

Lawford Parish Assembly Chairman report 2024

Good evening and welcome to this year's Parish Assembly.

Another year has gone by, and the Parish Council has yet again been extremely busy in delivering services and improving the public realm of our village. I can safely say that very few councils in the district and possibly in the whole county are investing as much as us in the community.

Because of the soaring energy costs, and mindful of light pollution, last year we embarked on an ambitious programme of converting all our 108 streetlights to LED; I am delighted to confirm that this project is now fully completed. We have also adopted Essex County Council's policy of part-night lighting, and together with the LED conversion we have cut our energy consumption by 50%.

We have been experimenting with solar powered lights, and we are in the throws of expanding this, but more on this next year.

In line with our Community Support ethos, we have given financial assistance to the following Groups:

- The Manningtree Rotary Club towards the 2023 Christmas Market.
- The Manifest Theatre for a new computer for artwork.
- Acorn Village for tables and chairs for their new gallery space.
- The North Essex Veterans Support Group for its breakfast club.
- Lawford Church for emergency repairs to the church tower.
- The Manningtree based Credit Union to promote the service and increase awareness of how it can help.
- East Anglia Children's Hospice for antenatal support.

- Dedham Vale AONB for the delivery of health and wellbeing projects, and
- The Essex Air Ambulance for the purchase of helmets and suits.

We have continued to tackle dog fouling by installing new signage across the village, especially at School Lane where we have seen a considerable improvement, and we have updated our Byelaws which now include specific reference to drones and e-scooters.

New planting has been done around Summers Park Pond, and we have worked with PACE to ensure local school children had access to a biodiversity project near the Pond and around Owl's Flight Dell.

We delivered a well-attended public event on Summers Park to celebrate the King's Coronation, and we are planning another next month to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-DAY when the Beacon will be lit in synchrony with the rest of the UK.

Our Handyman continues to provide support across the village through regular play park inspections, clearing of litter, stepping in to fix problems wherever they arise, and generally maintaining the public realm looking great.

He also ensures that all our play equipment is in good conditions in readiness for the regular external annual inspection; with our grass cutting contractor he also carries out the annual inspection of all trees owned by the Parish Council.

We have spent several thousands of pounds in carrying out repairs in all play parks and this year in particular, extensive work has been carried out in both Waldegrave Way and School Lane play areas.

Because of last year's poor and worsening standard of grass cutting by Tendring DC on the Lawford Dale and Waldegrave Way, and following several complaints by residents, we have taken the decision of taking this on ourselves.

We are in the process of agreeing terms with the DC, but as we are very lucky to have an excellent and reliable contractor whose standards are second to none, every grassed area in the village due to be cut will now look great. We are identifying areas where we will encourage rewilding, and again, this is work in progress.

Following a request from residents we have invested in a new accessible NEST swing on Riverview play area which is proving very popular with local children. We will also have, for the older children, a Zip Wire in place in Summers Park hopefully in time for the summer when the schools break up.

We are continuing to add to our bins tally with a new one installed by the side of the new Bus Shelter in Long Road, that follows on from last year's conversion and removal of all the small bins to the much bigger ones, which reflects the need for more of these because of the influx of new residents.

Our stock of benches is increasing likewise with two new ones on Summers Park, and an extra one on School Lane recreation ground; the benches are being provided by those residents who have lost their loved ones, which is a great way to keep them in their memories, so we do thank them for providing these assets for everyone to enjoy.

A big thank you to the Rotary Club who part funded the replacement of the bench on Cox's Hill where weary commuters can take a breather when they return up the hill from work!

We are very much continuing with Operation Quasar where we buy up 20 hours of Police time that can be deployed around the village wherever they are needed. This agreement with Essex Police was secured by Carlo, Alan Coley, and I, when we were district Councillors, and it is a unique scheme only in operation here and in Brightlingsea which was granted to compensate for the closure of Mistley Police Station.

Ben Chester now oversees all the Planning Applications as they come in and gives his expert comments, so thank you Ben.

Mark Kinsmore continues to advise on financial matters as well as the odd emergency repairs to play equipment....! Thank you, Mark!

Terry's very sensible approach to liaising with our partners such as Manningtree TC and Mistley PC is excellent, but especially for continuing the great relation we have with the football. Thank you, Terry!

We are fortunate to have a representative on our Council from Lawford Green, which will soon become the new hub-centre of Lawford once we take possession of the new Parish Office, so thank you Ken for looking after that part of the village!

A big thank you goes to Wendy St James for the meticulous way in which she has been helping Bridget in reviewing our Policies, so thank you Wendy!

And now for something very different, and under Dan Harty's initiative, last year we delivered a summer photographic competition for young people which was very popular and we are planning to re-launch it this year; and for something even more different, Dan has been producing and will continuing to do so, regular Podcasts that focus on local people, and groups of interest that includes the Manifest Theatre, Acorn Village, Fitness at Summers Park Gym, Manningtree Credit Union, Manningtree Rotary Club, Lawford Housing Enterprise Trust, and the Lawford House Pool. All podcasts can be accessed by the PC's Website, but also through this link when this report will be published:

<https://open.spotify.com/show/6fDeXF5uyJ1eyy0X9DpAyJ>

Thank you, Dan!

This year we said goodbye to four valued parish councillors who had given great service to the local community: Godfrey Payne who with

Carlo served on this Parish Council since 1987, Val Pretty, Iain Miles and Ben Newman Wright. We do thank them for the service they have given to Lawford PC.

All this work cannot of course be done without the excellent and expert input from our Clerk Bridget, who has most certainly brought in a breath of fresh air ever since her arrival in January 2022. Thank you, Bridget, for all you do for us and the village!

Finally, I would like to single out Dave Thurlow and Carlo for the sterling work they do, the huge amount of time they both give to our very good and first-class Council, with most of it done behind the scenes, and their dedication to the community. Carlo's link with Essex is extremely valuable especially in having liaised with Highways and the North Essex Parking Partnership in getting parking restrictions in place around Lawford Primary School, and for having resolved the deadlock of the Works Permits for the new roundabout on Wignall Street, the new Cycle and pedestrian access on Dead Lane, and the various repairs to the Lane. Carlo is looking after our grandson in Brentwood this evening, but he knows I am mentioning him!

Thank you for your attention in listening to me speak, and I look forward to another year of action with help from you all.