

**Minutes of the Town Council meeting
held in the Council Chamber, Chantry Centre, Chantry Way, CM11 2AP
on Thursday 14th December at 7.00pm**

Present: Chairman: Cllr M Thomas
Vice-Chairman: Cllr J Devlin

Councillors: A Adshead, J Clark, L Clark, R Clark, M Dear, J Henshaw, K Herlock,
J Leung, C May, M Moore, K Mordecai, M Roessler, D Spencer, A Talboys,
J Tutton

Also present: four members of the public and the Town Clerk

88. Apologies for Absence

Cllrs M Mordecai, E Sainsbury and G Talbot

89. Members Declarations of Interest with regard to items on the Agenda

None.

90. Co-Option

Members were reminded that there is currently one vacant seat on the Town Council in West Ward. Five candidates had presented themselves for co-option. Cllr Thomas explained to the candidates that they would be invited to say a few words about themselves before members voted. Voting then took place with the successful candidate having to receive at least 50% of the votes cast by members present and voting.

RESOLVED: that Jessica Leung is elected to West Ward.

Cllr Leung signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took her place at the Council meeting.

91. Public Participation Session with respect to items on the Agenda and other matters that are of mutual interest

None.

92. Town Council Minutes

Members **(a)** received and considered the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 26th October 2023, and **(b)** approved the signing of the minutes as a true record.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2023 be approved and adopted.

93. Chairman's Report

A report from Cllr Thomas had been circulated prior to the meeting detailing events he had recently attended on behalf of the Town Council.

RESOLVED: information noted.

94. Committee Meetings

(a) Planning Committee

Cllr Tutton presented the minutes of the meetings held on 31st October, 28th November and 12th December. The meeting of 14th November did not take place because the planning system at Basildon Council was offline which affected receipt

of applications. He informed members that a total of 34 applications had been considered, with 24 approved and 10 objected to.

(b) Health, Well-being and Environment Committee

Cllr Moore presented the minutes of the Health Well-Being and Environment Committee meeting held on 21st November 2023. She informed members that a quote from Basildon Council had been approved for repair and replacement work at Outwood Common play area, the Committee are looking at providing a floral display using pole baskets rather than hanging baskets on the High Street lamp columns in summer and the Council caretaker is taking over the maintenance of Jim Shields and Festival Gardens from April 2024 for a one year trial period.

(c) Finance & General Purposes Committee

Cllr R Clark presented the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting held on 7th December 2023. He informed members that a grant application from the BDRA had been rejected and that a thank you letter from Essex and Herts Air Ambulance had been received following the Council's £200 donation. The recommendation re the Precept and Budget setting is to be considered under Agenda Item 8.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of all the above Committees are approved and adopted.

95. Estimates and Precept Requirement 2024-25

Members received and considered the following:

- (a)** The draft budget for 2024-25, and;
- (b)** To approve a 1.05% increase on the precept for 2024-25 making the precept demand £319,390.32 - a £0.27p increase on a Band D property.

RESOLVED: **(i)** that the draft budget is approved and; **(ii)** that the Precept for 2024-25 is set at £319,390.32 and that the precept demand is issued to Basildon Borough Council.

96. Local Council Award Scheme

Members considered feedback from the EALC panel as to why the Town Council had not met the criteria for the Gold Award and following discussion it was:

RESOLVED: **(i)** that the Annual Town Meeting is moved to 4th March 2024 and a new application for the Gold Award is submitted in 2024.

97. Closure of Billericay Police Station

Members received and considered an email from Adam Pipe, Head of Roads Policing at Essex Police about the proposed closure to Billericay Police station during summer 2024. Mr Pipe had requested the views of the Town Council by 10th January 2024. Following discussion it was agreed that a response would be prepared by the Town Clerk which was to include the following comments:

- It is believed the building is a local heritage asset so the Council would wish to see the frontage retained
- Residents get a psychological benefit from a police presence in the town, even if the building is not being used as a Police station.
- The site is a prime location and the Council would wish to see the street scene preserved
- What will happen to the Town's flagpoles?

- Can Essex Police provide an example of the impact on crime statistics in a town where a similar sized police station has been removed?
- The Council believes residents want the reassurance of a police station in Billericay so would like the station to remain if possible
- There may be a swing back towards a locally based police presence in future which would require a hub
- The Council does not want the site to become an eyesore like Wickford's station and remain boarded up for years

RESOLVED: (i) the Town Clerk prepares a response on behalf of the Town Council which includes the above comments and; (ii) the response is circulated to members for review prior to being sent.

98. Items for Information

(a) UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Business Improvement Districts

Cllr Devlin gave members an update on the status of the project. He said that the original timescale given by Electoral Services at BBC was too tight so it has now been pushed back until after the May elections. It is therefore anticipated to start in June/July 2024.

RESOLVED: information noted.

99. Items for Press Release/Social Media

- New Town Councillor for West Ward.
- Town Council response to Police Station closure
- Change of date for Annual Town Meeting
- Rise in precept is far below rate of inflation

100. Questions from the Press and Public

A member of the public asked what was being done regarding the closure of Billericay Post Office. Cllr Devlin said that he would be reporting back to Council in January 2024.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00pm

Cllr ThomasDate
Chairman