

# MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual Report of the Parish Council for 2016-2017

### 1. Membership

In May 2016, Councillor Ian Rose resigned after serving the Parish Council for almost 58 years, between June 1958 until May 2016, including 35 years as Chairman between May 1974 and April 2009. Sadly, Ian Rose passed away shortly afterwards, but his service, diligence and dedication to the Parish will be long remembered and appreciated by local residents. Councillor Dean French was co-opted onto the Council in September 2016. In November 2016, Derek Bell resigned, although he has agreed to continue to look after the Swan Basin. In February 2017, Susan Anderson resigned, although she has agreed to continue to update the Council's Facebook page. The Council is following the procedure to fill the casual vacancies. 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 our District Councillors 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 £3,905 from Tendring District Council, which represents a Council Tax of £58.48 per Band D property. The precept for the coming year has been set at £60,000, including a grant of £3,710, which represents a Council Tax of £58.27 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 £41,214.51 and, subject to the submission of final audited accounts, at the end of the year stood at £53,643.08. This reserve is made up of the Current Account of £13,127.43, General Reserve of £33,057.29, a Cemetery Reserve of £4,935.96, and a Clerk's Superannuation Fund of £2,522.40, the latter two which cannot be used for any other purpose. The Essex Association of Local Councils, has advised that the Clerk's Superannuation Fund needs to be closed and the balance will be added to the General Reserve in the new financial year.

Total income during the year, excluding balances brought forward, was £88,427.72 and total expenditure £75,999.15.

The accounts are subject to a quarterly audit by an Internal Auditor and a yearly audit by External Auditors. The Financial Regulations were revised and adopted by the Council in May.

### 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 £4,647.70 and the cost of repair and maintenance was £1,398.00. 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

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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 £7,289.65, which included £2,140.00 for grass cutting. Income received for the use of the sports pitches and ground rents was £885. There was an excess of income over expenditure of £2,297 from the All The Fun At The Furze and the Family Fun At The Furze events.

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 an annual inspection is carried out by Tendring District Council. Repairs have been made to the Half-Pipe Skateboard Ramp and a Working Party has been set up to recommend improvements to the Furze Hill Children's Playground to make it more inclusive and for more equipment for toddlers.

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 £2,810.00. 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: £11,128.93 and £2,252.78. A further £1,922.50 was incurred for the wages of the Furze Hill Warden, who is employed for 4 hours a week. In November, the Parish Council recruited a part-time cleaner, who is responsible for opening, closing and cleaning the public lavatory at Furze Hill and also to clean the Village Hall. Since the end of November, the cleaner's wages have come to £2,253.32. Payment of the cleaner's wages are split between the Parish Council for 7 hours a week and the Village Hall Management Committee for 6 hours a week. Both the Parish Tree Warden and the Footpath Representative are appointed in a voluntary capacity.

## (d) Administration

The cost of administration, including insurance, audit fees, stationery, training fees, hiring of premises etc. was £7,678.76. Included in this is a sum of £450.00 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:

Manningtree First Responders	£600 grant
Essex Association of Local Councils	£577 subscription
Open Space Society	£45 subscription
Friends of Historic Essex	£25 subscription
Manningtree Museum	£100 grant
Tendring Association of Local Councils	£15 subscription
Royal British Legion	£60 grant

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Essex Air Ambulance	£500 grant
Mistley Parish Church	£1,000 grant
Citizens Advice Tendring	£750 grant
Community Bus	£250 grant
Essex Wildlife Trust	£40 subscription
Mistley Autumn Days Club	£80 grant
Suffolk Accident Rescue Service	£300 grant
Rural Community Council of Essex	£66 subscription
Foundry Court	£50 grant
Essex Heritage Trust	£10 subscription
Council for the Protection of Rural England	£36 subscription
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4504</b>

In addition to these grants and subscriptions the Council undertook the cutting of grass on the Welcome Home Field, worth approximately £750 and paid for pest control costing £118.

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

### **Planning**

Every planning application in the parish of Mistley is forwarded to the Council for our comments. During the year, the Council had to consider and respond to one planning application containing a proposal to build a large development of 67 dwellings to land to the rear of New Road. Understandably this generated a great deal of concern and the Council held a public meeting to allow local residents to express their views. Tendring District Council has determined that this planning application be refused. The Council's application to register Mistley Place Park as an Asset of Community Value was unsuccessful. The Council has continued to support opposition to create a dwelling at 3 Lane Cottages, The Green.

In 2016, Tendring District Council 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.

### **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 facility 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 £4289.00 and expenses amounted to £3,954.11. 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. Permission was granted to a request to erect a new memorial bench in the Cemetery.

The Privy Council made a Final Order dated 12 October 2016 relating to the discontinuance of burials in the Churchyard and Burial Ground of St. Mary and St. Michael. On 7

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November 2016, the Council agreed to take over the responsibility for the maintenance of the Churchyard and Burial Ground under section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **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 updating of the toilets has been completed. The cost of about £15,000, of which 50% was funded partly from a grant obtained from the Community Initiatives Fund made on behalf of Mistley Parish Council, which was supported by C. Cllr. Guglielmi. The remaining 50% was funded by the Parish Council and the Management Committee made a contribution of £1,000. 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. An adjustment has been made to the access to the Village Hall, by adding steps and a railing leading from the playing field.

## **Trees**

The second Memorial Tree fell down in high winds on the evening of 17 November 2015. The fallen tree damaged several of the rails of the hexagonal seating, which was repaired. The Council has agreed to plant a replacement tree, a hybrid variety of elm, for which Tendring District Council has made a grant towards half of the cost of the purchase, transporting and planting. We are awaiting the disconnection of the electrical supply and the removal of the stump and soil.

The Council owns many trees particularly at Furze Hill. During the last year, the Tree Warden has been drafting a management plan for Furze Hill Woods, which has been tendered to specialist woodland contractors to undertake surveys and submit figures for costs of their proposed works and any sources of funding they are aware of. Once the plans have been finalised, then we can go to tender on the works themselves. No work is urgent at this time, but if there is anything identified to protect public safety, then this will be carried out. 'Old Knobbly', a notable ancient oak, was nominated for entry in the Woodland Trust's England Tree of the Year competition, although disappointingly polled fourth place, the number of the votes cast was sufficient to merit a grant of £500, which will be put towards work to thin saplings and open up the veteran trees to air and light.

## **Family Fun At The Furze**

The Council together with Lawford Parish Council and Manningtree Town Council organised a successful day-long event at Furze Hill on Sunday 26 June 2016 for local residents of the three parishes. This included a mixture of stalls and bouncy castles. A modest charge for a wristband allowed children to use equipment for up to four hours. A variety of local bands played and there was also a licensed bar operating from Mistley Village Hall. At its peak approximately 1,000 people attended the event. There had been £1,200 in donations and grants and a bucket collection on the day yielded £100. Local businesses generously contributed grants towards the event and also provided equipment. The free parking at Mistley railway station and also a shuttle bus to and from Manningtree railway station, helped to reduce the impact on traffic. A repeat event will be considered for the summer of 2018.

## **Environment**

During the last year, the Council organised two litter-pick up events in October 2016 and March 2017. At both events, volunteers from the village, including children and dogs, picked up more than 30 bags of litter from around most of the village. Some of the

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volunteers baked home-made cakes which were enjoyed by participants with refreshments after returning from picking up litter. In addition, the children at Mistley Norman Primary School held two tidy up events around their school. We acknowledge the practical support of Tendring Council for providing litter-pickers, bag holders and bags, as well as arranging for the bags of litter to be removed. We also acknowledge the help of Tendring District Council for promptly dealing with reported fly tipping and in removing two abandoned vehicles.

Benches around the village have been assessed and repaired, cleaned and repainted. In July, a new memorial bench dedicated to the memory of a life-long resident of The Green was erected. Restoration work to names on the War Memorial, was undertaken on a pro bono basis by a local stonemason. The Council also undertook the repair of the footpath along Shrubland Road to eliminate potholes and ruts and to smooth out the rough surface.

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 (railway allotment) off Harwich Road to provide facilities for allotment holders. During the year, the two planning applications 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, were determined and have received permission (respectively full and outline) by Tendring District Council. Developers of both sites have offered land for allotments as a potential community benefit. The details of the developer's section 106 proposals in respect of land to the south of Pound Corner are being finalised but will require approval by Tendring District Council. A section of the fencing of the railway allotment has been replaced and a couple of gates have been installed to improve access for allotment tenants.

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 the Annual Accounts, Policies, Regulations, and Standing Orders are also available from the Clerk or online.

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 2017