

GREAT MAPLESTEAD PARISH ASSEMBLY
Meeting held on Wednesday 16th April 2025

ATTENDEES: Cllr.S.Harris - Chair.

Mrs A Crisp, Parish Clerk.

8 Village organisation representatives

7 members of the public

1. **APOLOGIES** – St Giles School – Mrs Nichols & Mrs Doe; PC John Thorne; Mr J Newton;
2. **MINUTES** – Meeting minutes from the Annual Parish Assembly 17th April 2024 were signed as a true record by Cllr.S Harris
3. **ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL** – Report pre-circulated by Cty.Cllr.P Schwier. Please read [here](#)
4. **BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL** – Report pre-circulated by Dist.Cllr.P.Schwier. Please read [here](#)
5. **GREAT MAPLESTEAD PARISH COUNCIL** – Report delivered by the Chairman, Cllr.S Harris
6. **GREAT MAPLESTEAD VILLAGE HALL** – Report delivered by Simon Last
7. **ST GILES PCC** - Report delivered by Rev.B.Vincent
8. **THE MAPLESTEAD AUTUMN SHOW** – Report delivered by Carol Brownlie
9. **KNITTING CIRCLE** – Report delivered by Carol Brownlie
10. **CARPET BOWLS CLUB** – Report delivered by Barry Vincent
11. **THE MAPLE LEAVES** – Report delivered by Angela Davies
12. **W.E.A.** – Report delivered by Gill Newton
13. **VILLAGE SOCIAL EVENTS & VILLAGE OF THE YEAR AWARD** – Report delivered by Ann Crisp
14. **CLOSING REMARKS** – Cllr.S. Harris

Meeting Closed 8.45pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Parish Council Chairman's Report – April 2025

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

This annual event is an opportunity to review, at first-hand, various things that have been going on in and around the Parish during the past 12-months and to preview some of the things that will be happening during the coming year.

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5. Since the last Parish Assembly a year ago, the Council has had to deal with a couple of major parish **community concerns**: withdrawal of the **F315 Bus Service** and a **Call for Development Sites** in the village as a part of Braintree District Council's **Local Plan Review**.

- **Bus Service withdrawal:** We expressed concerns in writing to both BDC & ECC about the adverse effects that replacing the existing scheduled buses with a Dart3 on-demand service would have on its main users – vulnerable and elderly residents and those unable to book online.

Despite us following-up these concerns, they were never fully addressed. Then, the subsequent decision last July by Arrow Taxis to stop operating the Dart3 service seemed to blindside both the District and County Councils. So we had a period when there was no centrally-available information or guidance available to us about any future service provision.

We managed to discover that Central Connect would be taking over the service from August for a 3-month free trial period. We also took up with them the concerns of residents that the booking service was inadequate: taking over an hour to book by phone/not having had reservations fulfilled.

We also found that people had been charged during the free trial period and Cllr. Rob Brudenell did a sterling job in getting their money refunded.

The service now appears to be operating reasonably satisfactorily and, following the trial period, Central Connect agreed to continue until at least June.

So, we'll have to wait and see what happens after that...

- **Local Plan Review:** Two sites in the village had been identified and submitted as having potential for future development, so in August we organised a special presentation to allow BDC's Planning Officer an opportunity to explain the implications and to answer questions about the Local Plan.

He reassured everyone who attended that developments will normally be focused around main towns and key service villages, not all sites submitted will be approved and even approved sites are not always developed...

As part of our input to the Local Plan consultation we requested that planning policies should provide for the introduction of better infrastructure and transportation options prior to any proposed increase in housing stock.

We also noted that rural north Braintree is identified as an '**area of deprivation**'. Villages such as ours are designated as '**Tier 3**', which means in terms of planning they are considered **unsustainable**. Also, we warned that the effects of any new development on our local rural roads would have a detrimental impact, particularly as many of them are already struggling to accommodate current levels of traffic.

During the last 12-months the Council has also undertaken – or had an input to – a number of more **specific local actions**:

- **Litter Picking** – Revised **zonal responsibilities** have been introduced for the **volunteers** who undertake litter-picking duties. Sadly it's an essential, ongoing job, so I'd like to take this opportunity to **publically thank the volunteers** for their time and dedication to keeping the village looking good and making it a pleasant place to live.
- **Footpath Maintenance** - We introduced new maintenance arrangements early last year and these have given us greater control over what gets done when. This means we can respond more quickly to parishioner concerns about footpath conditions. I'd like to thank Tony Hume for looking after this work for us.

On Footpath 26 (the one behind St Giles' Close) the **Slype** footbridge had been in a poor state of repair for some time. ECC had advised that its condition didn't meet **their** criteria for replacement but they **were** happy to provide a 'bridge kit' free-of-charge – an offer we gratefully accepted. Prior to Christmas, members of the **Task Force** removed the old bridge and assembled its replacement on site.

- **Lucking Street** – After much cajoling, ECC finally agreed to replace the damaged sections of the drainage kerb, down the hill from the Village Hall. The drainage ditch further down the road has also recently been cleared, so hopefully alleviating any flooding problems for the time being.

We also funded and fitted a replacement battery for the Wig-Wag light just across the road here

- **Quiet Lane** – Some time ago a Council request to make Toldishall Road a 20mph limit was rejected by Essex Highways. Instead it offered to officially designate it as a 'Quiet Lane' and signs were eventually installed at the beginning of March. These indicate to drivers of motor vehicles that more vulnerable users – horse riders, pedestrians and cyclists – may be on the road and have priority of use.

- **Playing Field** – Last summer the National Lottery representative who looked after our **Development Project** application visited to complete his 12-month sign-off – he was very impressed with how what he had only previously seen as plans had come to actual fruition.

Last year a grant was obtained from the **Community Gardens Fund** for developing the **Mindfulness/Sensory Garden**. This work is currently in progress – the Willow Dome is now starting to green over and the planters and bench are in situ, just awaiting completion.

And a long-overdue refurbishment of the **car park**, both to improve its appearance and durability and to remove a need for constant maintenance, was recently undertaken by an augmented **Task Force**. To avoid potential disruption, the work was scheduled and completed in just 4 days during the School's spring half-term holiday. Our congratulations and thanks to all concerned!

There are a few final points I'd like to mention in rounding off the Parish Council part of this meeting:

- In the last 12 months we have considered just 6 local planning applications, none of which we objected to, 1 of which we requested conditions be applied to and another that we subsequently supported on safety grounds.

- **Operationally:**

- Last May our Essex Association of Local Councils **Foundation Award** accreditation was extended for a further 4 years. There was a commendation for the way Council information is publicised through the website, its Magna Carta newsletter, Facebook, Parish News, its Notice Boards and various other media, meeting all the demands of the Transparency Code.

Having **Foundation** accreditation demonstrates that the Council not only has the required documentation and information in place to allow it to operate lawfully and in accordance with standard practice but that it also meets **a set of minimum standards** to enable it to **deliver effectively** for the community.

To put this into perspective, there are 307 Parish and Town Councils in Essex, and only 29 have achieved **Foundation Award** level – that's **fewer than 10%**. So, we would collectively like to thank Ann for all her work in ensuring that we continue to meet all the criteria laid down by the Award Assessment Panel.

- In May the EALC also presented **Councillor Long Service Awards** to Joe Newton (37 years) and Ian Johnson (33 years) to recognise their contribution to, and work on, the Council for over three decades...
- In July Rob Brudenell was co-opted as a new Councillor and, during the year, 3 Councillors have undertaken EALC training courses

Sadly, in October we lost Peter Haylock who, during his 35 years on the Council, had uniquely been the **Clerk, a Councillor and the Chairman** before standing down in 2023

A great friend to many, Peter had a collaborative, respectful and professional approach in all that he did for the community and **Council**.

The Clerks who served with him when he was Chairman all remarked on the kindness and support he showed. His dedication, commitment and concern for the well-being of the village was second to none – a lasting legacy to those who follow.

Finally, I am sad to announce that, at the end of next month, we will be losing our long-standing Clerk.

Ann has decided that, after 15 years in the hot seat, she wants to spend more time to spend on life away from Council matters – and who can blame her?

Personally I have enjoyed working with Ann enormously, both on Council business and on a wide variety of social activities. She has been a great help and support to me as Chairman in negotiating the possible pitfalls of the position – and I think that, in a number of instances, she has gone above and beyond the requirements of the job to ensure the Council achieves its aims; her work on the application that won Great Maplestead its **Essex Village of the Year** accolade being a prime example.

I'm really going to miss her extensive experience, knowledge, guidance and general helpfulness – and her uncanny knack of always seeming to find something to correct in every issue of the **Magna Carta!**

The good news is that, by Monday's closing date we had received five applications for the Clerk position, so we will be starting interviewing these candidates for the post very shortly.

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In closing, I'd like to **thank everyone** who has contributed to this evening's Parish Assembly – the Church and School, which are of course a central part of village life, but also **all those** who **organise and run** such a wide diversity of local activities and events – it means there's always something to do or to get involved with.

And I'd also **particularly like, once again, to thank Ann**, who has organised this whole evening – including obtaining the drinks – and without whom the Council would not have been able to operate nearly as well as it has.

Please give her a big hand...

Great Maplestead Village Hall

Parish Assembly, 16th April 2025

REVIEW

2024 was a busy year in the hall and as ever MANY THANKS MUST GO TO THE ORGANISERS of all the weekly, monthly and other regular activities.

- **Fitness Classes; Yoga classes; Classic car club meetings; Parish Council meetings; Maple Leaves meetings; Glass making classes; Mother and Toddler groups; Carpet bowls.**

In addition to the regular hirings we had a number of very successful events, including a Jumble Sale, Bingo Night and Quiz Night and a big thank you goes out to all the organisers who dedicated a lot of their time and energy to make to make them successful

GM Village Hall generated a net surplus of £3,857.45 in 2024 compared to £968.68 in 2023 as a result of both increased revenue and lower expenditures year over year. Unfortunately, 2025 is unlikely to be as strong as it looks as if we will be spending in the area of £3000 on repairs and maintenance.....SO PLEASE COME AND SUPPORT ALL THE ORGANISED EVENTS AND DON'T FORGET YOUR HALL WHEN YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A VENUE FOR THAT SPECIAL OCCASION!!

Upcoming events to look forward to in 2025:

- **Beer Festival; VE Day Celebration Night; Jumble Sale; Quiz Night.**

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Vicar's Annual Report to Parish Assembly.

2024 was a year which brought much sadness, we were all grieved at the loss of our dear friend and former churchwarden Gill Peskett. Gill passed away on 22nd October, her thanksgiving service was held in church and the village turned out in force to pay their respects. Gill was held in such high regard by everyone who knew her, and we miss her very much. We also saw the loss of several longstanding members of our community.

Despite the sadness, we have been blessed with some significant growth. Firstly, Café Church has continued to draw people in, led by an amazing lay team. They lead with vision and commitment, we have a good regular attendance which is testament to the welcome and content of the services, it is encouraging to see people who wouldn't normally attend a traditional Sunday service.

Secondly, we launched Meet, Cake, Create. This is a monthly meeting on Saturday afternoons for anyone who would like some company, tea and cake and enjoy a craft activity. We have a fantastic team of volunteers led by Jaqui Mee, all have completed Diocesan Safeguarding training, and they come with great enthusiasm, creativity and a sense of fun. The sessions have been hugely popular with people from all 4 parishes. We've recently moved to the village hall because it's warmer, has better lighting and access.

We have a house group which meets twice a month to discuss matters of faith and the Bible. We are hosted by either Jackie and Patsy or Nadine Scurr. The excellent hospitality of our hosts is always appreciated. We are guaranteed much laughter as well as serious discussions about faith, it's where we can ask any questions and hear different viewpoints in a safe space. We see it as an extension of church, all are welcome.

Our weekly coffee morning continues to be very popular and is a time of good humour and friendship. We have continued to offer the Tower Room as a warm space during the week and refreshments are available. This has been especially appreciated by walking groups.

We were pleased to be able to welcome the Community Payback Team to help with the maintenance of our beautiful churchyard. I think you will agree they are doing a fantastic job.

We have continued to work with St Giles school, hosting parents and children for school services, and value our close collaboration.

I am delighted that we have so many willing volunteers, and especially grateful that there is vision for new ideas. I pray that through our welcome we will see the church grow and flourish as we find new ways to reach out to people in our village.

I thank our PCC and both churchwardens, Paula and Denise for their hard work, support and encouragement.

Reverend Beverley

Knitting Report

The Knitting & Craft Group continue to meet on the last Wednesday of every month at 2pm, at Godsalve, Church St. We have now got about 10 ladies who come for a couple of hours enjoying each other's company while knitting or crocheting various items for charity. We have also welcomed ladies who just come along for a chat and who bring their own handicraft projects to work on.

We had a stall at the Church Christmas coffee morning so visitors could see the items we made. We did sell some items and money raised was donated to UK Aid, the charity we give our items to. UK Aid is in Felsted and they are a charity that sends container loads of goods to Ukraine to help those who need support in the war torn country. So far we have sent over 40 knitted blankets, a number of knitted toys, children's cardigans and jumpers and hats and mittens.

Unfortunately, at the end of last year on our older ladies, Beryl, sadly passed away. She had been part of the group for a number of years and was responsible for knitting a large number of hats and lovely knitted toys. She will be sadly missed.

Anyone interested in joining the group will be very welcome, you can find my contact details in the parish magazine.

Maple Leaves report 2024/25

The Maple leaves group, now in its 3rd year since leaving the WI, continues to grow in numbers and strength. We currently have 28 members, having grown by 4 new members this past year. We are always open to new members, so ask if you are interested.

Our programme continues to be organised in blocks of 3 months, with a different pair of members volunteering to organise each period. This gives us a diverse programme of ideas and I am always struck by the resourcefulness of our members.

Changes this year have included a new person at the helm, as we call it our "chief leaf" (me) and Betty Brunner has been doing a fantastic job as treasurer. We have also formed a small committee to organise the bigger events throughout the year and assist our pairs of organisers. Events organised have been the refreshments and cake stall at the Festive coffee morning and the brilliant Curry & Cards evening.

Our programme for the past year has included some great outings, including a tour of the Masonic Lodge in Sudbury and interesting speaker topics Sourdough breadmaking, Art & Halstead and the history of Textiles in East Anglia and The Courtauld family.

We have had some great in-house evenings – carpet bowls and our annual Christmas party, times of fun and friendship.

Christmas is always a busy time for us ladies – last year we experienced the Thursford Christmas Spectacular on a bus trip, supported the village Festive coffee morning where we raised funds for the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance (they came to give us a talk and collected our donation in February) and had our Christmas lunch at the Kings Head at Pebmarsh.

Our lunches have taken us to many local tearooms, cafes and restaurants including Martha's tearoom at Greenstead green, The Willowtree Café at Glemsford, The Wagon in Sudbury and the Barn Garden centre at Eight Ash Green.

We look forward to our remaining 2 months of our Maple Leaves year with a garden party at April Cottage, home of Charles Soule and in June an outing to the Beth Chatto gardens near Colchester.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Maple leaves members for their support of events over the past year and look forward to many more.

Thank you

WEA 2025

The organisation of the WEA is changing radically & as a result, finding tutors has become very difficult. We were lucky last autumn to have Roger Cooke to give us a taste of his course "Defending Britain with Fortifications" & his 2 weeks Iron Age & Roman Britain were popular and enjoyed

Sadly, the situation nationally has not improved and we are still waiting for a promised list of tutors for future courses. This is a sad state of affairs. We have been holding 2 courses each year since 1982 and had hoped to continue but the outlook does not look good. Only 3 branches in Essex are currently offering courses, so we are not alone! We will review the situation in August.

Jill Newton

GREAT MAPLESTEAD SOCIAL REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2025

June of last year saw the 80th Anniversary of the WWII D-Day landings and in customary Maplestead style, the village joined in with national commemorations. A beacon lighting event was held, together with a fish and chip supper. St Giles church participated in the national peel of bells earlier in the evening and as always the village hall looked well decorated for the occasion. The Maplestead singers, once again displayed their musical talents and entertained us with some wartime favourites. My thanks to all those who helped including Joe Newton & Martin Watson for beacon management; Charlie Tindall for reading the tribute; Martin Elms for playing of the Last Post; Jo Watson for organising and conducting the wonderful singing; and all the ladies who helped organise, serve and decorate. My apologies if I have left off any mentions. These events do not happen by chance and we are eternally grateful for the willing volunteers who give their time so willingly.

Summer 2024 saw the return of the ever-popular Maplestead Magna Melia. A morning of testing your local knowledge, map reading skills, driving skills and most definitely a test of your sense of humour. Generally, most people returned within a short time of each other but there were one or two teams who were tempted by longer excursions (via a pub, I think!). The winners of the much coveted trophy were Claire, Charlie & Helen.

August saw a free village BBQ and games afternoon, to celebrate the village winning Village of the Year, as awarded by the Rural Community Council of Essex. A lovely afternoon with food expertly cooked by parish councillors and an opportunity for villagers to socialise and enjoy the facilities of the village playing field.

The annual Quiz Night took place in the Autumn, with some more unusual rounds introduced, it was an evening that provided great entertainment as well as challenging the brain cells.

Pre-Christmas we also enjoyed the annual lighting of the village Christmas tree, followed by mulled wine and hot chocolate in the village hall.

Myra Jeggo ran, yet another successful Bingo evening raising valuable funds in aid of Cystic Fibrosis - with thanks to Myra for organising and making the evening such fun.

4 village walks - again expertly organised by Steve Harris with catering and refreshments kindly organised by Ann Harris and her team of helpers. A great way to discover and find things out about the parish you may never have known.

What's Coming in 2025?

VE-Day 80 Celebration & Beacon Lighting - A national commemoration of the anniversary of the end of war in Europe in 1945. To take place on Thursday 8th May. GM is registered to participate in the Beacon Lighting and following national suggestions for hosting such an event, there will be a fish and chip supper and pay bar to accompany events. It will be a party evening, with entertainment provided by 1940's singing trio Fox, Wiggle & Sass. Tickets for the event cost £15 and you need to reserve your ticket no later than 21st April. Please contact Ann Crisp or Julie Last for tickets.

More village walks - next one will be Easter Monday (this weekend). Followed by Autumn & Christmas.

Quiz Evening - Autumn

Advent/Carol singing - probably

Summer Boules Evenings - tba

These social events are additional to all the many other organisations and group activities within the village. As always the village is extremely grateful to all those who volunteer their time to organise and run various activities and social events, it keeps the community spirit alive.

Report delivered by Ann Crisp - Clerk