**CLERKS REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL MEETING 14th May 2025**

****Year End Financial/Budget**

1. **Budget**  - The council’s end of year financial position was within ordinary expenditure budget, but there was over-spend on the car park resurfacing budget which relied heavily on PC reserves. This took the council below its own Reserves threshold of 50% of annual staff salary (£4400).

Total income for Y/E 2025 budgeted at £14858 – actual was £16468. £1500 extra income is attributable to £500 ECC Councillors grant, £500 donation from the Maplestead Youth Club & £500 Village of the Year Prize. Plus bank interest received which the council only ever budgets at a minimal amount.

Total expenditure for Y/E 2025 budgeted at £15120 – actual was £29452. Of which £12796 was the playing field car park and mindfulness garden projects (£8273 of council reserves (including £1k of grants/donations) had been allowed for the car park project. The Mindfulness Garden was covered by a BDC Community grant of £3500. £1911 overspend on Staff Budget due to the delayed Q4 salary & home allowance bank payments from 2023/24. The remaining difference is underspent budget lines with just a few cost lines exceeded by minimal amounts.

**Year End Balances**

The end of year **General Reserves** were **£2908**

The council also has additional **Fundraising Reserves** for the Village Playing Field of **£475**.

**Total Y/E Reserves £3383** (original budget forecast was £6480). However, £618 VAT on car park spend still to come back, so **true end of year reserves** would be **£4001.** It should be noted that during the budget year, the council committed £1500 extra from reserves to fund the car park project (July meeting refers) and there was a project overspend (due to increased costs) of £900.

Importantly the council’s Reserves Policy commits to the council maintaining minimum reserves of 50% of annual salary costs currently £4400. Therefore, the council fell short of this target by £400. It is anticipated that the budget year 2025/26 will be a year of financial consolidation with limited projects – unless funded by external sources (grants/donations). This should allow the council to rebuild its reserves to at least the Reserves Policy level.

Whilst the Fundraising Reserves and grant monies have now been exhausted, the council continues to receive donations from yoga/pilates class use of the playing field during warmer months, and with the early onset of good weather this year, income from this source is currently higher than usual.

**2025/26 Precept set at £13932** The first instalment of £6966 has been paid by BDC to the council.

1. **Annual Return.** All AGAR forms are now complete and ready for sign off at the meeting. You will all have read the Internal Auditors report and hopefully have found everything to be in order, but please do ask any questions. As the council income and expenditure still exceeds £25k (due to the continued Playing Field Projects in the last financial year) the external auditor fee will be higher than usual again this year as the audit is more in depth.
2. **Council Insurance.** The council’s insurance policy premium quote for 2025/26 with Clear Councils (now underwritten by Ecclesiastical Insurance) had increased by £130. However, I have since spoken with Clear Councils who have reduced the premium to a more acceptable level of £460.56. (an increase of £57 on last year). Always worth a phone call! You do still enjoy reduced premiums due to your Foundation status and agreeing to a Long Term Agreement (3 years). I have requested quotes from alternative providers – Zurich insurance, CAS Insurance & Gallagher insurance . CAS informed that they could not provide a competitive quote (more than double what the council pays now). No response from Gallagher insurance & Community Insurance underwritten by Zurich are closely matched to Clear Councils at just £6pa more.
3. **Annual Street Cleaning** – The annual grant from BDC has increased to £872.99 and the annual agreement has been signed.
4. **Updates from March meeting**

The council was awarded £250 from Perrywoods Garden Centre towards development of the Mindfulness Garden. Cllr.Weight has taken full advantage of this award to buy plants for the planters and you will all have seen the evidence of the work of Dorothy’s team of volunteers and the school.

VE80 Celebrations – Another good celebration Maplestead style. Having the fabulous singing trio – Fox, Wiggle & Sass provided a great evenings entertainment and The Hook of Halstead provided great fish and chips once again. Once all monies accounted for, there should be a donation of appr £200 to go back to the village hall.

**Annual ROSPA Inspection** - the inspection will go ahead in May as usual

**And Finally….**

All things being equal, this will most probably be my last Clerk’s report to the council after 15 years in the “hot-seat”.

I wish to express my grateful thanks to all the councillors I have worked with throughout that time. Without exception, all have been respectful of the Clerk’s role and made the experience a complete pleasure. I am sure Great Maplestead Parish Council will continue to support whoever takes on this role, in the same exceptional way.

Thank you all, both past and present, it has been a blast!

**Produced by Ann Crisp, Clerk 12 5 2025**