



Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2017/2018

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT Cllr. Jim Devlin



At this time the Council looks back on its activities during the past year. In Essex we have a three tier system of local government where Essex County Council is responsible for the main infrastructure, schools and social, Basildon Borough is responsible for rubbish and recycling, parks, planning and housing. These are legal responsibilities of those two Councils and in these times it is unlikely that any extras will be provided by them. Billericay Town Council provides the things that the others find impossible to do. Much of what is in the reports from my colleagues, the chairmen of our three standing committees, describes this work which I believe contributes to the Town that we live in and gives it special character.

As Chairman of the Town Council I attend many events that show what Billericay is all about. I am never surprised at some of the excellent voluntary work that goes on in this Town and many of these were showcased at our Annual Civic Service in early March. During this past year we made our first Young Citizen of the year award and I was pleased to present this to April Simmonds at a special assembly at Sunnymede School. I was also able to present our Citizen of the Year Award to Carl Roberts at

a screening at Billericay Community Cinema for his work in the voluntary sector. I was also proud to accept an award on behalf of the Council recently for attaining the standards necessary under the new Local Council Award Scheme.

Sadly we recently lost two previous councillors Mik Dunn and former chairman Trevor Stansfield and I represented the Council at their funerals. I would like to formally record thanks for the work that they did for Billericay.

Looking forward the Town Council has a lot of work to do. The last function to be held in the Chantry Way Centre will be the Annual Town Meeting on 3rd May and the building will be demolished shortly after. This building was put up in the early 1970s as a Day Centre for the elderly by Basildon Council and later became a hall used by many groups in the town for meetings and events. Unfortunately it was never ideal for that purpose and is now beyond repair. I am looking forward to a new building which we can all be proud of which will meet the needs of the community. This is the largest project that the Council has undertaken to date.

We also announced recently that Billericay was the first Council in Essex to sign up to the Community Special Constable scheme and I look forward to an increased police presence in Billericay. Recruitment is under way but it will



Cllr Devlin presents Young Citizen of the Year Award to April Simmonds

be quite a while before we see our Specials on the streets as the training period is quite long. However I believe that this scheme is good for Billericay and I note that many Councils have followed our lead.

It is not all work as Chairman and I am very much looking forward to being a judge at the Soap Box Derby on the May Day Bank Holiday. This event embodies the spirit of Billericay with volunteers raising money for those groups that do good voluntary work in the area. ■

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Moira Moore



The Environment Committee works to enhance the environment around Billericay. We do this either by providing additional services or enhancing services provided by other councils.

We fund the various plantings around the War Memorial throughout the year and clean it in readiness for the Remembrance Sunday Service in November. This year one of the old, much loved, lime trees at the Memorial had to be felled as it was diseased and was becoming a danger to the public.

In the last year the Town Council has funded some much needed maintenance to the United Reform Church Burial Ground in Chapel Street improving the visitor experience to this historic site.

Another successful Billericay in Bloom competition was held in the summer with participants from residents, local businesses, schools and churches.

The skatepark in Lake Meadows is owned and maintained by the Town Council. Unfortunately, once again, this popular asset for young people was vandalized in the summer requiring the Town Council to spend over £1,000 to repair and make

it safe.

We look after two small gardens in the town – the Festival Gardens located in Crown Road and the Jim Shield Garden at the junction of the High Street and Western Road.

The Town Council continues to provide hanging baskets in the High Street during the summer months as well as planting flower displays in the summer and winter in the High Street planters and in the Jim Shields Garden. A project to illuminate the War Memorial is currently being evaluated. ■

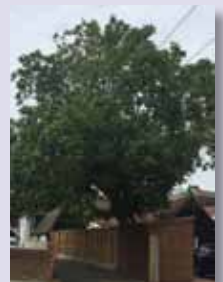


TREE WARDENS

The role of the Tree Wardens is to identify and monitor all of the trees of note in the town to help conserve and enhance our environment. From the first mention of creating a Tree Warden Scheme/ Group for Billericay last May and its first meeting on the 30th May 2017, the Tree Warden Group has progressed well. The group has discussed what its role should be, what it covers, where it fits in with the Town Council, how it should be organised, the scope of its responsibilities and subject knowledge.

The group is now 10 strong and are being led by resident Lauren Ramsey who volunteered to supervise this team. To help them get an understanding of what being a Tree Warden member and group might mean they had a visit and presentation from Irene Guidotti of Danbury Tree Wardens. She explained how they are organised and what they do and importantly, passed on the lessons learnt from their experience.

The group have identified the total area covered by Billericay Town Council, tree survey area priority, individual areas of responsibility and what needs to be recorded. A great start by the Tree Wardens Group. ■



FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Adam Adshead



The Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) is one of the three core committees that make up the Billericay Town Council. The "Finance" role is to oversee and scrutinise all of the Council's financial activities ensuring that they comply with Financial Regulations and that the Council continues to operate within its budget. "General Purposes" cover all other activities which don't naturally fall within the remit of our Environment or Planning Committees.

F&GP reviews and agrees the budgets for the various initiatives proposed, sets the precept, the portion of your Council Tax that funds those Town Council activities and it provides supervision of the Council's assets.

For the first time in 9 years we will be raising the Precept by £2.70 per year for a typical Band D property – or roughly 5.2 pence per week. The majority of the rise is for a specific project, with specific objectives and benefits for the town: the rebuild of the Chantry Way Community Centre which will provide a modern, centrally located facility. However, just over a quarter of the rise would have come from a central government grant (LCTS – the Local Council Tax Support grant) which is intended to be passed on to local councils such as Billericay, Great Burstead & South Green and Little Burstead. This year Basildon Borough Council voted not to pass this on, despite strenuous objections from Billericay Town Council and others. The decision was also taken very late in the day after all of the local councils had produced their budgets. The Government has since written to all councils urging them to reconsider and to pass the LCTS funding on to parish and town councils.

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

F&GP is responsible for a small grant budget which can be awarded to local community and charitable groups providing services to the town. This year grants have included £300 to Gone too Soon, a new group set up to provide bereavement support for parents, £500 to the Billericay Art Trail for new "flag" banners, £100

to the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance and £500 for replacement microphones to community radio station PhoenixFM who frequently interview and promote Billericay community groups.

THE BILLERICAY YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Relatively few parishes and towns have a Youth Town Council – but Billericay does. The BYTC is run on exactly the same lines as its adult equivalent. It's a great place for youngsters aged between 11 and 18 to develop new skills – campaigning for election, working together as a team, debating, and learning key influencing and decision making skills. They learn to develop an interest in community service as well as gaining and understanding of the political process. The BYTC have had a very impressive year in terms of learning about our democratic processes (which this year have included visiting Essex County Council in Chelmsford to witness a citizenship ceremony), supporting local community groups (providing marshalling support at the Soapbox Derby, Billericay Fireworks and our own Christmas Lights event) and organising a very successful Youth Talent Show.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Amongst the many activities this year, Billericay Town Council through the F&GP Committee have:

- Written a strongly worded letter of complaint to Basildon Borough Council regarding the cancellation of the High Street rejuvenation project.
- Complained to Basildon Borough Council regarding the withdrawal of the Local Council Tax Support Grant which has forced us to increase our Precept
- Agreed to fund two Special Constables whose focus will be on Billericay
- Attended Dementia Awareness Training, becoming Dementia Friends in the process.

BTC CHANTRY WAY CENTRE

Our plans for the Chantry Way Centre have progressed during the year. Following an architect's report which concluded that renovation of the existing building wasn't practical, our focus has been on the initial designs for a new centre.

We have a clear vision: to provide a flexible use

Community Hub maximising its social benefit through its use by community groups whilst delivering value by generating revenue from commercial use. By moving the Town Council office into the centre we will reduce overheads and a Community Hub will provide a focal point for the town.

The new build will be financed by a mix of savings which have been built up over a number of years specifically for this purpose; through Grant Funding, and complemented by a Government Loan which provides funds to Local Authorities at very competitive interest rates.

Our objective is that once the facility is up and running, the mix of income from commercial lettings and preferential rates for local community groups and charities combined with the savings achieved from bringing our offices into the new building will generate additional revenue for the council. ■

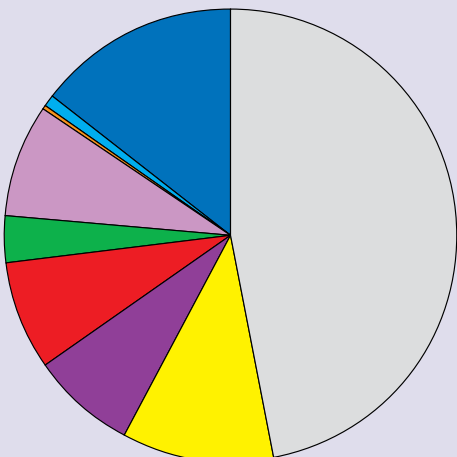
EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES

2016/17	EXPENDITURE	2017/18
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
123	Administration & Council Members	124
31	Recreational Facilities	29
20	Public Toilets	20
18	Christmas Lights	20
0	Other Projects	0
10	Publications	9
1	Election	0
9	Chantry Way Centre	21
1	Youth Town Council	1
4	Earmarked Reserves	2
59	To General Reserve	38
262	Total	264

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2016/17	INCOME	2017/18
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
249	Precept	249
4	Interest Earned	1
7	Local sponsorship	3
4	Outside Funding	2
0	From General Reserve	0
12	Chantry Way Centre	9
276	Total	264

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES 2017/2018



- Administration & Council Members
- Recreational Facilities
- Public Toilets
- Christmas Lights
- Publications
- Chantry Way Centre
- Youth Town Council
- Earmarked Reserves
- General Reserve

PLANNING COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Lesley Michelmore



The planning committee reviews and comments on planning applications for the Billericay Town Council Wards. Whilst the committee must have respect for National and Local Planning Policy and responsibility for the determination of applications lies with Basildon Council, it brings both local knowledge and local perspective that won't necessarily exist in Basildon. Applications are tested against the quality of design within the context of its setting, its impact on neighbours and highways considerations.

Over the past year, the committee has considered more than 330 planning applications, 12 licensing applications and 4 consultations. The Committee has also conducted an audit of the High Street with our County Councillor as limited

grant funding may be available to make some improvements to broken railings and replace damaged block paving.

The committee has set up a working group in anticipation of the next consultation for Basildon's Local Plan which would see just over 3000 homes built across Billericay. Councillors are reviewing numerous documents and evidence relating to the environment, transport and infrastructure, and will recommend a response for the consultation to the Full Town Council in due course.

The committee has sent two letters to Basildon Council in respect of the Local Plan; the first asking questions in relation to the new High Level Development Framework for SW Billericay and the second, a letter of concern regarding the proposed route of a relief road that would impact on ancient woodland at Frith Wood, 2 public rights