7484, which included £3500 for repairing the access road, plus £3563 for grass cutting plus £1612 for tree maintenance. Income received for the use of the sports pitches was £962. The Council employs a Warden to oversee the use of the Recreation Ground part of whose duties is to check the condition of the children's play equipment. Safety checks are also carried out at three monthly intervals by an independent Contractor and a major yearly check carried out by Tendring District Council

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 £1500.

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 £10570.

e. Administration

The cost of administration, including insurance, audit fees, stationery, training fees, hiring of premises etc. was £6254. Included in this is a sum of £876 claimed by Councillors in training costs, allowances and expenses.

f. Grants and Subscriptions

In order to assist local organisations some major and minor grants were paid out during the year. Subscriptions to relevant Essex and National Organisations were also made. The following are details of the grants and subscription paid during the year:-

First Aid Responders	£300.00 grant
Council for the Protection of Rural Essex	£29.00 subscription
Essex Association of Local Councils	£481.00 subscription
Friends of Foundry Court	£50.00 grant
Young Musician of the Year	£70.00 grant
Open Space Society	£40.00 subscription
Homestart	£150.00 grant
Manningtree Museum	£100.00 grant
Tendring Association of Local Councils	£15.00 subscription
Rural Community Council of Essex	£55.00 subscription
Manningtree Beach Bash	£150.00 grant
Royal British Legion	£50.00 grant
Mistley Church graveyard	£900.00 grant
Citizens Advice Bureau	£300.00 grant
Community Bus	£200.00 grant
Essex Wildlife Trust	£40.00 subscription
English Heritage	£15.00 subscription
Society of Local Government Clerks	£123.00 subscription
Essex Playing Fields Association	£25.00 subscription
Brantham Bonfire	£30.00 grant
Foundry Court Luncheon Club	£1000.00 grant
Historic Essex	£10.00 subscription
Essex Air Ambulance	£200.00 grant
Art on the Walls	£1000.00 grant
Welcome Home Field	£500.00 grass cutting
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6833.00</b>

# MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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

### Planning

Every planning application is forwarded to the Council for our comments. Major applications have been (1) 75 houses off Trinity Road (2) redevelopment of the EDME site (3) redevelopment of the Secret Bunker (4) extension of Long Furrows Care Home and (5) affordable housing in Harwich Road . Tendring District Council has consulted the Council in their preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and Supplementary Planning Documents. Of particular interest have been the various sites put forward by Developers for inclusion in the LDF. The Council has raised no objection to two of these sites (1) redevelopment of the EDME site and (2) housing development off Stourview Close.

### Cemetery

In conjunction with Manningtree Town Council the Council owns and maintains a public cemetery situated next to St Mary's Churchyard. The Churchyard is close to becoming full of interments and the Cemetery provides a convenient alternative for the families of loved ones, not only in Mistley and Manningtree, but also for adjacent parishes. The fees received during the year amounted to £1705 and expenses amounted to £1220. Any excess of income over expenditure is being put into a reserve account to be used for a future extension.

### Mistley Quay

The Council is supporting the efforts of Free The Quay to replace the inappropriate fence erected by the owners along the Quay by a more suitable barrier. An application to upgrade the walkway alongside the Quay to that of a public footpath is being pursued and a Public Inquiry is due to be held in June. Support is also being given to declare the Quay area Common Land, open to all members of the public.

### Village Hall

The Village Hall is owned by the Council but we have no say in the management, or maintenance of its interior, as it is leased to the Charity Commissioners and managed by a Management Committee whose work is appreciated by the Council. As an expression of this, improvements works costing almost £1000 were funded by the Council.

### Trees

The Council owns many trees on our land particularly at Furze Hill. Much work, costing £1400, has been carried out for safety and aesthetic purposes during the year.

## 5. Swan Basin

The Swan Basin, situated in the High Street, was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and is now listed as a structure of historic interest. The water flowing from the swan's beak was supplied by a brick culvert originating in the Furze Hill area and flowing under properties in School Lane and the High Street. Over the years this culvert has become blocked and broken at various times and in various places. During the previous year it was decided to bring it up to date and fill the basin from the mains supply in order to supply water to the swan by an electric pump. Much of this work was completed by the generosity of Tendring District Council and Veolia Water Company. However before the water could be switched on it was discovered that the basin was cracked and leaking and repairs, costing £4300 had to be carried out.

# MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

6. **Swans and Geese**

The Council continues to be concerned about the issue of the swans along The Walls. The river bank has eroded which has enabled the picturesque flock to easily gain access to the greensward turning it in places to a boggy grassless mess and to wander into the road putting themselves and motorists at risk. We welcome the swans, which are part of Mistley's heritage, but overfeeding, against the advice of the RSPB, the RSPCA and English Nature, has built up the flock to unsustainable level and has attracted numbers of Canada Geese which are not natives of the area. A Working Party of Councillors and a representative of Suffolk Coasts and Heaths was set up to discuss ways of improving this situation. This Working Party has engaged with Swan Watch to reduce the feeding but has also, as recommended by the RSPCA, considered ways of creating a barrier to make it difficult for the swans to come up on the greensward. It has thus organised the planting of a 70m hedge along the top of the river bank in the area primarily affected. This planting will soften the bank edge where a retaining wall has been built, help stabilise the bank edge and deter the swans from reaching the greensward. Initially a low fence will be erected to protect the hedge. The work will be carried out by voluntary labour and support from Rose Builders. A grant from Tendring District Council has helped meet the cost of the plants.

7. **Affordable Housing**

During the year a planning application for 15 affordable houses in Harwich Road was submitted by the English Rural Housing Association and approved by Tendring District Council. It is anticipated that construction will commence in 2013.

8. **Allotments**

The Council rents a number of plots of land to provide facilities for allotment holders. One of the plots has been the land off Harwich Road formerly the Brunswick House gardens which has been in private ownership since 1994. The tenure of this land is uncertain as the owners wish to bring forward plans to develop the land for housing and had given the Council notice to quit. The Council supports the use of the land for allotments and is committed to providing facilities for allotment holders. A Working Party has been set up with representatives of the Council and the local Allotment Holders Association to determine possible sites for long term allotment use and to establish a formal relationship between the Council and the Association.

9. **Health and Safety**

A Health and Safety Policy is in place and is being adhered to by the Council during the year.

10. **Access to Information**

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

Martin Rayner - Chair of the Council  
Frances Fairhall – Vice Chair of the Council  
Richard Ling - Clerk to the Council

1<sup>st</sup> April 2012