

MINUTES OF THE 2019 BILLERICAY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD IN THE COACH HOUSE, CROWN YARD, BILLERICAY
ON THURSDAY 25TH APRIL @ 7.00P.M.

In the Chair: Cllr J Devlin, Town Council Chairman

In attendance: Mr Jim Rose, Billericay Food Bank and Mr James Hendry, Street Scene Manager
Waste and Recycling - Basildon Borough Council, Borough and County Cllr Dr R
Moore and Mrs D Tonkiss, Town Clerk

Present: Twelve Town Councillors
Seven members of the public

Apologies: Given by Cllrs G Talbot, A Talboys, M Thomas, F Tomlin

1/19 Welcome by Town Council Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the twenty second 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 that there were two this year.

2/19 Guest Speaker

Mr Jim Rose - Billericay Food Bank

Mr Rose informed those present that the food bank has been open in Billericay for a year. It originated from a survey of local residents undertaken by St John's Church to find out their views on what was needed in the Community. Once the need for a food bank was identified St John's converted an old toilet in the church to house the operation, staffed it with Church members and spent time shadowing a food bank in Basildon observing how it functions. Donations of food and toiletries come from Churches Together, schools (particularly harvest festivals), and generous members of the public. Social media is used and there are regular collection points such as the Co-operative food store in Queens Park. People that use the food bank are referred by various agencies who feel that access for a short period of time would be beneficial. Peabody Trust, schools, doctor's surgeries, mental health teams etc. and people do self refer. There is a need in Billericay, despite it being considered an affluent town. The benefits system can see people being caught in a trap, and transitioning may cause temporary hardship. Money management problems, possibly very low income or illness, there are plenty of unforeseen life events which may mean someone requires the help of a food bank. Domestic abuse relocations, mental health issues, breakdowns, help is given to people that find life challenging and struggle to cope. A food bank is a human and accessible resource which is very important. In Billericay during the past year 40 to 45 people have been helped and 45 children. This is a combination of both single people and those with children. Some only require 1 or 2 visits, whilst others are more regularly supported. 250 sets of groceries have been given out in the past year. A typical food parcel is dependent upon the size of the family and consists of items for breakfast, and other daily meals. It can be a lot of food when going to a family so delivery is often provided. The food intake is managed by providing lists of what is suitable, such as breakfast cereals, long life milk, tinned food, teabags, etc. The food bank receives a helpful range of foodstuffs and donations of money which also helps to purchase stock in key areas.

Points arising from questions: Dietary restrictions are taken into account as part of the conversation that is had with users, but the majority of people that are helped are just grateful to receive anything. Could the problem be more widespread and people are just too embarrassed to come forward for help? It was felt that there could perhaps be a need amongst older people but they are the section of the community who find it hard to ask for help. Although the uptake has increased over the 12 months since opening, there is a stigma to using a food bank. The other donation points in Billericay are Waitrose, Emmanuel Church and Christ Church. How is a recipient's eligibility assessed and need measured? If people are referred through an Agency it is assumed that an assessment has already been made. Self referral is worked out on the basis of a conversation, and it largely works on the premise of trust. There has been only one occasion in 12 months when it has felt like a misuse. Some food banks are very large operations dealing with much larger numbers so vouchers would be used in that circumstance. No vouchers are used in Billericay and they are reluctant to go down that route despite other agencies doing so.

Cllr Devlin thanked Mr Rose for his extremely interesting talk and proceeded to introduce the second speaker.

Mr James Hendry - Street Scene Manager, Basildon Borough Council

Mr Hendry informed those present that Basildon Borough Council looks after the waste of 178,000 households and has the highest waste rate per household in Essex, of 1 tonne per year. However, participation in the recycling scheme is very good, most households do take part in that. People's habits have changed and this has sped up over the last few years, there is now less paper recycling (purchase of newspapers has declined) and more cardboard (Amazon/online deliveries). Wine bottles weigh less so the weight of material recycled has gone down. Supermarkets have also stopped a lot of their buy one get one free offers on perishable items which reduces food waste. People are also better educated in terms of cooking and storing food which has helped. BBC provide a weekly food and garden waste collection, a weekly pink sack collection for mixed recyclables, orange boxes for glass bottles and jars plus a textiles collection. Barleylands recycling centre is the only one that is managed by BBC, the other sites are under the authority of Essex County Council, and only recyclable material can be accepted at Barleylands. In the past year they have teamed up with the Lighthouse furniture project to reuse and repair electricals which are taken to the site. If you have electrical items which you are replacing then bring them to Barleylands for reuse rather than bin them. Pink sacks will move to a once a year distribution (currently two) and extra sacks will be delivered when requested. This has come from resident's feedback. BBC now also encourage people to take care of their locality and will provide residents with all the equipment for community litter picks. Anyone interested in the scheme should email recycling@basildon.gov.uk.

Points arising from questions: How are workers rewarded? A particularly hard working member of the Street Services team was mentioned and Mr Hendry took the feedback on board. He often buys breakfast as a thank you for his team and they also get shining star awards throughout the year. Are collections to remain weekly? There are no plans to change them currently. The Government has published a waste strategy which is out for consultation and the results will be known in a few years. Is the food waste collection changing? No change is expected there either. Are the black sacks to be replaced by wheelie bins? The consultation on wheelie bins for each household has been paused and this will not now happen. Will BBC provide free food caddy liners as other Boroughs do? The provision of these free of charge has been looked at but the cost would have to be passed back to the

council tax payers and BBC want to keep the cost down by not adding to the service. Are children being educated regards waste and recycling? Mr Hendry has gone into schools doing lessons and assemblies with pupils, and there is now a dedicated education team working out of Wat Tyler park who are excellent and they are delivering the message into schools. Have recycling centres been slimmed down and could this possibly contribute to increased fly tipping? Acceptance criteria for recycling sites has changed to clamp down on trade waste. Data would indicate that this has not caused an increase in fly tipping though. Can broken glass/bulbs go into the orange recycling boxes? The orange boxes are for bottles and jars only. They will not take light bulbs or pyrex, but broken glass in the boxes should be accepted. Does BBC get a revenue for recycling? Everything which is diverted from landfill generates a recycling credit, e.g. glass is traded, and there are contracts in place to help offset the recycling costs. However, markets can be volatile and BBC needs to make sure that best value is always obtained. At the highest level the Borough was recycling 52% of its waste, this is now down to about 48%. If every resident recycled whatever they could then the rate would be around 70%. Mr Hendry encouraged those present to be recycling advocates and educate their neighbours, friends and family. Are studies done of non recyclable waste? There is one being done at the moment which will be helpful in terms of letting BBC know whether more publicity is required for recycling. Does BBC offer a recycling service to businesses? Not at the moment but this is currently out to consultation across the country as it is recognised that things should not be different at work and home so more consistency is needed. A successful service has to be both convenient and easy to use. Residents that don't recycle can be reported to BBC and an enforcement officer will visit them at home. They will always seek to educate before issuing penalty notices. When should refuse go out on collection day? Do not put them out too early as crews do not start collecting before 7.30am. Black sacks on top of recycling bins can cause injuries as operatives only have clothing which offers protection when loading from the ground. Questions were asked about what plastics could be recycled and whether there needed to be a triangle marker on the packaging? Mr Hendry advised that it is best to focus on the container and the following can all be recycled: drinks bottles, fruit punnets, bubble wrap, yoghurt pots, bleach bottles, milk cartons. Microwaveable food trays and child's plastic toys cannot be recycled.

Cllr Devlin thanked Mr Hendry for his very informative and engaging talk.

3/19 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 3rd May 2018

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 3rd May 2018, were taken as read and approved as a correct record. No questions were raised and there were no matters arising. Cllr Devlin did inform those present that there were now applications in process for the Billericay Community Special Constable roles.

4/19 Chairman's Report 2018/19

Cllr Devlin made reference to the front cover of last year's Annual Report which showed him with a sledgehammer 'demolishing' the old Chantry Day Centre. Unfortunately delays occurred and it wasn't finally demolished until a few weeks ago. The design for the new building has been done, consultation has taken place, the loan application has been made and Government approval for the borrowing is currently awaited. This has been a busy year for the Town Council with several high points. The illumination of the War Memorial being a particular highlight. When BBC withdrew funding for the project the Town Council stepped in and crowd funded which was very well supported by residents. It ensured sufficient funding was received to not only light the Memorial, but purchase two There But Not There Tommies and replace the paving. This has now made the Memorial fit for its centenary in 2020. War

Memorials were always erected via public subscription and this has been done again. The work of the Town Council has continued also, Billericay in Bloom is now in its 20th year and is growing in popularity again thanks to Cllr Moira Moore who has put in a lot of personal effort to revitalise the competition. The Christmas Lights have a new scheme and a new location for the switch on event. The Town Crier magazine and Annual Report is used to communicate with residents as is social media via Facebook, Twitter and the Council's website. This year's Civic Service focused on community and the Town Council has been involved with some of these projects. The Tree Warden group has now moved on by itself and the wardens are working with BBC to try and protect trees in the town. Another scheme saw Brightside Primary School being given litter picking equipment so that they could keep an area near their school litter free. There have been no successful applications for the Community Special Constable roles but Cllr Devlin urged people to consider applying as there is no age limit. The High Street litter pick is being held on 27th April at 9.30am.

5/19 Reports of Committee Chairmen

Finance & General Purposes Committee - Cllr Adam Adshead

The Chantry Way Centre redevelopment has consumed a large amount of time in terms of additional meetings and preparation work. Cllr Adshead thanked members of F&GP Committee, especially Cllr Roessler for all his extra work. The precept rise had been kept down to 2% and this increase was mainly down to supplier's costs increasing. Costs are always carefully monitored to ensure best value. The Youth Town Council has gone from strength to strength and it is wonderful to see young people develop during their time. Some long serving members have now been lost due to going off to university/college but elections last year brought in many new members and it is recognised as an important youth group within the town. This year the redevelopment of the Chantry Way Centre has taken up most time for the Committee, including the three week consultation in the library and an open event in the Centre. All responses have been analysed and the results are available online. The whole project is budgeted at £1.9m. £500,000 from Council reserves and a £1.4m loan from the Government (Public Works Loan Board). The cost of this community facility will be some way offset by moving the Council offices and saving on the cost of rent etc. It will also be boosted by income from hiring to commercial organisations and also to community groups at discounted rates. Grants are being applied for and any received will be used to offset costs. Projections are that the building will be financially neutral and make more revenue than is paid out over time. There is a distinct social benefit to residents in having a community building. The demolition was unfortunately impacted by a delay in the gas disconnection and also having squatters that had to be lawfully removed. The Council was very impressed with the demolition contractors and their handling of the site. It was discovered during the demolition that the foundations were far in excess of what was required for a single storey building and it would seem that provision had been made for a second floor at some point. 90% of the removed materials will be recycled. Tender submissions have been received from 5 companies for the rebuild and these are currently being evaluated by the architects who are also undertaking value engineering. Cllr Adshead gave his thanks to the Town Clerk and Committee Clerk for their support.

A full copy of Cllr Adshead's report is published in the Annual Report 2018/19.

Cllr Devlin thanked Cllr Adshead for his report.

Environment Committee - Cllr Moira Moore

Cllr Moore said that the Chairman had already covered a lot of her Committee's work during the past year. The War Memorial paving has been renewed and the area has never looked

better. A group of councillors get together on the last Saturday of every month and spend an hour or two to keep it looking tidy. Billericay in Bloom is entering the twentieth year of competition and what is particularly pleasing is the increase in entries for the children's categories. The move to Sun Corner for the Christmas Lights switch on was well received and is especially good for the safety of local children as it keeps them away from the roads. Cllr Moore finished by saying that all the work of the Environment Committee is covered in the Annual Report.

A full copy of Cllr Moore's report is published in the Annual Report 2018/19.

Cllr Devlin thanked Cllr Moore for her report.

Planning Committee - Cllr Lesley Mitchelmore

Cllr Mitchelmore informed those present that the Town Council is a consultee only, and does not have the authority to grant or refuse applications, that is down to Basildon Borough Council. The Town Council is also consulted on licensing applications. Two were objected to and this resulted in the licence applicant amending their application. Various consultations have been considered and responded to including the BBC Local Plan Regulation 19. Cllr Mitchelmore thanked her colleagues on the council who had contributed as there had been a lot of work researching and reviewing the six areas of the Local Plan. The formulation of a local plan is a good way of ensuring that growth within an area is appropriate. There was a concern when three applications were granted on appeal rather than being determined during the statutory time frame and the Council communicated with BBC regarding this.

A full copy of Cllr Mitchelmore's report is published in the Annual Report 2018/19.

Cllr Devlin thanked Cllr Mitchelmore for her report.

6/19 Questions from the Press and Public

- i) Social Isolation and loneliness** - those present were informed the Essex County Council are launching a map which pinpoints local groups trying to combat this, and the Town Council were asked to consider publicising it. Local businesses are being approached to sign up for Meet Up Mondays, when commercial premises allow people to come in, sit down and have a free coffee and chat. If there is anyone interested in any of these initiatives, please contact the Town Clerk who will obtain further information.
- ii) A lack of both disabled and cycle parking in Billericay.** Essex County Council are the highways authority and disabled parking is no longer provided on highways so does not appear in High Streets. Those with a blue badge can park in places other motorists can't. Disabled bays are put in residential streets for residents so that they have somewhere to park near their homes. The Town Council provided a row of cycle stands in Alma Link, and it is understood that some residents are not keen to use them as they are off the High Street, but they are there and available to cyclists. There will also be cycle bays at the new building in Chantry Way as the provision of these is a planning requirement.
- iii) Policing.** There is a lot of information on social media about burglaries taking place in Billericay but no visible police presence. Cllr Devlin felt social media exaggerated this issue and thereby caused the perception there are a lot of burglaries in the town, when the crime reports received from the Police would indicate otherwise. It actually contains very little about crimes in Billericay. Police officers are sent where crime is the highest which is why not many

officers are seen in Billericay. There is a Police meeting on Friday 26th April in Waitrose at 7pm for anyone interested in talking directly to the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

- iv) **Tree Wardens.** There is now an active group of tree wardens keeping their eyes open in Billericay. If anyone sees any tree being felled and this causes concern telephone the Town Clerk who will advise the wardens so they can investigate further.

7/19 Closing address

Cllr Devlin thanked everyone for coming. He reminded those present that at the 2018 meeting he did say the next one would be held in the new building, but the project is taking longer than anticipated so he can't promise that for 2020, and he expects it to be held in the Coach House again.

The meeting closed at 20.40pm