

Your Billingham

Latest News From Your Town Council



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Spring is in the air and after twelve months of upheaval, the successful Covid-19 vaccine rollout means that, by the time that you are reading this, we should be on the way to the end of the national lockdown and be able to see family and friends again. Although a return to normal lives is still a bit of a way off yet, I'm excited about the prospect of seeing people in person again, rather than through a computer screen.

The Covid-19 pandemic has ravaged communities and the toll on our physical, mental and financial health has been severe for many in our town. Here at Billingham Town Council, having been involved in the creation of the Billingham Covid Support Response, we have seen first-hand the impact on many of our families, which is why we have taken the decision to freeze our Town Council precept this year. With many residents having been placed on furlough and some having lost their jobs, we recognize that, financially, times are hard, so we are ensuring that our Town Council precept doesn't increase even by a penny over the next year. We are increasing the amount of support available to our residents through activities such as the Holiday Enrichment Project, our free Sunday Lunch Delivery Service for elderly residents and, once restrictions are lifted, we will be looking to reinstate our Community Lunch Club.

We are in the process of setting up a Community Wellbeing Committee to better understand the needs of our residents and how their Town Council can support them. However, it isn't just our residents that will need our support as we emerge from this pandemic. Local charities, CICs, sports clubs, youth groups, craft clubs and volunteer groups will also need additional support, which is why we have increased the amount of funding available through small grants and sponsorship this year. If this is something you are interested in, please do visit our website, where you will find eligibility criteria and an application form. Despite having a slightly smaller budget this year, we are providing a record amount of funding to local organisations next year through our subsidy programme, with £36,000 allocated for projects over the coming twelve months. More on this over the page in our special feature on the budget.

Although I am disappointed that Billingham wasn't included in the allocation of funding for the Towns Fund that would have brought some much needed investment into our town, I was pleased to learn that Stockton Borough Council are planning to acquire Billingham Town Centre. Our town centre is in need of investment and this will be welcome news for residents. Also, what great news for our town that Fujifilm Diosynth will be manufacturing the new Novavax vaccine here. The announcement in February saw Billingham being mentioned on all of the national news networks and was a hot topic on Channel 4's The Last Leg!

I am always keen to hear from residents and you can get in touch with me directly via my Facebook page www.facebook.com/BTCchair or via email at cgamble@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk. Please also like our Billingham Town Council Facebook page and follow us on Twitter @billinghamtc to stay up to date with all of the latest Town Council news.

Find us on Facebook @billingham.towncouncil

Precept

2021/22

Billingham Town Council precept information below outlines how much it costs for services on Bands A – E

The Town Council precept is the amount that the Council has estimated that it will require to fund the services it provides to Billingham residents. The last year has been a difficult year for so many within our community. With the ongoing coronavirus pandemic affecting the lives of us all, Billingham Town Council understand that many of our residents are facing more financial challenges than ever. As a result, we have set our budget for 2021/2022 to ensure that households do not see an increase in the amount they are paying despite us delivering more services than ever before. The table below outlines the cost for each property banding and read on for more information about the services coming this year to support our town and its residents.

Sunday Lunch Service



This service was launched in May 2020 as part of the Covid-19 community support response. It was during this time that the Town Council identified a need within the community for support to some of our most elderly and vulnerable residents who are not in a position to be able to cook a hot meal for themselves. Managed by the Chairman of the Town Council with support from staff, councillors and volunteers, to date, more than 4500 two-course meals have been prepared and delivered. The service, funded through our precept, has now been extended until March 2022. This budget commitment over the next year will allow us to reach out to more residents and provide more meals.

Events



The Town Council has the pleasure of arranging and promoting events for the enjoyment and benefit of residents and visitors. Due to COVID-19, our 2020 programme has looked very different as Government restrictions meant no large scale gatherings. As we hopefully emerge from lockdown towards the summer, we do hope that 2021 will be different and have increased our budget provision for the coming year, in the hope that we can deliver bigger and better events in a safe way. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for future announcements.

Ward Community Fund



This fund, introduced in 2020, provides town councillors with opportunities to support local projects and initiatives or respond to local issues within their wards. Each of Billingham's five wards has £1000 available during 2021/2022. If you are involved in a project in your area that needs some help or you have an idea about doing something for the community, please contact your local town councillor, detailing how it will benefit the ward and its residents. Councillor contact details can be found on our website.

Grants, Subsidies & Sponsorship

The Town Council is committed to encouraging, supporting and promoting individuals, groups and local organisations within Billingham for the benefit of the town and providing an easily accessible process of funding support. This year, the Council has increased its annual budget provision for community funding and is providing three separate funding schemes:

Grants

Aimed at funding one-off projects that can be completed within a year, up to a value of £500;

Subsidies

Set over a three year term to provide some financial stability. Applications can be made between 1st April and 31st August and will be considered as part of the budget setting process which takes place between September and January;

Sponsorship

Available to voluntary or not for profit organisations. Application forms for all schemes are available from the Town Council website.

	2020/2021	2021/2022	Increase	Cost per Month
BAND A	£19.92	£19.92	£0.00	£1.66
BAND B	£23.24	£23.24	£0.00	£1.94
BAND C	£26.56	£26.56	£0.00	£2.21
BAND D	£29.88	£29.88	£0.00	£2.49
BAND E	£33.20	£33.20	£0.00	£2.77

Community Lunch Club



This club which was set up in November 2019, runs once a month and is an opportunity for Billingham residents who are affected by food poverty to access a free meal at the Cafe in John Whitehead Park. It also offers those who live alone with very little social interaction to come together with other members of the community, to build new relationships and learn about other services within the local area.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the club was postponed in March 2020. However, we hope to have this up and running again later this year and extend the service, so that we are able to offer it to as many residents that need it.

Holiday Enrichment Programme



Over the last 12 months, we have supported local organisations to deliver holiday enrichment projects across the town. In a year of financial uncertainty, this has been welcomed by residents more than ever and we have been inundated with positive feedback from parents. As a result, we have committed funding to ensure that local children are able to access activity sessions, which include a meal provision across all school holidays for 21/22.

£36k awarded to Local Organisations



As part of the Town Council's subsidy programme, commencing in 2021, we are supporting three local organisations over the next three years. Billingham Environmental Link Programme, Fighting Chance Billingham Boxing Club and BCT Aspire were all successful in securing funding, which will see them receive £12,000 per year each to support their projects.

Don't be alarmed!

On the morning of 5th February, the toxic alarm sounded throughout Billingham and a review of social media posts highlighted that many of our residents were unaware of what to do when hearing the alarm. We therefore want to take this opportunity to share with you all the safety information kindly provided by CF Fertilisers. The alarms are tested every Tuesday between 9am and 10am, with quarterly test dates advertised in advance. If you hear the alarms at any other time, please follow this safety advice; Go immediately into a house or building, close all windows and doors switch off ventilation and air conditioning systems. Stay indoors and listen to BBC Tees (95FM) and Zetland FM (105FM) for further information. Monitor official social media accounts, particularly on Zetland FM. BBC TV and ITV may also provide up date information. Please stay calm and cooperate fully with any instructions given by the emergency services. Remain indoors until the incident is over.

BTC Meetings

Billingham Town Council meets six times a year. In addition to these meetings, the Council has two committees (Finance & General Purposes and Planning & Services) that meet monthly and have responsibilities for certain aspects of the Council's overall duties. From April 2021, the Council is proposing to set up a Community Wellbeing committee which will agree priorities for the delivery of projects to improve community wellbeing within the town. All Council meetings are open to the public and press. Dates and times are available on our website and Facebook page.

Cafe in the park

The Café in the Park remains closed. We look forward to welcoming customers back with delicious hot coffee and some tasty treats. Please follow the Café in the Park Facebook page for updates.



Have you had your Covid-19 Jab Yet?

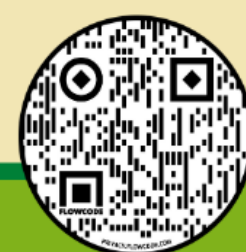
Many of you will have received your first vaccination already and some of you may have also received your second dose. The 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccine should give you good protection. But you need to have the 2 doses of the vaccine to give you longer lasting protection.

There is a chance you might still get or spread coronavirus even if you have the vaccine so it is important to continue to follow social distancing guidelines and, if you are able, wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth in places where it's hard to stay away from other people.



Christmas Activity Packs

There were 300 activity packs made up and delivered out to children in Billingham on the 5th, 12th and 19th of December, getting the children excited in the lead up to Christmas. The activity packs contained games, arts and crafts activities and a mini afternoon tea. Billingham Town Council wants to thank all those involved in delivering the activities packs.



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