



Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2013/2014

YOUR QUALITY COUNCIL

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2013 Cllr. John Buchanan

This last year has been an exciting one for the Town Council, and I hope you will enjoy reading the reports of the different committees, project groups and working parties. There cannot be many organisations which can change 100% of their staff in the space of less than a year while continuing to deliver services and projects to the community. But that is what the Town Council has done. Our long serving administrator, Madeline Gapes retired in April to be replaced by Diane McCarthy, and our Town Clerk, Helen Philpott, then left us at Christmas and Deborah Tonkiss has taken over. During the year we have delivered all the things you have come to expect from the Town Council, such as the hanging baskets, the Christmas Lights, and the public toilet, we have improved the standard of upkeep of Festival Gardens in our

second year of responsibility, and added the planters in the Jim Shields Garden to our list of beautification activities in the High Street. A brand new playground has been installed at Outwood Common much to the delight of all the children of the area, and I can dare to say we have installed a fountain in the lake at Lake Meadows, of course as part of an aeration scheme to improve the water quality, nothing so frivolous as just to have a pretty fountain.

Using the slogan, "Billericay, a Great Place to Be", we produced another fantastic packed edition of the Town Guide, and then as a climax to the year, in conjunction with Churches Together in Billericay, we participated in a community weekend culminating in a Civic Service attended by the Lord Lieutenant, the Chairman of the County Council, many other dignitaries and about 200 Billericay people.

Deborah Tonkiss and Diane McCarthy



Never forget that the town councillors are all unpaid volunteers, we only have 2 members of staff and we still charge less than £20 per band D household per year.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Moira Moore



Volunteers cleaning the war memorial

The job of the Environment Committee is to assist in the enhancement of Billericay's environment. We do this either by providing additional services, or enhancing existing services provided by Basildon Borough Council or Essex County Council. Amongst other things we provide the Christmas lights for the High Street and additional 'litter picks' in areas that need an extra clean up. We also organize the hanging baskets in the High Street during the summer, and hold the Billericay In Bloom competition every year – this year was the 16th year of this most popular event.

We are the custodians of the war memorial. We have two plantings a year; the first is in the summer and the second is late autumn in support of the Remembrance Sunday service. The flowers were spectacular in the summer and by spring the new plantings were in full flower making the war memorial an oasis of colour for Easter. Many people have

complimented the Town Council on the upkeep of the memorial.

We do provide a public toilet in the Iceland car-park which, although not used by hundreds of people, is, nevertheless much appreciated by residents for them to know one is available 24/7 for their convenience! It is the only toilet in Billericay open to the public all day and all night, 365 days a year.

We also look after The Festival Gardens in Crown Road and during the year we pruned trees, cut the hedges and planted bulbs. We have plans for improvements that will be implemented during next year.

We arrange regular town walks in the summer months where residents and visitors to the town are guided around local historic buildings and sites.

Billericay in Bloom Working Party – Chairman: Cllr. Pam Went

Despite the late arrival of summer we received our usual high quality entries for the Billericay in Bloom competition. The judges were impressed with the overall standard of the 80 entries, in particular those from the schools. St. Peter's Catholic Primary School won Best School Garden and Buttsbury Junior School won Best School Vegetable Plot. John Smart once again managed to claim The Best in Show prize and Best Wildlife garden. He had cleverly managed to combine his interest in the promotion of wildlife with a garden that encouraged wildlife and was



Buttsbury Infants School

aesthetically pleasing.

Although the weather had made it a difficult time for gardeners, the judges were amazed to see how people had transformed gardens or commercial premises. Beautiful hanging baskets and window boxes did much to brighten up Billericay during the wet summer.

We had a pleasant and happy atmosphere at the prize-giving held at Canon Roche Social Centre. We were lucky enough to have Ken Crowther from BBC Radio Essex to speak and present the prizes. We were pleased that Mo Larkin, Mayor of Basildon and Councillor Kay Twitchen, Chairman Essex County Council, were also able to attend.

Our thanks go to sponsors, the judges and residents who made our competition such a success.

We are in the process of planning our competition for this year and have asked for suggestions regarding improvement and categories. These ideas could be included in this year's competition. For the first time entrants will be asked to submit photographs to help the judges draw up a shortlist. Hopefully, there will be even more entries and lots of sunshine to help the gardeners.

Christmas Lights Working Party – Chairman: Cllr. Jo Clark

The Billericay Town annual festive switch on of the Christmas Lights took place on Saturday, November

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Flower beds at Police Station also maintained by the Town Council



Doesn't it look wonderful?



For further information and general enquiries contact:
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W: www.billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk

Official Office Opening times 9.30am - 12.30pm Mon-Fri.

Outside these hours please ring as there may well be office staff present.



Christmas Lights Switch-on

30th. As usual this was well supported. Once again the Salvation Army Band was there to play for us and the Billericay School Choir entertained us with songs and carols. Members of the Youth Council joined in the spirit of the occasion by dressing up in costumes and handing out balloons and treats to the children. Jim Shrubbs, our Town Crier announced the proceedings and Father Christmas, courtesy of the Lions, switched on the lights. The snow fell on time thanks to Cath Thwaites of The Chequers and all in all it was a great start to the festive season in Billericay. This year we tried a new style of lighting display which added colour to the High Street and proved successful. Our thanks go to all the shops, businesses and charities who helped by providing donations to fund the Christmas Lighting display and also those who made such an effort by decorating



Best Dressed Window Winners

their windows and helping to make a wonderful Christmas atmosphere in Billericay. The Best Dressed Window Competition was won this year by the Gift Box, who donated their £100 to St. Francis Hospice, Highly Commended Certificates were awarded to Billericay Blinds, A.E. & J.E. Farrers and The Olive Branch. It is always a very difficult decision, but well done to all the winners and also all

those who also made the effort and helped to make Billericay really festive.

Litter Working Party – Chairman: Cllr. Bob Chapman

During the last year we have held three successful litter picks in the Billericay area including a first ever one at Queens Park and also at Outwood Common



Litter Pick Volunteers

and in the High Street area. The turnout for all of them has been excellent with fifty collectors at Queens Park and a record twenty six bags collected. The response from local residents has been very positive with good feedback especially in the Outwood Common area.

We have continued to ensure that Billericay is supplied with an adequate number of litter bins and have looked at other methods of litter control in liaison with Basildon Council. Another three litter picks are scheduled for this year, and let's hope the support for them continues to grow.

Recreation Working Party – Chairman: Cllr. Peter Bowditch

The Lake Meadows Aeration System – After a careful study of the water condition in the lake between the Town Council and Basildon Borough Council we came to the conclusion that an aeration system would be beneficial to the welfare of the wildlife that is supported by it and also would go a long way to avoiding the Algae problems we have experienced in past years. In November the system was switched on in the presence of representatives from the grant funders and the local authorities plus members of other organisations and members of the public. At this point the Town Council handed over the operating and maintenance of the system to Basildon Borough Council for them to manage and



Lake Meadows

operate as per our agreement. Since the system has been in operation the water has improved and we are delighted to see the great number of people coming along to see the new aeration system and share in the beauty of our wonderful park.

Play Area at Outwood Common – The Town Council engaged in a lengthy and productive consultation with all interested groups in Outwood Common and it was agreed that we work together to install a new play area for children up to eleven years old, plus new goal posts and a youth shelter for the older ones on the village green. At every stage we had open discussions with the local representatives and the results were truly impressive. We also reached agreement with Waltham Forest Borough Council who owned the land for a long lease and with Basildon Borough Council to keep the area free of litter. The generosity of the grant funders allowed the project to go ahead and to be a great success. We are all proud of the results and delighted to see that the children once again have an area in which to play and have fun. Partnerships really work.



Outwood Common Opening

PLANNING COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Ian Davie



The Local Planning Authority (Basildon Council) must notify Billericay Town Council of any relevant planning application or alteration to that application within the Town Council's area. Because there is little scope for building within the Town's urban boundary, most planning applications deal with extensions or conversions or small scale development such as replacing a bungalow with two or three houses (depending on the size of the plot). During the past year the Planning Committee dealt with 265 such applications. The Committee found reasons to object to 114, but Basildon Council granted planning permission to about half of these

– sometimes because the applicant agreed to amend the plans. The number of applications considered by the Committee was somewhat fewer than in previous years. This was possibly the result of legislation introduced by the Government last year relaxing the need for planning permission for large rear extensions and new legislation this year affording greater flexibilities for change of use. These granted permitted development rights to allow buildings used for retail and agricultural purposes to be converted for residential use; changes of use for retail premises to banks and building societies and a range of changes of use to support nurseries providing child care and state funded schools. Permitted development means that an application for normal planning permission is not required provided that certain limits and conditions are met. In January Basildon Council published details of its Local Plan Core Strategy Revised preferred Options

Report, which sets out an overall framework for development in the Borough up to 2031. It estimates that 16,000 new homes will be needed during that period, including 2,000 around Billericay. Since, as already mentioned, there is no scope for accommodating major development within the existing settlement, this means that there must be housing in the surrounding Green Belt: at least 600 houses in two pockets to the east of the town and at least 1,400 in a "western expansion zone", as indicated on the map. Naturally the plans have generated considerable controversy, and the Town Council has endeavoured to mitigate the impact of these proposals on the people of Billericay in its submission to the Borough's public consultation. On a rather more positive note, the Government has released details of the 'Local Green Space' (LGS) designation, introduced in the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework, as a way to provide protection to green areas of particular importance to local communities. The Town Council will use the LGS scheme as a basis for protection of smaller open spaces in Billericay as identified in the Billericay Design Statement, such as Perry Green, Home Meadows and David's Walk, which add so much to the character of the Town. The Planning Committee convenes every two weeks and meetings are open to residents who wish to comment on specific proposals which might affect them; Agendas and Minutes for all meetings which

Planning Committee – continued from page 2

include details of applications and recommendations can be seen on the Council's web site.

The Committee is responsible for three Working Parties or Project Groups:

- Conservation Area and Street Signs
- Salt Bags and Bins
- Country Walks

Countryside Walks Project Group – Cllr. S McCaffrey



Last year it was suggested that the Town Council might produce leaflets describing walks around Billericay along the lines of the Circular Walks leaflet already available from the Council. The aim was to raise the awareness of those interested in the countryside

outside the town and encourage visits to Wildlife Centres at Norsey Wood, Queens Park and Laindon Common.

In conjunction with Living Landscapes the first leaflet, showing three walks commencing at Norsey Wood with maps and describing items of interest on the way, was launched at an event during the Civic Weekend on 15/16 March. Copies can be obtained from the Town Council office.

Salt Bags & Bins Working Party – Cllr. I Davie

As usual last November the Town Council distributed bags of salt grit free of charge to residents to assist with problems on the many steep inclines in Billericay caused by ice and snow. Of course, this winter the

weather was quite mild, so there must be two tonnes of salt languishing in garages and sheds around the town, waiting for a vicious cold spell. (Probably in summer.)

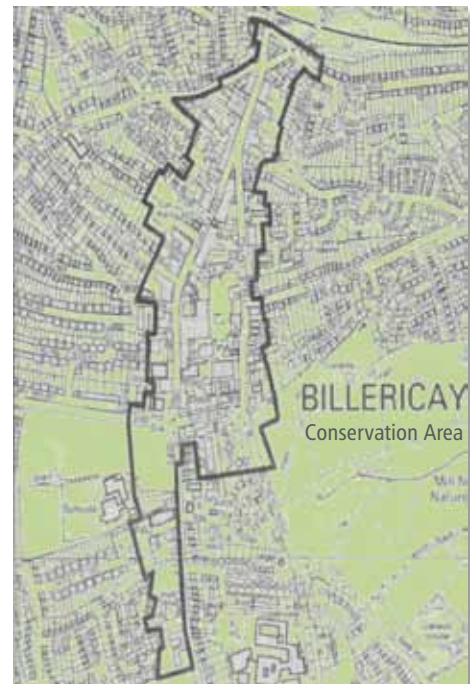
Just a word of advice: the salt supplied is highly corrosive, so keep it away from garden tools and other metal items.

The salt provided in this way supplements salt in wayside bins provided by Essex County Council. A number of residents have enquired about adding further bins in troublesome locations. ECC policy is to only maintain existing bins, but has agreed that the Town Council can purchase and install additional bins on highway verges.

Conservation Area and Street Signs Working Party – Cllr. J Devlin

During the past year this Working Party has continued to monitor the street furniture and signage in the Conservation Area to ensure that all signs are relevant and that redundant signs and posts are removed. We have now started to write a Conservation Area Guidance for all occupiers of premises within the Conservation Area. It has become clear that many occupiers do not understand the obligations that they have within this Area. The vitality of our Town Centre is dependent upon maintaining its unique character as well ensuring that the historic buildings are preserved and not affected by poor design of surrounding buildings. We are working closely with Basildon Borough Council whose help has been invaluable. The outcome of this work will be seen during the forthcoming year and hope that this guidance will be incorporated in the Local Plan so that Billericay's heritage can be protected and the

area improved. Our current plan is that we provide a written guide to be distributed to every property which details what they can and cannot do without permission and also design guidance to show what is acceptable. Billericay Town Centre depends upon its character to survive in these challenging times for retailers and we look forward to maintaining a High Street that does not suffer from boarded up shops.

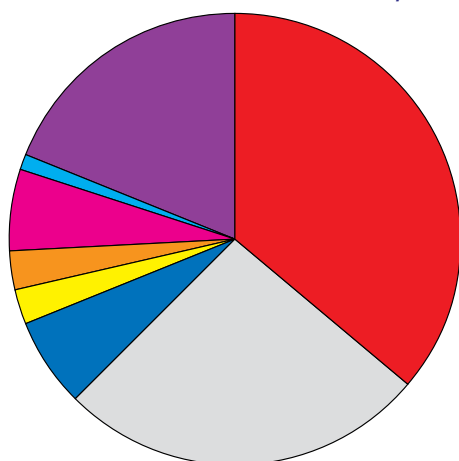


FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Jim Devlin

The past year has been yet again a financially stable one for Billericay Town Council. Town and Parish Councils do not receive a block grant from Central Government, so unlike County, Borough and District Councils we have not suffered from a reduction in income. Thus Billericay Town Council has not needed to reduce services and expenditure on local services and facilities and at the same time has not needed to raise the precept that you pay.

During the financial year 2013/14 we are pleased to once again report that all expenditure has remained within budget and that the Council retains a healthy financial position. We have continued to cover

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES 2013/2014



- Administration & Council Members
- Recreational Facilities
- Publications
- Public Toilets
- Youth Town Council
- Christmas Lights
- Earmarked Reserves
- Other Projects

the cost of regular expenditure on things such as Christmas Lights in the High Street and fund the Billericay in Bloom event as well as finance a new Children's playground at Outwood Common and the new fountain and aeration system in Lake Meadows. A change to the way that the precept you pay is calculated regarding Council Tax Relief means that we collect less than before from the directly paid

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES		
2012/13	EXPENDITURE	2013/14
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
99	Administration & Council Members	114
23	Recreational Facilities	83
19	Public Toilets	20
7	Christmas Lights	8
24	Other Projects	9
10	Publications	18
15	Election	0
2	Youth Town Council	4
53	Earmarked Reserves*	59
14	To General Reserve	0
267	Total	315

*Earmarked reserves are for Christmas Lights £2,000, Elections £6,000 and Building Fund £51,000.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
2012/13	INCOME	2013/14
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
246	Precept	246
7	Interest earned	5
2	Local sponsorship	4
12	Outside funding	60
0	From General Reserve	0
267	Total	315

precept. To ensure that Town and Parish Councils do not have to put up their precept to cover this, Central Government makes a grant to the Borough Council to cover this reduction in income. Many Borough and District Councils do not pass on this money in full leading to the Town or Parish Council having to increase their precept. I am pleased to report that Basildon Borough Council has not taken this course of action, despite the financial constraints they are under, and they passed this money to the Town Council in 2013/2014. They have also committed to doing the same for the coming financial year, 2014/2015, and they deserve recognition for their honest approach to this matter which sadly many other councils have not. We are pleased to report that for the fifth year running the precept will remain the same at £19.80 for a band D property.

ITC Working Party – Cllr. Jules Bottazzi

This year, the ICT and website working party has continued to make improvements to the Town Council's website, reviewing it regularly and making updates. The recent addition of Google Analytics has enabled us to see with which pages the public interacts the most, so we can tailor our content accordingly. The Council continues to review and update hardware for the office as necessary and have ensured secure back up of data off site. The way people communicate is changing and, to ensure we speak to all age groups, we have recently opened a Twitter account to keep the public updated on news and events. To simplify communication with your councillors each member has an email address consisting of first name.last name @ billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk.



Town Crier Working Party – Cllr. M Wilson

The Town Crier goes from strength to strength. This year we have produced four issues which go into all homes in the town. The distributor has been changed and we are now experiencing fewer problems than before. The Town Crier not only allows us to inform residents of the many and varied activities of the Town Council but also features events and anniversaries of our local organisations.

Town Guide Working Party – Cllr. M Wilson

It is encouraging that the Community News section is increasingly being used by local groups to share what they are doing with the rest of the town.

The eighth edition of the Town Guide was launched in November with the tagline “Billericay – A

Great Place to Be”.

This was borne out by the many and varied contributions from our clubs and societies. The guide continues to find its way around the world where it is read by former residents of the town and those who have visited here. Again we are indebted to our graphic designer who always manages to fit that ‘quart’ into a pint pot.



Report for 2013-2014

The Youth Council had a very busy year which was marked by a number of events we organised for the young people of Billericay. Who could have predicted that our first event of the year, the Easter Egg Hunt at Lake Meadows would be cancelled due to snow! A hasty rescheduling meant that the event became a May Day Egg Hunt, but was well attended and enjoyed by all who took part. The Cake Bake in the Reading Rooms was very popular and we sold out of cakes. Following on from the success of our Urban Games in 2012 another one was held last July and that was even more popular than the previous year. It is now our intention to hold an even bigger, better Urban Games this summer! The Live Music Night held at Hannakins Farm on 15th March, which was part of the Community Event Weekend, was great fun and all those who participated and attended really enjoyed themselves. The Youth Council comprises young people aged between 11-16. You don't need any special skills or qualifications to become a member and elections will be held in November 2014. All that's required is you either attend a Billericay school or live in Billericay, and it's a great way to make new friends and give something to the community.



**COUNCILLORS ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS
7 MARCH 2013 – 18 FEBRUARY 2014**

NO. OF MEETINGS	22	7	7	8		
COUNCILLOR	PLANNING	FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES	ENVIRONMENT	COUNCIL	WPs/Pgs	TOTAL
Cllr T Arnold				3		3
Cllr J Bellringer	5			7	1	13
Cllr J Bottazzi			5	4	9	18
Cllr P Bowditch	17	5	7	7	26	62
Cllr T Bown		3	1	3	1	8
Cllr J Buchanan	20	3	8	9	43	83
Cllr R Chapman			8	8	20	36
Cllr J Clark	15		6	9	23	53
Cllr I Davie	24			7	18	49
Cllr M Dear	13	7		8	13	41
Cllr J Devlin	19	7	4	4	22	56
Cllr C Dyer		7	6	6	4	23
Cllr S McCaffrey	24			9	24	57
Cllr M Moore	17	7	8	6	17	55
Cllr R Rapley		3		6	11	20
Cllr D Spencer	16		1	5	7	29
Cllr T Stansfield		5		3	6	14
Cllr P Went			6	8	12	26
Cllr E Willis				3	5	8
Cllr M Wilson		6	8	7	13	34

BILLERICAY TOWN COUNCILLORS

Name	Address	Phone No.	E-Mail	Ward
Tina Arnold	c/o Billericay Town Council	07806612662	tina.arnold@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
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Peter Bowditch	18 Cranmer Close, Billericay, CM12 0YQ	01277 659530	peter.bowditch@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
Tony Bown	76 Western Road, Billericay, CM12 9DT	01277 625732	tony.bown@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
John Buchanan	72 Meadow Rise, Billericay, CM11 2EF	01277 656715	john.buchanan@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
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Jo Clark	33 Carson Road, Billericay, CM11 1SA	01277 659842	jo.clark@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
Ian Davie	51 Tye Common Road, Billericay, CM12 9NR	01277 656139	ian.davie@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	SW
Marie Dear	c/o Billericay Town Council	01277 625732	marie.dear@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
Jim Devlin	231 Perry Street, Billericay, CM12 0NZ	01277 656937	jim.devlin@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
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Susan McCaffery	25 The Rising, Billericay, CM11 2HN	01277 625732	susan.mccaffery@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
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Rod Rapley	43 Crescent Road, Billericay, CM12 0JQ	01277 622125	rod.rapley@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
Daphne Spencer	Fir Tree Lodge, 16 Back Lane, Stock, CM4 9DG	01277 829750	daphne.spencer@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
Trevor Stansfield	174 Perry Street, Billericay, CM12 0NX	01277 623519	trevor.stansfield@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
Pamela Went	4 The Mullions, Billericay, CM12 9XG	01277 658961	pamela.went@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
Emma Willis	5 Bluebell Wood, Billericay, CM12 0ES	01277 625732	emma.willis@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	W
Marion Wilson	25 Parklands, Billericay, CM11 1AS	01277 626321	marion.wilson@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	E
CHAIRMAN:	Cllr John Buchanan			
TOWN CLERK:	Deborah Tonkiss Billericay Town Council The Loft, Crown Yard, High Street Billericay, Essex CM12 9BX	Telephone: Fax: E-Mail: Website:	01277 625732 01277 634784 townclerk@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk www.billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk	

FACTS

The Town Council represents YOU and has a consultative role in relation to Basildon Borough Council, Essex County Council and other authorities responsible for police, water and health.

DID YOU KNOW

- ▶ the Town Council's Coach House meeting room in Crown Yard is available to hire at reasonable cost; a comfortably furnished room which can accommodate up to 40 people seated. For details of hire, contact the Town Clerk.
- ▶ the Annual Report can be made available in large print. To obtain a copy in alternative format please contact the Town Council.
- ▶ the Town Council has supplies of the Pink recycling sacks – free of charge, White Garden waste sacks – £1.80 per roll and Food waste sacks – £3.00 per roll.
- ▶ members of the public are welcome to attend Council and Committee meetings and are given the opportunity to ask questions – dates of meetings and agendas are available on the Council's website.
- ▶ copies of the Billericay Design Statement are also available from the Town Council office.