



West Mersea
Town Council

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Town Meeting 20th April 2017

This has been an exciting and interesting year with loads of changes:

- A new Town Clerk
- 4 new Councillors, 1 resignation and 3 retirements.
- We have had the honor of welcoming our very own Olympic Gold medal winner Saskia Clark MBE
- Started the great task of our Neighborhood Plan
- Restructured our committees
- Our precept has been increased to support our current years plan
- Made major improvements to our Website and communications

Our committees have been immensely active and I would like to thank all the Councillors for their efforts and hard work.

We currently have 7 committees and 1 working group

Committees

1. Bradwell
2. Facilities and Assets
3. Sports and Recreation
4. Communications
5. Transport
6. Personnel
7. Waterside

Working Group

1. Cemetery working group

ASSETS, FACILITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

Completed Tasks

1. Autumn and Spring litter picks around West Mersea
2. Decision made and implemented for emptying of bins currently responsibility of West Mersea Town Council, by Colchester Borough Council. Financial savings to WMTC and the release of time for ground staff.
3. New picnic table for Children's Field.
4. New fountain installed at Queens Corner. New plant troughs to be provided in 2017.
5. New Village Sign provided and work to tidy up library forecourt completed with much assistance from Mersea Refresh and WMTC groundsmen.
6. Certain signage removed in East Road, Queens Corner and Glebe to improve appearance
7. Scaffolding on Strood removed.
8. Repair work to Melrose Road office roof completed.
9. New bench opposite Boots and with help from Refresh Mersea, tidied and planted area

On-going Tasks

1. Improvements to rails alongside oyster beds
2. Emergency Plan for West Mersea
3. Work to trees in West Mersea Park and Coast Road
4. Play areas for Youth Field and School Field, including replacing perimeter fencing and installing new gates, where needed.
5. Rate relief for toilets 2018/9
6. Changing Places scheme for Esplanade
7. Preparation of Mersea Walks leaflet
8. New bathing raft with support from Beach Hut Watch
9. Work on Sensory Garden has been started and will be completed during 2017.
10. Refurbishment of Willoughby toilets – scheme proposed and up for discussion with NEPP and Beach Hut Watch. Hopefully work to start 2018/9.
11. Overgrowing hedgerows – article placed in Mersea Life with follow-up article in May (Courier)

Disappointments

1. Failure to secure Section 106 cash to proceed with refurbishment of Coast Road toilets and introduction of charging. Will need to be addressed in next budget 2018/19.
2. Failure to persuade owners of certain commercial premises to improve the appearance of their premises.
3. Much time investigating if parking area for new Surgery viable in Oyster Close but for various reasons this has stalled.

COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE

This year has seen a lot of work in the communications committee, with improving the ways residents can contact the council being a priority. The following improvements have been made:

1. Ongoing improvements to our website, making it easier to navigate and containing more useful information for both residents and visitors.
2. New telephone and broadband system in the Council offices, saving money and getting a faster service that can provide internet to numerous users at once.
3. Dedicated email addresses for all councillors and staff.
4. Facebook account for West Mersea Town Council, with posts reaching over 1,000 viewers.
5. A more positive relationship with the local free press, enabling us to keep residents up to date with what the council is doing.
6. Introduction of monthly councillor surgeries where residents can drop-in and speak to councillors, and share their concerns and comments.
7. E-Newsletters

CEMETERY WORKING GROUP

The cemetery working group was formed in early 2017 to look at improving the management of the WMTC cemeteries. During the short period, it has been in operation we have started to transfer burial records onto a digital database and have started work to tidy up Firs Road and Feldy View cemeteries. Work is underway to streamline the paperwork involved and to make sure we are working within official guidelines at all times. Most of the grave spoil has been removed and all the 'compost' heap. Bins have been put in place so that the heap does not build up again. We are looking at Woodland Cemetery management and hope to improve the look of the cemetery in the coming months with a plan for managing, planting and maintenance.

SPORTS & RECREATION

The Glebe has been exceptionally busy in the last year although perhaps with mixed fortunes amongst the user clubs. From the Councils point of view the big issue has become the financing of the park. For the first time in years the full cost of running the Glebe became apparent when we set about producing a budget for 2017. From this it was deduced that the total cost of all the facilities exceed £23,000 against which the net income is under £7,000. The Council unanimously agreed that savings had to be made and a revised proposition has been put to the Mersea Island Sports Association. They will be discussing the terms of this new lease agreement at their AGM on the 20th April and we will proceed from there. Our intention is to have new terms in place by the Autumn, if possible. Whilst the Rugby and Oyster Football Clubs have been doing exceptionally well, bringing large numbers of youth into the games, the Tennis Club has not had an easy time of it. Membership, however, has held up well even though there has been a substantial increase in annual fees, but sadly there has been no use of the grass courts, and with lack of regular maintenance the grass is now in a poor state. The Tennis Club has been discussions about handing the court area back to the Town Council so that perhaps they might be used for other more popular pursuits. The Council has offered to keep the area rough cut whilst the Tennis Club formally decides what they wish to do, or other suggestions are explored.

On the plus side, the Tennis Club are in negotiation to formally join MISA and to allow other MISA Clubs to use the pavilion for functions on agreed occasions. If this proceeds the Council has agreed to spend up to £5,000 putting heating into the premises.

TRANSPORT

During the year we have applied for certain road restrictions for The Lane, Yorick Road, St Peters Road, Firs Chase and Coast Road but were unsuccessful this year because we didn't gain enough points to get the works done, as Colchester allows three schemes per year. We will reapply again this year. We have been successful in getting white and yellow lines reapplied to the end of Yorick and Coast Road junction near the Yacht Club and other roads on the island.

We are also aware of the bad state of our paths and roads and intend to apply as much pressure to get these resolved. We have also been promised that the white lines at the bottom of Seaview, where the caravan park entrance is, will be renewed but no date has been given to us yet. We have a good relationship with NEPP and are working with them to identify the best times of the year for the PEO to visit the island. We must remember that they cover all North Essex so we have to share that resource with a large area, who also have parking issues on busy, hot weekends.

PERSONNEL

A lot of work has been carried out in the office behind the scenes. Visually, all can see that the office looks much more professional and Petra and Carol are working hard to streamline the processes to make everything efficient and up to date. There is still a lot to do but huge improvements have already been made. We are also looking to make sure all our staffing polices and working practices are up to date, such as staff training days, health and safety checks and statutory duties.

WATERSIDE

We work closely with the CBC Zone Wardens as they are our water bailiffs. Stephen Collis, CBC, keeps us up to date with all issues on the pontoon and waterfront. We were saddened to hear of the loss of some beach huts due to fire. The Strood railings are in a very poor state and this Council is liaising with Essex County Council who will hopefully repair them. The Marine Police have been visible in policing the Mersea coastline.

BRADWELL

The Working Group was re-installed as a full Committee.

We submitted a comprehensive response to the Environment Agency in connection with the FED effluent discharges, but it now continues after a delay. The prospect of a new build of Bradwell B, with reactors 10-12 times larger, by the Chinese, has moved a stage further as the Generic Design Assessment started in January 2017.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This is an immense task and we owe a massive thank of gratitude for everyone who is helping, including Debbie, our co-ordinator who brings all the information together. We are also aware of the importance of this plan for the future of West Mersea, for supporting our businesses, improving our environment and open spaces and getting the relevant and correct type of housing for the community's needs.

SUMMARY

We have had a very productive and active 2016-17 and there will be no letup in 2017-18. Let's ensure that we carry on delivering and serving our community to the best of our abilities and remits. We strive to work with the community and do our best for Mersea Island.