

**WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

**HELD ON THURSDAY 25 MAY 2023**

PRESENT: Councillor Bob Holmes  
Councillor Sam Jarvis  
Councillor Paula Moore  
Councillor Carl Powling  
Councillor Sophie Weaver

IN ATTENDANCE: Locum Town Clerk  
18 members of public

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Jarvis, Holmes, Moore and Town Clerk, Emma Cornwall (Porch Pantry).

2. **CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES.** To confirm Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 28th April 2022

**It was RESOLVED that the MINUTES of the Council meeting held on 28th April 2022, be confirmed as a true record of the meeting.**

3. **MATTERS ARISING.** To consider matters arising from the Minutes of the 2022 Annual Town Meeting

There were no matters arising.

4. **PUBLIC FORUM**

Congratulations were offered to City Councillor John Jowers on his appointment as Mayor for Colchester City Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan should be regularly reviewed at the Town Meeting by the Council as to the changes in the past year, as per the requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan under Para. 8.14.1.

A member of the public asked when the road will be next swept as East Road has a lot of mud from the Sanderling Reach development.

A member of the public asked for the make-up of the Council to be confirmed. There are 9 seats and currently 5 councillors, so as long as 3 attend council meetings, they are quorate.

A member of the public asked if there is a campaign to encourage new councillors.

Thoughts were shared about why councils struggle to recruit. Mayor's notes should be reintroduced to local papers, councillors should get involved with local organisations and tourism should be considered, such as reinstating the Mersea Walks leaflets. Sub committees could be formed to allow non-council members to take part.

Thanks were given to the previous councillors for the fantastic Covid support put in place.

5. **COUNCIL REPORT.** To receive a report from the Council

Congratulations to Cllr John Jowers on becoming Mayor of Colchester City Council and Cllr Carl Powling on his appointment as Colchester City Councillor.

Report by Councillor Sophie Weaver, Mayor.

Thanks to staff, local charities and community hubs, Community Support, Church, Porch Pantry, Mersea Lions, Refresh Mersea, Neighbourhood Watch and First Responders. Also, County and City Councillors.

- **Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations** - Beacon lighting, Street Party, Music event and a picnic.
- **New Changing Places Toilet facility** was completed and opened on Victoria Esplanade Car Park. Shed installed for beach wheelchair. Various works at other toilets have been refurbished – Coast Road, Library and Fairhaven.
- **Boardwalk:** SSSI, bridge installed, work ongoing to complete the boardwalk.
- **Cemeteries:** Firs Road Cemetery - Posts installed at the front entrance.
- **West Mersea Park** – School Gardens: New bridge installed. Obsolete and non-compliant paths removed and turves laid. New compliant path laid for access into the bandstand. Youth Field and School Gardens: new safety surfacing laid. Reymead: new gates and fencing installed.
- **Glebe** - New bridge installed between Glebe 1 & 2, new path laid between Glebe 1 & 2. progress with draft leases for Mersea Island Sports Association and the Tennis Club, various improvement works at the tennis club.
- **Misc:** Church Green Oak posts installed. Broomhills; new gate made and installed. Seaview car park - new bird beak fencing installed. The grass cutting contract went out to tender and was renewed. WMTC employs a gardener to care for our flowerbeds and planters.
- **Neighbourhood Plan**, adopted last year, is becoming a useful reference point with regards to decisions on planning issues.
- **First Community Special Constable**, Andy Bryant, started with us officially on 1st November.

## 6. MERSEA ISLAND LIONS CLUB

Report by Roy Chamberlain, Secretary, Mersea Island Lions Club.

## 7. BEACH HUT WATCH (WMBHW)

Report by Bob Winnington, Chairman, West Mersea Beach Hut Watch 25.05.2023

### The Organisation

WMBHW is a voluntary organisation and its aim is to promote and protect the interests of owners and users of beach huts in West Mersea.

We organise patrols of members' beach huts and report any damage or criminal activity to owners and the police. We also keep our members informed on relevant local issues and developments.

### Membership

There are 464 beach huts within the WMBHW Patrol area. 316 are registered members at present i.e. 68% of the total. In addition, there are 52 owners who were members last year who are yet to renew and, if that brings the total to 368 which is 80% of the total. That is pretty well the optimum saturation level.

In addition, I have engaged with West Mersea Holiday Park and whilst they have their own patrols through the Park Security, their owners are able to join WMBHW and, indeed, 6 have; primarily to attract our Member benefits. More about those benefits later.

### WMBHW AGM 2022

Subscriptions – The AGM approved that the annual subscription will remain unchanged at £5 per hut owned for the 2022/23 season for all members. We offer free membership to the owners who volunteer to patrol.

### Committee Officers

I am delighted to advise you that the following committee members were re-elected at the AGM:

Chairperson (Bob Winnington)

Secretary (Ann Taylor)

Treasurer (Ros Kelly)

Patrol Officers (Clive & Sue Jenner)  
Membership Secretary (Lorraine Carter)  
Publicity Officer (Lynn Hartley).  
Committee Members: - Andy Thompson, Peter Rowlinson and Sheena Taylor

#### Matters arising from the AGM held on Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022

- **Yellow Lines:** update provided on the proposal put before the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to enhance the safety on Victoria Esplanade together with other changes to the yellow line configuration in West Mersea
- **Signage:** conversation ongoing with CCC about signage and we will update further if information comes to light.
- **Putting Green:** CCC to take responsibility for upkeep in 2023.
- **Lifeguards:** CPR courses available on April 16<sup>th</sup> and July 16<sup>th</sup>.
- **Fairhaven toilets:** West Mersea Town Council instigated a significant amount of work to upgrade the facility including repairs to the roof and ceiling and the installation of a new toilet system.
- **Bathing Rafts:** I understand that there is a WMTC Bathing Rafts Working Group which has not sat for 2 years and an update is requested from WMTC.

#### Beach Hut Members Day: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023

We held a Beach Hut Members Day over the King's Coronation Weekend on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May. 16 Hut Owners took part and decorated their huts in a royal theme plus we had a scavenger hunt for the children and an opportunity to meet Committee Members for drinks at the end of the afternoon.

#### Colchester City Council

I have developed a good working relationship with the Parks and Recreation team at Colchester City Council and we have held regular meetings during the year including one earlier this week. We have discussed ways in which the presentation of the beach hut area can be enhanced and we are looking to upgrade the signage in the area too. Key issues reviewed include:-

- Investment plans for 2023 / 24 including:-
  - the appearance of the Old Putting Green area and enhancements to the flower beds
  - Possible provision of additional benches
  - Renewal of fences – money spent in March for this purpose
- Increases in costs for Commercial Licenses
- Zone Wardens – last check 10<sup>th</sup> May; 23 huts in need of repair work
- Beach Management Plan

#### WMBHW Community Support

Our Community initiative last year was to provide "Special Beach Hut Days" for 14 less privileged families with links to The Porch Pantry, Colchester Women's Refuge and the Salvation Army and this was warmly received.

We are currently in the midst of planning our Community initiative for 2023 and we are looking to support Mersea Lifeguards, The Porch Pantry, Mid and North East Essex MIND and the Mersea Community Centre.

#### Beach Hut Patrols

Patrollers volunteer and we operate a weekly rota. The volunteers may carry out as many patrols as they wish, but we expect a minimum of one patrol during each week of the winter patrols and two in the summer.

The Island Supermarket, in Mersea High Street, has agreed to look after the 'Patrol Bag' for us for a number of years but with the Post Office moving there shortly, they have stopped this support. Thankfully, The Spar shop on Queens Corner has kindly offered to take on this role from June 2023.

Clive and Sue Jenner will be stepping down as the WMBHW Patrol Officers before the next AGM after many years valuable service to WMBHW. Sheena Taylor has agreed to take on the role as Patrol Officer and we will be effecting the handover in the next couple of months.

### Membership Benefits

We currently offer the following benefits to our members in the current year as follows:-

- Members of WMBHW can purchase a Season Ticket for Victoria Esplanade, Willoughby Park and Seaview Avenue at a reduced rate of £85
- Kent & Blaxill – discounts with WMBHW membership card
- A 10% discount is available to all WMBHW members through the following Insurance companies.
  - Insure Homes
  - Love Your Hut
  - Ryans
- The following local businesses also offer discounts to our members:-
  - Moores Estate Agents
  - Two Sugars
  - Mansion House Florists
  - The Little Kitchen Cakery
  - Sheer Elegance
  - Blackwater Pearl
  - The Trove
  - The Gilt Rooms
  - Mersea Island Watersports
  - Mersea Mudcakes
  - Dukes Seafood

### West Mersea Beach Hut Watch website

We are delighted to confirm that we plan to launch the WMBHW website by the end of June. You will be able to find it here: [www.westmerseabeachhutwatch.co.uk](http://www.westmerseabeachhutwatch.co.uk)

### Social Media

On Facebook the administration of the 'West Mersea Hutterers' group have very kindly said that WMBHW can use this page to contact our members with Beach Hut Watch news regarding membership, when our AGM will be taking place etc. It was also an excellent way of contacting members quickly when we are alerted to incidents.

We now have our own Instagram account 'westmerseabeachhutwatch' so give us a follow. This will run alongside the posts that we put on to the Mersea Hutterers Facebook page.

## **8. MERSEA ISLAND ALLOTMENT AND LEISURE GARDENERS ASSOCIATION**

Report provided by Bernard Hart, MIALGA Chairman.

I have been chairman of MIALGA (Allotment Association on Mersea) for the past 6 years. The allotments are situated on East Road on the left just past the Fox inn.

The land is owned by Mrs Mary Crisp and rented to the council on a 15-year lease, which is due for renewal next year.

The council sublet the land to allotment holders and at present there are 51 full size plots each measuring approximately 15x25 metres, however many plot holders find a full-size plot too big for them so we now offer half plots instead of full ones to new tenants. We now have 14 full sized plots, 73 half plots and 12 quarter plots. There are 2 roadways serving the plots and at intervals along each are positioned water troughs.

COVID to many people was extremely negative but not for our waiting list. During the first lockdown one of the few things you could do was use your allotment. Our waiting list was traditionally zero but after COVID it shot up to 25. It still remains high at around 12 people.

The other aspect of this was that people found they could really enjoy the allotment.

People with little or no gardens benefited, families came up there and enjoyed an afternoon on the plot and it is a great opportunity for social interaction. People have drinks together; they swap seeds and plants, and you can get a lot of useful advice on growing crops.

Each year we have a get together at the community hut, where Pimms and cake are served along with the occasional delicacy such as beetroot crisps.

The allotments and their environs provide so much pleasure to people from all walks of life. Let us hope that the lease can be renewed without too much fuss next year.

## **9. REFRESH MERSEA**

Report by Lesley Mullins, Refresh Mersea.

## **10. PORCH PANTRY**

The porch pantry continues to be well run and used. There has been a slight downturn in the donations, as expected with the cost-of-living crisis. The organisers have been very successful in getting grants for the supplies. Some new shelving and racking have recently been fitted in the Church to increase and improve storage. The porch pantry remains totally anonymous, not means tested and available to anyone that genuinely needs it.

## **11. NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH**

Report by Peter Rudlin, Neighbourhood Watch Chairman.

I have been running NW for over 20 years, taking over from the late Don Butlin. In the last few years I have started a WhatsApp group with the help of Councillor Paula Moore, and we now have over 52 members in that group which appears to be working well. There are other NW members who are not part of this WhatsApp as they do not have this facility on their phones.

I receive weekly Crime Sheets from Essex Police passed on to me via the Chairman of Colchester NW, Grahame Stehle. I am Deputy Chairman for Grahame and attend Essex NW Meetings in Chelmsford from time to time.

Generally speaking the crime rate on Mersea is very low but there are still some issues that we are aware of. These include:

- Unauthorised oyster pickers, removing large quantities of oysters.
- Antisocial behaviour in Reymead Woods.
- "Nottingham Knockers" door to door sales.
- Rogue traders, particularly targeting elderly and vulnerable people.
- Drug dealing in the Windsor Road area. Regular contacts with neighbours supplying information to Essex Police.
- Notable incidents over the past year include information received regarding a gun used in a shooting in Carrington Court area - details passed on to Police.
- Reports of a rogue motorcyclist with no registration plates and dangerous driving - Traffic Police informed and a local man has been banned from driving for two years.
- A large catering canister of Nitrous Gas and ballons and small gas canisters were found near Goings Lane junction with Lower Kingsland Road. Police aware and items shown to them.
- A prolific drug dealer was jailed on other offences in January 2023.
- An assault in Melrose Road near the sensory garden.

Good News is that on 1st November 2022 Special Community Police Constable Andy Bryant commenced work on Mersea and we work closely with him.

A NW meeting was held in March 2023 with a good attendance.

In April a scam awareness event was held in the MICA Small Hall, with speakers from Essex Police.

A Community Speed Watch Group has been formed and trained and is now a regular practice in West Mersea.

## 12. POLICE COMMUNITY SPECIAL

Report by Community Special Constable Andy Bryant.

Community Special Constable Andy Bryant provided a brief history leading up to his appointment and a summary of his policing activity, since taking up the role on the 1st November 2022.

MONTH	SHIFTS	HOURS	INTEL REPORTS	TRAFFIC TICKETS
November 2022	5	43.30	0	0
December 2022	5	34.00	1	4
January 2023	5	33.00	1	5
February 2023	6	44.30	5	5
March 2023	6	40.15	9	0
April 2023	2	16.00	3	0
May 2023	4	33.30	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>244.45</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>

Further to the above, he discussed several Community initiatives actioned to date, which included the following:

Assisted in setting up a Community Speed Watch Group, with inception date in early March 2023. Including attending the training. The CSW team coordinator is Mr Richard Williams, a recently retired police officer. A summary of current CSW findings to date were presented to those present.

In conjunction with the Essex Police Fraud Prevention Team, SC Bryant delivered a Fraud Awareness presentation to the Community on the 11th March 2023. A follow up is to be arranged for later in the year.

SC Bryant has continued to work closely with the Neighbourhood Watch coordinator, Mr Peter Rudlin including supporting NHW at their first meeting held since before covid pandemic.

Engagement visits have been carried out at various elderly sheltered accommodation settings.

Engagement visits have been carried out at various community groups.

Engagement visit is planned for a pre-school setting over the next month.

There have been a number of welfare focussed visits following bereavements, including a family affected by the Turkish earthquakes, where both parents sadly perished.

### Observations

- Traffic Offences – Seat belt offences regularly enforced. Several tickets have been issued for the non-wearing of seat belts. This only represents a small percentage of those actually observed, with words of advice given on several other occasions. The use of mobile devices whilst driving is also regularly observed. However, enforcement has not always been possible whilst on foot patrol.
- There have been several reports of drunk driving and speeding, although most have been non-specific reports. Intelligence reports have been submitted where details have been provided. However, several arrests for drunk driving have taken place on the Island in recent months.
- Drug dealing/use – There have been several reports regarding drug dealing on the Island. Most reports have been 3rd party accounts only but where specific information has been available, Intelligence reports have been submitted.
- Anti-social behaviour – After a spate of activity involving youths was reported before Christmas 2022, it has been relatively quiet in recent months.
- Nottingham Knockers and Rogue Traders continue to visit Mersea. Residents are asked to be vigilant when dealing with unsolicited approaches offering goods or services.

- There is generally a positive 'vibe' amongst the population regarding the presence of a 'village bobby', although I'm always quick to point out that I'm not the only policing presence on Mersea.
- There is still an obvious reluctance for members of the public to step up and report incidents direct to the police, with a tendency to declare matters on social media rather than report to the police. The Community is encouraged to step forward and report criminal activity if and when witnessed.

Cllr Weaver thanked all the speakers and everyone that attended and said that the important work of these groups and others not with us tonight, and how we all work together to support everyone, is what makes Mersea a community to be proud of.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.10pm.

DRAFT