



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **2023/2024**

**VICE CHAIRMAN – Councillor Helen Atkinson**

**TOWN CLERK – Miss Dee Smith**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the 2023/2024 Annual Report of Billingham Town Council which provides a flavor of the many activities, events, achievements, and actions organised or undertaken by Billingham Town Council during 2023/2024. It also gives information about the Town Council and a financial summary report.

Billingham Town Council was established in 2007 and is run by an elected body of fifteen Councillors representing the five electoral wards of the town. The next local elections take place in May 2027. All Town Councillors serve in a voluntary capacity and are elected for a four-year term of office. They are from a variety of backgrounds, sharing their skills and serving on the Council committees to ensure projects are delivered successfully. The Chairman of the Council is elected annually in May at the Annual Meeting of the Council. Details of the electoral wards and individual members for 2023/2024 can be found on page 13 of this report.

A Town Council is the first tier of local Government. Billingham Town Council provides additional services to those provided by Stockton on Tees Borough Council. Billingham Town Council represents the people of the town and assists residents and many more to deal with local issues that affect them. We also work in partnership with Stockton on Tees Borough Council, many local organisations, and groups to deliver services for our residents.

The Town Council is subject to an annual internal and external audit of its finances. The internal audit is currently carried out by Bells Audit Service and the external audit by Mazars. Details and information of audits can be found on the Town Council website.

The Town Council has its own website [www.billingham-tc.gov.uk](http://www.billingham-tc.gov.uk) which provides details of meeting dates and times, details of upcoming events and recent publications, there is also a section for agendas and minutes of meetings. Information and links are also available for other Billingham organisations and community associations. The Town Council continues to use Facebook and various noticeboards around the town as a means of reaching the community.

## **PROJECTS, SERVICES & EVENTS FOR 2023/2024**

The Town Council works in partnership with the local community and voluntary organisations to deliver a diverse range of events and activities throughout the year which continue to be popular with residents and visitors to the area.

### **HM King's Coronation – 'A Right Royal Doo'**



Residents were invited to celebrate King Charles III Coronation at Café in the Park. The event included live music from the Funk Collective, face painting and glitter tattoos and arts & crafts provided by Billingham Community Partnership.

The Town Crier opened the event with the 'Coronation Cry' and Mr Mark White CBE, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Durham gave a thank you on behalf of HM The King and family.



### **Funday Fridays**



Every Friday throughout August, the Café in the Park welcomed families to enjoy free activities. The café was a hive of activity with children enjoying making badges, face painting, arts and crafts, animal encounters, outdoor games, treasure trails and slime making.

Over sixty children and young people took part in physical activities delivered by BCT Aspire. Participants enjoyed playing rugby, football, golf and rounders.



### **Billingham Show**



This year Billingham Show took place in its new venue of John Whitehead Park. The two day show included fairground rides, stalls, free children's corner, horticulture & craft show, information stalls, Strongman & Strongwomen Competitions, fun dog show and birds of prey. This year's show will take place on the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2024.



## Christmas

Christmas festivities in Billingham commenced with the Christmas tree lights switch on in the town centre. Singing Sue's Vocal Academy choir with over 100 members sang a variety of Christmas songs around the tree to spread some festive cheer, culminating in the light switch on by the cast of the local pantomime Jack & The Beanstalk supported by the winner of the Town Councils design a Christmas scene competition.

The Town Councils festive family fun event was held at St Aidan's Church Hall filled with Christmas stalls, face painting, hot food and drinks from Café in the Park. A special appearance by Santa and mischievous elf.



## OYEZ OYEZ OYEZ



Another busy year for the Town Crier representing the Council and the town at a whole host of events, including Christmas tree lights switch on in the town and at Dorset Crescent, the Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance, the Billingham Show including compering the dog show. Also, for the first time, the Town Crier was present at the Remembrance Sunday Parade at Station Road and Port Clarence.

The Town Crier is a member of The Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers.

To find out what the Town Crier has been up follow Joe's blog: **[billinghamtowncrier.com](http://billinghamtowncrier.com)**

If you would like to book the Town Crier for any events in Billingham, please contact the Town Council office.





## **SUNDAY LUNCH SERVICE**

The Sunday Lunch Service was started in 2019. Every Sunday, approximately seventy two course hot meals, consisting of a main meal and a dessert, are delivered to elderly residents in Billingham.

We've continued to receive new referrals for the service from local agencies and received lots of positive comments and appreciation from residents in receipt of the meals.

This scheme runs with the assistance of councillors, one paid part time staff and volunteers, including drivers. As part of Student Volunteering week, two sixth form students volunteered their time to help at the project, gaining valuable skills and experience.



Since December 2019, over 15,000 lunches have been delivered.

## Café in the Park



The operating model for the Community Hub and Café in the Park changed in 2023 into a seasonal business. This allows the space to be used to deliver community based projects for local groups in the months of October to March. The café service opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024 and will run to the end of September, Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4.30pm. It offers a range of delicious treats including homemade cakes and scones, alongside tea and expertly made coffee from Caffè Vinci. We are also a dog friendly café.



## Community Space



The Town Council has joined Stockton on Tees Borough Council Community Spaces Initiative to offer local residents a safe and friendly space to stay warm during the colder months. The cafe offers local residents a warm space to go during the day to stay warm and enjoy hot food and drinks.

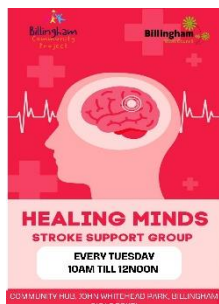
## Chatty Café Scheme

Café In the Park is part of the Chatty Café Scheme which aims to get people chatting and reduce loneliness, so come along for a cuppa and meet our friendly team.



## Community Hub

A selection of local community groups is utilising the community hub during the week. These include Healing Minds (Stroke Group), Well Being Group, Stockton Carers Support Group, Walking Group, Cancer Support Group and Friendship group.



## **Community Garden**

Work has finished on the Community Garden at the back of the Café in John Whitehead Park. The area is fully accessible with raised planters, fruit trees and outdoor space to hold events and activities throughout the year.



## **Pantry in the Park**



The pantry is open every Monday between 9.30am to 11.30pm and offers ten non-perishable items, including toiletries for £2.00. Free fresh fruit and vegetables are offered. Attendees of the pantry also receive a complimentary soup and sandwich to takeaway.

## **Go With the Flow**

Every Thursday from 9.00am at Café in the Park this scheme provides access to free period products.





## **REMEMBRANCE**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2023 working in partnership with the Royal British Legion (Billingham Branch) the Town Council delivered the annual Remembrance Day Parade and service which as usual was well attended by the residents of Billingham.

Representatives from the Royal British Legion, Armed Forces, Scouts, Cadets, St Johns Ambulance Cadets and other local organisations marched from the top of the Salutation Public House to the Cenotaph on Station Road. Reverend David Brookes conducted a short Remembrance Service focussing on the importance of Remembrance which was followed by the laying of wreaths.



A short service was also held at the Cenotaph on Port Clarence on the Sunday afternoon.



## **TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS**

**Chairman (resigned as Chairman\_27th March 2024): Cllr Clare Gamble**

**Vice Chairman: Cllr Helen Atkinson**

Decisions about Town Council business are taken at formal meetings of the Council. The Town Council has Standing Orders which act as the written rules of the Council and set out the Council's internal organisation, administrative procedures and procedural matters for meetings.

Business discussed at Town Council Meetings is primarily of local importance but sometimes can include discussions on issues which are regional or national importance. Whilst some responsibilities are outside the jurisdiction of the Town Council, the Council closely monitors and discusses the activities of Stockton on Tees Borough Council and highlight issues and concerns on behalf of local residents.

Meetings are open to the public and press who are entitled to report on anything said in open debate.

Full Town Council meetings are usually held bi-monthly except Summer Recess in August.

Meeting dates are set at the beginning of each calendar year and can be found on the Town Council website.

In addition to full Council meetings, some of the work of the Town Council is delegated to committees. During 2023/2024 the Town Council has the following committees that meet monthly:

### **Services & Engagement Committee**

**Chairman: Cllr Michelle Bendelow**

**Vice Chairman: Cllr Gareth Hedley**

This committee monitors the operation of Town Council services and amenities, projects and community activities, ensuring a high standard of provision. It considers their further development and the development of other facilities to improve the overall wellbeing of the residents of Billingham and reduce current health inequalities.

## **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

**Chairman: Cllr Jim Scollen**

**Vice Chairman: Cllr Guy Snead**

This committee is responsible for the overall financial security of the Council, setting the precept, creating and monitoring the annual budget.

In addition, this committee reviews business contracts and service level agreements, allocates grant funding and ensures that the Town Council's strategies, policies and procedures are undertaken in accordance with statutory and legislative requirements.

Furthermore, there are various Sub Committees such as Staffing, which meet when required.

The Town Council is a consultee on all planning applications submitted to Stockton on Tees Borough Council for Billingham. This means that the Town Council has the opportunity to support or object to any application submitted from within the Town. During 2023/2024 there were 122 applications considered by the Town Council.



## **GRANTS, SUBSIDIES & SPONSORSHIP**

Billingham Town Council is committed to supporting and strengthening the many networks and community groups that help to make a positive difference to the local area. Through its annual grant, subsidies and sponsorship schemes, the Town Council was able to support a number of local organisations and projects during 2023/2024.

### **Grants Awarded 2023/2024**

- Wellbeing Group - £500
- Iron Guidance - £500
- Billingham Synthonia Cricket Club - £500
- Billingham Community Project - £500
- St Thomas of Canterbury SVP - £500
- Pat Chambers - £500
- Friends of High Clarence Primary School - £500
- Billingham Bowling Club - £500
- Billingham United Football Club - £500
- Nicola Rennison - £200

### **Subsidies Awarded 2024-2027**

BCT Aspire - £36,000

Billingham Boxing Academy - £36,000

Billingham Environmental Link Programme - £36,000

### **Sponsorship Awarded 2023/2024**

- Billingham Ice Hockey Club - £10,000
- Billingham Synthonia Cricket Club - £5,000
- Billingham International Folklore Festival - £2,000
- Billingham Legacy Foundation Supporters Group - £3,000
- Catalyst Stockton on Tees Ltd - £500

The Council looks forward to receiving applications from community organisations which are able to demonstrate a clear need for financial support and which contribute towards improving the lives of local residents. Further information regarding the grant, subsidies and sponsorship schemes and application forms can be found on the website: **[www.billingham-tc.gov.uk](http://www.billingham-tc.gov.uk)**

## **COUNCILLOR INFORMATION**

The last full Council election was held in May 2023 and the following Councillors were elected or have since been co-opted to represent one of the five wards for Billingham for the 2023/2027 term of office:

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>
<b>Billingham Central</b>	Gareth Hedley	gareth.hedley@billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Gina McCall	gina.mccall@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Ann McCoy	ann.mccoy@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
<b>Billingham East</b>	Michelle Bendelow	michelle.bendelow@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Daniel Forrest	daniel.forrest@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Mick Stoker	mick.stoker@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
<b>Billingham North</b>	Clare Gamble	clare.gamble@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Colin Leckonby	colin.leckonby@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Marc Besford	marc.besford@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
<b>Billingham South</b>	Adam Gilburt	adam.gilburt@billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Jim Scollen	jim.scollen@billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Maria Lacey	maria.lacey@ billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Michael Shotton	michael.shotton@billingham-tc.gov.uk
<b>Billingham West</b>	Helen Atkinson	helen.atkinson@billingham-tc.gov.uk
	Guy Snead	guy.snead@ billingham-tc.gov.uk

## **COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE 2023/2024**

During the year, Billingham Town Council meet regularly. The schedule of meetings is available on the Town Council website and various noticeboards around the town.

Please note that councillor attendance runs from May through to April.

<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF MEETINGS</b>	<b>MEETINGS ATTENDED</b>	<b>OVERALL %</b>
<b>H ATKINSON</b>	17	16	<b>94</b>
<b>M BENDELOW</b>	15	12	<b>80</b>
<b>M BESFORD</b>	14	13	<b>93</b>
<b>D FORREST</b>	13	10	<b>77</b>
<b>C GAMBLE</b>	25	15	<b>60</b>
<b>A GILBURT</b>	13	12	<b>92</b>
<b>G HEDLEY</b>	15	10	<b>67</b>
<b>M LACEY</b>	15	10	<b>67</b>
<b>C LECKONBY</b>	14	11	<b>79</b>
<b>G MCCALL</b>	14	11	<b>79</b>
<b>A MCCOY</b>	14	11	<b>79</b>
<b>J SCOLLEN</b>	16	8	<b>50</b>
<b>M SHOTTON</b>	14	4	<b>29</b>
<b>G SNEAD</b>	14	12	<b>86</b>
<b>M STOKER</b>	15	14	<b>93</b>

*Attendance is not an indication of performance.*



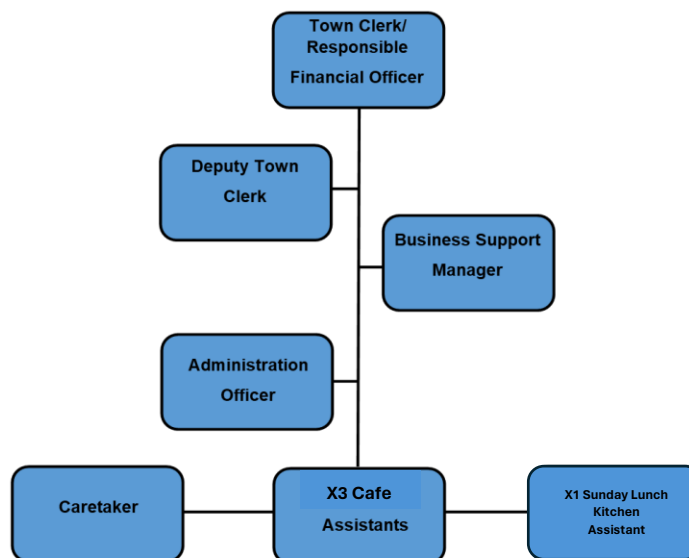
## STAFFING

### **Town Council Staff**

The Town Councils affairs are administered by an appointed Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer – Miss Dee Smith, who is supported by the Deputy Town Clerk – Miss Victoria Lloyd, Business Support Manager, a part time Administration Officer, Caretaker, three part time Café Assistants and one kitchen assistant who work on the Sunday Lunch Project.

The Town Clerk is an advisor to the Council on matters of strategy and policy and is responsible for supporting the Council to fulfil its legal, statutory and financial obligations.

The Town Clerk reports to the Council on a regular basis and ensures that the instructions of the Council, in connection with its functions, are carried out. The Town Clerk is accountable to the Council for the effective management of its assets, services and human resources.



## **FINANCE**

The financial year of Billingham Town Council begins on 1<sup>st</sup> April and ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March the following year. Each November, the Town Council plans ahead and sets a budget to determine the sum it needs to provide services and deliver projects and events for the next financial year.

The tax is collected on our behalf from the residential properties within the town wards by Stockton on Tees Borough Council as part of Council Tax. This money is known as the Precept. There is no other form of statutory income for the Town Council.

In addition to the annual precept, the Town Council also pursues grant funding and sponsorship opportunities to fund some aspects of its work.

The Council's precept for the financial year 2023/2024 was £331.720, which was equivalent to £34.27 on the average Band D property.

### **Expenditure 2023/2024**

The Town Council delivers a wide range of services and community projects for the benefit of local residents. The Council's total expenditure for 2023/2024 was £336,244.00 however some of the projects outlined in this report extend over more than one financial year, therefore some costs will be reflected in the financial accounts for other years.

### **Reserves**

The Town Council holds ring-fenced funds for specific future projects known as 'Earmarked Reserves,' and these are reviewed regularly to ensure adequate provisions are in place. The Town Council held Earmarked Reserves of £171,523.00 at the end of 2023/2024. Most of this is for Reserves Allocation to 2024/2025 Budget.

It is good practice for a Town Council to hold general reserves of between 3-12 months operating costs. The Joint Panel on Accountability & Governance (JPAG) (March 2020 edition) advises "The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserves is that this should be maintained at between 3 & 12 months net revenue expenditure".

## **CONTACT BILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

**We would like to hear from you.**

Billingham Town Council welcomes views from local residents and people working within the wards, on any aspect of life in the area.

If you would like to discuss this report or raise any concerns or suggestions, please contact your local Town Councillor or the Town Clerk at:

**Billingham Town Council  
Billingham Library & Customer Service Centre  
Billingham  
TS23 2LN**

**Office opening hours are 9am-5pm (Monday to Friday)**

**Telephone Number: 01642 551171**

**Email address: [info@billingham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@billingham-tc.gov.uk)**

**Website: [www.billingham-tc.gov.uk](http://www.billingham-tc.gov.uk)**

### **Keep up to date with Council Business**

Did you know that residents can watch Full Town Council and Committee meetings as they happen? Members of the public also have an opportunity to ask questions at a Full Town Council meeting.

Agendas for meetings are available at least three clear working days before a meeting and minutes of meetings are published regularly.

### **Follow our socials!**

