



Maplestead Magna Carta

Great Maplestead Parish Council's Award-Winning Newsletter

The Parish Council – its responsibilities and procedures...

Striking a balance...

At the last Parish Council meeting a recent upsurge in Freedom of Information enquiries, complaints and demands for action in respect of two contentious local issues was reported.

It was also noted that dealing with the resulting, and unprecedented, volume of correspondence and e-mails was severely reducing the **Clerk's** availability for other, regular **Council** business.

In addition, the legal advice the **Council** has had to seek in this regard may potentially incur costs that, being unbudgeted, will reduce the funding available for some future **Parish** projects.

Since every parishioner contributes to the precept (budget) through their **Council Tax**, spending it **effectively**, to the advantage of **everyone** within the **Parish**, is a major part of the **Council's** mandate.

• Roles and responsibilities

At the last meeting – attended by nearly a fifth of the **Parish** electorate – it was felt opportune to explain that the Councillors – all of whom are volunteers and, in **Great Maplestead**, elected – have a responsibility to consider, represent and undertake actions for the benefit the **Parish** and **all** its parishioners.

Something that's perhaps not widely understood is that the **Council's** only **statutory** powers are to:

- raise a precept (budget) and spend it for the benefit of the Parish
- hold an annual meeting/at least 3 others a year
- appoint someone to be responsible for the Council's administration and financial affairs

Any other powers are **discretionary** only – and the **Council cannot** carry out activities which legislation permits **other local authorities** to provide.

It is **Braintree District Council** that is responsible for delivering the services, facilities and amenities that people and businesses in the **Parish** rely on, such as recycling, waste collection, and so on.

So the **Parish Council** can't, for example, deal with recycling matters or monitor **anti-social behaviour**. **BDC**, supported by **Essex Police**, is now the preferred first point of contact for reporting and dealing with the latter – for advice phone: **01376 552 525**.

Also, individually, Councillors have no more power than any other parishioners to report things like anti-social behaviour – and, anyway, such complaints are always best made by those most directly affected.

• Policies and Procedures

The **Council** is obliged to consider complaints made against it in specifically defined ways – these are fully explained in its **Complaints Procedure**, at: <https://greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk/council-information/policies-procedures/>.

Details of the **Council's Freedom of Information Policy** can also be read on that page. It is legally only required to respond to **FoI** requests for **unrestricted, recorded information (if held)** that is not already in the public domain. Providing details of telephone conversations, verbal discussions or the rationales behind any decisions made, for example, is **not** a requirement of the **FoI Act 2000**.

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Caring for our environment...

The Council, in conjunction with local land-owners, is launching a new environmental conservation management initiative.

Being overseen on the **Council's** behalf by **Patsy Maile**, this project also involves **St Giles' Church** and the **School** and is receiving advice from **Essex Wildlife Trust** and **B-line**, a national programme to create corridors (like motorways) for pollinators (like bees) running right across the country; more information at: www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-hub.

Previously it was thought that breeding in captivity and then releasing into the wild was the way to help wildlife like bees and butterflies thrive. Now the idea is to create an environment that encourages natural migration and adaptation to new habitats, which then results in successful breeding.



This also helps increase species diversity as well as providing a varied environment in which to live.

EWT will be sending advisers to help and discuss ideas for the different habitats existing in and around the **Parish** – landowners will then consulted on how to implement this interesting initiative.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the project, or even develop a wildlife part of your own garden, contact Patsy on 461002 or e-mail: patriciamaille@greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk

Rural Crime Awareness Day

Essex Police's Rural Crime Awareness Day, on Wednesday 14th November, will be of interest to everyone – businesses, farmers and anyone living in a rural location.



The aim of the event is to try and reduce rural crime by building stronger links with the rural and farming community, and raising awareness of security measures and products.

A number of companies and organisations will be exhibiting their products and services alongside police personnel and partners, who will be there to provide crime prevention, security measures and personal safety advice.

The event – at Slamseys Farm, Blackley Lane, Great Notley, CM77 7QW – will be free to attend and open to visitors from 10.00am until 3.00pm.

For further information, dial 101 and ask for Brenda Cross on extension 110019.

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Sign of the times...

The Playing Field is a community amenity owned by the Council for the benefit of the village, its parishioners and their families, their guests and any visitors to the Parish.



Recently, the Council's official Conditions of Use sign, displayed in the Car Park entrance, was tampered with and removed.

Unfortunately, this means that there is currently no on-site reference as to what is and isn't allowed on the Playing Field, which ironically could lead to difficulties in pointing out to people those activities that are unacceptable.

Fortunately the sign has now been recovered undamaged and will be re-installed, mounted in a more secure manner, shortly.

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Clearing a path...

Work has recently been carried out to improve conditions on FP26 at The Slype.

The 'stepping stones', which were installed to help cross the boggy part of the path below the steps, after the plank bridge, have been cleared of overgrowth and the surrounding vegetation cut back.



The 'stepping stones' still need to be treated with care but walkers can now use this path without getting wet or muddy footwear.

The current Parish footpath network status is at: <http://www.essexinfo.net/gtmaplesteadpc/footpaths/> – just follow the instructions on the page.

If you wish to report any footpath problems, please notify the Parish Clerk.

A clean sweep...

The roads and gullies in Great Maplestead are due to be swept, as part of the regular cleaning schedule, on Thursday 4th October.



To avoid unduly compromising this operation would everyone, and particularly residents of Church Street, please ensure that there is no road-side parking on that day.

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Latest Planning News

There were no Applications Received or Decisions Made at the Council meeting on 29th August.

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Forthcoming Events

During the next few months there are a number of events at the Village Hall* that you may wish to note for your diary:

- ✚ Sat 23rd Sept Harvest Festival Service - at St Giles' Church, with the St Giles' Festival Choir. Starts at 11.00am, followed by a Bring & Share Lunch in the Church afterwards. More information from Jill Newton (01787 463 893) or Gill Peskett (01787 462 786). All welcome.
- ✚ Sat 13th Oct* Quiz Night - doors open 7.00pm - start 7.30pm. Entry £5 per person/maximum 12 teams of 6 people each. Tickets from Val Castro (01787 462 789) or Carol Brownlie (01787 461 527).
- ✚ Sun 14th Oct* Harvest Walk - meet at 11.00am. Entry £2.50 per person/children & dogs free. Refreshments at half-way and end
- ✚ Sat 10th Nov* Maplesteads' WW1 Centenary Celebration – a commemoration of the 100-year anniversary of the end of World War 1, with a hog-roast meal and an Old Time Music Hall evening of locally-originated entertainment. Doors open at 7.00pm for this charity event, proceeds going to the Royal British Legion. Tickets will be available only from the Box Office (01787 461 421) from 1st Oct.

More information about these and many other village activities can be found on the 'Events' page of the Parish Council website.

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Contacting the Council

Any comments, requests or correspondence should initially be made to the Parish Clerk:

Ann Crisp, New House, St Giles Close
Great Maplestead, CO9 2RW

Tel: 01787 460 216 (4-6pm Mon-Thurs)

E-mail: anncrisp@greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk

Website: <https://greatmaplesteadpc.co.uk>