



Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2018/2019

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT Cllr. Jim Devlin



As I look back over the past year I find that much of it has been dominated by one issue, the new building in Chantry Way. Last year we produced our first combined Town Crier and Annual Report and in that issue I was pictured standing outside the old Day Centre with a sledgehammer. If I had started the demolition single handed at that time I am sure I would have completed it faster. It is an unwritten rule of any public works that the original plan runs massively behind schedule and if that is true the new building in Chantry Way is not going to be an exception. Much of the delay was caused by the utility companies slowness in disconnecting the electricity and gas supplies so demolition could begin. This hold up resulted in squatters moving in and delaying the utility companies. However, all is now done and those of you that have ventured down Chantry Way behind the Chequers pub will have seen a rather fetching blue hoarding around the site awaiting building contractors to start.

The new Town Hall will house the office and Council meeting room but will mainly be a community space in the same way that the old Day Centre was. The building will have a hall and kitchen replicating the facility that existed before in a modern structure with updated

facilities. However, the building will also have three smaller rooms that can be used for meetings and presentations by clubs and organisations in a more intimate setting. The entrance area to the building has been identified as the Community Hub and it will become whatever the community makes of it. This space should be where clubs and organisations reach out to others in the community in an informal setting. This is an exciting phase in the life of the Town and the Town Council.

At our Civic Service on 10th March the theme was Embracing Community and I spoke about a sense of place being central to bringing about a sense of community. The role of the Town Council is to add the things that the other responsible Councils, Essex and Basildon do not have statutory responsibility to do. Billericay Town Council looks after the things that make Billericay, Billericay. We maintain the War Memorial and I am so pleased the Town came together to crowdfund the Floodlighting and the Tommies to mark the 10th anniversary of the end of WW1. We provide the hanging baskets and planting in the centre of town and next year we will have a focal point in the town with a new Town Hall.

Over the year I have attended many events around the Town but the ones that always give me great pleasure are presenting our Citizens of the Year Awards. I was delighted to present



Chairman Cllr Jim Devlin presents Young Citizen of the Year Award to Jasmine Regan

the Citizen of the Year Award to Kay Baker the Leader of 2nd Billericay Scouts. I was able to sneak in at the end of the Scouts AGM and present the Award in true "This Is Your Life" style, which came as a great surprise to her. The award was well deserved. I also was pleased to present the Young Citizen of The Year Award to Jasmine Regan for all her community activity. Jasmine is an Air Cadet and I was able to present the Award, again as a surprise, at the air cadet's award service at All Saints Church, Stock.

Finally, I must thank my fellow councillors and our staff for the hard work they have put in this year as some have put in many hours working on the Chantry Way building development as well as keeping all the rest of the show on the road. ■

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.

Billericay Town Council alone, with local sponsors, pays for the hanging baskets in Billericay High Street a much-appreciated feature during the summer months. The Town Council also provides the flowering plant displays in the planters outside Poundland and in the Jim Shields Garden at the junction of Western Road with the High Street. We also provide planting outside the police station. We also look after two small gardens in Billericay – the Festival Gardens located in Crown Road and the Jim Shield Gardens.

THE WAR MEMORIAL

We also fund the various plantings around the war memorial throughout the year, and help clean it in readiness for the annual Remembrance Sunday Service in November. This last year was

of particular importance as the 100th anniversary commemoration of the end of the First World War. The beacon on Sun Corner was also lit as part of these commemoration events.

The Town Council was proud to support the installation of lighting at the War Memorial. A local company, Russell Stillwell, supplied and installed the lights free of charge. This new feature at the War Memorial is much appreciated by Billericay residents.

BILLERICAY IN BLOOM

Each year we hold the Billericay in Bloom competition. This year was the twentieth year that

the competition was held. We had a total of twelve entry categories including the best school garden, best front garden, best commercial premises and best wildlife garden. Local infant and primary schools entered the category 'Children's Plant in a Recycled Container'. The event was well supported by Billericay residents, businesses and schools.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Over recent years the Town Council's annual 'Celebration of Christmas Lights' had become larger with more and more residents attending the lights switch-on event. The closure of part of the High Street, the control of traffic particularly around the Chapel Street junction and the

increasing number of attendees in support of this event was proving problematic and so this year we moved the event to Sun Corner. This proved to be very popular as the safety of all was greatly improved. It also resolved the issue of car parking for attendees and did not involve closing any part of the High Street. Entertainment was provided by local schools, clubs and societies together with, of course, Father Christmas. ■





The Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) oversees and scrutinises all of the Council's financial activities ensuring that they comply with Financial Regulations and that the Council continues to operate within its budget. It also has responsibility for those activities which don't naturally fall within the remit of our Environment or Planning Committees – the development of the new Chantry Way community building being the prime example this year.

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 coming year we have raised the Precept by 2% to cover increased costs. This represents an increase of 45 pence per year for a typical Band D property – less than a penny per week.

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

A small grant budget is available to be awarded to local community and charitable groups providing services to the town. This year it included a grant of £500 to help fund the setup costs of the School Pastors, a partner group of the Street Pastors, and £100 to the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance.

THE BILLERICAY YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

The Youth Town Council has had a very exciting year. Run on the same basis as the Town Council it is designed to be a place where young adults aged between 11 and 18 can develop new skills, build self confidence and support and help their local community.

A number of experienced YT Councillors left for college and university and with elections being held in schools this year we've welcomed some

new and very enthusiastic additions onto the Council.

Highlight of the year must be the well attended "Tonight We are Young" talent show organised by the YTC which was a big success. They've also attended Basildon Youth Council's Mental Health Project launch, had a briefing by and discussion with Town Cllr Lesley Mitchelmore on the Local Plan, attended the Remembrance Sunday parade, led the judging of the Christmas shop window competition and supported the Christmas Light switch on, the Soapbox Derby and the Billericay Fireworks.

CHANTRY WAY REDEVELOPMENT

Inevitably most of the work of the committee this past year has focussed on the redevelopment of the Chantry Way Centre to provide a new hall and meeting rooms for local community groups to use as well as bringing in funds from commercial hire.

The old Chantry Way Centre had reached the end of its life and by the time you read this will have been demolished in preparation for the new build.

Last August we launched a 3 week public consultation including a widely publicised Open Day which featured the latest plans and a "fly through" computer graphic demonstration. Architects and Town Councillors were present throughout to discuss the plans and answer questions with over 150 people attending. A number of constructive comments were made many of which were incorporated into later versions of those plans. Feedback from our 10 survey questions was both very positive and very detailed and there was clearly a great desire to see a new community facility built. We would like to thank all those residents who visited the Open Day and took part in the survey.

In late November the plans for the new building were passed by Basildon Borough Council and during this time we also went out to tender for the demolition of the existing centre.

Following the awarding of the contract, work on the demolition was significantly delayed as we had to wait a very long time for the gas network operator to disconnect our supply. During this period unfortunately squatters moved in. Although they were swiftly dealt with this necessitated a court order, with the legal costs and various additional activities sadly amounting to over £8,300.

Whilst all this has been going on we've been meeting regularly with our architects designing the internal structure and facilities within the building and we have also launched the tender for its construction. We will have the tender submissions in late March with our architects validating and

shortlisting potential suppliers by mid April for the Town Council to make a final decision.

Our vision for the new centre is to provide a flexible use hall and meeting rooms maximising its social benefit through its use by community groups whilst delivering value by generating revenue from commercial hire. By moving our Town Council office from its current leased building 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 money 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. ■

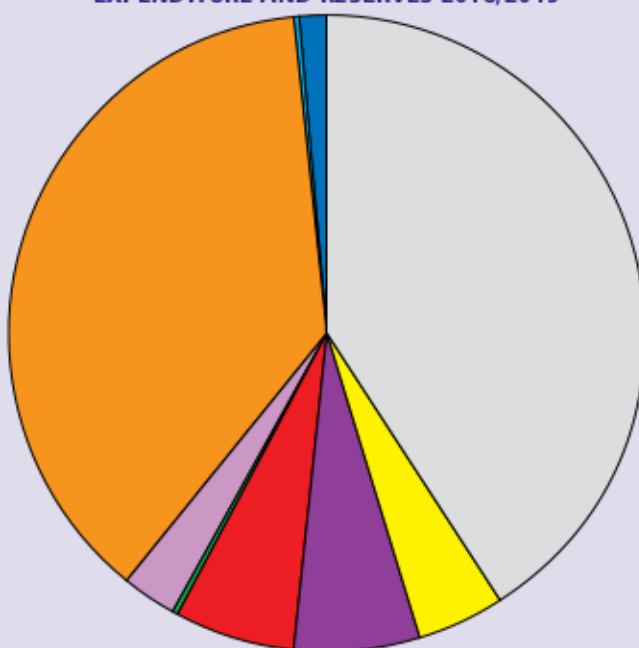
EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES

2017/18	EXPENDITURE	2018/19
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
124	Administration & Council Members	129
29	Recreational Facilities	14
20	Public Toilets	20
20	Christmas Lights	19
0	Other Projects	1
9	Publications	9
0	Election	0
21	Chantry Way Centre	118
1	Youth Town Council	1
2	Earmarked Reserves	4
38	To General Reserve	0
264	Total	315

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2017/18	INCOME	2018/19
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
249	Precept	275
1	Interest Earned	4
3	Local Sponsorship	5
2	Outside Funding	10
0	From General Reserve	16
0	From Earmarked Reserve	4
9	Chantry Way Centre	0
0	Premises Letting	1
264	Total	315

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES 2018/2019



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



CONSERVING OUR TREE HERITAGE

In association with Billericay Town Council

THE BILLERICAY TREE WARDENS

We were formed in 2017 because it was realised that some of our veteran trees, especially oaks, were being felled and not always for valid reasons while Bigger threats to our trees are afoot with respect to the "Local Plan." Our main aim has been to raise awareness in the town as to our "Tree Heritage." In 2019 we are to embark on several substantial tree planting projects on the edge of our town together with several smaller projects on our inner green public spaces. Our members are the "eyes and ears" of their local patch. ■