

MISTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Parish Council for 2017-2018

1. Membership

Councillors Beverley Burton and Faye Kent were co-opted onto the Council respectively in April and July 2017. In April 2017, Richard Horlock automatically lost his seat as a Member of the Parish Council for not attending any meeting of the full Council or any Committee for more than six months and failing to provide any explanation for his absence or submit his apologies. The Council currently has one casual vacancy.

At the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting in May, Martin Rayner was re-elected Chairman and Andrew Birch was re-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 resigned as the Parish Clerk in March. Richard Ling will retire at the end of June 2018 after 28 years of service – 22 years as the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, and six years as the Responsible Finance Officer only. Kate Palmer was appointed to the joint role of Clerk from 1 April and then take on the additional role of Responsible Finance Officer from 1 July.

2. Finance

The Council's precept for the year was £60,000.00, including a grant of £3,710.00 from Tendring District Council, which represents a Council Tax of £58.27 per Band D property. The precept for the coming year has also been set at £60,000, including a grant of £2,411, which represents a Council Tax of £59.02 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 £53,643.08 and, subject to the submission of final audited accounts, at the end of the year stood at £4,378.23. This reserve is made up of the Current Account of £7,859.03, General Reserve of £33,079.58, and a Cemetery Reserve of £5,439.62. The latter cannot be used for any other purpose. Acting upon advice received from the Essex Association of Local Councils, the Clerk's Superannuation Fund has been closed and the balance was added to the General Reserve.

Total income during the year, excluding balances brought forward, was £10,328.52 and total expenditure £110,593.37.

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 £5,097.41 and the cost of repair and maintenance was £4,389.58. While most of the street lights owned by Essex County Council within the Parish 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, a car

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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 £6,347.28, which included £1,580.00 for grass cutting. Income received for the use of the sports pitches and ground rents was £885.00.

The Council employs a Warden to oversee the use of the Recreation Ground. Duties include litter picking and 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.

The Council had to consider whether to repair or to decommission the half-pipe skateboard ramp. Between 2013 and 2016, the Parish Council had spent £4,300 in repairing damage caused by vandalism. Following more damage in 2017, a decision was made reluctantly to decommission and remove the ramp. In 2017, some of the older play equipment at the Furze Hill Children's Playground was replaced with a new orbital swing, new cradle swings and a roundabout to make it more inclusive for toddlers and those with special needs. In addition, a combined goal and basketball net has been installed. The total cost of the upgrade was £32,883.08 and was funded by a combination of grant awards from the Big Lottery Fund, Tesco Bags of Help Award, section 106 monies and also by the 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 £1,645.00. 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: £11,762.45 and £2,176.01. Also £1,887.60 was incurred for the wages of the Furze Hill Warden, who is employed for 4 hours a week. The Council's part-time Caretaker / Cleaner's wages have come to £6,789.96. 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 voluntary appointments and we are grateful for their contribution.

(d) Administration

The cost of administration, including insurance, audit fees, stationery, training fees, hiring of premises etc. was £10,399.73. Included in this is a sum of £520.00 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	£300 grant
Essex Association of Local Councils	£554.78 subscription

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Manningtree Rail User Association	£50 grant
Manningtree Museum	£100 grant
Tendring Association of Local Councils	£15 subscription
Royal British Legion	£100 grant
Essex and Herts Air Ambulance	£500 grant
Citizens Advice Tendring	£750 grant
Essex Wildlife Trust	£40 subscription
Mistley Autumn Days Club	£80 grant
Suffolk Accident Rescue Service	£300 grant
Rural Community Council of Essex	£60.50 subscription
Foundry Court	£50 grant
Essex Heritage Trust	£25 subscription
The Hub	£200 grant
East Anglia Children's Hospices	£150 grant
Mistley Rugby Club	£100 grant
Essex Wildlife Trust's Appeal	£100 donation
Welcome Home and Memorial Fund	£620 annual insurance premium
Mistley Bowls Club	£50 grant
Acorn Village	£200 grant
Stour Sailing Club	£100 grant
Swan Watch	£200 grant
Total	£4645.28

In addition to these grants and subscriptions the Council undertook the cutting of grass on the Welcome Home Field, worth approximately £500 and paid for pest control costing £66.

4. Other Facilities and Services Provided by the Council

Planning

Every planning application in the Parish of Mistley is forwarded to the Council for comment. Tendring District Council's land supply has been tested by the Planning Inspectorate as developers have challenged whether the determining authority had reached its five-year target. Subsequently, Tendring District Council has sought a judicial review of one of the Planning Inspectorate's decision. Developers who had previously obtained permission through a technicality for constructing 300 houses on land south of Long Road, submitted a new planning application proposing a 66% increase from 300 to 500 houses. The Council viewed this as an outrageous increase when there are already 1,200 houses which have been agreed for Lawford and Mistley; Tendring District Council's Proposed Local Plan indicated that planning should be proportionate to the area and this proposal was unfair. There was also particular concern about the proposed entrance and exit to the commercial area from Dead Lane. The Council lent support to Tendring District Council issuing an enforcement notice against an attempt to create a dwelling at 3 Lane Cottages, The Green. In January 2018, after a four-day Public Inquiry, the Planning Inspectorate allowed a developer's appeal concerning a proposal for a large development of 67 dwellings to land to the rear of New Road. Applications for other notable developments: 135 dwellings on land south of Harwich Road and 25 bungalows on land to the south of Pound Corner were approved by Tendring District Council and work has started on those sites. Outline planning approval has also been granted by Tendring District Council for up to 70 houses on land off Stourview Close. The Parish Council has worked with the other local Councils of Lawford and Manningtree to try and mitigate the impact of such housing

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increases on the road network, particularly at Manningtree Station and on school places and doctors' surgeries. It is hoped that the offer of a surgery as part of the development off Harwich Road will be taken up by the NHS and negotiations are on-going.

Cemetery

The Council jointly with Manningtree Town Council owns and maintains a public cemetery situated next to St. Mary and St. Michael's Church Burial Ground. The cemetery provides a convenient facility for the interment of those deceased, not only in Mistley and Manningtree, but also of those from adjacent parishes. The fees received for the year amounted to £5,794.00 and expenses amounted to £1,686.37. 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 is also now responsible for the maintenance of the Churchyard and Burial Ground of St. Mary and St. Michael Church, along with the closed Trinity Road Cemetery.

Village Hall

The Village Hall is owned by the Council but the management and the maintenance of its interior, is leased to and managed by a Management Committee whose work is appreciated by the Council. The updating of the Village Hall's CCTV camera system has been completed. A defibrillator has been installed in a cabinet on the side of the Village Hall and training was kindly provided by the Manningtree First Responders. The Village Hall car park has also been relined.

Trees

The second Memorial Tree on the traffic island opposite The Towers fell down in high winds in November 2015 and was replaced on 11 October 2017 with a hybrid variety of elm tree, for which Tendring District Council has made a grant towards half of the cost of the purchase, transporting and planting.

The Council owns many trees particularly at Furze Hill. 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 work can be put out for tender. '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 tree to air and light.

Family Fun At The Furze

The Council together with Lawford Parish Council and Manningtree Town Council has been involved in the planning and organisation of this biennial event at Furze Hill taking place on Sunday 10 June 2018. There would be a mixture of stalls, music, demonstrations by local organisations and activities for children including a bouncy castle extravaganza. There would be no entrance fee, but voluntary contributions would be sought. Live music would be provided by local bands.

Environment

During the last year, the Council organised a litter-pick up event in October 2017, at which volunteers from the village, including children and dogs, picked up more than 30 bags of litter from around the village. Some of the volunteers baked home-made cakes which were

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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 District 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. The Council also undertook the repair of a section of Church Lane from the Parish Church up to the railway bridge to eliminate potholes and ruts.

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 and remedial works to the paved area and also cleaning and painting are to be carried out by a local contractor during 2018.

6. **The Walls**

Speeding along The Walls is still a concern which is raised regularly by residents and Councillors.

7. **Allotments**

The Council currently rents land (railway allotment) off Harwich Road to provide facilities for allotment holders. As part of the two planning applications proposing large-scale housing developments to land to the south of Pound Corner and to land to the south of Harwich Road, 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 in the process of being finalised and formally approved by Tendring District Council. A section of the fencing of the railway allotment that was damaged has been repaired.

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 2018