

**MINUTES OF THE 2024 BILLERICAY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CHANTRY CENTRE, CHANTRY WAY, BILLERICAY
ON MONDAY 4TH MARCH 2024 @ 7.00P.M.**

In the Chair: Cllr M Thomas, Town Council Chairman

Present: 9 Town Councillors
9 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr J Henshaw, Cllr K Herlock

1/24 Welcome by Town Council Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the twenty fourth 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.

2/24 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 29th April 2024

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 28th April 2022 were taken as read and approved as a correct record. No questions were raised and there were no matters arising.

3/24 Feedback Session – what do residents and hirers want to see at the Chantry Centre?

Cllr Thomas said that as the Chantry Centre has been operational for almost three years it had been decided to use this meeting as an opportunity to gain feedback from hirers and users. The building is a supremely useful asset and the Town Council wants to encourage more people through the doors, so Cllr Thomas asked those present to think about what they would like to see here. His first event as Town Council chairman was to attend a meeting during Dementia Awareness week and he had been amazed at the number of support groups available to sufferers and their families, most of which he hadn't been aware of, and he feels the Council should promote these umbrella organisations going forward so residents are aware of what is out there for them. He wants the Town Council to be facilitators in bringing the community together.

Feedback from Fit N Fabulous:-

Would Like – coat hooks, ability to lower temperature below 19 degrees as need the hall colder from a fitness perspective.

Feedback from Photofold Camera Club:-

Dislikes – have experienced resolution issues when using the projector. Their judges have observed that what is shown on screen does not match the image on the laptop.

Feedback received from visitors to Billericay Community Cinema:-

Dislikes – poorly publicised events, lack of parking, chairs not comfortable, lack of information about Town Council, no signage from High Street. **Would like to see** – community noticeboard in foyer, councillor photos and contact details publicly displayed, more promotion on social media, a cash point.

Feedback from Friends of Lake Meadows:-

The group hold their committee meetings in the Centre and enjoy meeting there but disabled parking can be a problem. They would like to be able to see what dates are already booked on the Council's website so they can agree future dates during their meetings.

Billericay Revival Church:-

Reported an incident that took place the previous weekend whereby the AV keys were not returned to the lock box in the storage room and suggested that spares are placed in the lobby key safe in case this happens again.

Summary of points raised for discussion/consideration by Council:-

- Coat hooks/umbrella stand for hall
- Keeping disabled car parking space clear
- Ability to reduce temperature in main hall for fitness classes
- Provide information about the Chantry Centre for inclusion in estate agent's welcome packs
- A "What's On" screen that is visible from outside the building
- Provision of information board with QR Code for community groups/charities
- Room availability shown on Council's website
- Adjustment of AV settings for individual groups
- Potential to place other keys in lobby key safe
- Advertise facility to businesses via LinkedIn
- More promotion of the facility via social media

Events people would like to see held in the Chantry Centre:-

- Martial arts classes/clubs
- Quiz nights
- More exercise classes
- Amateur productions/shows
- Concerts/art
- Short mat bowls
- Children's events
- Saturday children's cinema
- Over 60's speed dating

Cllr Thomas said that some of the senior citizen groups are run by people that are elderly themselves. The Town Council would be prepared to take these groups on rather than see them fold. The Council is also in the process of obtaining information from Basildon Council so that we can reach out to local businesses offering our services. Cllr Thomas is aware we need to let residents know that we are here and improve on getting information out there, but it is not the Council's responsibility to publicise other people's events.

Other issues that were raised:-

Telephone boxes outside the Post Office delivery office in the High Street. As they are the property of BT and are listed structures there is nothing the Town Council can do apart from making BT aware of their condition and reminding them they are liable should a member of the public get injured. The Council's Health, Wellbeing and Environment Committee has the condition of these kiosks as an Agenda item at the next meeting and will be trying to get something done.

The road from the High Street to the Chantry Centre could be better lit. This is not owned by ECC Highways so the Town Council will look into whether they are able to do anything.

Potholes around the town. Cllr Thomas encouraged members to report these online and Cllr Devlin said if they are particularly bad to telephone ECC Highways for an emergency repair.

Once a month/ad-hoc hirers. These bookings prevent a commercial group from hiring in the evenings but the building was only obtained from Basildon Council on the understanding that community groups took priority and were permitted to remain as hirers.

4/24 Closing Address and Summary of Council's year

Cllr Thomas gave those present a statement regarding his year in office and the events that had taken place during it, including the Coronation of King Charles III. The Chantry Centre is the home of Billericay Town Council and we are keen to expand its usage. A part-time caretaker has been employed who has undertaken an increasing amount of tasks since joining the staff and his workload has expanded outside the building to the High Street and our green spaces. A second Community Open Day is being held on 22nd March to encourage people to come along and find out about community groups and the volunteering opportunities they have available. The Tree Wardens are an affiliate group of BTC and they have performed tree planting at various areas around the town, litter picks have been reinstated and the next one is on 18th May with a further one planned for later in the year. New Christmas lights were on every lamp column in the High Street last year, whereas this had not been possible in previous years. The display will be further enhanced for 2024 and it is hoped that more premises will be added for displaying icicle lights along their frontage. The hanging baskets are being replaced by pole baskets so the High Street will have a colourful floral display this summer.

Cllr Jim Tutton – Chairman of Planning Committee

Cllr Tutton said that in the past year the Committee had considered 242 applications – and 58 of those had been objected to. There is a good level of consistency between BBC and BTC with regard to applications that are refused – around 80%. There can be a long time between submission and determination of applications and the Town Council is a consultee the same as any resident – we have no extra powers. The Council always objects to green belt applications but with no local plan developers are trying to take advantage. This means they would not have to provide infrastructure that would be included in the local plan. A recent success at blocking a developer was the site at Potash Road. The developer appealed the refusal but they lost thanks to resident's putting forward convincing arguments at the appeal hearing. If any residents wish to object to a planning application Cllr Tutton urged them to write a letter and submit one letter per household member as this carries far more weight than a petition. Recent large applications that the Council has objected to include land south of London Road – a Lidl store and 130 dwellings. Pasha in the High Street – development of 14 flats behind the building which is currently on hold. 97 Chapel Street which has been ongoing for three years and is subject to a planning change review on Wednesday, at which the latest design is likely to be approved. The redevelopment of Reids is currently being decided.

Cllr Martyn Mordecai – Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee

Cllr Mordecai said that he used to run a large conference facility and that the Council will take all the hirer feedback regarding Chantry on board.

Cllr Thomas thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm