

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
23rd April 2019
REPORT BY CHAIR OF MENDLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL
Cllr Mike Exley

At first thought, this year seems to have been dominated by the need to consider planning applications -some which will/would have significant impact. Mid Suffolk have had, seemed to have lost and then found a five year land supply, all in the same year. This is an important factor when all of the planning considerations are weighed up and decisions made.

The need for this work is likely to continue and all we can do locally is to continue to make detailed representation either as a Parish Council or as individual residents providing comments directly to MSDC, the Planning Authority and decision maker.

We also continue to work on the revision of our Neighbourhood Plan, in anticipation that by allocating specific sites for future growth, we will provide clarity with a legal status, to determine how and where any growth should be in the future. The reliance on the importance of MSDC having a five year supply should then, based on current legislation, be less relevant for Mendlesham.

You may recall a consultation some 18 months ago now, which provided valuable community thoughts on where and when future development should happen. Our local thoughts at that time and since have been very clear. We need to take into consideration the current pressures on our road structure, the amount and type of traffic passing through our conservation area now and the need to mitigate what can be done to prevent and hopefully lessen volumes of traffic through this area. Development has to be in the right place, the right time and contribute towards our community well being.

We then received belated advice that for a robust legal plan, we needed professional help to assess the suitability of the different land site options. This additional information will decrease the possibility of a legal challenge against our plan in the future. After obtaining grant funding, national and Locality from Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council, we have commissioned a Site Assessment report, a Strategic Environment Assessment report, a Historic Environment report and Traffic surveys detailing volumes and type of traffic through Mendlesham village. We also commissioned a Housing Needs Survey.

Most of this information has now been received with the remainder due imminently. We now need to assess this and decide the way forward. It is likely that we will have to consult with you again on this, but please be patient and support us in this vital work.

Playingfields:

We are pleased to report that we have three new pieces of equipment at Mendlesham Green, a nest swing, roundabout and climbing complex. This work was paid for with £10,000 from Parish Council Funds, £500 Mendlesham Education Foundation, £2,000 Mendlesham Community Council, £2500 SCC Locality grant and £7201 MSDC Capital Grant. Thank you.

Work on the project at the Mendlesham Playingfields continues further to the S106 monies available from Station Fields and we hope to be in a position very shortly to agree and commence the first works.

Community Centre:

Working in partnership with the school, the building has benefited from an improved fire system, new internal doors, external cladding, guttering and redecoration of the Main Hall, the stage lights now all work. The Small Hall also now has a new sound system and projector- thank you to Mendlesham Community Council who provided the idea and majority of the funds. New doors been provided for the Small Hall from Mendlesham Parish Council funds.

Whilst the majority of this work has been at no or little cost to Mendlesham Community Centre Charity, our overheads have increased outside our control, particularly utility costs.

After much consideration, we have reviewed our charging system and increased fees from 1st September. This is necessary to keep the building available and to the required standard. Whilst we were able to keep the hire fees the same since 2016, we now have to increase fees from September and will review this annually, increasing as a minimum by inflation.

We have also taken the opportunity to review our hire fee structure to make the arrangements fair and transparent for all and hope to attract new hire, particularly over weekends and school holidays.

We have received a £3000 MSDC Locality grant towards the provision of LED lights with decisions about where and when to be made shortly. We have also reviewed our other utility costs to ensure we keep costs to a minimum and will be reviewing cleaning arrangements as well.

Mendlesham Green telephone box: thank you to everyone who has helped. We now have a refurbished red telephone box containing a defibrillator at Mendlesham Green. This was funded by Mendlesham Parish Council.

Other work: The Battles Over Remembrance event at Mendlesham Green, arrangements to comply with new data protection legislation, GDPR, provision of a new noticeboard (still to be installed) near Station Fields with the help of a grant from Lovells, continued conversations about Rights of Way and Planning Enforcement issues with officers have also helped keep everyone busy.

Future:

So what next?

We have an election for Parish Councillors. The first in 16 years. There has been much interest from residents about becoming more involved in community life. This can only be positive for the parish. We should also have all 11 Councillor positions filled for the first time in four years.

We have researched and made the decision to set up a Community Land Trust which will be the legal vehicle enabling us to own our own community housing for petuity. This is at an early stage and will require community support. Whilst there are other parishes already doing this in Suffolk and Essex, this is another first for Mendlesham and Mid Suffolk District Council who are providing a £4,000 grant and support to help us set this up. More information when known.

The Neighbourhood Plan/Planning work, Mendlesham Playingfield Project and Community Centre work will also continue . So plenty to do, without anything else new Cllrs or events may bring.

Community:

We have some wonderful organisations in Mendlesham , looking after the young, older residents, the religious needs of our community and providing sporting, educational and social activities. Many other individuals are also just quietly doing their bit for the community. You know who you are, your work is much appreciated Thank you.

Parish Councillors, I would like to say thank you for the valuable and often unseen and unsung work that you do.

Mike Exley, Chairperson of Mendlesham Parish Council.