

Chairman's Report – November 2023

General

Levelling-Up

The Levelling-Up initiative seems to have levelled off for the time being...
A watching brief will be kept to see how (or if) the project develops from hereon.

Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy

The results of an assessment (assuming it has actually been carried out...) by EV Charger supplier **Qwello** – with whom **ECC** are currently partnered to deliver a number of charging points across the county – to assess the village as one of the locations for its current **On-Street Residential Charging Point Fund** project, are still awaited.

In the meantime, the Council has been contacted by another EV Charger supplier, **Believ**, with a proposal to supply and install a **fully funded EV rapid charger**, capable of charging two vehicles at a time, in the Playing Field car park.

Believ is funded by **Liberty Global Ventures** and **Zouk Capital**, which manages the Treasury-backed **Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund**, with support from its delivery partner **Virgin Media O2**.

A site meeting with **Believ's** Senior Public Sector Relationships Manager was held on 15th November to evaluate the car park's suitability for such an installation and discuss the proposal in more detail.

Their offer includes free planning and connection to the nearest suitable mains power source, installation of all the necessary equipment and signage and the long-term maintenance and operation of the charge point – there would apparently be no charge to the Council or any need for us to seek additional funding. In return, **Believ** would require us to sign an commercial NDA and grant a 20-year lease on the area within the car park required for their equipment (but **not** the parking space for the vehicles being charged), for which the Council would receive a monthly/annual rental.

A more detailed response from **Believ** is currently awaited, with the promise of a full proposal being available for us to consider at our January meeting.

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Areas of Responsibility

Footpaths

❖ Report:

- A quote submitted by Peter Crawford Ltd for our 2024 footpath cutting and maintenance requirements was somewhat in excess of our budget.
- To allow more local control over which paths need attention, and when, Tony Hume has been approached to see whether he would be prepared to use his own equipment to maintain certain paths on an *ad hoc* basis. **[Agenda Item 9.3]**
- He will be given specific guidance as to which paths to work on and when, with the proviso that he submits an invoice that covers both his time and material expenses; these costs can then be met from the ECC SLA grant. Tony will be covered under the Council's insurance while carrying out any work.
- A draft of the proposed letter of engagement has already been circulated.

❖ Action Plan:

- Work is to be undertaken to clear overgrowth recently reported by parishioners on FP23 (Purls Hill to Hulls Mill).

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Communications

1. Website/Facebook

❖ Report:

- Since the last meeting, the **Home** and **News** pages of the website have been updated with information and details about:
 - **Little Lodge Phone Mast Appeal** (closed on **15th November**)
 - **Recycling Centre Booking** consultation, (closed on **19th November**)
 - The new **Essex County-Wide Advice Service** – to help people struggling with energy bills.
 - **Essex County Council's 2024/25 Budget Plans** consultation, which runs until **Sunday 3rd December**
- Facebook, along with a WhatsApp link, was utilised effectively to remind residents of the deadlines for the **Mobile Phone Mast Appeal** and the **Recycling Centre Booking** consultation; a reminder of the deadline for contributing to **ECC's Budget Plans** consultation will be posted after the PC meeting.
- Links to the **Maplestead Magna Carta** page of the website are now being posted on both the **Council** and **Maplestead Mates** Facebook pages, to give the newsletter the widest local coverage
- The Council's Facebook page profile picture continues to be updated monthly – for November it is a poppy field.

❖ Action Plan:

- The Facebook page will continue to share relevant posts with Maplestead Mates in order for its information to reach the widest possible local audience.

2. E-newsletter (Maplestead Magna Carta) [Agenda Item 12]

❖ Action Plan:

- **Issue 53** is scheduled for publication **w/c 4th December 2023** (tbc).
- Editorial content for this issue is suggested to include:
 - Playing Field: Mindfulness Garden
 - Grant/plans for play area
 - Footpath maintenance update*
 - Warm Haven re-opening*
 - Winter Criminal Activity*
 - Noise: consideration/notification
 - Planning News
 - Forthcoming events

* Held over from last issue

- Online versions will also be published on the **Council & Maplestead Mates** Facebook pages

3. Parish News [Agenda Item 9.5]

❖ Background Information:

Parish News, the monthly magazine delivered free to all households in Great & Little Maplestead, Pebmarsh and Gestingthorpe is in financial difficulties. A new Steering Committee has now taken over the running of the magazine and it is anticipated that, with some radical changes being introduced from February to increase reader and advertiser appeal, the publication will be back on a firm financial footing for 2024. In order to tide things over in the interim, however, all four Parish Councils are being asked for a one-off financial contribution to help share the cost of publishing this year's Christmas double issue...