



Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2015/2016

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2015 Cllr. Jim Devlin

As we near the end of my first term as Council Chairman I am pleased that this Council has been able to continue to keep our portion of the Council Tax that you pay the same yet again. This means that the charges from Billericay Town Council have not increased since 2010 without any reduction in services to the Town, and in fact some improvements, of which this Council is rightly proud.

I have been impressed this year with the community spirit that Billericay has and this has been demonstrated in the many events I have attended in my role as Chairman. We should all be proud of the Town that we live in which is a vibrant place with all sorts of activities taking place.

Over the past year the Council has been active in a number of new areas. Police cuts to budgets and reorganisation meant that Essex Police

were no longer able to provide ad hoc support to the Remembrance Day Parade in the High Street. Obviously this Act of Remembrance could not take place without the road being closed and so the Council were approached by the British Legion to help. This meant a formal road closure had to be organised and signposted, a cost we were not expecting. However again the community rallied to support with kind donations to the cost from Cooperative Funeralcare and the Billericay Society. The other new departure for the Council was a much larger Christmas Lights Switch On. Over 400 adults and children attended on a rather cold Saturday afternoon and because of the road closure this was very safe for the children. There were some lessons to be learned from this event as shops reported much reduced trade on that Saturday afternoon. To address this we are looking to make some changes for 2016 but still retain a safe and fun

event for children and adults alike in the lead up to Christmas.

By the end of this financial year Billericay Town Council should have taken over the Day Centre in Chantry Way from Basildon Borough Council. We see this as yet another opportunity to increase the services we offer to the Town and we look forward to expanding the use of this Town Centre facility. Over the coming year we will be working with current users and potential new users to see how we move this facility forward.

2016 is election year for Billericay Town Council and on 5th May all councillors are up for re-election. A number of current councillors are retiring and I would particularly like to thank them for all the work they have put into making Billericay a great place to be. Overleaf we have published councillors attendance at meetings so you can see the large amount of effort councillors have put into their local community.

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Adam Adshead

The role of the Finance and General Purposes Committee is to oversee and scrutinise all of the Council's financial activities to ensure that they comply with Financial Regulations and that the Council continues to operate within its budget.

Whilst each year is more challenging we are pleased that for the seventh year running the Precept (the portion of your Council Tax that goes to the Town Council) will remain at £19.80 for a Band D property. This works out at less than 2.5 pence a day per resident.

We have worked hard to ensure that we continue to be able to invest in our Town, many positive results of which are detailed in the Environment Committee's report.

We are also pleased to have been able to approve grants to a number of organisations. These include

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES

2014/15	EXPENDITURE	2015/16
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
113	Administration & Council Members	100
37	Recreational Facilities	35
17	Public Toilets	19
8	Christmas Lights	14
4	Other Projects	2
10	Publications	16
9	Election	0
4	Youth Town Council	1
57	Earmarked Reserves*	75
0	To General Reserve	0
259	Total	262

*Earmarked reserves are for Building Fund £75,000.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2014/15	INCOME	2015/16
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
246	Precept	246
4	Interest earned	3
4	Local sponsorship	3
5	Outside funding	7
0	From General Reserve	0
259	Total	262

2015/16 figures as at 3rd February 2016

helping sponsor the Billericay Town Football Club Under 16's Team to provide shirts for their young players; supporting the Friends of Lake Meadows in the refurbishment of the "Child in the Park Garden"; helping to establish the Billericay Community Cinema, and helping Christ Church, Billericay in funding part of a major drain repair project.

During the year we have focused on increasing our reach in communicating with residents.

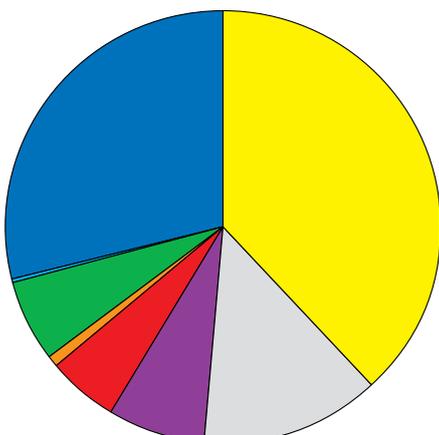
The popular Town Crier Newsletter continues to be produced and delivered to each household every quarter and a new edition of the Town Guide was launched in October and has gained some very positive responses.

This year we've seen significant changes in Billericay Town Council's online presence. Many areas of the website have been rewritten, redesigned or added to. We've made information easier to find within the constraints of our existing software, and an upgrade planned for the coming year will make this process even easier. In addition to Minutes of meetings we've now added all key Council documents to ensure our activities are both open and transparent.

We've built on our Twitter presence (@Billericay_TC) increasing the number of followers and have improved the impact of our Tweets by using more graphics. This year has seen the addition of a Facebook page (facebook.com/BillericayTownCouncil) which has quickly established itself and all of our important announcements are now also posted here. At relatively short notice the Town Council stepped in at the request of the British Legion to fund the necessary road closure and allow the Remembrance Day parade to continue.

Finally our Assets Sub-Committee have been working closely with Basildon Borough Council to arrange the transfer of the Chantry Way Day Centre to Billericay Town Council on a 99 year lease thus safeguarding the site for community use.

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES 2015/2016



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

For further information and general enquiries contact: Town Clerk

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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.

Find us on Facebook/BillericayTownCouncil



@BillericayTC



ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Moira Moore

The Environment Committee assists in the enhancement of Billericay's environment. We do this either by providing additional services, or enhancing services provided by other councils.

We provide the Christmas lights in the High Street in the winter and in the summer we provide the hanging baskets in the High Street. We provide additional litter picks in areas where residents have highlighted that an extra clean up would be beneficial. We also hold the Billericay in Bloom competition each year – this year was the 18th year of this popular event. Lake Meadows park goes from strength to strength and this year the Town Council in partnership with Basildon Borough Council and the Royal Horticultural Society Hyde Hall, installed a rhododendron walk on an overgrown area in Lake Meadows which was cleared and landscaped with rhododendrons and azaleas.

The Town Council renovated the Festival Gardens in Crown Road last year and the improvements have been much appreciated by local residents. The garden's reputation as an oasis of calm in the town is growing and the number of visits to the garden by local residents has increased substantially.

A new countryside walks leaflet was produced which featured three circular walks in the area with detailed routes and notes of the local flora and fauna that can be found along the routes.

COMMEMORATION WORKING PARTY – Chairman Cllr. Jo Clark

The group has been preparing for two forthcoming events, one being the lighting of the town beacon in honour of the Queen's 90th birthday which will be part of a national celebration; secondly we are also marking the 100 years since Billericay attracted national interest when a zeppelin was brought down over the town. The group is also organising a new award to recognize someone who has made a big contribution in the town and will become Citizen of the Year.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY – Chairman Cllr. Jo Clark

An immensely popular Christmas lights switch on event was held in November last year. For the first time the High Street was partially closed to enable the Town Council to hold a much larger event than in previous years. This included a stage with school choirs and the Salvation Army band leading the spectators in carol singing. Our annual best dressed window competition was won by the Olive Branch

with commendation certificates to the Little Tin Shed, the Gift Box, Billericay Blinds, Halls Interiors and Ravens Bakery. We are looking forward to the Christmas Lights Switch On event on Sunday 20th November 2016.

RECREATION WORKING PARTY – Cllr. Peter Bowditch

Lake Meadows – Our partnership with Basildon Borough Council and Friends of Lake Meadows is a very important arrangement which allows Lake Meadows to benefit with ideas and investment from outside sources for our residents and visitors to Billericay.

The skateboard area had a £10,000 makeover earlier this year after an expert survey made the point that this wooden design was unique in the area and was visited by BMX riders from miles around. It is a joy to watch the bravado of these young people, and some not so young, testing their skills in the most adventurous ways, especially during the summer months.

The Rhododendron Walk planted a year ago is maturing well and will be a very colourful spectacle this year and for years to come.



l-r Steve Prewer Basildon Borough Council, Town Councillors Peter Bowditch, Moira Moore, Adam Adshead and Rob Baker, Basildon Borough Council

We have cooperated in a flowering cherry tree planting arrangement with Bennetts Funeral Directors who are celebrating 125 years in business this year. They have made a significant contribution by donating a number of these flowering trees to Lake Meadows in agreement with Basildon Borough Council. The preparation and planting of these trees in various locations will add to the ambience of the area, which we have supported.

In October the 'Plant a Shrub' event took place in the Festival Gardens and 29 families and friends of loved ones contributed to the garden by planting a variety of shrubs. This year we continued to maintain and improve Jim Shields garden.

COUNCILLORS ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS APRIL 2015 – 3 FEBRUARY 2016

COUNCILLOR	PLANNING	FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES	ENVIRONMENT	COUNCIL	WPs/PGs	TOTAL
Cllr A Adshead	16	6	6	5	27	60
Cllr T Arnold				2		2
Cllr J Bellringer				6	2	8
Cllr P Bowditch	15	6	6	5	16	48
Cllr J Buchanan	20	1	6	6	30	63
Cllr R Chapman			6	7	2	15
Cllr J Clark	17	5	7	5	47	81
Cllr I Davie	19			6	19	44
Cllr M Dear	11	5		7	10	33
Cllr J Devlin	12	6	6	7	48	79
Cllr C Dyer		6	6	6	5	23
Cllr S McCaffrey	15			6	13	34
Cllr L Mitchelmore	4			2	1	7
Cllr M Moore	16	6	6	4	26	58
Cllr R Rapley		4		3	7	14
Cllr D Spencer	19		7	5	19	50
Cllr T Stansfield		3		3		6
Cllr E Willis				4	1	5
Cllr M Wilson		5	6	3	14	28

PLANNING COMMITTEE Chairman Cllr. Ian Davie

The Planning Committee meets every two weeks throughout the year to examine planning applications affecting the Town. In 2015-16 we considered a total of 307 proposals. Most of these related to residential conversions and extensions, but the cumulative effect of even small modifications can be detrimental to the street scene.

The Committee raised objections to 128 applications and about half of these were upheld by Basildon Council. At Basildon, planning decisions are usually delegated to the Council's Manager of Planning Services; more contentious cases are reviewed by the Borough Planning Committee. An example was an application to replace Wallinhurst Garage in Chapel Street with a 24 hour filling station. The Town Council objected strongly on a number of grounds: noise nuisance to nearby residents, traffic congestion at a busy junction in a narrow street, inappropriate operations in the town centre Conservation Area etc. Surprisingly, Planning Services recommended approval; fortunately, the application then went before the Planning Committee in Basildon which refused it.

As well as planning applications we review proposals for changes to planning law and regulations and, if necessary, respond to public consultations. This year we looked at Basildon's Statement of Community Involvement, which explored ways of publicising planning applications; another was a Department for Communities and Local Government consultation on how to achieve more starter homes in urban and rural locations. At the time of writing, we are in the throes of preparing a response to the Borough's 2016 Draft Local Plan.

In addition to the foregoing duties, the Planning Committee oversees two Working Parties:

- Conservation Area and Street Signs
- Salt Bags and Bins

This year saw publication of the Billericay Conservation Area and Shopfront Design Guide and its subsequent adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. This vital guide helps us to enhance and protect our town centre's vibrant and attractive character. It ensures that modern shopfronts can be sympathetically designed to blend in with much older buildings, as shown in the photograph.

With another mild winter, the Salt Bags and Bins Working Party had an uneventful year. However, anticipating that next winter may be quite different, we have selected sites for a further six wayside salt bins after receiving 38 requests from residents.



Publicity Officer: Youth Cllr. Todd Brand

This year I have had a wonderful time with the BYTC.

The first event I attended after joining the group was the Mothers Day arts and crafts. It was a great success and we all had a wonderful time. After that we did massively well with the Halloween Cake sale, where the Youth Councillors all made and decorated cakes at home to be sold to children on Halloween, raising funds for the BYTC. An overall highlight of the whole year had to be our group trip to the Houses of Parliament. We had a tour of the House of Lords and House of Commons, seeing where the political debates took place, learning about the history of Parliament, and finding out how it was run, which was very helpful for the aspiring politicians in the group. Other notable moments over the year included paying our respects at the Billericay Remembrance Day by laying a wreath, a hilarious trip to rope runners, and broadening our horizons with the Basildon Youth Strategy Group, and inspiring councillors from other parts of the county to set up their own Youth Council Group. Overall, we have all had a very enjoyable and productive year.