

Parish Assembly Speech for Val 20th May 2026

Good evening, everyone and welcome!

Thank you so much for having made the time to come along tonight to our parish Assembly, which is an event where we look back at what the Council has done over the course of the past 12 months, and also to give an opportunity to the community to have their say, and hear their comments so that we can then consider and progress any suggestions that are put forward.

This year we have come up with a slightly different format, and we have invited along the community groups who have received financial support from the parish Council over the year, and Bridget will shortly explain what we have come up with.

Eight of the organisations we have supported are here this evening, and we have:

1. **Acorn Village** who received £1500 towards Art Supplies and Workshop
2. **Lawford Football Club** who received £1900 for a new boiler
3. **Manningtree Community Bus** £ who had 1500 towards their running costs
4. **Manningtree Rotary Club** who received £500 towards the Christmas Market
5. **The Manifest Theatre** who had £2500 towards their Youth Theatre project
6. **The North Essex and Suffolk Veterans Support Group** who received £500 towards their breakfast Club

7. **Manningtree and Mistley Bowls Club** who had £500 for their Centenary Celebrations
8. And **PACE** who received £680 towards the Tendring Show Bus, and the Earth Festival; they also occasionally have free use of this building for their meetings.

Lawford is now one of the largest Parishes in Tendring where we have seen the biggest housing growth in the whole District, and it is now referred to as semi-rural.

We are extremely fortunate to live in such a vibrant place, where we have a wealth of shops and restaurants, transport links, schools, doctors' surgeries, great digital connectivity, great recreational facilities, an excellent recycling centre on our very own doorsteps, several large employers who make an excellent contribution towards our economic well-being, a thriving industrial estate, and most importantly the beautiful countryside on our fingertips, so it is no wonder that people want to move and live here.

This housing growth is not all bad news in real terms, as not only it has made a substantial contribution towards our finances, but it has also ensured the prosperity of the various businesses in Manningtree High Street, and of course the consequential spin off, such as cleaners, gardeners, small builders, and so on.

Because of our wealthy £185,359.66 precept, that equals 90p Per week per household, we have been able to embark on many projects that other Parishes cannot consider, nor afford.

In previous years we have greatly improved our footpath network, with 5 major new footways that now connect the Lawford Dale

estate and Manningtree with the rest of Lawford; we purchased Riverview Playing Field from TDC; we have delivered two important car parks at Riverview, and School Lane; we embarked on a long term programme to changed our 100 street lights to LED, which is much more sustainable, especially as we now have part-night-lighting to match ECC's policy; we made a substantial financial contribution to both, the new School Lane Pavilion, and the Venture Centre, to name but a few.

Carlo, our previous district colleague Alan Coley, and I we secured a huge number of community benefits from Rose Builders, which of course include this magnificent building that was handed over to us last May.

It is very exciting for the Parish Council to have its own premises, especially when it is of this standard!

The hire of the building keeps on growing month by month, with 8 groups now paying rent for the use of it; we do have put in place a Social Policy where any not-for-profit community group can have the use of the building for free, such as PACE, and the ROTARY CLUB.

We have now also agreed that the Scouts can use the grassed area just outside for Camping purposes free of charge, and we will be funding works to provide a gate for ease of access.

The council's philosophy is if you are a community group working on behalf of the Lawford community then you can use the room, and the grounds for free.

Two other organisations who we welcomed in having free use of this building are the Manningtree First Responders and the St John's Ambulance Cadets who a few years ago got turfed out from

their old premises in Manningtree, and ended up renting space at the Masonic Hall which was not ideal, so when they approached us to see if they could use the building, not only we wholeheartedly agreed, but we also provided a bespoke storage space for all the props they use in their training; this is now their new home and an excellent recognition for the sterling work they do in our community.

We have adapted the building to suit our user groups with a new hard tarmacked entrance off Bromley Road, a dimmer switch in the Rose Room, a dishwasher, and new tables and chairs.

We have taken on a new caretaker to look after the building and ensure that users find a clean and well-cared for environment when they enter the building.

We continue with our efforts to tackle dog fouling through the provision of 6 new large bins this year, and “EYE STARING” posters in key location.

We have tackled head-on the antisocial parking outside the Lawford School’s new entrance off The Avenue, by paying for a TRO to introduce Parking Restrictions, and we have done the same in Cotman Avenue, where some inconsiderate drivers constantly parked their vehicles dangerously on the first bend.

We have awarded a total of £15,298.06 in small grants made to 13 local projects, and we continue to work with PACE to ensure local school children had access to a biodiversity project in Summers Park.

We have refreshed the Operation Quasar agreement we have with Essex Police, where we buy up 20 hours of overtime per month and use it where necessary, such as speeding checks,

engagement with anti-social drivers, and youths, and only last week we had an abandoned camper van removed from Lawford Green that had been left there for several months.

Our Handyman continues to provide support across the village through regular play park inspections, clearing litter, maintaining the public realm, and generally assist with any job that need to be done.

Phase 3 of Lawford Green has delivered a new playground at Pax Drive, which gives a total of 6 play areas in total that we are responsible for.

Part of maintaining all these playgrounds is being responsible that they are all safe and conform to strict requirements, so every one of them gets an Independent Annual Inspection carried out, that we pay for, so any faults get dealt with as soon as possible.

We have in fact carried out this year extensive repairs carried out in both Waldegrave Way and School Lane play areas.

We have a policy where Lawford residents who lose their loved ones can apply to have and pay for, a memorial seat installed with a commemorative plaque; last year three new benches were installed near the football club at School Lane.

We are now responsible for many more trees than we have been in the past, so we carry out an annual inspection of all trees owned by the Parish Council.

We have continued to invest in switch to LED to all streetlights across Lawford which is now complete.

And finally:

- We have now completed our footpath improvement programme with the widening of the Riverview footpath.
- We have installed Goal posts on Summers Park
- We have improved the Zip Wire on Summers Park
- And carried out more groundworks at Lawford Football Club

Our projects in the pipeline for the future are the provision of 14 Wind and Solar powered Street Lights, and the provision of a “Pump Track” for the youngsters, potentially on the Waldegrave Way recreation ground.

We still have some outstanding issues, such as

- ❖ The Manningtree Station Underpass
- ❖ Ownership of some public areas Lawford Dale
- ❖ The forthcoming NSIPs (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) and
- ❖ The Grange Road Planning Application for 95 new homes that will yield misery and chaos on Lawford, it will threaten the loss of Tye Henge, destroy the rural character of the area, and it will have a dreadful impact on the Biodiversity.

I would like to conclude with a few notes of thanks to various people who have hugely helped the sooth running of our Council.

First of all, to Bridget, our most excellent, and conscientious Clerk who keeps everything ticking impeccably well.

To Dave Childs, our Handyman who is always there when we need him.

To Dave Thurlow, my Vice Chairman for his support, his Fund-Chasing efforts, and his project drive.

To Ben Chester for his very professional comments on Planning Applications.

To Terry Barrett, for his monthly reports from Tendring, his involvement and liaison with Manningtree and Mistley, the football club, and any other district matters.

To Lisa Castell, for her enthusiasm in how she engages with our schools and other stakeholders, and for having started the very first litter pick in Lawford

To Wendy St James for her meticulous critical friend overseeing of our finances and policies.

To Mark Kinsmore for his financial wisdom; to Mark Naylor and Ken Symon for all their contributions to the Council.

And finally, to Carlo for his sterling input on all fronts, especially from ECC. It seemed very odd not to have received an ECC report at our meeting on Monday, but I suppose we should get used to that!

Thank you for listening. And before I handover to Bridget do you have any questions for us?