



## **BIRCH PARISH COUNCIL**

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

Thanks to my fellow councillors and also the Clerk for all their hard work over the previous year.

**Village Hall Future proofing** - an application for funding has been submitted to the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) to cover solar panels, new LED lighting and an EV charger for the Memorial Hall.

**Play Area** - renovations were completed last year with a grant of £50k from the Enover Community Trust. The Parish Council maintain the play area and are considering the installation of a climbing wall this year.

**Remembrance Sunday** – this was again very well supported by residents. A donation of £50 to the Royal British Legion was made towards their Poppy Appeal Fund.

**Village Cleaning** – the Parish Council has renewed its litter picking contract with Colchester City Council (CCC). Thanks to Cllr Ninnim and Mr Bowtle for all their hard work in collecting many bags of rubbish, averaging 20 large bags every month.

**Grass Cutting** – A substantial budget has been allocated again this year to maintain the standard of grass cutting, this also includes keeping the graveyard cleared and maintained on a regular basis.

**Planning Applications** - the Parish Council are consulted on all planning applications that fall within their area, although the decision on all applications is made by the Local Planning Authority (Colchester City Council or Essex County Council depending on the type of application).

**Highway Matters** – potholes, signage, and many minor highway issues are regularly reported to ECC, thanks to County and City Councillors, Cllr Bentley, Cllr Ellis and Cllr Maclean for their help in getting many of these issues actioned in a timely manner.

**Speeding Traffic / Community Speed Watch (CSW)** – the Parish Council has consulted with residents regarding speed reduction measures and are in the process of obtaining village gateways at Orpens Hill. An application is being put together to submit to the Local Highways Panel (LHP).

**Finance** – the precept (parish part of the Council Tax) was agreed at the November meeting for 2024/25. Actual expenditure is estimated at £23,800.00 however taking into consideration current reserves and income it was agreed to set the Precept at £18,000.00, this works out at £57.80 a year for a Band D property.

**Communications** – the Parish Council continues to inform residents on what is happening in the village via its meetings, the Parish Website, monthly press releases, the Birch Community Facebook group and the notice boards.

- Parish Website – the website is updated regularly with information relating to the Parish Council.
- Parish News – Birch Parish Council is still supporting the production of the Parish News and notes the excellent job that is done for the PCC by the editor, writers and distributors.

*Elaine Bowtle*

Chairman of Birch Parish Council