

It is my pleasure to present the annual report for the Parish Council for Tolleshunt Major 2023/24.

Before I get into the details of the councils' activities over the reporting period, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the parish council which now totals a healthy seven. All members are volunteers who sit with a shared view of making Tolleshunt Major a great place to live. We are proud of the support we get from our neighbours and friends, and I am confident we will progress into the new reporting period with the same gusto!!

I would also like to thank Maddie Thompson our local ward member for her continued support and providing a useful conduit between ourselves and those within Maldon Council.

I reserve my greatest thanks and appreciation to our Parish Clerk. Vysian is an integral part of all our operations and her support, wisdom and experience are relied upon at every meeting as well as the work she conducts behind the scenes making sure we function in a proficient manor. Thank you Vysian.

It has been a great honour to preside as Chairman of the council over the last year, a role which I have enjoyed tremendously. The Council listens and pays attention to the needs of our community whilst following protocols and rules. This may, on occasion appear to be non-action and progression may on occasion prove to be slow, but the Council continues, as always, to ensure its decisions are made based on values of our community. This requires working closely with other local authorities to achieve a common goal, but the Council remains autonomous in its decisions.

Looking back over the year the council have been involved in many projects, it will come as no surprise that again this year the Planning issues, have taken up a considerable amount of our time. Each application is reviewed and considered in isolation and against the needs of the village. We appreciate not everyone will agree with the outcomes of the council but, rest assured all views put forward are taken into account. To be clear the Parish Council are not statutory consultees on planning applications, but Maldon District Council may choose to consider our comments when making its decisions. As such it is important that we and residents in the village continue engage in the planning process if we wish to have any influence on those decisions.

Other notable events over the year include our engagement with RCCE a rural housing enabler. This matter related to affordable housing being constructed in our village. Our engagement included several meetings and as all residents will know a questionnaire to every household to assess if this was a need within our community. Following the consultation, we have now gathered evidence to present to the authorities to demonstrate the feeling within the village on this matter. We are happy to share the findings with any resident so please get in touch if required.

The highways and road safety within the village are another of the major topics which are considered monthly by your council. We have continued to engage with the council operated Speed Cam operation which has officers attend the village to monitor vehicle speed. I can report that in comparison to our neighbouring villages we have a very low rate of speed detection. We have considered the cost involved in this process and remain open to its ongoing use. Unfortunately, due to a lack of current support the locally run community speed watch program has had to be suspended. Again, this requires committed volunteers and as we do not currently have sufficient to maintain this program it will be suspended until the situation develops. If you are interested, please let me know. We are currently exploring the

possibility of a permanent speed deterrent device for the village. I am hopeful that during the next year we may have exciting developments in this area.

As residents you will all have seen the damage caused to the Bennet Island outside the village Hall. We as a council like you have witnessed its decline over the years and the evidence, gathered has shown that the increased traffic from the Business Park has played a role in this continued deterioration. I am pleased to report that following persistent engagement through the correct channels eventually escalating to a direct meeting with our local MP Priti Patel we have finally made significant progress. Although the matter has not yet been fully resolved I have seen correspondence from our MP to Highways and the Council and we have a plan in place for engagement with the Business Park to find a solution to the ongoing issue. We are as ever sympathetic to the fact we have a Business Park located within the village, but I am sure over the coming months we will find a balance between the rural feel of our village and the necessary activities at the Business Park.

The playing field remains one of the councils' major assets I think you will join me in thanking Malcolm, and his team of merry helpers who regularly attend to maintain the equipment making sure it is clean presentable and in working order. We have a regular inspection by ROSPA Play safety whose guidance we follow, this is one of the small costs to the council's budget. I note with pleasure that the trees planted have grown and will benefit the future residents as they bring more life and colour to those visiting the park.

Footpaths are very much a part of country life, and we have a significant number in our parish area. We are fortunate to have one member of our council Alison who has been interested in footpath maintenance for many years and along with members of the public helps to keep our footpaths safe and accessible by reporting any safety issues to the appropriate authority.

You will be aware that the parish council manages a modest budget, this year we have had to ask for a small increase to account for spending in previous periods and the general rise in costs for maintenance such as grounds and insurance. The discussions about finances are treated with the upmost importance and all financial matters are reviewed and regulated to the finest detail.

In May the community came together to celebrate the Kings' Coronation. The weather was kind, and it was good to see the children's fabulous efforts at crown decoration no less impressive was the adults' efforts at drinking prosecco and a right royal quiz. The Council was happy to support this event along with our great publicans at The Bell.

I would now like to take a moment to thank Louise and Ruth for what can only be described as dedication beyond belief with the litter picking activities, they do so much to make our village what it is. I so often see them out going over the same ground and the shame of it is that they still manage to fill bag after bag of rubbish. Every resident has a responsibility over the image of our village so if you have rubbish in your car take it home and bin it... don't leave it to someone else.!!!

I remind all our residents that every meeting of the Parish Council has an open session to allow members of the public to ask or answer questions or give evidence or information on matters relevant to the business of the Council. We encourage everyone who is interested in the village to come along and see how we work and participate where necessary. All details are circulated online and via the village notice board. Anyone who wishes to become involved in organising events for the community are welcome to apply to join the Parish Council or any of the other groups which all help and support your village.

Finally, and unfortunately, it would appear we have a space opening on the council. Tony & Gill Payne are in the process of moving away from the village for a new and exciting adventure. Tony & Gill have been an integral part of this village for over 36, Years. They have immersed themselves in village life with open hearts and even an open home during the Ukraine crisis welcoming refugees in. They really are the best ever neighbours to us all. Our loss will be a significant gain for wherever they finally land. I hope you join with me in wishing them well on the new adventure and I will make sure to keep in touch so I can report back on all the exciting new developments.

Kind regards your chair.

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