



Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2016/2017

Billericay – A Great Place to Be

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT Cllr. Jim Devlin

My second year as Chairman has seen a time of great change for Billericay Town Council. During this time I have represented the Council at many events and again I have found this both enjoyable and informative.



Retiring Town Councillors with the Chairman Jim Devlin
A TIME OF CHANGE

Early in the municipal year in May we had our four yearly election. Of our twenty councillors, eleven decided not to offer themselves for re-election. Due to age, many felt that they could not commit themselves to another four years. Among those we lost were four original members of the Town Council formed twenty years ago: former chairmen John Buchanan and Trevor Stansfield and also Marion Wilson and former Vice-Chairman Rod Rapley. All four were originally elected in 1997 and they were the last original members of the council. We also lost former Chairman Peter Bowditch and other councillors who felt that age was not on their side or who had moved further away and were no longer qualified to stand. At the election the nine remaining councillors stood again plus two new candidates and because of this there was no need for a poll.

The first council meeting seemed a little empty. We set about recruiting extra councillors to be co-opted onto the council and I am pleased to say we now have all twenty seats filled. However, we had to acknowledge that due to fewer than two thirds of our councillors being elected (we needed fourteen, we only had eleven) we were no longer able to execute a power granted to local councils by the Localism Act of 2011 which permits councils to carry out any action that can legally be carried out by an individual. We are now only permitted to exercise the powers specifically granted by the Local Government Act 1972. So we drop back to the old rules which means that we have to check each action against the list of powers, a consequence of which is that we can be a little restricted in helping local community groups. The big change in the councillors did, however, enable us to take a long hard look at the organisation of our committee and working party structure with a view to freeing up administrative resource to allow the office to cope with the extra demands placed upon it by the other great change.

CHANTRY WAY CENTRE

In April the Chantry Way Centre was transferred by Basildon Borough Council to us on a ninety-nine year lease at zero cost to the Town Council. We have appointed architects to draw up a plan for the building going forward and we expect to have their initial report in the next few weeks. The building was opened in 1972 with a small extension added a few years later and so it has reached its 45th birthday. This report will give us options for how we take the



Cllr Devlin and retiring ex Chairman Cllr Stansfield building forward so that it is fit for use by the town over the coming forty-five or more years.

This change has not stopped the council delivering on the usual services and events that it has run over many years and because we, as a Local Council, do not receive money from central Government we have not had to deal with the budget cuts suffered by the Borough and County Councils. However, with their services to the Community falling we need be aware that we may need to increase services offered by this council.

In closing, sadly my duties have also included attending two funerals, those of former Town Councillor, Gerald Dann, a member of this Council in its early years and former Chairman of Basildon Council, Geoffrey Buckingham, who was member for the Burstead ward. Both men gave great service to the town. ■

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Moira Moore



Billericay in Bloom prize winners

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.

The Town Council provides hanging baskets in the High Street during the summer months as well as planting flower displays in the summer and winter in the planters located near to Poundland and in the Jim



Tranquil Festival Gardens

Shields Garden. We also provide plantings outside the police station. Each year we hold the Billericay in Bloom competition that is always well supported by local residents and schools.

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

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For further information and general enquiries contact: Town Clerk

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

Details of Town Councillors can be obtained from the Town Council website or Offices.



Crowds at Xmas Lights

and Western Road. We have great plans for the Jim Shields Garden, which you will see come to fruition over the next couple of years.

We fund the various plantings around the War Memorial throughout the year and help clean it in readiness for the Remembrance Sunday Service in November.

"Plant a Shrub" is held annually in the Festival Gardens where residents can plant a small shrub in remembrance of a loved one.

We provide 'litter picks' to enhance the work done by the street cleansing team from Basildon Council.

THE QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

At the beginning of last year the Town Council joined a nationwide show of respect to mark the occasion of the Queen's 90th birthday, an event which involved the lighting of the Beacon by Billericay Town Council's first Citizen of the Year and the unveiling of a commemoration plaque. The Queen lit the principal beacon at Windsor Castle which was followed by beacons across the country including ours at Sun Corner. This popular event was attended by many residents alongside councillors, representatives from clubs and societies and members of the Air Cadets.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Over recent years the Town Council's "Celebration of Christmas Lights" has steadily become larger with more and more residents attending the switch on. This year all of the displays and much of the electrical infrastructure were replaced by a new contractor selected by tender. A whole new colour design was chosen for the High Street with more lights and features than ever before. The High Street twinkled with colour. A spectacular Christmas tree was erected in Jim Shields Garden on the corner of Western Road creating a warm welcome to the High Street; the trees by the War Memorial were a mass of coloured lights whilst at the other end of the High Street the Beacon twinkled brightly. Use of LED lighting enabled us to have the lights on for more of the day, bringing the High Street to life during the dull winter days. Feedback from residents was very positive, and those who attended enjoyed an afternoon of entertainment provided by local schools, clubs and societies together with Father Christmas.

COMMEMORATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE ZEPPELIN L32

On September 24th 2016 the Town Council commemorated the centenary of the crash of the Zeppelin L32 by organising an event to unveil a marker stone on Greens Farm Lane to denote the site of the crash. A reception was held at the council offices where councillors were in attendance together with special guests including the son of the pilot who shot the Zeppelin down, Air Marshall Sir Freddie Sowrey. There were also a number of other honoured guests. This was an important historical event for Billericay which now has its own marker stone. ■



Beacon lighting for HM the Queen's 90th birthday

PLANNING COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr. Lesley Michelmore

It has been a busy year for the Planning Committee which has considered numerous planning applications and responded to Basildon Council's New and Alternative Sites Consultation as a part of the Local Plan proposals. The committee also invited both a Basildon Planning Officer and a Licensing Officer to address them about the most effective ways to comment on planning and licensing applications.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Planning Committee is a consultee for Basildon Council Planning Department. This means that we comment on planning applications but the decision to grant/refuse rests with Basildon Council's Planning Committee and its Planning Department. Where Billericay Town Council adds value is in our specific local knowledge of the streets and their environs.

Applications that enhance the host building, respect the character and context of the local area and do not adversely impact neighbours are welcomed.

A member of the public recently asked whether Basildon Council took our comments into account. Over the past six months alone, the committee considered one hundred and ten applications and made objections to forty-two of those. It is clear, when reading Basildon Planning Officer reports for those applications, that the committee's comments are considered and tested as a part of the application process. Here are some examples:

The Town Council is:

- **Passionate about protecting the character of Billericay's Conservation Area.**

The Town Council objected to an application in the

conservation area on the grounds:

"The timber shop front should be painted black, which would be in keeping in the Conservation Area and would match with buildings on either side; timber cladding would be out of context with the buildings on either side."

The applicant revised their plans after which the application was granted permission.

- **Passionate about good design that enhances the host building.**

A Basildon Planning Officer Report said:

"As a result of objections raised by Billericay Town Council the applicants have revised the size of the rear dormer, by setting it further into the roof slope. ... it will not now over-dominate the roof in accordance with the objective of these Guidelines."

Planning Committee – continued from page 2

This revised scheme was granted permission.

• Passionate about good design that is in keeping with the local area.

A Basildon Planning Officer Report said:

“Billericay Town Council objected to the application on the grounds of the proposals creating a terracing effect which would be out of keeping in the street scene and as the proposals created a habitable room on the boundary.”

The applicant revised the plans and the revised scheme was granted permission.

• Passionate about schemes that do not impact negatively on neighbours.

Members of the public are welcome to attend planning meetings and make representation to the committee if they are concerned about an application that appears on the agenda for that meeting. The committee will listen to, and consider the concerns before making their recommendation. Here is an example of an application where we agreed with the members of public in attendance:

The Town Council objection included: “Dormer is too wide and not subservient to the apex of the roof; rear extension is too deep; loss of parking”

The application was refused permission.

• Passionate that applications provide sufficient parking space.

THE LOCAL PLAN

The Planning Committee formed a working party to respond to the latest Local Plan Consultation on New and Alternative Sites. We concluded that none of the new or alternative sites were required to meet Basildon’s Objectively Assessed Housing Need and that none would be satisfactory alternatives to

existing proposed sites. Concerns were raised over the impact of these sites on:

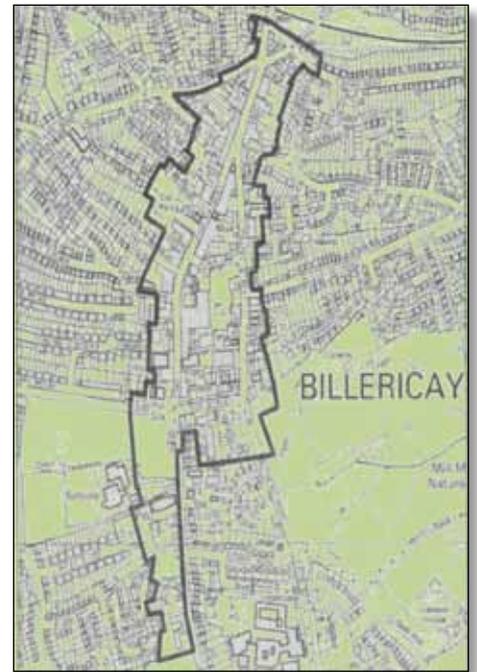
- **The environment and character of areas of the town:** The impact on the Greenbelt and green Wedges in the town, Ramsden Heath and Woods Living Landscape; the wildlife corridor from Norsey Woods to Mill Meadows and further on to Frithwood and also the Ancient Woodland at Frithwood.
- **Coalescence** between the settlements of Billericay and Little Burstead, Billericay and Great Burstead and South Green, and Billericay and Havering Grove.
- **Infrastructure:** Traffic and concerns over increased congestion at key junctions in the town.

LICENSING

The Planning Committee also considers licensing applications from local premises. This is a complex area and so the committee invited the licensing officer from Basildon Council to discuss licensing applications and the best way to respond to them. Following this and further discussions, information relating to licensing and how to report issues is available on the Town Council website.

ROAD CLOSURES

The Planning Committee is notified about proposed road closures by Essex County Council and these are posted on the Town Council website. ■



Billericay Conservation Area



The Billericay Youth Town Council (BYTC) is a great committee to get involved in. I have only been with the council for eight months now and already feel like the members and I have made a difference within the Billericay community, whether that is small or on a slightly larger scale. As the Publicity Officer I am responsible for all of the more social aspects such as promotion of events, including posters, leaflets and social media advertising.

As a whole, the Youth Town Council plays a major role in organising some of what goes on within the town of Billericay, such as our newly upcoming event ‘New S’cool Disco’ which we are currently working on. Not only do we organise our own little events, we also lend a hand to other things within Billericay such as the Rotary’s Soapbox Derby, the Round Table’s firework display, the Billericay Town Council Christmas lights switch on ceremony and many more things that go on frequently. BYTC works a lot in co-operation with the community itself and will try to get involved where ever possible to bring the best

out of the youth of Billericay. The Billericay Youth Town Council is there to inspire young individuals who are interested in becoming a part of what is known as a great experience in which you become skilled at communication, learn and discover things about yourself and the community that you may not get a chance to do if you miss the opportunities the BYTC offers. Overall the BYTC is a great way to let your ideas be heard so that you can develop your ideas with those who work with you using teamwork and understanding. ■



TOWN CRIER, ANNUAL REPORT AND TOWN GUIDE

Editor: Cllr. Marie Dear

THE TOWN CRIER has been published in four bumper six page editions since last May. Delivered to every home in the town, at quarterly intervals, it provides the latest news on Town Council activities and initiatives. It also covers the Town Council’s reactions to consultations which impact the town. Additionally, articles cover the many and varied local organisations, clubs, features and events. There is so much happening in our town providing a wealth of potential material for selection and publication in the Town Crier.



THE ANNUAL REPORT provides an in depth focus on the Town Council’s projects and activities on behalf of residents.

THE TOWN GUIDE is currently planned for publication next year. This ever popular publication provides a wealth of information on societies, clubs, organisations and

activities within the town. The Town Council is assessing ways to produce The Guide with as wide a distribution as possible by the most economical method.

Thanks go to our graphic designer for adeptly fitting articles into the pages of our publications. ■

**COUNCILLORS ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS
MAY 2016 – MARCH 2017**

COUNCILLOR	PLANNING	FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES	ENVIRONMENT	COUNCIL	WPs/PGs	TOTAL
Cllr A Adshead	13	6	6	6	26	57
Cllr J Blair*		1		4		5
Cllr R Chapman		6	5	6		17
Cllr J Clark	15	3	5	6	28	57
Cllr R Clark*	13			5		18
Cllr J Dansey*		3		5	3	11
Cllr M Dear	10	4	5	6	22	47
Cllr J Devlin	15	6	4	7	23	55
Cllr C Dyer		5	5	4	1	15
Cllr D Hayden*				2		2
Cllr J Hughes*	11			5		16
Cllr L Mitchelmore	18		5	6	8	37
Cllr V MacManus		4	6	4	3	17
Cllr M Moore	16	4	7	7	30	64
Cllr M Roessler**				3		3
Cllr D Spencer	16		5	5	6	32
Cllr A Talboys*	9			6	5	20
Cllr M Thomas			5	2		7
Cllr F Tomlin*		3		6	12	21
Cllr J Tutton*	11			2	7	20

*Town Councillor since July 2016

**Town Councillor since November 2016

The Finance and General Purposes Committee, or F&GP, is one of the three core committees that make up the Billericay Town Council alongside Planning and Environment. The role of the "Finance" part of F&GP 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 the "General Purposes" cover all other activities which don't naturally fall within the remit of Environment or Planning.

F&GP reviews and agrees the budgets for the various initiatives proposed and sets the precept, the portion of your council tax that funds those Town Council activities and it provides supervision of the council's assets.

The precept is the money that allows us to run both the statutory elements of the Town Council and our many projects such as the Christmas lights and hanging baskets that contribute to making Billericay such a great place to live. With many other local authorities having to increase their council tax, for the 8th successive year we are pleased to have frozen our precept at £19.80 for a Band D property, although this gets more challenging each year.

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

F&GP is responsible for a small grant budget which can be awarded to local community and charitable groups within the town. This year grants have included £500 to the Billericay Lions to help fund the replacement of their popular Santa Sleigh which has reached its end of life and £450 to the Forget-me-not Memory Cafe to establish themselves in Billericay. Following on from the callous theft of the Statue of the Child from Lake Meadows the Friends of Lake Meadows organised an appeal to help fund a suitable replacement. We were pleased to be able to award them £1,000 made up of £526 from the grant fund and £473 from the Civic Service collection.

THE BILLERICAY YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

We are one of a relatively few parishes and towns which have a Youth Town Council. The BYTC is run on exactly the same lines as its adult equivalent and it determines its own agenda. It's a great place for youngsters aged between eleven and eighteen to develop new skills – campaigning for election, working together as a team, debating, and learning key influencing and decision making skills. They learn to develop an interest in community service as well



as gaining and understanding of the political process. During the year elections were held within local schools and we welcomed on board a number of new Youth Councillors. It's great to witness how they are all settling in and gaining self-confidence each meeting.

IT WORKING PARTY

This year has seen a major upgrade to the Town Council's website, making it much easier to find relevant information as well as increasing transparency as to how the council operates. Over the past year we've seen almost 9,000 people access the website looking at over 36,000 pages of information. The most frequently accessed are agendas and minutes of Planning meetings, however, the Town Trail and Walk are popular and we see large spikes in usage around key events such as the Christmas Lights Switch On, the Zeppelin Commemoration and the online publication of the Town Crier. We've also been more proactive on social media through our Facebook and Twitter accounts ensuring useful information about the council activities and decisions gets to as wide an audience as possible. You can find our website at BillericayTownCouncil.gov.uk, our Facebook page at [facebook.com/BillericayTownCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/BillericayTownCouncil) or you can follow @BillericayTC on Twitter.

THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKING PARTY is responsible for all external communication covering both printed and online material. Our quarterly publication, the Town Crier, continues to receive very positive feedback and is delivered to every home in the parish. Our increased use of social media has seen a much larger contribution of articles from community groups. We were also proud to have received a Highly Commended commendation from the Rural Community Council of Essex in their Community Magazine Awards last year.

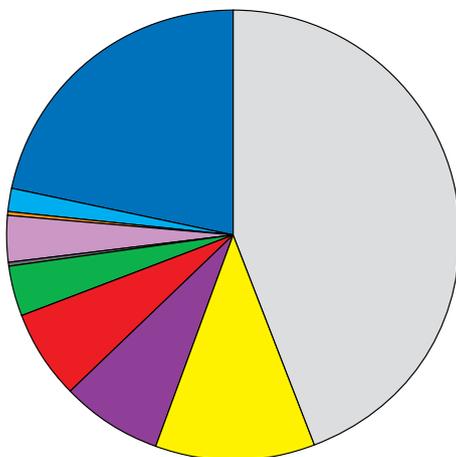
BTC CHANTRY WAY CENTRE

We've taken on responsibility for the The Chantry Way centre from Basildon Borough Council and this has been a major focus of attention this year. Firstly we've worked hard to increase the use of this Town Centre asset by both community groups and commercial organisations. New users serving our community include the NHS and the Forget-me-not Memory Cafe, a free drop-in session for both those with memory issues and the people who look after them, along with a number of commercial companies. Bringing responsibility for the centre closer to the people who use it has given us the opportunity to maximise the use of this great community resource as well as fix some of the basic problems more proactively.

Longer term we have been looking at the future of the Chantry Way Centre. It has long been the intention of the Town Council to reduce the cost overhead of leasing office and meeting room space and Chantry Way will, in future, give us that opportunity. The building is well beyond the originally envisaged lifespan and parts will only survive for a few more years. In the past months we've visited a number of similar community buildings to look at how they are used, what works and importantly what doesn't. We've also met with many of the groups who currently use the building to find out how they use it and what they'd like to see in the future. Since then we've gone out to tender, commissioning architects to look at options for the future. These include both establishing whether a refurbishment / renovation is a viable option as well as options on a complete rebuild. We're currently waiting to hear and consider their ideas and conclusions before deciding on the next steps.

Our vision for the Chantry Way centre is somewhere we can house the Town Council thus reducing our overheads; gaining revenue by generating income from commercial use thus delivering value for residents, and providing a flexible use facility that will allow us to maximise the social benefit through its use by the community groups that make up the foundations of the town. ■

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES 2016/2017



- Administration & Council Members
- Recreation Facilities
- Chantry Way Centre
- Public Toilets
- Youth Town Council
- Christmas Lights
- Earmarked Reserves
- Publications
- General Reserve
- Election

EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES		
2015/16	EXPENDITURE	2016/17
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
100	Administration & Council Members	123
35	Recreational Facilities	31
19	Public Toilets	20
14	Christmas Lights	18
2	Other Projects	0
16	Publications	10
0	Election	1
0	Chantry Way Centre	9
1	Youth Town Council	1
75	Earmarked Reserves	4
0	To General Reserve	59
262	Total	276

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		
2015/16	INCOME	2016/17
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
246	Precept	249
3	Interest Earned	4
3	Local sponsorship	7
7	Outside Funding	4
3	From General Reserve	0
0	Chantry Way Centre	12
262	Total	276