



Billericay Town Crier

July 2025

www.billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BILLERICAY TOWN COUNCIL



BEACON LIGHTING FOR VE-DAY 80

IT WAS WONDERFUL to see so many residents at the VE Day 80 Beacon Lighting event on Thursday 8th May. The atmosphere was truly special, with a great sense of community spirit throughout the evening.

The weather was kind to us, and we were able to enjoy the musical performances on Sun Corner from High Voltage Performing Arts and Lorraine Cater, both of which had the crowd singing along and celebrating together.

Our Chairman, Jim Devlin, gave a warm and thoughtful opening speech, and we were proud to have two members of our Youth Council read the National Tribute.

At exactly 9:30pm, the Billericay Citizen of the Year, John Smart, had the honour of lighting the beacon as part of the nationwide commemorations.

Thanks are also extended to the Royal British Legion, Air Cadets, Army Cadets, Scouts and Guides, whose support and involvement helped make this event such a success.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US AT THE VE DAY 80 EXHIBITION



AS PART OF the VE-Day 80 celebrations the Town Council held an exhibition in the Chantry Centre on Saturday 10th May. We were delighted to welcome a steady stream of visitors throughout the day, many of whom stayed for quite some time, engaging with the detailed information on the display boards and watching the visual presentations.

The maps showing where bombs fell around Billericay sparked particular interest among our younger residents. These helped bring the historical context to life, especially when they could see just how close some of the bombs landed to where they live today. Feedback on the exhibition was overwhelmingly positive, ranging from "it was great" to more enthusiastic praise. One visitor described it as "an amazingly detailed and professionally crafted exhibition."

Town Council Chairman, Cllr Jim Devlin, who is also Chair of the Billericay Community Archive, gained new insights from his many conversations with local families that visited and residents with relatives named on the War Memorial left with a deeper understanding of their family's wartime history.

Our thanks to everyone that supported and contributed to this commemorative event which was a truly meaningful day for our community.

LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
FOUNDATION

For further information and general enquiries contact: Town Clerk
Billericay Town Council • The Chantry Centre • Chantry Way • Billericay CM11 2AP
T: 01277 625732 • E: townclerk@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk • W: www.billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk
W: www.chantrycentre.org.uk

Office Opening Times – 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday – Friday

@BillericayTC

BillericayTownCouncil



CITIZEN AND YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2025

BILLERICAY CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2025 – JOHN SMART

Billerica Town Council is proud to name John Smart as the Citizen of the Year 2025, in recognition of his outstanding and long-standing service to the community through his leadership of the Billerica Tree Wardens.



John Smart

John, who recently retired as Chair and Secretary, has been the driving force behind the group for many years. His dedication to protecting and enhancing the town's green spaces has left a lasting legacy. He played a key role in safeguarding many important trees across Billerica, including mature woodland areas near Norse Wood. His passion for the environment and his deep understanding of the value trees bring to public amenity and well-being have guided countless local efforts.

Throughout his service, John was known for his swift and thoughtful responses to residents' concerns about tree removal or potential threats. Whether advising on tree management near homes and highways, or engaging with contractors and landowners, he always

approached matters with courtesy, empathy, and expert knowledge.

John's vision extended beyond preservation, he spearheaded several major planting initiatives, leading to the addition of thousands of trees and hedgerows in the area. These efforts involved substantial research, coordination, and liaison work with partners and authorities.

His collaborative relationship with Basildon Council Tree Officers ensured that the Tree Wardens' views were respected, while his involvement with the Basildon Biodiversity Forum helped integrate Billerica's efforts into a broader environmental strategy for the Borough.

Even when his mobility became limited, John continued to guide and support the group remotely, offering advice to both team members and residents via phone and email.

The Town Council is honoured to recognize John's exceptional contribution with this award. It is a fitting tribute to his tireless efforts and enduring commitment to Billerica's natural heritage.

BILLERICAY YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2025 – JESSICA ELSDON

The Town Council is equally delighted to announce Jessica Elsdon as the Young Citizen of the Year 2025, in celebration of her extraordinary dedication to volunteering with the Billerica parkrun.

Since joining as a volunteer in February 2024, Jess has completed over 50 volunteer shifts, contributing through all seasons: rain, shine, and even freezing temperatures. Her involvement has been broad and impactful, successfully taking on 10 different volunteer roles, which are essential to the

safe and accurate running of the event. These include Timekeeper, Barcode Scanner, Finish Tokens, Number Checker, and critical safety roles such as Tail-Walker, Marshal, and Volunteer Co-ordinator.

In addition to these duties, Jess has served as event photographer on ten occasions, capturing the spirit of the parkrun with creativity and flair. Her photo sets have been widely appreciated for highlighting the diversity of participants and the vibrant community atmosphere.

Jess is admired not only for her reliability and professionalism but also for her warm and welcoming nature. She has become a valued member of the parkrun team, helping to make the event an inclusive and enjoyable experience for all.

Her commitment, talent, and positive energy exemplify the values of citizenship, and the Town Council is proud to honour her with this award.

Congratulations to both John and Jess on their well-deserved recognition, and thank you for making such a meaningful difference to our community.



Jessica Elsdon & Cllr M Thomas



DEMENTIA AWARENESS WEEK

Best Decorated Shop Window/Premises

19-25 May was Dementia Awareness Week. As in previous years the Billerica Dementia Alliance asked the High Street shops and businesses to colour theme their windows or provide a display in blue and yellow.

Town Councillors Mark Thomas and Peter Bunyan along with Cllr Thomas's wife Stella, judged the windows and the winners were:

1st Place – Oxfam

2nd Place – Waitrose

3rd Place – Riri's

The Town Council gave each winner an amount to donate to a charity of their choice and we are pleased to advise that Billerica Men's Shed were awarded £40 and Billerica Memory Café £50. Thanks to all the businesses that took part.



DEVOLUTION AND COUNCIL RE-ORGANISATION

THERE ARE TWO things happening in Local Government over the next couple of years. Next May there will be elections for a Mayor of Greater Essex who will cover the whole of the areas now covered by Essex County Council and Southend and Thurrock Councils. The Mayor will get devolved powers from Central Government over things like transport, infrastructure and economic development as well as the Police and Fire, like Andy Burnham in Manchester or the new Mayor of Lincolnshire. They will head a Combined County Authority made up of representatives from the three Councils.

All the Councils in Essex are to re-organised into Unitary Councils, so all the ones we know will go and new much larger Councils will be formed. There is disagreement over how many councils there should be; many District Councils want 5 Councils others and the Government guidance want 3 Councils for cost saving reasons.

The Government will announce the preferred plan in the Autumn. There will be elections of Councillors to the Unitary Councils in May 2027 and the Councils will probably operate from May 2028. The Town Council is not affected by this; however, it is possible that certain functions of the Borough Council may be devolved to us as part of the process. We will be careful to ensure that whatever happens involving the Town Council it will not cause more cost to you overall in your Council Tax for the same standard of service.



A trip down memory lane – TC staff 2014

TOWN COUNCIL WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

AT THE MARCH meeting, two new councillors were co-opted to Billericay Town Council – among the youngest to ever serve.

CIEEN BUTLER (West Ward) brings a vibrant record of community engagement, including work with Basildon Pride, local events, and participation in creative circles such as reading and writing clubs.

BEN LAMMIN (East Ward) is a corporate lawyer with a strong interest in civic involvement. He aims to apply his professional expertise to support the community and help shape the town's future.



Cien Butler



Ben Lammin

RETIREMENT OF LONG SERVING STAFF MEMBER DIANE MCCARTHY

A PERSONAL THANK YOU FROM THE TOWN CLERK

Diane McCarthy joined the Town Council in April 2013 as Clerk to the Planning Committee. During the past 12 years her role has expanded and changed beyond recognition. Originally Diane also undertook general office administration duties, but over the years she has become a font of knowledge for all Planning matters, Facilities Manager for the Chantry Centre, Event Planner, Exhibition Organiser, Town Council Photographer, and right-hand woman to the Town Clerk.

Over the last year Diane met the challenge of carrying out her responsibilities as Planning Committee Clerk at a time when Billericay is being inundated with planning applications for large housing developments. She did this with professionalism and understanding of residents' concerns. Diane welcomed residents at planning meetings and ensured their concerns were recorded.

On a personal level, having worked with Diane for almost 12 years, I can say she is so much more than a colleague she is also a great friend and confidante, and this Council would not be as well run as it is without Diane's contribution.

Myself, the other members of staff and all town councillors will miss her enormously. We all wish Diane a long, happy and very well-deserved retirement.



RESTORING THE FESTIVAL GARDENS – A FRESH START

THE GARDENS HAVE long been a cherished space where people could plant a shrub in memory of a loved one. However, in recent years, increasingly hot summers and the lack of an on-site water supply have made it difficult for plants to thrive. Many of the beds have become overgrown, and the once beautiful rose bushes are no longer blooming as they once did.

Although the hedge along Crown Road was removed a few years ago to open up the space and improve visibility, we continue to receive reports of vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the area.

The Town Council is committed to addressing these challenges and breathing new life into the Gardens. To that end, the Recreation Working Party has been re-formed and tasked with developing a plan to restore the Gardens to the peaceful green oasis they were always meant to be.

As part of this revitalisation, we also aim to make the Gardens fully accessible for wheelchair users, ensuring that everyone in our community can enjoy this special space.

THE TOWN COUNCIL HOSTS TWO MAYFLOWER STUDENTS ON WORK EXPERIENCE

WE WERE PLEASED to welcome Connor and Kenneth to the Town Council offices from 7-11 July to learn about what we do and how we do it. Their thoughts are below:

CONNOR BOYCE – MAYFLOWER SCHOOL – YEAR 12

My name is Connor, and I completed work experience at The Chantry Centre. Across the course of the week I completed tasks such as designing posters and constructing a stage for performers alongside my colleague Kenneth. Also, I received a presentation from the Council Chairman, where he explained the national council hierarchy and what responsibilities the Billericay Town Council have.

Overall, I have greatly enjoyed this week. Kenneth was great to work with, and all of the staff were very welcoming and patient. I hope to be able to use the skills I have learnt from this week later down the line.

KENNETH PRADEEP – MAYFLOWER SCHOOL – YEAR 10

My week of work experience was really fun, and I gained a much deeper understanding of the workplace environment. Everyone was super helpful, supportive and welcoming which made it really enjoyable. We helped around as much as we could which in turn helped me understand how to do certain tasks. Overall, I loved getting to do my work experience week here and I would love to come to work here in the future.



Kenneth and Connor



REPAIRS TO WAR MEMORIAL

THE TOWN COUNCIL are the custodians of the Town's historic War Memorials and as such we are responsible for arranging works to keep it looking its best. Prior to Remembrance Sunday Bakers of Danbury will be coming to specialist steam clean both the WWI and WWII memorials and surrounding walls, repoint all open masonry joints and replace a section of failed coping stone on the WWII memorial. The Town Council has had it planted up for the summer and I'm sure you'll agree it's looking very colourful indeed.

TOWN COUNCIL LITTER PICKS

ON 26TH APRIL, Town Councillors and members of the public gathered at the Chantry Centre to carry out a litter pick along the High Street.

The next community litter pick will take place ahead of the Remembrance Day Parade, on **Saturday 8th November, from 10:00am to 12:00pm.**

If you would like to take part, please meet at the **Chantry Centre by 10:00am.** All equipment will be provided.



Let's work together to keep our town clean and welcoming.

TOWN COUNCIL OBJECTS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TOWN'S GREEN BELT

THE TOWN COUNCIL has explored every avenue to resist development on the green belt of our town:

- Freedom of Information Requests have been made of Basildon Borough Council which have been negative.
- A request for advice was made of National Association of Local Councils which was not fruitful.
- The Town Council Planning Committee has raised legitimate objections to those developments.
- The Planning Committee Chairman, Cllr Chris May, has attended Basildon Borough Council Planning meetings to express the Town Council's strong objections.
- The Town Council Planning Committee have responded in depth to Local Plan Consultations, raising many strong objections to the destruction of the green belt and the lack of the required infrastructure. The Planning Committee will continue to respond to Local Plan Consultations.

While Basildon Borough Council have correctly adhered to the Planning Policies laid down by the Government, the Town Council will be persistent, raise residents' deep concerns and do everything within its powers to resist these developments.

A GREAT SUCCESS – COMMUNITY OPEN DAY

THE COMMUNITY OPEN DAY held at the Chantry Centre on 22nd March was well attended by local clubs and organisations. As always, it provided a fantastic networking opportunity for many, as well as a chance for residents to discover volunteering opportunities and explore ways to support their wellbeing. The Town Council is planning to host similar events periodically and is incorporating the feedback received from the participating groups. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the local organisations, clubs and charities who generously gave their time to make this event possible.

CAR PARK CHARGES: AN UPDATE FOR RESIDENTS

IN MARCH BASILDON Borough Council announced on social media that they were going to be increasing car park charges across Billericay, their original argument being that, since Basildon Council doesn't own car parks in Basildon town centre, it would be unfair for the wider Borough to "subsidise" Billericay or Wickford.

This overlooks the reality that Lake Meadows, Radford Crescent and the High Street car parks are used by people from across the Borough – for work, shopping, leisure, and visiting friends. These are shared facilities and should be treated as such.

Also, announced on social media was that the Town Council would be asked to fund 4 hours of free weekend parking across all three car parks through an annual contribution of £15,000 to Basildon Council alongside £15,000 from Basildon Borough Council's Billericay Area Committee. Billericay Town Council was never formally approached about this – despite a promised letter that never arrived. Instead, announcements continued to be made online. Basildon's Billericay Area Committee declined to fund free parking as their funding only covers capital projects.

By late May, a verbal proposal reached us asking for £17,000 – but for four hours' free parking solely at Lake Meadows. The total cost for Lake Meadows and the High Street had risen to £47,000, with Radford Crescent not included at all.

The Town Council considered this proposal at its meeting on June 12th. Serious concerns were expressed about the poor communication and the lack of a detailed financial justification. No clear breakdown was provided to explain how the original figures were estimated, why costs rose so significantly, or how future increases would be controlled.

As we have a duty to spend the precept responsibly and to enable the Town Council to make an informed decision we have asked Basildon Borough Council for:

1. A clear breakdown of all costings.
2. A service level agreement to manage any future price rises.
3. A guarantee that any future increases will be shared with us well before our budget is set, rather than being presented with an out-of-budget fait accompli.

When the Town Council has this information the matter will be considered at a Full Town Council Meeting. We will keep residents informed.

COUNTRYSIDE WALKS – SERIES 1 AND 2

BACK IN 2014, the Town Council partnered with Living Landscapes to create a series of rambling maps featuring country footpaths from local nature reserves in and around Billericay. The aim was twofold:

- (a) to raise public awareness of the area's nature reserves, and
- (b) to encourage enjoyable, scenic walks starting from them.

Two sets of maps were produced:

- **Series 1** features three circular walks from **Norsey Wood**
- **Series 2** offers three walks from **Queens Park Country Park**

Eleven years on, these routes remain popular with both residents and visitors. Copies of the maps are available from the **Chantry Centre** and **Billericay Library**, and a mobile-friendly version can be found on the **Town Council's website**.



BILLERICAY YOUTH TOWN COUNCIL



Gateway 97.8fm Junior Question Time

On 30th May 2025, Youth Town Council Chairman George and BYTC Vice-Chairman Alex were on the panel for Gateway 97.8fm's, Annual Junior Question Time. We answered an array of questions including crime & safety, public transport, education, housing and the environment. Questions were asked by our local MP, local borough and town councillors, as well as organisations. It was a fantastic opportunity and we felt that our voices were heard. To listen back to snippets from the radio show visit our Instagram @billericaytc.



BYTC/BYSP at Summerfest 2025

On Sunday 6th

July 2025, Billericay Youth Town Council attended Billericay Summerfest, where we had a stall for our Youth Safety Project, promoting our iconic Youth Safety Booklet along with our advice posters and property marking leaflets. As well as this we handed out safety goodies to help enhance public safety. This was a great event for us to engage with many young people and families.

BYSP & Essex Police Summer Events – Launch of new Essex Youth Safety Booklets

This school summer holidays, look out for Essex Police and the Billericay & Essex Youth Safety Project team, as we launch our



brand-new Essex Youth Safety Booklet. We will be hosting a range of events in Billericay and other districts promoting the long awaited for Essex Youth Safety Booklets. We are extremely excited to reveal these and look forward to engaging with many more young people across Essex.

Basildon Borough Volunteer Awards 2025 –BYTCs were represented at these awards by George Wood who was entered in the Young Volunteer of the year and by Ella who received the award.

Young Volunteer of the Year (11 – 21yrs): – Highly Commended – Ella Qurrey-Ruane – Young Essex Assembly

COULD YOUR GROUP RUN AN EVENT AT THE CHANTRY CENTRE?

BILLERICAY TOWN COUNCIL is excited to announce new grant funding for local community groups, charities and volunteers who want to run events at the Chantry Centre.

As part of our commitment to "building community", we're inviting ideas for events that bring people together, benefit residents, and make full use of our fantastic community hub. We know many local groups have great ideas but limited financial resources – so we're making it easier for you to make them happen.

Your event could be for families, young people, or older residents. It could be a music night for local teens, a flower show run by a gardening club, or an afternoon concert for seniors. If it benefits the Billericay community, we'd love to hear from you! Successful groups will receive funding to help cover costs – including free Chantry Centre hire. You organise and run the event, we'll help fund and promote it.

We want to see our local groups shine, our

residents given more opportunities to attend events and get involved, whilst getting as much value as we can from the Chantry Centre.

Interested? We are hosting a meeting of interested groups on September 11th at 7pm in the Chantry Centre where you can share your ideas. Contact us at townclerk@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk or phone 01277 625732 for more information.

Let's make something special happen – together!

BIODIVERSITY IS FOR EVERYONE

THE VARIETY OF life on Earth includes all living organisms, sustaining ecosystems essential services like clean air, water, and food. It contributes to human well-being by offering resources like medicine, shelter, and recreation.

Norsey Woods, Lake Meadows, Mill Meadows, residential gardens, parks, woodlands, green verges, open spaces and nature reserves are the green lungs of Billericay. Unfortunately, they are under threat due to human activities such as deforestation, pollution, and over development. **What can you do?**

- **You don't have to lose your garden** – Even small gardens provide biodiversity benefits for all. With a few maintained paths, you can have your own nature walk.
- **Collaborate** – A wonderful example is the use of hedges in Billericay providing an alternative to fencing. Research and plant native species, contact local groups with experience for help such as the Billericay Tree Wardens.
- **Soil Testing** – If contaminated, the soil must be carefully excavated and



- disposed of. Replace with local clean topsoil or suitable alternatives. Chemicals don't disappear after use, instead they are absorbed into the soil.
- **Leave the leaves!** – It's tempting to remove branches that fall or to use the rake, but you lose vital decaying matter that breaks down and enriches the soil as well as giving shade and shelter for smaller creatures.



BILLERICAY COMMUNITY CINEMA CELEBRATES 10TH BIRTHDAY

ONE OF THE biggest successes of the Town Council's grant policy is the much-loved Billericay Community Cinema, which marks its 10th birthday this September.

Founded in 2015 at Billericay Library and moving to the Chantry Centre in 2021, by September it will have shown 196 films to nearly 9,500 local residents. The volunteer-run cinema screens two films a month: an evening "Film Thursday" and a Sunday Matinee, offering a mix of modern and classic films – from Buster Keaton's 1920s comedies to recent hits like Maria and Conclave.

Each screening brings together regulars and first-time visitors alike – whether people come alone or in groups, they're always guaranteed a warm welcome.

Tickets are just £5 for Thursdays and £4 for Sunday Matinees, with refreshments (including delicious home-baked cakes on Sundays) all very reasonably priced. What better way to spend a few hours?

After covering costs, profits are shared locally. Half supports the Billericay Good Companions Club, with the rest donated to local groups every six months. In June the Billericay Men's Group received £238, Gone Too Soon £334, and BCCS £223 and from July to December donations will go to the Norsey Wood Society and the Mill Meadows Society.

You can pick up leaflets at the Chantry Centre and Billericay Library, or see what's on at www.billericaycine.com

COMMUNITY EVENTS AT THE CHANTRY CENTRE – AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 2025

AUGUST 2025

Every Monday and Wednesday – Barclays Local – community banking hub 9am-5pm

1st August – Basildon Community Transport Service – Toenail cutting 9.30am-12.30pm

9th August – Crafty Cow Mystical Craft Fair 11am–3pm

14th August – Hearing Help – hearing aid support service 2pm–4pm

SEPTEMBER 2025

Every Monday and Wednesday – Barclays Local – community banking hub 9am-5pm

1st September – Cater Museum talk – Billericay's Zeppelin 7pm-9pm

4th September – Billericay Cine – The Imitation Game 7pm start

11th September – Hearing Help – hearing aid support service 2pm-4pm

21st September – Billericay Cine – Hope & Glory 2.30pm start

27th September – Herite – pre-loved designer sale 11am-3pm

TOWN COUNCIL VACANCIES

The Town Council currently has **two part-time staff vacancies:**

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Based at the Chantry Centre, working from **1:00pm to 6:00pm.**

CARETAKER

Working **5 hours per day** on a flexible shift pattern, **including morning and afternoon shifts** as required by the Chantry Centre.

Both positions are **25 hours per week** and are Monday to Friday,

If you are interested in either role, please contact the Town Clerk for full job descriptions and details on how to apply.

Email:

townclerk@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk

Telephone: 01277 625732

TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

AUGUST 2025

Tuesday 5 Planning

Tuesday 19 Planning

SEPTEMBER 2025

Tuesday 2 Planning

Tuesday 9 Health, Well-Being & Env

Tuesday 16 Planning

Thursday 18 Finance & General Purposes

Thursday 25 Full Council

Tuesday 30 Planning

OCTOBER 2025

Tuesday 14 Planning

Tuesday 21 Health, Well-Being & Env

Tuesday 28 Planning

Thursday 30 Finance & General Purposes

NOVEMBER 2025

Thursday 6 Full Council

Tuesday 11 Planning

Tuesday 25 Planning

All meetings are open to the public and press and are held at The Chantry Centre, Chantry Way, unless otherwise stated and start at 7.00pm.

BILLERICAY TOWN COUNCILLORS

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