

MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Parish Council for 2015-2016

1. Membership

In the May 2015 Election, ten Councillors were elected unopposed. Former Councillor Ian Tucker decided not to stand for election. An eleventh Councillor, Susan Anderson was co-opted in August. At the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting in May, Martin Rayner was re-elected Chairman and Andrew Birch was elected Vice-Chairman. Carlo Guglielmi (also our County Councillor) and Alan Coley were re-elected in May 2015 as our District Councillors and have attended most meetings and provide updates on the business of both the District and County Councils. We are grateful to both Carlo and Alan for their help and advice. Andrew Lee and Richard Ling continue to assist the Council respectively as the Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.

2. Finance

The Council's precept for the year was £59,000, including a grant of £4,110 from Tendring District Council, which represents a Council Tax of £58.91 per Band D property. The precept for the coming year has also been set at £59,000, including a grant of £3,905, which represents a Council Tax of £58.48 per Band D property. This will allow us to continue our programme of maintenance and improvement to the services provided in the Parish.

At the beginning of the year the Council's reserves stood at £33,947 and, subject to the submission of final audited accounts, at the end of the year stood at £41,366. This reserve is made up of a General Reserve of £35,040, a Cemetery Reserve of £4,434 and the Clerk's Superannuation fund of £1,892. 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 £88,495 and total expenditure £81,076.

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

The Financial Regulations and Standing Orders were revised and adopted by the Council in January.

3. Major Items of Expenditure

(a) Street Lighting

The Council owns and maintains 106 street lights within the parish. The cost of energy during the year was £3,434 and the cost of repair and maintenance was £4,666. While most of the street lights owned by Essex County Council are being turned off between midnight and five o'clock in the morning, all of the street lights owned by the Parish Council continue to stay on.

(b) 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 total cost of maintaining the Ground, excluding the Village Hall which is maintained by a Management Committee, was £7,513, which included £2,527 for grass cutting. Income received for the use of the sports pitches was £1,338. The Council employs a Warden to oversee the use of the Recreation Ground

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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 an annual inspection is carried out by Tendring District Council.

In addition to the Recreation Ground, the Council maintains The Green, and two areas of common land (The Walls and the Green at Mistley Heath) and cuts highway verge grass on behalf of Essex County Council. The total cost of grass cutting was £2,594. On this land, we provide and maintain litter bins, public seats and public shelters the largest of which is at The Walls.

(c) Employment

The Clerk and the Responsible Finance Officer are employed (respectively: 15 and 3 hours a week) under the terms and conditions of the National Agreement drawn up by the Society of Local Government Clerks and National Association of Local Councils. Their salaries and expenses, including Income Tax and National Insurance, during the year amounted to respectively: £11,454 and £2,200. A further £1,870 was incurred for the wages of the Furze Hills Warden, who is employed for 4 hours a week. Both the Parish Tree Warden and the Footpath Warden are appointed in a voluntary capacity.

(d) Administration

The cost of administration, including insurance, audit fees, stationery, training fees, hiring of premises etc. was £7,518. Included in this is a sum of £458 claimed by Councillors in training costs, allowances and expenses.

(e) 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 subscriptions paid during the year:

First Aid Responders	£500 grant
Council for the Protection of Rural Essex	£55 subscription
Essex Association of Local Councils	£502 subscription
Open Space Society	£45 subscription
Friends of Historic Essex	£10 subscription
Manningtree Museum	£100 grant
Tendring Association of Local Councils	£15 subscription
Royal British Legion	£60 grant
Essex Air Ambulance	£300 grant
Mistley Church graveyard	£1,000 grants
Citizens Advice Bureau	£750 grant
Community Bus	£200 grant
Essex Wildlife Trust	£40 subscription
English Heritage Trust	£15 subscription
East Anglian Children's Hospice	£120 grant
Mistley Autumn Days Club	£80 grant
Welcome Home Field	£550 grass cutting
Suffolk Accident Rescue Service	£300 grant
Manningtree Frankenberg Association	£100 grant
Mistley Rugby Club	£100 grant
Eden Rose Trust	£100 grant
Total	£4,942

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4. Other Facilities and Services Provided by the Council

Planning

Every planning application is forwarded to the Council for our comments. Tendring District Council has consulted the Council in their preparation of the new Local Plan. The Plan considers the three parishes of Mistley, Manningtree and Lawford as one. Tendring District Council set up a dedicated Local Plan Committee that is overseeing further revisions to the Local Plan including identifying additional land for housing development to comply with government policy; ensuring cooperation and agreement between Tendring District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council; and maximising the opportunities for economic growth, job creation and investment in infrastructure off the back of new development, in line with the Council's Economic Development Strategy. Based on the figures in the 2013 Strategic Housing Market Assessment it is likely that the Council will need to identify sufficient land to deliver around 12,000 homes between now and 2031. For the Manningtree, Mistley and Lawford area some 540 homes have been identified but due to the lack of a Local Plan developers have already submitted plans for some 1,200 homes (this figure includes developments in Brantham and East Bergholt which will have impact on our communities and facilities). Such a cumulative level of development will put considerable pressure on facilities and the local road network and representations have been made to Tendring District Council regarding this. The examination and final adoption of the Local Plan will take place in 2016.

During the year, the Council had to consider and respond to five planning applications containing a proposal to build a large development (more than ten dwellings) in the village: 300 houses at land south of Long Road and east of Clacton Road; up to 135 houses at land south of Harwich Road and east of Heath Road; up to 70 houses at land north of Stourview Avenue; 25 bungalows at land to the south of Pound Corner, Harwich Road; and 78 houses at Mistley Place Park. Understandably this generated a great deal of concern to residents and those in neighbouring parishes. The Council held several public meetings to allow local residents to express their views and concerns. A great deal of concern in particular was generated regarding the Mistley Place Park application, which was subsequently withdrawn. Tendring District Council has yet to determine the outcome of the other applications.

Cemetery

The Council jointly with Manningtree Town Council owns and maintains a public cemetery situated next to St Mary's Burial Ground. The cemetery provides a convenient alternative for the interment of deceased parishioners, not only in Mistley and Manningtree, but also of those from adjacent parishes. The fees received for the year amounted to £4,852 and expenses amounted to £2,537. Any excess of income over expenditure is divided on a 75/25% basis between the Council and Manningtree Town Council after £500 has been put into a reserve account to be used for a future extension. The Council has been notified by the Church that it has applied for the Burial Ground (between the Churchyard and the Cemetery) to be declared closed and the care and maintenance could be passed to the Parish Council.

Mistley Quay

The registration of part of Mistley Quay as a Village Green by Essex County Council was approved in July 2014, following the recommendations of the Planning Inspector which were the result of an eight-day public inquiry in June and July 2013, was welcomed by the Free the Quay, the local community and the Council. Consideration of the recommendations

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have been delayed further by extensive representations by TWL, the owner of Mistley Quay, subsequent to the Inquiry. All the issues raised after the Inquiry by TWL were rejected by the Planning Inspector. TWL has since brought judicial review proceedings to have the decision reviewed in the High Court. The process consists of several stages and the parties involved are TWL and Essex County Council.

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 and managed by a Management Committee whose work is appreciated by the Council. The scope of the Village Hall extension had not included the updating of the toilets and the Management Committee felt that this work was critical to the success of the Village Hall. A quotation of about £15,000 had been obtained and a grant from the Community Initiatives Fund been made on behalf of Mistley Parish Council, which was supported by C. Cllr. Guglielmi. The Community Initiatives Fund approved a contribution of 50% towards the cost of updating the toilets. The remaining 50% was funded by the Parish Council and the Management Committee made a contribution of £1,000. Work began in March and will be completed in April. Again, the Chairman acted as Project Manager, while the Responsible Finance Officer was responsible for finance matters to ensure compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

Trees

The Memorial Tree fell down in high winds on the evening of the 17 November 2015. This Horse Chestnut tree was planted in 1988 to replace the original Horse Chestnut tree that was blown down during the storm of October 1987. The fallen tree damaged several of the rails of the hexagonal seating. Local residents and Parish Councillors inspected the tree and notified the appropriate authorities. The lighting was removed for storage together with the commemorative plaques from the damaged hexagonal seating. A local wood carver had removed the tree in exchange for the wood. The seating has been repaired and the Parish Council is considering what the best option would be for the site.

The Council owns many trees on our land particularly at Furze Hill. During the last year, remedial work continued for safety and aesthetic purposes, including: clearing branches from trees nearby to 'Old Knobbly' which are in competition for the canopy space; and removing overhanging branches near to the rugby pitch. Extensive bramble-clearing was undertaken at Furze Hill with the support of the Payback Team which has opened up the glades and views through the woodland near the sports pitches.

Environment

During the last year, the Council has organised two litter-pick up events in July 2015 and March 2016. At both events, volunteers from the village, including children and dogs, picked up 25 sacks of litter from around most of the village. Some of the volunteers baked home-made cakes which were enjoyed by participants with refreshments after returning from picking up litter. Originally, the Council had intended to hold this as an annual event, but this increased to a spring and an autumn event. We acknowledge the practical support of Tendring Council for providing litter-pickers, bag holders and bags, as well arranging for the bags of litter to be removed.

New village signs were made, which Tendring District Council installed on new posts and removed and disposed of the old signs. We also acknowledge the help of Tendring District Council for promptly dealing with reported fly tipping and in removing four instances of graffiti. The posts at The Green were cleaned and repaired or replaced where necessary, with a few new posts installed to close gaps. Benches around the village have been assessed

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and repaired, cleaned and repainted.

5. **Swan Basin**

The Swan Basin, situated in the High Street, was built in the Eighteenth Century and is now listed as a structure of historic interest. The Council is responsible for its maintenance.

6. **The Walls**

Speeding along The Walls is still a concern which is raised regularly by residents and Councillors. The Council is still awaiting a decision to proposals for speed reduction measures along The Walls, which it submitted to the Local Highways Panel.

7. **Allotments**

The Council currently rents land off Harwich Road to provide facilities for allotment holders. Previously the Council had sought to negotiate the lease of a two-and-a-half-acre plot of land for new allotments off Harwich Road and backing onto Rigby Avenue, but this has been delayed while the landowners revisit their options for developing the site. During the year, two planning applications have been submitted proposing large-scale housing developments to land to the south of Pound Corner and to land at the rear of the affordable housing on Harwich Road – the developers of both have offered land for allotments as a potential community benefit. The planning process takes time and both applications were opposed by local residents: the first because of the proposed access to the development; the second because of volume of housing and cumulative impact on the locality. Tendring District Council has yet to determine the outcome of either application.

8. **Health and Safety**

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

9. **Access to Information**

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

Martin Rayner – Chairman of the Council
Andrew Birch – Vice-Chairman of the Council
Richard Ling – Responsible Finance Officer
Andrew Lee – Clerk to the Council

April 2016