



District Councillor Monthly Report

Lawford, Manningtree & Mistley

May / June 2020

Coronavirus & Implications

At the time of writing we are still under 'lockdown' and in the main local compliance with the government directions is excellent. However, I know we all look forward to some relaxation of the social distancing requirements as soon as it is safe to do so.

The officers at Tendring District Council have been working hard to maintain as many essential services as possible. Many members of staff are now re-deployed into other areas and their flexibility and dedication to the tasks has been inspiring.

TDC has been notified of over 800 residents in the district who are in isolation, due to their personal circumstances. The council has the responsibility to ensure that food and other essential supplies are delivered to these people on a regular basis.

In addition, our Careline staff are working flat out to support many vulnerable people in our community.

The District Council is responsible for the allocation of financial support to local businesses, as directed by government. This is extremely problematic, but huge sums of money have already been allocated and the process continues.

Waste Collection in the district has continued as normal, which is not the case in other districts nearby. There has been a huge increase in the uptake of the Green Waste collection facility (brown bins) as residents complete gardening projects at home.

I know many local people are asking why the Lawford Recycling Centre has closed. The Essex County Council closed the facility in line with government directions. However, Tendring District Councillors are in discussion with the ECC to see if there is a safe way the system can be reopened, with the reduced staffing now available (some are in isolation). It must be understood that the recycling centre does not operate in isolation and the system involves drivers, sorters and other people elsewhere, as well as the staff at the Lawford site.

I am in regular contact with Sharon Robinson who is, as you know, coordinating the main local support group through her Manningtree Shout Out Facebook pages. Sharon has an army of volunteers assisting those who in various ways, need some support at this time. I was extremely pleased to see that Mistley Parish Council has recognised Sharon's efforts, in awarding her with the Chairman's Community Award 2020.

Carlo, Val and myself have been given access to small amounts of funding by TDC which we can allocate to any group needing immediate assistance. We have allocated some of this money to a 'Manningtree & District Foodbank Reserve'.

Meetings

District Council Committees are not able to meet as usual. Some of these groups have met initially via Zoom, or Skype. This is not ideal and clearly is not entirely inclusive to all members of the public.

I have also voiced my concerns regarding Security and Privacy when using Zoom. There are reports of incidents when inappropriate material has been uploaded during meeting sessions by outside persons.

I also know that some universities and other organisations have already banned the use Zoom for lectures and tutorials as outside infiltration cannot be restricted as there is no encryption, therefore identity security, privacy and GDPR requirements cannot be complied with.

Carlo has had audio meetings with the Council Solicitor and the Chief Executive regarding the methods of communication to be used. I have also shared my concerns with the Chief Executive.

It has now been confirmed that initially the Council's Skype will be used but all meetings will migrate to Microsoft Teams for meetings which the council has purchased, as the package is encrypted.

Enquires continue regarding how future inclusive public access to meetings can be achieved.

Planning

The Planning process is probably one of the most difficult areas to adequately cater for in terms of virtual meetings. The TDC Policy requires that in order to sit and make decisions on planning applications each committee member must have attended the site meeting. No site meetings are currently taking place due to social distancing requirements.

Members of the public are entitled to attend Planning Committee meetings and, in most circumstances, give an oral presentation. This is proving extremely difficult, especially so if the member of the public has no access to the internet.

One example is - 19/01965/OUT – Land East of New Road, Mistley. Back in February I called-in this application, so it would be before the Planning Committee and I would have the opportunity to again speak against it. I have called-in the two previous amended layout iterations to this approved (on appeal) development of 67 homes and successfully spoke against on both occasions.

Carlo, Val and I were sent the full Planning Committee agenda and supporting plans and reports for a virtual Planning Meeting which included this application. We were sent this by e-mail and we were asked for our comments.

It has been categorically established that the content was so large that the e-mail bounced back to TDC, but we were never informed or invited to the meeting, and the Planning Department took no further action to contact us.

The meeting went ahead, without my input, and the application was approved. I find this incredible considering that I had called the application in to the committee in the first place.

We have asked for the Council Solicitor to carry out an inquiry.

After the misleading press coverage of this matter, several false and malicious comments concerning your District Councillors were posted on Facebook. The Police have been contacted, a crime has been recorded and they are carrying out an investigation.

Reminder to businesses to register for Coronavirus Support Grants

Businesses across Tendring who are eligible for Government grants during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic are being urged to sign up.

A wealth of financial support is being made available for small businesses during the outbreak, including business rate relief which is automatically applied to those eligible.

Grants are also available for small businesses, and businesses in the retail, leisure and hospitality sector, which are paid for by the Government but administered by Tendring District Council (TDC).

So far more than £23million has been paid out, but it is estimated around one-third of firms (800) who are eligible have not yet applied.

Business owners in Tendring are encouraging those who have not yet registered for a grant do so. The grants do not need to be repaid.

For further details and to register for a grant visit www.tendringdc.gov.uk/coronavirus and go to the Business section.

Repayable loans are also available to apply for through the Gov.uk website.

Coronavirus Testing

In recent weeks, the Government has been prioritising Coronavirus testing for those in hospitals, care homes and essential workers. This week, with capacity increasing, the Government has expanded the list of people who can be tested.

The full list of those eligible for testing is:

- * All those working on the frontline in health and social care (with or without symptoms).
- * Patients in the NHS and residents in care homes (with or without symptoms).
- * All other essential workers with symptoms.
- * People who live with essential workers and have symptoms.
- * People over 65 with symptoms.
- * Anyone who goes into work because they cannot work from home (for example, construction workers) and has symptoms.

Anyone in one of the above groups, and their household, can find out whether they have the virus. Testing is most effective within 3 days of symptoms developing.

Guidance on Coronavirus testing, including who is eligible for a test, how to get tested and the different types of test available, can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested?fbclid=IwAR3zbTjtn6tW-coHd8zo5OMT12zePDeuVDKXaXwqtSGXEa7tq-YuJeLQFvI#essential-workers>

If you are eligible, to apply for a test please follow the link below:

<https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>

Stay safe everyone, and hopefully normal contact can be resumed as soon as possible.

Alan Coley – District Councillor

04 May 2020

District Report on Behalf of:
Alan Coley, Carlo Guglielmi & Val Guglielmi

In an emergency which requires TDC's assistance residents can contact the council's Control Centre on 01255 222022, available 24/7.

General Information: If anyone witnesses any fly tipping occurring, please contact TDC's Waste Management Team on 01255 686768.