

MINUTES OF THE 2022 BILLERICAY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD IN THE MAIN HALL, CHANTRY CENTRE, CHANTRY WAY, BILLERICAY
ON THURSDAY 28TH APRIL 2022 @ 7.00P.M.

In the Chair: Cllr J Devlin, Town Council Chairman

Present: 14 Town Councillors
14 members of the public

Apologies: Given by Cllrs R Clark, M Dear, C May, M Moore, G Talbot, A Talboys

1/22 Welcome by Town Council Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the twenty third Billericay Annual Town Meeting. He stated that it was a legal requirement to hold this meeting to enable local residents to ask questions of their Town Councillors. The last annual meeting was held in 2019 so this is the first to be held in the Chantry Centre. Previously it had been the custom to have an external guest speaker but this time it had been decided that community groups/hall users should be invited to speak.

2/22 Guest Speakers

Mr Vic Hare, Billericay Horticultural Society

The Horticultural Society became a member of the RHS in 1926 and Mr Hare gave an interesting potted history of the society. Many of their trophies are named after local people or businesses, the original subscription was just 1 1/2p but this is now £5 per person or £8 per couple per year and has not increased for the past twelve years. They raise additional funds by holding a raffle and twice yearly plant sale, plus there is a small charge for attending the monthly meetings which feature talks from visiting speakers. The BHS started using the Chantry Centre in July 2021 and now have 59 members which has been reduced from 100 due to Covid.

Mr Andy and Mrs Jane Robb, Billericay Revival Church

The Revival Church will be ten years old in November and Mr Robb said they had worked their way along the High Street by holding their meetings in the Rising Sun public house function room, then Billericay School. They have used the time of the pandemic to change and innovate the Church and started meeting at the Chantry Centre in August 2021. They have a large age range of members and work in partnership with the other churches in town as part of Churches Together in Billericay. They love serving the Community, are Street Pastors and some of their members serve in the Foodbank and within the Community Hub. Jane started Baby Basics out of the Hub which helps young mums by providing newborn essentials such as a Moses basket, clothing and toiletries. Every Wednesday the Church is in Costa Coffee from 2pm – 3.30pm where people can attend and pray for healing. They really appreciate the Chantry Centre as a venue for being right in the heart of Billericay.

Mrs Lyn Wilson and Mrs Kay Baker, Gone Too Soon

Mrs Wilson said that Gone Too Soon provides a bereavement support service for anyone that has lost a child over the age of twelve. They meet in the Chantry Centre once a month from 7pm – 9pm and really appreciate the central location. People travel from all over Essex as there are not many support groups available for parents that have lost older children. They have recently held a quiz night at the Chantry and work closely with St Luke's Hospice. People value the service as it is a place they can speak freely and openly with others who

have experienced the same issues. They also host sibling's meetings which ensures they are taken care of and supported.

Mr Steve Stringer, Photofold Camera Club

Mr Stringer is the Deputy Chairman of Photofold Camera Club. The club started in the 1950's and originally met in a hut in what is now Waitrose Car park known as the Fold, and this is where the club got its name from. They moved to The Fold in Laindon Road and were meeting on Zoom during the pandemic then decided to hold an exhibition in the newly opened Chantry Centre in September 2021. This received 300 visitors – previous exhibitions had attracted no more than 30. They now meet every Tuesday in the Chantry main hall at 8pm between September and June. They hold regular print and projected image competitions judged by professionals and thanks to the audio visual facilities in the Centre are able to host speakers from all over the world. Following this move to better premises the membership is growing and they will be holding a second exhibition in the Chantry Centre on Saturday 3rd September 2022.

Mr Ken Tout, Good Companions

Mr Tout said he and his wife Eleanor had been running the Good Companions Senior Citizens Club for 30 years. The club was originally set up in 1965 for disabled senior citizens. In 1991 Ken and Eleanor heard from a member of their Church that the club was failing so they agreed to act as helpers for two hours every fortnight. When they took over the running of the club one of the first things they did was remove the requirement that members were "disabled" which opened it up to all senior citizens in the town. With further promotion the numbers attending grew and they were hosting the club every two weeks in the old Day Centre then moved to the Mayflower Hall when the building was demolished. During the pandemic Ken and Eleanor kept in touch with their members and decided to restart physical meetings in the Chantry Centre in 2021. The members were thrilled to be able to get out again as a lot of them had been very isolated during the Covid lockdowns. The first hour is entertainment and the second is tea time with sausage rolls and cakes. They honour member's birthdays and give everyone the chance to chat. The club now has 60 members and they meet on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. Ken said the Town Council has been very kind as they always help with setting up and taking down for the meetings. The Community Cinema was looking for a group to sponsor so they generously cover the group's rent of the Chantry which is another enormous help. Ken stressed it is not a drop in club, members have to be introduced, but the system works very well. They always end meetings with a prayer which was written by a past member.

Mr Pete Mitchelmore, Billericay Community Cinema

Mr Mitchelmore explained that the idea for a community cinema grew from an Essex County Council event, the Big Do, which was held in 2015. Within six months a business plan had been put together and their first screening had taken place in Billericay library. By the end of the first year they had also won a national award. Community cinemas operate all around the country with many different themes, but the Billericay Cinema like to bring the classics back. In July 2021 they moved operations from the library the Chantry Centre and have made the group about more than just a film, it is a group that they want to be accessible to every part of the community. The Sunday matinee was created for the socially isolated as they can come out during the day and enjoy tea, cake, see a film and have a chat. The Cinema is also about the volunteers and their commitment. Moving to the Chantry Centre has benefitted the cinema, as space restraints have been lifted and a safe, warm environment is created for attendees. There's a shorter set up time which is a plus for volunteers and as the screen

drops down from the ceiling it means everyone has a good view regardless of where they are sitting.

3/22 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25th April 2019

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 25th April 2019, were taken as read and approved as a correct record. No questions were raised and there were no matters arising.

4/22 Presentation of Citizen and Young Citizen of the Year Awards

Cllr Devlin said he took great pleasure in making the awards to:

Young Citizen of the Year - Emily Jackson Bridge. Emily was nominated for her tireless fundraising. She started a pop-up cake stall in 2020 to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support when her mum couldn't host her usual coffee mornings due to the pandemic. By the end of 2021 Emily had raised over £10,000. This money has also been shared with the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance and the Basildon, Brentwood and District Cats Protection group.

Citizens of the Year – Ken and Eleanor Tout. Ken and Eleanor were nominated for their 30 years spent running the Good Companions club. Their effort and dedication is inspiring in providing a vital service to alleviate social isolation amongst senior members of the community.

5/22 Questions from the Press and Public

A resident expressed concern about the changes in the High Street and whether they would have a detrimental effect on local businesses. Cllr Devlin said that this was not something the Town Council had any control over. It was also mentioned how nice the tables and chairs outside restaurants and cafes were, giving the High Street a continental feel. There was a request to reinstate the Town Walks and Cllr Devlin said this would be considered at the next meeting of the Health, Well-being and Environment Committee.

6/22 Chairman's Closing Address and Summary of Council's Year 2021/22

Cllr Devlin thanked everyone for coming and said that the format of this year's meeting had been a success.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm