

MINUTES OF THE BILLERICAY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD IN THE CHANTRY WAY CENTRE, CHANTRY WAY, BILLERICAY
ON THURSDAY 3RD MAY @ 7.00P.M.

In the Chair: Cllr J Devlin, Town Council Chairman

In attendance: Mr Les Hawkins MCMI, Specials Supported Policing Coordinator, Borough and County Cllr Dr R Moore and Mrs D Tonkiss, Town Clerk

Present: Thirteen Town Councillors
Fifteen members of the public

Apologies: Given by Cllrs R Clark, A Talboys, M Thomas, F Tomlin

1/18 Welcome by Town Council Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the twenty first Billericay Annual Town Meeting. He stated that it was a legal requirement to hold this meeting to enable local residents to ask questions of their Town Councillors. Cllr Devlin said that the custom is also to invite a guest speaker to attend the meeting, and he was pleased to introduce Mr Les Hawkins, Specials Supported Policing Coordinator from Essex Police to talk about the Community Special Constable scheme.

2/18 Guest Speaker

Mr Hawkins informed those present that he is a retired Police Sergeant who served 27 years with Essex Police. He now works in the Special Constables unit and they are currently mid-way through a three year programme to develop the Community Special Constable (CSC) scheme. It is a vision of the Police and Crime Commissioner to have a special constable in every parish and town area. A special constable is effectively a part time officer. They are usually volunteers with day jobs, but they could be students or retired. They have full policing powers the same as a regular officer and are not to be confused with PCSOs. In Essex Specials are asked to give a minimum sixteen hours per month, the CSCs will apply to work in a specific town or parish area and their duties will then be tasked in that area. Parish and Town Councils that sign up to the scheme will pay for the duty allowance and travel costs of their CSCs. They will work very closely with the local councils - attending meetings and liaising with residents to find out what is happening locally. This will get fed back, thereby giving town and parish councils a link to the Community Policing teams. It is not up to individuals to task CSCs, all reports need to be made via the community policing team. As serving officers CSC's could be sent elsewhere but only in an emergency. The Council will only pay for the time they spend on duty in Billericay. An average duty is 4-8 hours so the £10 allowance helps to buy food, covers boot wear, etc. Travel costs apply from the time they leave home until the time they book on. The widely recognised annual cost of £1,000 per CSC was worked out via averaging the duty hours of around 500 per year per special, and best guessing the travel costs. That is the top end figure but is dependent upon duty hours. The training to get them independent as an officer can take up to 2 years, and although that sounds a long time, doing nothing means that nothing will happen. There is a Basildon Special who is interested in moving to Billericay and is already an independent officer. Thirteen councils are signed up to the Scheme with only one who has CSCs ready to go.

Cllr Devlin thanked Mr Hawkins for his interesting and informative talk.

3/18 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 19th April 2017

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 19th April 2017, were taken as read and approved as a correct record. No questions were raised and there were no matters arising.

4/18 Chairman's Report 2017/18

Cllr Devlin said that each Committee Chairman will give their report and then time will be allocated for questions at the end.

Billericay is a giving community and its service organisations raise cash for good causes. As Chairman I attend many events in the town and in local schools, and I represent the Basildon local councils at the Essex Association. It has been a busy year for the Council - the Citizen of the Year competition introduced a Young Citizen award last year and the Town Council achieved Foundation award status which is partly down to the quality and transparency of information given to the electorate. All is on the Town Council website at www.billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk. The CSC scheme participation came from a meeting I attended and we are pleased to have been the first local council to sign up to the scheme. Sadly two former councillors passed away this year and I had the sad duty of attending their funerals. Tonight is the last meeting which is open to the public being held at the Chantry Way Centre, although the Council will be continuing to use it for a couple of months before demolition takes place. BTC took over the building on a 99 year lease from Basildon Borough Council in 2016. The rebuild has been planned for the last two years and the demolition has to be done first to allow site surveys to be undertaken. It is hoped that the new building will be up and running in late 2019/early 2020, and the 2020 Annual Town Meeting will be held here.

A full copy of Cllr Devlin's report is published in the Annual Report 2017/18.

5/18 Reports of Committee Chairmen Planning Committee - Cllr Lesley Mitchelmore

Cllr Mitchelmore said that the Town Council's aim is to bring a local perspective to Planning Applications. During the year the Committee had considered 330 planning applications, 12 licensing applications and 4 consultations. Very often the Town Council's comments are taken into account by Basildon Council. A working group has been set up to respond to the next local plan consultation and councillors will be reviewing numerous documents and evidence relating to the environment, transport and infrastructure. Over 1,700 documents in total.

A full copy of Cllr Mitchelmore's report is published in the Annual Report 2017/18.

Cllr Devlin thanked Cllr Mitchelmore for her report.

Environment Committee - Cllr Moira Moore

Cllr Moore said that her report in the Annual Report covers the areas that the committee look after in Billericay, such as hanging baskets, Christmas lights, War Memorial, flower planters and two gardens in the High Street - Jim Shields and Festival Gardens. This year money was also spent to improve the appearance of the URC Burial Ground in Chapel Street. The Environment Committee manages all the things around the town that happen every year and which residents have come to expect. The work of the Committee ensures that these improvements to the environment continue.

A full copy of Cllr Moore's report is published in the Annual Report 2017/18.

Cllr Devlin thanked Cllr Moore for her report.

Finance & General Purposes Committee - Cllr Adam Adshead

Cllr Adshead thanked all members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee plus both Clerks for all their hard work in meetings, of which there has been a lot this year. The decision to raise the precept was not an easy one - this was initially going to be a 10% increase to cover the Chantry redevelopment costs but Basildon Council cancelled the High Street regeneration project at the 11th hour and also didn't pass on to local councils the LCTS grant payment which meant a slightly larger precept increase. It works out at a 5.2p per week increase for a band D property. The Town Council is very aware it is public money but it is hoped that the redevelopment of the Chantry Way Centre will provide residents with a facility which offers a community hub as well as flexible meeting spaces for community groups. Investigations have shown that the current building is at end of life and meetings have been held with current users and visits made to other similar facilities in the area. An architect was employed to come up with a design which has been looked at by Basildon Council planners in the pre application process. A new series of designs is being drawn up and the tender for demolition services is about to go out to tender. Billericay is also one of the few places that has a youth town council and they are a group of young people aged 11-18 who come to gain an understanding of the democratic process whilst visiting places like Essex County Council and assisting with events in the town.

A full copy of Cllr Adshead's report is published in the Annual Report 2017/18.

Cllr Devlin thanked Cllr Adshead for his report.

6/18 Questions from the Press and Public

It was asked whether the plans for the new building were publicly available. Not at the present time as they are not finalised.

How many storeys will it have? Two.

Could young and old be encouraged to mix together in the new Centre? Yes, that is certainly a possibility.

Where are the current hirers going? They have all found new locations in Billericay.

How is the new build being funded? By Public Works Loan Board borrowing and obtaining grants.

Is the proximity to a residential area being taken into account? Yes.

7/18 Closing address

Cllr Devlin thanked everyone for coming.

The meeting closed at 8.01pm