



# Billericay Town Council Annual Report 2025/2026

*Billericay – A Great Place to Be*

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025/26 Cllr Jim Devlin



When I retired as Chairman in May 2022 after seven years in the position, I did not expect to write an annual report again. However, I was persuaded by fellow councillors to stand again last May and thus I have been Chairman once again for the last year.

One of the first things that happened in my new term was notice from Santander that their branch in the High Street would be closing meaning the loss of the last bank in Billericay. Fortunately, I had been involved with our former MP, John Baron, in talks with Cash Access UK about a Banking Hub when the Post Office closure happened the previous year and so had all the contacts necessary. The Town Council were very keen to ensure that the town had a Banking Hub and so together with our current MP, Richard Holden, we approached Cash Access UK to see how quickly they could swing into action. Fortunately, the previous work paid off and the Banking Hub we see today on the High Street is the result and I am told this was the fastest implementation of a Banking Hub anywhere.

We now face upheaval with Local Government

Reorganisation. As you are probably aware the Secretary of State, Steve Reed MP, has decided that Essex should have 5 Unitary Councils and that means that Billericay will be in South West Essex, which will be formed by combining Basildon and Thurrock. The new authority will be responsible for all services that formerly Basildon and Essex provided. It should make things simpler but there will be drawbacks particularly for places like Billericay on the periphery of the area, an example of this could be that we will probably lose access to the Mountnessing Rubbish site as this will be in Mid Essex and our nearest site will be Pitsea. There will be other problems like this, and your Town Council will be raising these issues as the new Unitary starts to be implemented. The Town Council is unaffected by these changes, but we will look to ensure the impact on residents is minimised.

About two years ago together with Basildon Council the Town Council was involved in an initiative to set up a Business Improvement District for the High Street and surrounding businesses. The BID came into being last year and you may know it as "Your Billericay". This is a completely independent organisation run by the businesses in the area and receives no funds from

either council. However, it is doing a lot of good work for the businesses and running events like the Late-Night Shopping just before Christmas and many more coming this year. This together with all the voluntary groups and clubs just goes to show what a vibrant community Billericay is.

The Town Council has been looking at what can be done for young people as they often get left out. We have decided to fund a Youth Worker who will be from Bar'n'Bus, a well-regarded local youth services organisation, who will be committed full time to Billericay starting in the next couple of months. They will be working wherever youngsters are and trying to address the issues they have.

The Council has now taken on the responsibility for running the Good Companions Club for older residents from its founder Ken Tout after 33 years. Ken now finds running the club too much and we thank him for all he has done.

Finally, I must mention that Diane McCarthy, our valued Committee Clerk, retired last August after 12 years where she was the font of all knowledge on planning matters. We wish Diane well in her retirement. We now have two new members of staff Dawn Percy, who has taken on the planning role, and Andy Taylor who is our new Caretaker/Handyman. ■

## FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr Adam Adshead



### **Delivering strong financial management while continuing to invest in the community.**

The Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) is responsible for overseeing the Town Council's finances. Working alongside the Town Clerk, its 11 councillors ensure that income and expenditure are carefully managed and that the Council operates in line with its Financial Regulations.

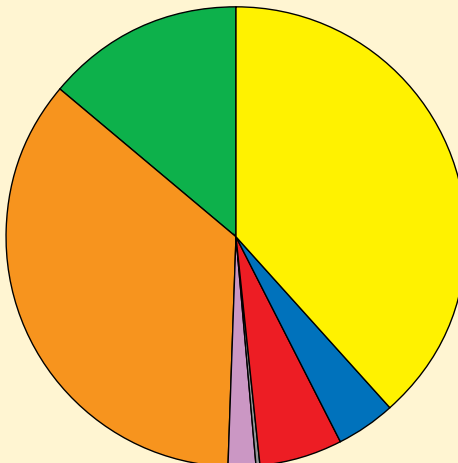
During the year, both internal and external audits were completed with the external auditor issuing an unqualified opinion, confirming that the Council's financial management and governance arrangements are sound. In addition the Committee reviewed internal control processes, updated the Council's risk register and reviewed a number of policies during the year.

Despite ongoing financial pressures faced by all local authorities, the Town Council has again been able to freeze its Precept for the coming year. The annual cost for a typical Band D household remains £26.01 – around £2 per month – helping to ensure that Billericay continues to be one of the lowest charging town councils.

Alongside its financial oversight, the Committee is responsible for the operation of the Chantry Centre. Over the past year, income from the Centre has increased by 8% to £82,000, driven by both a rise in commercial hires and greater use by community and not-for-profit groups.

The Committee has also supported a number of key initiatives during the year. These include the introduction of the Events Assistance Grant to encourage new activities and events at the Chantry Centre, a significant early repayment of £221,000 from Council reserves to reduce the loan taken to construct the Centre – cutting annual repayments by

### EXPENDITURE & RESERVES 2025/2026



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

around 18% – and funding for a new Youth Worker to support young people across the town.

Together, these actions reflect a continued focus on careful financial management while investing in services and facilities that directly benefit the Billericay community.

I would like to thank Councillors, our Clerk and staff for their hard work in delivering the projects overseen by Committee. ■

### EXPENDITURE AND RESERVES

2024/25	EXPENDITURE	2025/26
£'000	DESCRIPTION	£'000
166	Administration & Council Members	167
20	Recreational Facilities	18
26	Christmas Lights	25
0	Other Projects	1
13	Publications	9
147	Chantry Way Centre	154
70	Earmarked Reserves	60
<b>442</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>

### INCOME

2024/25	INCOME	2025/26
£'000	SOURCE	£'000
319	Precept	321
26	Interest Earned	22
22	Outside Funding	9
75	Chantry Way Centre	82
<b>442</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>

# 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 the borough and county councils.

## **This past year the Committee has:**

**War Memorial:** arranged for Bakers of Danbury to replace the damaged cornice of the WWII Memorial, repair and steam clean both memorials so they are now looking splendid in the heart of the High Street.



## **Festival Gardens and Jim Shields Garden:**

we are undertaking a large scale project to redesign both these green spaces. At the time of writing a preliminary design is being worked on with Ground Control. Our aim is to make Festival Gardens fully accessible to wheelchair users and to also deter the anti-social behaviour that often takes place there.

**Litter:** installed a solar compacting bin outside the Chantry Centre and is working with Basildon Council to replace damaged litter bins around the town.

## **Reinstated the High Street litter picks.**

**Seating:** installed a red bench on Sun Corner which is a living memorial to a young person who received lifesaving treatment thanks to pioneering research from the British Heart Foundation.

**Planting:** arranged planting of the two new planters in the High Street which were funded by the BBC Billericay Area Committee. Continued to provide flower baskets on the High Street lamp columns and plant up the War Memorial and other planters twice a year.

**Christmas Lights:** For Christmas 2026 we will be working with the Business Improvement District to extend the lighting scheme to other parts of the High Street.



**Flag Pole:** with the closure of Billericay Police Station a flagpole is being installed at the Chantry Centre so the Town flag can be flown. ■



# PLANNING COMMITTEE Chairman: Cllr Chris May



As the prolonged drafting and This report is written shortly after appeals from residents, District and Town Councillors to Basildon Council Planning Committee fell on deaf ears as plans to build 49 houses on Potash Road were approved, despite legitimate and compelling objections being raised.

This unfortunately is a recurring theme for the past year whereby large-scale developments focussed in and around Billericay's valued Green Belt are receiving approval in the face of overwhelming local opposition. This year, the Town Council has raised objections to development proposals for land on Laindon Road, Greens Farm Lane, Heath Close, Tye Common Road, Outwood Common Road as well as Potash Road.

One must hope that a combination of market forces and political headwinds will, in due course, serve to minimise the impact on our ecosystems and quality of life. Notwithstanding, Billericay Town Council will continue to champion the views of residents and do whatever is in our (limited) power to ensure these views are forcefully conveyed.

This has been a busy and challenging year for the Planning Committee with 197 applications being reviewed which resulted in 40 objections,

the most common being;

- Inappropriate development on the Green Belt
- Poor and awkward design
- Breach of Conservation Area rules
- Overlooking neighbours
- Excess height or mass
- Highway safety concerns

Over and above scrutiny of individual applications, the Planning Committee undertook on behalf of the Town Council detailed scrutiny and responses to National and Local consultations, including.

**National Planning Framework (NPPF)** – The governments handbook for Planning Authorities and which has now been adopted and largely used to justify developments on the Green Belt. We objected to the rules which allow reclassification of Green Belt to 'Grey' Belt, and excessive housing targets not reflecting 'real' demand.

**Basildon Borough Council's Local Plan** – Responded to three iterations of the draft Local Plan with our key concerns being;

- Excessive housing target bearing no relation to actual demand
- Spurious reclassification of Green Belt to Grey Belt
- Potential irreversible damage to delicate

ecosystems

- Lack of adequate Infrastructure Delivery Plan or funding mechanisms to provide it
- Insufficient infrastructure improvements to provide sustainable communities for present and future Residents
- Need for robust Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund vital services

**National Grid – Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Proposals** – The proposals to build a line of 50-metre-high pylons along Billericay's western boundary. We objected to the loss of visual amenity, harm to delicate ecosystems, and the inevitable noise and disruption during the construction phase.

Finally, I would like to thank Committee members, both past and present, for their unstinting efforts along with our hard-working staff, without whom the Committee would not function!

A reminder that we value the input of residents; our Planning Committee meetings are accordingly open to the public. Residents can address the Committee in person with their concerns regarding items on the agenda.

Please check the website for details of meetings and agendas. ■

## YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Chairman: George Wood



This year we have continued to focus on community safety by working with other youth councils across Essex to develop an Essex-wide youth safety booklet, which we hope to launch this summer alongside Essex Police. It covers topics young people are concerned about, including knife crime and theft (based on our Youth Safety Survey).

While we wait for funding, we have also been developing a campaign to allow people to easily and discreetly report crime or anti-social behaviour on buses. Young people across Essex, including Billericay, have raised concerns about feeling unsafe on buses. Calling 999 isn't always practical because you can be overheard, so we want a text service similar to 61016 on trains.

Our survey showed that around 20% of young people had seen a crime on a bus, but only 12%

reported it. Only 48% felt somewhat safe, while 73% said a text service would help. We are now working with our MP, Richard Holden, the PFCC and the Department for Transport to push this forward. Some young people now refuse to use buses because they feel unsafe – this needs to change.

In February we received £1,282 from the Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner to expand our Youth Safety Projects. This will fund a gazebo for events, a website domain and safety items such as torches. This is the start of expanding our work across Essex.

We have also worked on local issues. Lighting in the underpass by The Billericay School on the A176 was not working, leading people to avoid it and cross the busy main

road. We are pleased this has now been fixed, but there is still no lighting at the entrance and exit, which continues to feel unsafe. We will keep pushing for this to be addressed.

We also helped get blocked drains near Quilters School cleared after being an issue for over three years.

Finally, BYTC will be volunteering at the Soap Box Derby, running a safety stall at Summerfest 2026 and organising walk and talk events with our Neighbourhood Policing Team – so please come and say hello.

To keep up to date with all of Billericay Youth Town Council's work, follow us on Instagram, Facebook or Threads @billericayBYTC. ■

## COMMUNICATIONS WORKING PARTY Chairman: Cllr Marie Dear



Welcome to the Annual Report which provides in depth information regarding the Town Council's Committee work and finances. As usual the latest edition of the Town Crier is amalgamated with the Report.

As Editor I have been impressed by the many volunteers within Billericay who do so much for our community, whose successes are covered in the Town Crier.

I hope you have enjoyed the Town Crier over the past year. Its amazing how much the Town Council has achieved and shared with residents. The Communications Working Party are always happy to receive articles of 200 words maximum to review. Please send articles for consideration to the Town Clerk.

Thanks are due to my Communication Working Party colleagues Cllrs Adshead, May and Moore and to our Designer, David Vinten, for his creative work. ■

### MEETINGS ATTENDED MAY 25 TO MARCH 26

COUNCILLOR	PLANNING	F&GP	HW&E	COUNCIL	TOTAL
<b>No. of Meetings held</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	
Cllr A Adshead		7		6	13
Cllr P Bunyan			7	3	10
Cllr C E Butler	6		2	5	13
Cllr R Clark	15	5		7	27
Cllr E Davies	12		6	7	25
Cllr M Dear	11	3	1	8	23
Cllr J Devlin				7	7
Cllr J Henshaw	5			3	8
Cllr K Herlock			3	5	8
Cllr C May	17		6	4	27
Cllr M Moore	8		6	8	22
Cllr K Mordecai		4	7	7	18
Cllr G St.Pierre		5		4	9
Cllr I Scott				4	4
Cllr H Stuart	12			5	17
Cllr G Talbot		5	5	7	17
Cllr A Talboys	12	3		8	23
Cllr M Thomas		5	4	6	15
Cllr J Tutton	17	5	5	8	35

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## DEMENTIA FRIENDLY SOCIETY

WE ARE LAUNCHING **Billericay Talks** an opportunity for older people missing the intellectual and social stimulation that the workplace used to provide. It is open to everyone, but is designed to be inclusive for people living with dementia (and their supporting family members/friends).

We are grateful to the Rotary Club of Billericay and the Town Council for their support. First Friday morning of the month. 10.30 – 12.00. Free entry. Refreshments provided. Interesting speakers on a range of subjects. Opportunity to meet and talk with others in a similar situation.

Our first talk is **"A Century of Spice"** by Patrick Rothon of Unbar Rothon, Billericay. To find out more and book your place, please email [Billericay@Uniteinkindne26ss.co.uk](mailto:Billericay@Uniteinkindne26ss.co.uk)

**Billericay Community Dancing** First Wednesday afternoon of the month. 2-4 pm. £5 entry, carers free of charge – an inclusive event for adults with SEN and a dementia friendly event. For more info email Anna – [Anna@bennettsfunerals.co.uk](mailto:Anna@bennettsfunerals.co.uk) or Jo – [Jocurd@bluebirdcare.co.uk](mailto:Jocurd@bluebirdcare.co.uk)

**Billericay Community Cinema Dementia Friendly Screenings. Next dates:** 29 June 14.30 The Greatest Showman  
30 August 14.30 Calendar Girls

**Dementia Action Week: Information Morning**  
Friday 22 May 10.30-1.00. Come along and meet representatives of services, clubs and organisations that support people affected by dementia.