

## **Chairman's Statement 2025/26**

It is my pleasure as Chairman to present the annual statement on the work of the Parish Council for the year 2025/26.

It has been another relatively quiet year for planning with the number of applications coming forward for consideration reduced over that which we have seen in previous years. The nature of these applications is also mostly confined to house renovations and extensions. However, we did this year consider a sizeable application for a residential development on a pocket of open land along Plains Road. This application generated a good deal of local interest and the meeting where we considered this application saw by far the biggest public attendance that I have experienced in my time on the Parish Council. This application is still under consideration and we await the outcome.

Earlier in the year Maldon District Council engaged in relation to planning enforcement and provided useful information on how they manage the process. We understand that a number of outstanding cases have been closed and there are very few enforcement cases now on our radar. This may, in part, be related to the fewer number of applications coming forward. Residents are encouraged to report enforcement cases directly to the District Council but the Parish Council will support residents where it is right and proper that we do so.

As with planning we have had relatively few highways issues to deal with in the past year. However, we remain concerned about the state of Witham Road which has many sizeable potholes and severely damaged verges. We have also seen further damage to the wall of the Village Hall. We continue to lobby our local Essex County Councillor about these issues. We are also in regular contact with the Councillor regarding enforcement against a fly tipping site.

In relation to speeding in the village I am pleased to report that we now have funding for a Speed Indicator Device in the village thanks to a grant from Maldon District's Community Fund. The equipment has been ordered and we await delivery. Hopefully this will be up and running by June.

We have made a concerted effort this year to respond proactively to issues raised in the annual ROSPA report. Amongst other things we have updated and replaced most of the signage, purchased new football nets, filled the holes on the football pitch, cleaned some equipment and put in place some protection against strimming damage. There is more to be done but we have achieved a lot. We also arranged for a dead tree to be removed as there was a potential safety issue resulting from falling bark which could also have escalated to falling branches had it been left standing.

This year the Parish Council set a precept of £14,000. We have had comment from the auditor in recent years that our reserves are too low so were we mindful of that when setting the budget. At the same time, although the Parish Council element forms a very small part of the overall Council Tax, we also need to be conscious of the impact of our budget on residents. In relation to finance we have now successfully implemented electronic payments and have been operating this for some time.

Change is coming to the local government structure of Essex. A new model of five unitary authorities has been agreed so Maldon District Council will cease to exist and our area will become part of Mid Essex. Whether or how much this affects the Parish Council remains to be seen. Whatever happens we will continue to do our best to engage with and support local residents. We have a regular spot in the local newsletter and also this year we facilitated a drop in session with the local community police. Although not heavily attended those who did come along said they found it useful.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to my fellow councillors and those that support the work of the Parish Council. Earlier in the year we lost Trevor one of our longstanding members and then Chairman who has moved away from the area but we are very pleased to welcome Charlie who joined us a few months ago. Whilst we still have one vacancy we now have a good mix of people and everyone pitches in to help out to make sure that what needs to be done gets done. I pass on my thanks to you all for your enthusiasm, good nature and willingness to get involved. Thanks also to Vysian who we all rely on probably much more than we realise! We also benefit greatly from the input of our District Councillor Maddie Thompson who regularly brings her knowledge to our meetings and provides a link back to the District Council

This concludes the annual report. We look forward to the coming year which I am confident will provide the Chairman with many positive things to talk about in April next year.