



Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2023/2024

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023/24 Cllr Mark Thomas



It has been my pleasure to serve on Billericay Town Council (BTC) as Chairman since May 2023. During that time, so much has happened locally as well as nationally and internationally.

In May the whole country celebrated the Coronation of King Charles. Being able to celebrate a coronation is something that most people haven't experienced before, so BTC decided to encourage residents and shops to take part in the festivities by awarding prizes for "The best Street Party" and "Best dressed High Street window". The winners were given a £100 towards their chosen charities. BTC also decorated all the new lamp posts in the High Street in red, white and blue garlands. We also purchased a Coronation Plaque for the Chantry Centre and it is now prominently displayed in the lobby – hopefully many of you have now had the opportunity to see it.

The Chantry Centre continues to be a fantastic facility for the town and is being used by a wide range of community groups, businesses and private hirers, as well as being the home

of BTC. As a council, we are keen to expand the centre's use amongst all potential users, so we are currently looking into ways in which we can do this, including requesting feedback and suggestions from existing users. As the popularity of the Chantry Centre continues to increase, the decision was taken to employ a part-time caretaker to ensure that the centre continues to run efficiently and effectively for all users. I am pleased to say, that Jerry Owers joined the council staff back in April and has successfully undertaken an everincreasing number of tasks on behalf of BTC at the Chantry Centre and in and around the Town.

BTC continues to support the Billericay Tree Wardens in their efforts to protect and enhance the number of trees in and around Billericay. Recent planting schemes included 800 saplings planted in Pleasant Drive and Lake Meadows and a large number of saplings along Tye Common Road. On both occasions, BTC Councillors took part in these tree planting schemes.

In an effort to keep the town tidy, we organised a successful Litter Pick in April, assisted by members of the Billericay Town Rotary Club. We are keen to continue to undertake these and are looking

to arrange one on 18th May and another one later in the year, probably in October. To further enhance the street scene, we have agreed to purchase new pole planters for the new lamp posts along the High Street. These should bring much needed colour to our High Street.

The replacement of the street lighting allowed us to install the new Christmas lights scheme along the whole High Street, as we were previously restricted on which lamp posts could be used, due to CCTV cameras or other restrictions. Now that most of the restrictions no longer apply, we are in discussions to try to enhance the display for Christmas 2024.

Following the success of the Community Open Day last year BTC decided to take on the organisation of the event on an annual basis. On Friday 22 March 2024 the event saw many more charities and voluntary organisations in the town represented with an increased attendance from the public. Numerous local voluntary organisations had the opportunity to let residents know what they do and to recruit new volunteers. As Chairman it was heartening to receive very positive feedback from those taking part and attending. We look forward to delivering an even more successful Community Open Day next year. ■

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr Martyn Mordecai



We have all experienced increasing costs this year and it is unfortunately no different for the Town Council. Whilst we have successfully managed many costs it was still necessary to increase the

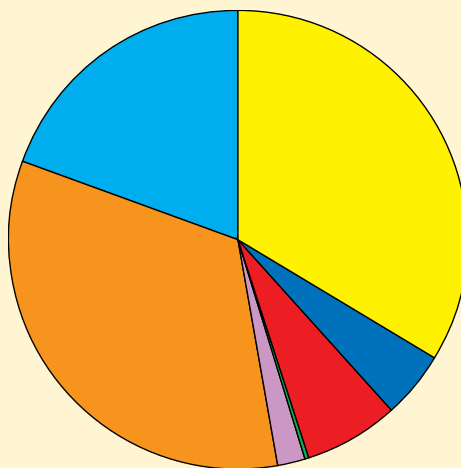
Precept for 2024/25 by 1.05%. The annual cost for a typical Band D household will be £26.01 a year (£25.74 2023/24) – this is an increase for the typical Band D household of just over 2 pence per month – and this small increase still ensures that Billericay remains one of the lowest charging Parish/Town Councils.

During the year we were delighted to make a donation of £100 to Essex and Herts Air Ambulance. In moving to the new building, we continue our high level objectives which are two-fold:

- **Social:** to provide facilities for community groups to use at an affordable cost. This year, there were 2,540 hours of activities lead by community/not-for-profit groups based in Billericay, and 2,106 hours run by commercial, which includes the Barclays Banking Hub, that has proved a success for the community.

- **Financial:** to generate income from commercial hirings to subsidise costs. Almost 70% of the revenue has come from commercial organisations. On closing the financial accounts for 2023/24, subject to Audit, we expect to have generated over £76,000 (£72,000 2022/23) in revenue.

EXPENDITURE & RESERVES 2023/2024



- Administration & Council Members
- Recreational Facilities
- Christmas Lights
- Other Projects
- Publications
- Chantry Way Centre
- Earmarked Reserves

Cost control plays an important part of F&GP's activities and we had fixed our gas and electric contracts until 2028. This has been especially important in the current climate of price rises.

Thanks are due to all members of the Finance

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES

2022/23	EXPENDITURE	2023/24
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
113	Administration & Council Members	142
20	Recreational Facilities	20
8	Public Toilets	0
10	Christmas Lights	28
4	Other Projects	1
11	Publications	8
0	Election	0
154	Chantry Way Centre	140
0	Youth Town Council	0
65	Earmarked Reserves	81
385	Total	420

INCOME

2022/23	INCOME	2023/24
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
303	Precept	317
0	Interest Earned	22
0	Local sponsorship	0
9	Outside Funding	5
73	Chantry Way Centre	76
385	Total	420

and General Purposes Committee, for the work that they have done in ensuring we give 'best value' to the town. ■

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 provide all the floral displays in the High Street, including the planters and flower beds at the War Memorial, during both summer and winter. In 2024 we are bringing back the summer flower baskets on the lamp columns as they were much missed by both residents and visitors. We hope the new fixings will see them remaining firmly in place and giving a beautiful floral display from June to October. The two small green areas that we look after 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 – are now being maintained by the Town Council’s caretaker as it is more cost-effective and means we can deal with any problems or issues immediately.

We have reinstated the High Street litter picks, holding one in 2023 and have two planned for 2024. We are also looking at providing additional litter bins and replacing the ones that are in poor condition in partnership with Basildon Borough Council.

We provided a brand new Christmas lighting scheme in the High Street in 2023. 10 companies tendered and after much debate a white theme was agreed which would involve string lights on all the lamp columns, a Christmas parcel for the

Jim Shields Garden, string lights in all prominent trees and a wrap around design on the Beacon at Sun Corner. Thanks to the new lamp columns installed by Basildon Council, it meant that every column had a decoration on it for the first time in many years.

The white theme was generally well received and we will be further enhancing the design next year with more icicle lights across the front of buildings, adding gold tinsel to the lamp columns and lighting up as many of the High Street trees as possible.

The Billericay Tree wardens continue to be the guardian’s of the Town’s trees and have also undertaken several planting projects to enhance and preserve the environment and bio-diversity in Billericay. ■

PLANNING COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr Jim Tutton



It has been a busy year for the Planning Committee. The meetings have seen increased interest from the public, with 89 residents attending through the year. Primarily they attended to object to applications that are either developments on green belt land or applications that are considered inappropriate within the High Street or conservation area.

Developers are trying to gain outline planning permissions on prime sites before the new Local Plan comes into effect. With the support of Billericay residents, we are fighting and objecting to these plans every time they come before us.

There is also a trend towards converting or extending commercial properties into either purely residential or a combination of both, in and around the High Street.

Of the 266 planning applications reviewed by Basildon Borough (and subsequent 7 appeals), we

agreed with the Borough planning department on approximately 82% of the applications. At this time 49 are still to be determined by them.

Of the 7 appeals, 3 were allowed, 3 dismissed and 1 still to be determined.

The most common objections to applications are: habitable room on the boundary, excessive bulk, insufficient rear garden, poor and awkward design.

We also considered:-
3 licensing applications – Blue Boar, Giggling Squid, The Warehouse;
5 consultations – Local Plan Issue and Options; Statement of Licensing Policy; Street Trading Policy; East Anglia GREEN – Norwich to Tilbury and EPOA – Essex Parking Guidance.

We look forward to continued support from our residents, in trying to get the best planning outcomes for our lovely town. ■

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE CHANTRY CENTRE

Lead Councillor: Cllr Adam Adshead



Having been open nearly 3 years the Chantry Centre has gone from strength to strength and has established itself as the core community hub for activities and events in the town.

Over 125 different community groups, commercial businesses and individuals have made 1,745 bookings with us during the year providing activities as diverse as club meetings for photography enthusiasts, bereavement counselling, exercise classes for all ages and abilities, films, book clubs, Brownies and advice and support for new mums as well as being used for business meetings, company training sessions and as the venue for the Barclays community banking hub. It’s particularly pleasing that the largest category in terms of hours booked was by those groups focussing on social isolation and social support primarily for the elderly.

As in past years our entire venue comprising the hall, kitchen and our four meeting rooms was provided two days free of charge to the Rotary Club of Billericay Mayflower for their Christmas Market.

Financially revenue grew by more than 6% to just over £76,000 with the number of bookings up 8%. We’ve seen good growth in centre usage on Mondays and Tuesdays – but if you’re looking to run regular activities Fridays provide plenty of opportunities!

With revenue up and a slight reduction in overheads the net annual cost of providing the centre reduced to £1.40 for each household (2022/3 £1.65).

What’s next? There is plenty of scope to develop the centre further and the coming year will see us doing more marketing to promote events and activities, especially those run by and for the community to help them reach wider audiences. We are also looking at whether there are activities missing which residents would like to see and whether we can encourage community groups or companies to expand their offerings. ■

COUNCILLORS ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS 23 MAY 2023 – 24 MARCH 2024

COUNCILLOR	PLANNING (23)	FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES (7)	HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT (7)	COUNCIL (7)	TOTAL
Cllr A Adshead		3		6	9
Cllr J Clark	7			7	14
Cllr L Clark			3	3	6
Cllr R Clark	18	6		6	30
Cllr M Dear	9	1	4	7	21
Cllr J Devlin	20			6	26
Cllr J Henshaw	6			5	11
Cllr K Herlock		1	3	7	11
Cllr J Leung	1		1	3	5
Cllr C May	19		6	5	30
Cllr M Moore	18	5	6	7	36
Cllr K Mordecai	16	4	6	6	32
Cllr M Mordecai	3	5	5	6	19
Cllr M Roessler		2		5	7
Cllr E Sainsbury			3	4	7
Cllr D Spencer	8			6	14
Cllr G Talbot		5		6	11
Cllr A Talboys	18	5		5	28
Cllr M Thomas		5	7	6	18
Cllr J Tutton	20	4	5	6	35

EVENTS WORKING PARTY

Chairman: Cllr Kim Mordecai



2023 was a quiet year for the Events Working Party. The only event was the King's Coronation, however, there was a directive from Buckingham Palace that it was to be a low key affair and so we just decorated the High Street with red, white and blue bunting and gave prizes for the best dressed shop window and the best street party, with the prize money being donated to charities of the winners choice. We are currently in the process of organising a commemorative event for the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings, which will see the beacon being lit. ■

HELLO FROM THE EDITOR

Editor: Cllr Marie Dear



Welcome to the June edition of the Town Crier with all the latest news from the Town Council. This edition also includes the Annual Report giving a deeper analysis of the Town Council's projects, finances and activities.

The Town Crier Working Party works to produce the Town Crier and includes Cllrs Adshead, Dear, May and Moore. At Working Party meetings articles are chosen and the logistics of distribution and printing planned with the help and support of the Town Clerk. As is usual with publications drafts are created and shared with members of the

Working Party. After editing articles are proof read by Cllr Adshead. As the Town Crier is published and distributed to every home in the Town Council parish 3 to 4 times a year the Working Party is kept busy.

There have been so many events covered by the Town Crier over the past year. We are never short of material as there is so many community minded volunteers in Billericay. Articles from residents of no more than 200 words in length are welcomed for consideration.

A big thank you to our graphic designer, David Vinten, for his work on our publications. ■

BILLERICAY YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Chairman: George Wood



Last year in the Billericay Youth Town Council we focused on community engagement, working with our local foodbank and organising events for young people. This year we shifted our focus to community safety in the Basildon Borough, which replicates the outcome of the Make Your Mark Survey, with crime and safety being the top concern of South Essex for young people.

On 14th August 2023 Youth Town Councillor, George, went to a Let's Talk Community Policing meeting where he mentioned youth crime and safety for young people, due to recent crime incidents affecting young Billericay citizens.

During our first meeting in September, George spoke to the Youth Town Council about the information he received from the police and an idea about creating a publication with safety information in it, specifically with young people in mind. Youth Town Councillors loved this idea and a draft booklet and social media banner was designed.

Essex Police PCSOs and British Transport Police visited us in one of our regular meetings regarding the youth safety information to include. During the process of making the documents we also worked with Fearless, Basildon Council's Community Safety Team and Immobilise to help with adding details specific to their organisation.

Saturday 23rd March 2024 was our launch event for the project at the Chantry Centre when the booklet and social media banner was unveiled. Many members of the public came long to watch the presentation and received crime prevention and safety advice from the Police and Fire Service.

This year we have also had visits from other Town and Parish Councils about starting their own Youth Councils. They asked us questions about how the Billericay Youth Town Council runs and best ways to recruit young people. Our recent recruitment drives in secondary schools have worked extremely well for replenishing our own members. ■

BILLERICAY YOUTH SAFETY PROJECT LAUNCH EVENT – SUCCESS

ON SATURDAY 23rd March 2024 the Billericay Youth Safety Project booklet and social media banner were launched, live at the Chantry Centre. Many members of the public came along to get a copy of the booklet for themselves. Also in attendance were Essex Police Community Support Officer Kat, Roy from Essex Fire and Rescue Service and Lisa from Basildon Borough Council Community Safety Team. All three ran stalls and gave away freebies to enhance citizen safety in the Basildon Borough. At 12pm the founder of the Billericay Youth Safety Project, George Wood, delivered a presentation about the creation of the publication, whilst also unveiling the illustration competition winners. Quite a few young people and parents from the town visited during the day. Thank you to all those who came along.

The project does not end here though. Secondary and year 6 students in schools across Billericay will start to receive a copy of the booklet for themselves from local police officers. We are also compiling a similar booklet and social media banner for the rest of Essex.

During school holidays the Billericay Youth Town Council have put on,

and will continue to put on, many events for young people regarding safety, where they can get advice and freebies. Recent pop ups include Billericay Train Station with British Transport Police and outside Billericay Poundland with Essex Police.

For more information on upcoming events please see our Instagram @ [billericayyouthsafetyproject](https://www.instagram.com/billericayyouthsafetyproject)



Billericay Youth Safety Project Pop up at Billericay Train Station

FOCUS ON CHANTRY HIRER

ONCE A MONTH the Chantry Centre hosts an NHS hearing aid support service. Hearing aids need cleaning and re-tubing every 4 to 6 months, so if you have hearing aids issued by a local NHS audiology service, their friendly trained volunteers will be able to provide this necessary maintenance.

The service is FREE to attend but appointments must be booked in advance, either via their website or by telephone/text. They are in the Chantry Centre on the following dates between now and the end of the year – 13th June, 11th July, 8th August, 12th September, 10th October, 14th November, 12th December. Appointment times are between 2pm and 4pm. Website – www.hearinghelpessex.org.uk Phone: 01245 496347 Text: 07950 406173



CIVIC SERVICE – NEW DATE

PLEASE NOTE THAT the rescheduled Civic Service is now being held at 3pm on Sunday 29th September 2024 at Emmanuel Church, Laundon Road. The theme is "Celebrating Young People" so members of various youth groups and organisations will be taking part in what should be a joyous and enjoyable event. Everyone is very welcome to attend and tea and cake will be served afterwards.