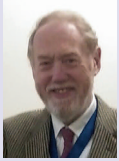




Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2020/2021

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020/21 Cllr. Jim Devlin



I think I can honestly say that when I wrote my report last year and mentioned Coronavirus in the last paragraph I had no idea what a year we were in for. Covid-19 has dominated the entire municipal year and has no doubt dominated many of your lives. For those of you that have suffered loss or severe illness, I offer my sympathy and hopefully we are now able to look forward to managing the situation.

The emergency regulations that were brought in by the Government immediately hit Town Council operations and necessitated the closure of the office for a number of weeks, and although staff were eventually allowed to return we still had to remain closed to the public. The build of the new Chantry Centre was also stopped for a few weeks and thus completion was delayed; however, this did not really have much impact as even when it was eventually completed at the beginning of January we could not open to the public.

In the early days of the pandemic the Town Council was able to make several grants to local organisations that were helping local people to cope with the problems of the "stay at home" rule by setting up contact groups and delivery groups for food and medicines. As a Town Council we were in a position to act quickly in the early days before the County or Central Government were able to swing into action; however, our resources were naturally limited and once these larger sources of funding became available we were able to step back.

The pandemic did affect the running of the Council because the regulations prevented meetings taking place, and we had to set up systems whereby we could run remote meetings once the legislation was enacted to make these legal. Surprisingly these remote video meetings have worked quite well and it is possible that Government will look at allowing some sort of hybrid meetings in the future.

Normally I mention some of the events I have attended over the course of the year and am able to highlight some of the people that have

been involved, such as our Citizen of the Year. Naturally, nothing has happened this year except when I attended the installation of the new vicar for St. John the Divine at Outwood Common, Rupert Hankey, the sole event that sneaked in between lockdowns.

Despite all the problems most of the work of the Council has gone on as normal. My thanks must go to our ever-hardworking staff who have, despite the difficulties, pulled things together and managed to get the Chantry Centre finished and also find time to get the magnificent statue erected on the corner of Western Road and High Street in the Jim Shields Garden. The Statue, "They Sailed For Freedom", put up to commemorate 400 years since the Mayflower sailed, was just about the only thing that it was possible to do last year to mark that event. My final act this year as Chairman was a sad one, lowering the Town flag to half mast to mark the death of HM The Duke of Edinburgh.

We now look forward to the Chantry Centre becoming a vibrant hub for the community in the centre of town, something this Council has been working towards for many years. ■

HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Moira Moore



The Health, Wellbeing & Environment Committee works to enhance the environment around Billericay. We do this either by providing additional services or enhancing services provided by other councils. We fund various planting around the War Memorial throughout the year. We look after two small gardens in the town – the Festival Gardens located in Crown Road and the Jim Shields Garden at the junction of the High Street and Western Road. During the year, together with the Billericay Tree Wardens, two apple trees were

planted in the Festival Gardens. The Town Council continues to provide hanging baskets in the High Street during the summer months as well as planting flower displays in the summer and winter in the High Street planters.

Unfortunately much work of the Town Council had to be cancelled, deferred or much reduced by the Covid-19 pandemic that brought about various lockdowns and other restrictions to normal business. As a result we had to cancel our much-loved Billericay in Bloom competition. We did, however, continue to provide the Christmas lights in the High Street. We also displayed the

Tommies at the War Memorial to mark the 75th anniversary of VE day on May 8, 2020.

2020 was the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower and the Town Council commissioned a bronze statue celebrating that event by leading Essex based artist John Doubleday. This was erected in November 2020 in the Jim Shield garden. We made a video showing the installation of the statue and were pleased that it had over 1,000 views (The video can be viewed on the Town Council's website and Facebook page). ■

BYTC Chairman: Oliver Grimes



Over the last year, the Billericay Youth Town Council have worked incredibly hard to still provide our normal years excitement and activities whilst under brand new conditions and operating almost all online, mostly through Zoom. We still, however, managed to bring lots of events to the Billericay community and thanks to the wonderful

aid of technology – the whole world! This year, our main event was our annual showcase which went live to our brand-new YouTube channel in the earlier month of January! We had an incredible array of young talent performing and thanks to our recreated Facebook page (which we'd recommend you follow) received lots of views! So much so, that for this year only, we ran a second showcase in April to celebrate Easter! Our two showcases featured dancers, singers, musicians, actors, and comedians from across Billericay and the surrounding areas. We hope that our next showcase will also take

place in the council's new home, The Chantry Centre. We also welcomed new members onto the team this year and are hoping to do so again now (ready for next year) as some of the older folk leave. We have many exciting events planned next year to help in the community alongside other local organisations and through doing so, we hope that new members can gain new friends, learn new skills, and make a positive change to Billericay as a whole. If you are interested in joining or know someone (age 11-18) who might be – then don't be afraid to contact us through the Town Clerk! ■



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For further information and general enquiries contact: Town Clerk
Billericay Town Council • The Chantry Centre • Chantry Way • Billericay CM11 2AP

Official Office Opening times 9.30am - 12.30pm Mon-Fri. Outside these hours please ring as there may well be office staff present.



FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Adam Adshead



The F&GP Committee normally meets every 6 weeks. It consists of 11 Councillors tasked with overseeing the Council's financial activities, ensuring that they comply with Financial Regulations and that the Council continues to operate within its budget. It also takes on those activities which don't naturally fall within the remit of our other Committees and includes this year's primary focus: the completion of the new Chantry Centre community building.

In common with everyone we've had to deal with the unprecedented challenges presented by Covid-19. There were no formal meetings between April and July after which they resumed online via Zoom. However, this year's 5 committee meetings mask the true workload as behind the scenes we've had our busiest year by far. The impact of Covid couldn't have come at a more difficult time for the construction of the Chantry Centre. When the March 2020 lockdown was initiated the external fabric of the building was nearly complete, however, internal work had only just started and construction was completely halted for 7 weeks. Once building work was able to restart regular meetings to discuss and resolve issues were held with the architects Ingleton Wood and construction group A.W.Hardy who reorganised the building schedule to ensure the various trades were able to safely socially distance. Solid progress was made, however, one element was significantly delayed: the lift was stuck "somewhere in Italy" for a lengthy period.

Fortunately our pre-Covid plans had built in a significant contingency for vacating our leased



The Hall at the Chantry Centre

Photo by Claire Banks Photography

offices and the Chantry Centre finally became the official home of Billericay Town Council on December 29th 2020.

Since December our focus has moved from primarily managing construction to learning how to manage the building and its infrastructure, writing the processes and procedures needed to manage the facility and preparing the centre for eventual hire when Covid permits.

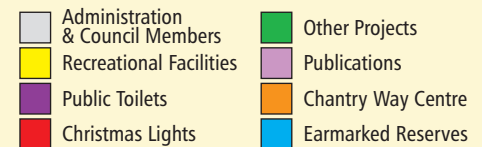
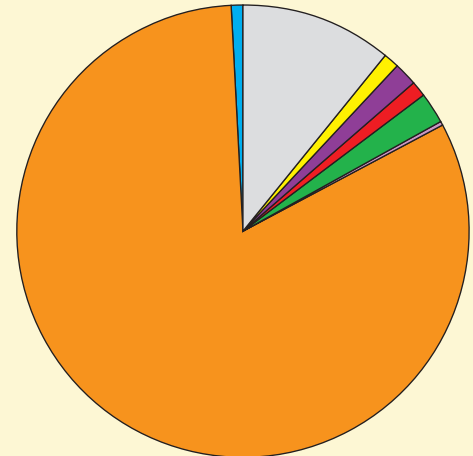
In addition to providing a more cost-effective home for the Town Council our main aims have been to provide modern facilities for the town's community groups to use (replacing those in the demolished Day Centre) and to generate income through the commercial hiring of meeting rooms.

Interest in using the facilities has been encouragingly high. Since February we have been inundated with queries and a wide variety of bookings have been made covering the next 12 months. We've seen significant demand from community groups intending to use the hall and

rooms for events and regular meetings; from individuals running fitness classes for adults and young children; from commercial organisations wanting to hold "off site" staff meetings and from businesses running training sessions.

Covid has caused us challenges – from unanticipated costs through to constraints on usage and public access to the new centre, however we are confident that it will become a significant asset for Billericay and we very much look forward to welcoming Billericay's residents and the many community groups who do so much for our town into the building. ■

EXPENDITURE & RESERVES 2020/2021



EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES

2019/20	EXPENDITURE	2020/21
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
140	Administration & Council Members	122
31	Recreational Facilities	13
20	Public Toilets	19
19	Christmas Lights	13
0	Other Projects	25
9	Publications	3
0	Election	0
828	Chantry Way Centre	919
0	Youth Town Council	0
250	Earmarked Reserves	9
0	To General Reserve	0
1297	Total	1123

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2019/20	INCOME	2020/21
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
282	Precept	292
4	Interest Earned	0
3	Local sponsorship	1
0	Outside Funding	5
7	From General Reserve	616
0	From Earmarked Reserve	9
0	Chantry Way Centre	0
0	Premises Letting	0
1,000	PWLB	200
1297	Total	1123

PLANNING COMMITTEE Vice-Chairman: Cllr. Jim Tutton



Although we have had various lockdowns this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the Planning Committee have continued to review and respond to planning applications collectively, albeit remotely. Indeed we have received more applications this year than last.

In the last year we have reviewed 286 applications, of the 256 that Basildon Borough Council have determined, the outcomes of these resulted in 216 (84%) being in agreement with the

Planning Committee conclusions.

The Committee also gave responses to 3 consultations, Unauthorised Encampments, Planning White Paper and Right to Regenerate, our responses to these were sent using government generated online forms.

There were some changes to licensing in the form of the relaxing of pavement licensing rules, which is meant to assist some high street businesses. Bearing in mind these changes, we considered 7 Licensing applications, all of which were considered acceptable and were granted.

The pandemic will have undoubtedly curtailed some of the issues that would have been given to us to review, analyse and perhaps respond to, post Covid I am sure they will soon arise on the agenda.

Assuming the current relaxing of lockdowns continue as currently scheduled, come June the Planning Committee are looking forward to a return to the face to face meetings we usually have when reviewing your applications, and our first one in the new Chantry Centre. ■