



Billericay District Residents' Association

Incorporating **Billericay Action Group**



www.bdra.org

www.billericayactiongroup.org.uk

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| Held: | 22 nd May 2024 - Emmanuel Hall, Billericay |
| Attendance: | Recorded as 33 |
| Agenda Prepared by: | Viv Burling ExCo Secretary |
| Minutes Taken by: | Viv Burling |

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Vice Chair, Stephen Chapman welcomed everyone to the 98th AGM of the BDRA, with a special welcome to Phil Norton of the Billericay Street Pastors.

2. Guest Speaker – Phil Norton

Phil presented his talk speaking about the work done by the Street Pastors and their re-launch on the 15th June.

3. Questions and Answers

There were questions from the audience at the end of the talk, which Phil was able to answer. The Chair thanked Phil for his talk and he stayed for the meeting.

Formal business of the AGM commenced.

4. Apologies for Absence.

- Yvonne Cave

5. Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the 24th May 23 were accepted as a true and complete record of the meeting.

6. Matters Arising

None

7. Chair's report (Vice Chair, Stephen Chapman)

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, members of this Association.

I welcome you to tonight's annual general meeting and thank you for attending. I hope that you will find the meeting to be informative on the Association's activities and our role going forward.

The past year has been a difficult one for the Association as we have lost a number of Committee members, whom in the main we have not been able to replace. Furthermore, we have also seen a reduction in our volunteers and also in our membership base.

Accordingly, while all of our volunteers have continued to work hard, we would welcome your encouragement; support and help in broadening our membership base and in growing our list of active volunteers in roles such as delivering The Resident.

With regards to the Association's activities over the last 12 months, we have through the auspices of our joint area committee participated in a number of events that has helped maintain our profile and also gained some new members.

We have also increased our campaigning role both through our colleagues on the Billericay Action Group with regards to planning application on prior local plan sites and also on the Council stance on a new local plan.

In addition, we have through our Councillors and direct with the Essex County Council been raising issues with regards to the terrible state of our roads and pavements. Whilst it would be difficult to say that we have made much progress, we have highlighted and will continue to highlight as many of the issues as possible and press our representatives to fight for our town.

We also found out about the closure of the Post office in the town and reported same to Councillor Schrader and he has been working hard with BBC and the Post Office to find a solution. However, as Councillor Schrader reported on social media this is an ongoing situation and they are trying to find a smaller location.

So all in all a busy year and one which clearly shows that the BDRA has an important role in helping to defend the interests of the residents of Billericay but also that we need more support from our members to be able to carry on with these activities.

The coach trips have also continued to be a success and we hope that all those attending have enjoyed the trips and will continue to enjoy them throughout 2024.

8. **Local Plan**(*Stephen Chapman reading a report produced by Andy Wilson*)

Some of you may recall that Basildon Borough Council (BBC) started work on a new Local Plan 10 years ago in 2014. That version of the plan was submitted to the Government in 2019 but it was withdrawn by the council in 2022.

The reason being that not only was it largely out of date based on evidence from almost 10 years earlier, but that it did not serve the residents of the borough well-being damaging to the rural Green Belt areas and did not provide what the urban areas needed by way of appropriate housing. That plan would have seen around 3,000 houses built on 9 major sites all in the Green Belt around Billericay with little guarantee that the infrastructure would have been adequately improved in line with house building. It was a bad plan.

It was a bold move by the BBC council administration to withdraw the plan, but it has left the borough vulnerable to speculative development and we have now seen several Green Belt sites approved, such as on Kennel Lane and Southend Road, with several more on or near London Road yet to be decided. And there could be more! Thankfully the proposed development on Potash Road was rejected. BBC is failing to meet its housing target and in such situations the planning system is tilted towards development, even in the Green Belt. That is the primary reason why we are seeing housing being approved, not just because there is no current Local Plan.

We need a new Local Plan. It must be recognised that we need a new Local Plan as it will provide a degree of certainty over where development can, and cannot, take place over a 15-year period. The Local Plan is where the Green Belt is defined and through that plan it protects such land from future development.

We must also accept that all parts of the borough must play a part in delivering houses for our future generations, but they should be distributed to where there is most housing need and where the development can be best sustained. We all need to acknowledge the importance of having a Local Plan and do all we can to ensure that the next version is good for our existing communities, our environment and delivers the right type of houses specifically for first time buyers, young families, and the elderly.

The current situation. Work started on a new Local Plan soon after the previous iteration was withdrawn, but we have yet to see any detail. BBC held a public consultation on the Local Plan last summer to gather the views of residents and other interested parties, including landowners and developers. The results of that consultation showed that residents right across the borough supported protecting the Green Belt in favour of brownfield urban development and expansion. The need for adequate infrastructure was also a key priority. Earlier this year, under some pressure from the Government, BBC revised the timetable for the Local Plan such the aim is to submit a plan to the Government by the middle of next year and have the new plan in place by mid-2026. This is about a year earlier than originally scheduled. What this means is that matters will progress much faster than expected. We are likely to see the first draft Local Plan and another public consultation at the end of this year. That will be the first time that the details on housing targets and site allocations will be made public. At this stage we cannot predict what the new Local Plan will look like. The council may opt to meet the full Government housing target of over 20,000. Should that be the case there will be the need for further Green Belt to be released. Alternatively, they could legitimately use the current Green Belt as a constraint and build the plan on a lower number. The previous council administration was proposing a lower target but with the change of administration earlier this month that may no longer be the case. Yet again politics will have bearing on the outcome of the Local Plan.

Please look out for further news over the coming months and when the next consultation is launched, and please be prepared to make your view known. As before, the BDRA and Billericay Action Group will provide you with information, advice and guidance through our websites, social media and The Resident.

There was a discussion following this report, contributed by Mike Andrews, with his experience of the Local Plan.

It had always been a possibility that the bold decision by the Council to withdraw the last draft Local Plan because of its failure to fully reflect local desires to maximise the protection of the Green Belt would be accompanied by risks of opportunistic large-scale Applications by developers for sites in the Green Belt. Some had materialised and where these had been approved, either directly by the Council or subsequently by Planning Inspectors on appeal, it was generally due to factors related to National Policy. As an example, the 7000 properties already granted Approval by Basildon Council are not considered because they are not actually being constructed, despite the decision not to start being solely one made by developers. It had been hoped that greater protection for our local Council might have been provided by our national representatives. Often local Councils find themselves hamstrung by national rules which seem to be biased in favour of developers. The well-known eyesore at the Stock Road end of Radford Way is another example where the developer has not contravened any of the regulations but the partially developed site is still considered by many residents to be unacceptable.

Not all is gloom however as at least one large development in the Green Belt, in Potash Road, was rejected on Appeal.

It was also noted that whilst some new housing was essential the associated infrastructure which supports it was generally outside the control of the Council despite their responsibility to meet the housing numbers.

On a related topic, in February 2024 the BDRA had expressed some concerns about the operation of the planning process and the Planning Committee to the Planning Department of Basildon Council. These related to the lack of

visibility of comments submitted in respect of Planning Applications both from the public and the Statutory Consultees, the training of Councillors on the Planning Committee, public visibility of the briefings provided by Council Officers which are available to Councillors prior to Planning Committee meetings and 'guidance' given to Committee members by the Chair or Council Officers prior to voting on Planning Applications. An initial response was received but despite a reminder no specific response to our comments had been received.

9. Treasurer's Report

FINANCIAL RESULTS 2023-24

| INCOME & EXPENDITURE | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| For the years ending January 31st | 2024 | 2023 |
| Revenue & Sales | | |
| Subscriptions £ | 11,492 | 11,992 |
| Advertising | 8,526 | 10,877 |
| Coach Trips | 25,593 | 15,821 |
| Total revenue Sales | £45,611 | £38,690 |
| Costs | | |
| Magazine | 17,810 | £17,524 |
| Coach trips | 22,876 | 13,806 |
| Total Costs | £40,686 | £31,330 |
| Gross Surplus/Deficit | £4,925 | £7,360 |
| Other Income | | |
| Interest (Net) | 78 | £20 |
| Other income | 0 | 100 |
| Total other income | £78 | £120 |
| Other Expenses | | |
| Admin & Misc expenses | 3,007 | £2,634 |
| Donations & Sponsorship | 500 | 1,087 |
| Total other expenses | 3,507 | £3,721 |
| Net surplus/Deficit | 1,496 | £3,759 |

| BALANCE SHEET | Jan31st 2024 | Jan31st 2023 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Assets | | |
| Cash at bank and in hand | £57,909 | £54,337 |
| Debtors, Receivables & Pre payments | 2,741 | 240 |
| Total Assets | £60,650 | £54,557 |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| Creditors, Payables & Accruals | £11,674 | £7,097 |
| Total Liabilities | £11,674 | £7,097 |
| RESERVES | | |
| Accumulated fund | £48,976 | £47,480 |
| Total Liabilities and Reserves | £60,650 | £54,557 |

COMMENTARY

A Gross surplus of £4,925 was recorded in the Financial Statements for 2023-24 financial year. This was down on the prior year of £7,360 due to lower subscriptions, higher costs of the magazine and lower levels of advertising revenue, partially offset by the higher net income from Coach trips. With regards to subscriptions, membership has fallen slightly to stand at just under 4,000 households. There were 15 coach trips in the year, compared with 11 in the previous year. There were no major expenditures during the year. The balance sheet remains strong, with available reserves of £48,976 at the end of the 2023-24 financial year. This is preserved at a high level, representing a long standing "fighting fund" for potential outlay on

legal and consultancy services to support the campaign against the Basildon local plan.

Marian Jones asked why the liabilities were increased from last year. Susan Harrington, advised that she could not ask that question immediately, but would email Marian with a response, and post the answer on the website.

Susan Harrington asked for confirmation that those present were happy to continue with Phil Dove as the independent Examiner. This was agreed.

10. Motions

The ExCo Secretary (VB) referred to Appendix 3 in the pack relating to proposed amendments to the Constitution. It was explained that the changes were split into 3 areas, Housekeeping, New Sections and Amendments. The following were put forward: -

(a) Housekeeping - small amendments: -

| Section | Previous | Change |
|------------|---------------------|--|
| All | Executive Committee | ExCo, after Section 1 Definitions |
| Section 1 | Officers, | Included Database Membership Secretary as a key officer |
| Section 4a | Membership | Included Steeple View |
| | | Included the ability to receive an e-version, if you live outside Billericay |
| Section 4c | Membership | Included the ability to receive an e-version, to replace 'subject to a delivery network. |

(b) New sections

- 5c. Any committee member of ExCo, a standing sub-committee or sub-committee, with a personal or financial interest in the subject being discussed, shall declare that interest and absent themselves from the discussion/meeting.
- 5e. Any committee member, after being absent from three consecutive meetings, without explanation, will be deemed to have resigned.
- 7d. Reasonable expenses incurred by any volunteer can be claimed, subject to being supported by appropriate documentation.

(c) Amendments

- 5d (f) The ExCo shall set out the terms of reference for sub-committees and *standing sub-committees, in agreement with said sub-committees.*
- 5e (h) Minutes signed by the Chair, and retained - *A pdf version of the minutes will be centrally stored.*
- 8a. Non committee members may enter into any contracts - *changed to financial agreement on behalf of the association only with the express prior permission of the ExCo.*

Marion Jones advised that she had never seen the Constitution before and would like the opportunity to read it before commenting. She was advised that she could not comment on the Constitution, only the proposed changes. There were no further comments from the members and the changes were accepted.

There were no Motions put forward by the Members.

11. Nomination of Officers- Executive and Joint Area Committee 2024-25

The ExCo Secretary (VB) referred the Members to Appendix 4 in the pack and asked those present to agree to the nomination for officers for 2024-25, as follows: -

Officer Appointed 2023-24

Executive Committee

Chair
Vice Chair
Treasurer
Secretary
Editor

Keith Bailey
Stephen Chapman
Susan Harrington
Viv Burling
Lisa Ronchetti

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|--|---|--|
| Billericay Action Group | Membership Database Sec Chair | Gordon Shand Andy Wilson |
| Joint Area Committee | Chair Vice Chair Secretary | Tony Beard Eve Oliver Marian Jones |
| Officer Nominations for 2024-25 | | |
| Executive Committee | Chair Vice-Chair Treasurer Secretary Editor | Vacant Stephen Chapman Susan Harrington Viv Burling Lisa Ronchetti (<i>standing until July 2024</i>) |
| | Membership Database Sec | Gordon Shand |
| Billericay Action Group | Chair | Andy Wilson |
| Joint Area Committee | Chair Vice Chair Secretary | Tony Beard Eve Oliver Marian Jones |

Those present agreed to the positions as detailed above.

12. Any Other Business- including questions and answers from the floor.

There was no other business and no questions from the floor.

13. Chair’s Closing Remarks

Stephen Chapman, thanked those present for coming and their support. He advised that during 24-25 we would continue to work where we can and make a success of the BDRA. He advised that we particularly need a new Chair, if anyone present felt they, or someone they knew, had the skills for this role we would be pleased to hear from them.

Tea and biscuits are now served. Meeting closed at 9pm.