



ANNUAL REPORT

2020/2021

CHAIRMAN – Councillor Clare Gamble
TOWN CLERK – Miss Dee Smith

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



COUNCILLOR CLARE GAMBLE
CHAIRMAN OF BILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

THE YEAR WE STAYED HOME

Welcome to my annual report for the municipal year from April 2020 through to March 2021. A year that is starting the way it ended, sat in the garden, enjoying the sunshine, looking forward to being able to meet up with friends and family once more. When the Prime Minister announced the national lockdown back in March 2020, I don't think any of us imagined that over a year later, we would still be under national restrictions.

These last 12 months have truly been extraordinary. Over the last year, Covid-19 has claimed the lives of too many of our residents. My thoughts remain with their families, friends and loved ones as they try to come to terms with their loss.

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. The successful rollout of the vaccine means we are on the path back to, hopefully, some level of normality.

The pandemic has really shone a spotlight on Local Government and at all levels, councils have truly stepped up to support their local residents. Whilst the entire pandemic is overshadowed with sadness for those that we have lost and those that we have missed, I also look back over the last year with a huge amount of pride. Pride in our town, its residents, businesses and organisations. They have come together to help those most vulnerable. From individual acts of kindness like those of Jo Burton who won the Billingham Community Partnership award for helping her neighbours, to organised efforts like our Covid Community Response team which saw local organisations BCT Aspire, BELP, Billingham Boxing Academy and ourselves working in partnership with over 100 local volunteers to deliver food and prescriptions to those that were shielding. Volunteers called our isolated residents every week just for a chat and walked dogs for those that weren't able to leave the house.

As a result of the Covid Community Response, we launched our Sunday Lunch Service which saw shielding and isolating residents receiving a free 3 course hot meal each week and whilst the Covid Community Response ended in August last year, the Sunday Lunch project has continued as we have identified a real need for some of our elderly residents, especially those that live alone and simply cannot cook a hot meal for themselves. This service has been a lifeline for many of them and I was overjoyed when my fellow Councillors agreed to extend the service through to March 2022. This service is underpinned by a team of 20 volunteers who help me cook the meals, plate them up and deliver them to local residents each week. Their commitment has been unwavering and I was delighted to nominate them for the Stockton Borough Council's Mayors Civic Awards. We are still awaiting the outcome of our nomination, but regardless of the result, I am so incredibly proud of each one of them and hope they get the recognition that I feel they truly deserve.

Despite the restrictions and the Town Council office being closed for much of the year, meetings have continued via Zoom. I am sure many of you will have seen the YouTube clips of Jackie Weaver and Handforth Parish Council. Thankfully, we haven't had any such drama here in Billingham but this really has shone a spotlight on the all too common issue of bullying which happens within our sector and I am pleased that this has really brought the conversation around the Code of Conduct into the fore and the need for clear, enforceable rules to govern Councillor behaviour and hope to see more action from Government on this.

Again, despite the lockdown, new and existing projects have continued. We have also launched a new Community Wellbeing committee in the last month. As we start to move out of lockdown, so many of our residents will have been isolated for the last year and no doubt worried about integrating back into society as businesses continue to reopen and as a Council, we are keen to support residents to play a full and active role in their community.

We are also looking forward to the new opportunities opening up within our town. The Fujifilm Diosynth expansion and the excellent news that their Novavax vaccine will be created here in Billingham. Earlier this year, we were excited about Stockton Borough Council's announcement of their intention to purchase Billingham Town Centre and we look forward to engaging with them as future redevelopment plans start to emerge. Finally, we welcome the news that Billingham Railway Station is

finally set to receive funding to make it accessible as this is something the Town Council have campaigned on over several years.

To close my Chairman's report for 2020 / 2021, I'd like to express my personal thanks for the work that has taken place over the year.

Firstly, I'd like to recognise the dedication of our staff. Despite having to adapt to working from home and getting to grips with remote meetings, they have gone above and beyond in ensuring that we, as Councillors, and our residents have been supported throughout this pandemic.

Secondly, I'd like to thank our Councillors who have regularly put themselves forward to help with projects to support our residents over the last year.

Also, a big thank you to our partner organisations, BCT Aspire CIC, BELP, Billingham Boxing Academy, Stockton Borough Council, Catalyst, Billingham Family Hub, Tesco Billingham, Roberts Family Butchers and Buono Pizzeria.

My final heartfelt thankyou is reserved for our volunteers across all of our different projects. Over the last 12 months, we have engaged with over 100 volunteers who have given up so much of their free time for the benefit of our community.



REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2020/21

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this has been a very difficult year and has brought new ways of working for the Town Council. Since March 2020, the Café in the Park and the adjoining community building have been closed, however the office based staff, with support from Councillors, have continued to work throughout the pandemic continuing to provide a service to the local community in Billingham.

Whilst no events have taken place, the Town Council in conjunction with BCT Aspire, Billingham Environmental Link Programme and the Billingham Boxing Academy launched a Covid Community Response on 23rd March 2020.

Working with Stockton Borough Council / Catalyst's COVID helpline and these local organisations meant the Town Council was able to scale up a solution that saw over 100 local residents volunteering to assist with shopping for food items, making up food parcels and distributing them to local residents in need. Not only were we able to support the local community with food deliveries, but we also arranged collection and delivery of prescriptions, provided a dog walking service and made weekly welfare calls to residents to check on their wellbeing or just for a chat. This service ran until 31st July 2020 when service need started to reduce.

During this period, over 1000 food parcels were delivered, 642 prescriptions were collected and volunteers made 62 welfare calls each week to our most vulnerable residents. The Town Council was also successful in obtaining over £10,000 of community funding towards this response which was shared amongst partners.



CLLRS GAMBLE & PEEBLES WITH OUR
THANK YOU NHS FLAG.



CLR GAMBLE, COLIN LIDDLE (BCT
ASPIRE) AND ADRIAN WORTH
(BILLINGHAM BOXING ACADEMY)
RECEIVING A CHEQUE FROM
GROUNDWORKS TESCO BAGS OF
HELP DONATION FOR COVID
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

SUNDAY LUNCH SERVICE

In December 2019, The Town Council launched a monthly Community Lunch Service delivered from the Café in John Whitehead Park. The aim of this service was to provide an opportunity for Billingham residents who are on a low income or live alone with little social interaction to come together to access a free three course meal, build new relationships and learn about other services within the local area. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, this service was cancelled in March 2020.

In May 2020, after identifying a need within the community for ongoing support to some of our most vulnerable and isolated residents, we reconceptualised this project as a weekly delivery service. To date, we have delivered over 5000 nutritious hot meals to individuals within our community.

Residents truly value this service and following approval at the Full Council meeting in January 2021, it was agreed that this provision will continue throughout 2021/22, funded by the Town Council from our precept. This budget commitment means that the we are able to increase the number of residents we support through this service to 150 each week right through into March 2022.



CLLR BENDELOW AND VOLUNTEER NATALIE KUSHNIRENKO PLATING UP SUNDAY LUNCHES.



STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL CLLR CHRIS BARLOW HELPS DELIVER HOT LUNCHES EVERY WEEK.



CHAIRMAN CLLR CLARE GAMBLE BAGGING UP LUNCHES READY FOR DELIVERY.

HOLIDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

Over the last 12 months, Billingham Town Council have worked in partnership with 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 community leaders, we were keen to support those organisations that we were partnered with for the Covid Support Team to maintain their pre Covid holiday enrichment schemes, adapted to be delivered in a Covid secure way. We supported both BCT Apsire and BELP with their enrichment programmes, giving both organisations £1000 each to top up their funding through Stockton Borough Council's Public Health / Catalyst scheme.

As our café in the park was closed, we supported BCT with use of our premises and staff for the preparation of their packed lunches as their building was being utilised as the Covid Community Support Hub. Over the summer holidays, thousands of packed lunches were delivered.

As Covid restrictions continued, over the October half term, we continued to support BCT with their own enrichment activities and the Town Council provided a hot meal collection service from the café in the park, allowing residents to collect meals from our centrally located café in John Whitehead Park.

Moving into 2021, the Town Council were successful in a bid for funding from the Catalyst / Stockton Borough Council Public Health fund which allowed us to deliver 200 breakfast hampers and put some of our own funding to allow us to include activity packs and these were delivered to families across our town.

The success of this project meant that we were keen to repeat this activity and over the Easter Holidays, we delivered a further 300 breakfast hampers and Easter themed activities to local families, again accessing funding from Stockton Borough Council / Catalyst.

Having seen first hand how much families in need value this service, we have ensured that there is sufficient budget allocated to continue a holiday enrichment provision into 2021 / 2022.



VOLUNTEER JAYNE (BILLINGHAM BOXING ACADEMY) AND CAFÉ STAFF MEMBER LYNNE GETTING BREAKFAST HAMPERS READY FOR DELIVERY.



ALEX CUNNINGHAM MP AND CLLR EVALINE CUNNINGHAM HELPING DELIVER HAMPERS TO LOCAL FAMILIES.



EASTER EGGS READY TO BE INCLUDED IN OUR ENRICHMENT HAMPERS, ALL DONATED BY TESCO BILLINGHAM.



LOCAL PIZZA OWNER ARI FROM BUONO PIZZERIA WITH CHAIRMAN CLLR CLARE GAMBLE. BUONOS DONATED PIZZAS FOR LOCAL CHILDREN TO BE INCLUDED IN OUR HALF TERM ENRICHMENT PROJECT.

CHRISTMAS 2020

Following the success of the Billingham Town Council Christmas event 2019 which saw the spectacle of the Singing Christmas tree come to Billingham Town Centre, we were disappointed that ongoing Covid-19 restrictions meant that we were unable to hold an in person event and we had to think of new and innovative ways to deliver Christmas activities to residents.

During December 2020, we delivered 300 Christmas themed activity packs which included a mini afternoon tea to local children.

We provided funding to BCT Aspire to deliver Tesco vouchers to families in Billingham and the Clarendons as part of their Christmas Enrichment activities.

Billingham Family Hub delivered parcels to families within the town which included books and chocolates which were funded by a donation from Billingham Town Council.

The Moses Project were delivering Christmas Hampers to families facing financial hardship across Stockton Borough and Billingham Town Council paid for 10 hampers for families within Billingham through a donation of £650.

High Clarence School also delivered Christmas hampers to families in need within their community and Billingham Town Council funded 10 hampers at a cost of £500.

We held our annual Christmas Card competition which allows local children and schools to design the Billingham Town Council corporate Christmas card. Usually, the winner gets to turn on the Christmas Lights at our Christmas event. However, as we were unable to host the event this year, the winner, Elini Thornton, received a selection box and a £50 gift voucher as well as a pack of Christmas cards featuring her winning design.

As part of our Sunday Lunch service, we delivered a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings on the Sunday before Christmas. Through our regular contact with residents in receipt of Sunday lunches from us, we identified 27 people who were spending Christmas alone and delivered a Christmas dinner to them on Christmas Eve.



CAFE IN THE PARK & THE ANNEXE

The Café in the Park has remained closed throughout the last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, the buildings have been used to deliver a range of community support projects such as the Sunday Lunch delivery service and holiday enrichment projects.

During this time, we had a leak from a burst pipe in the ceiling which caused extensive damage to the café. Remedial work has now been carried out and the café has a new colour scheme and furnishings as well as a new menu ready for when we reopen in June 2021, Government roadmap allowing.

Staff and Councillors look forward to welcoming back our regular customers, and hopefully some new ones too! We will retain our Chatty Café scheme and dog friendly status when we reopen. We have lots of new activities planned for the café and annexe which we can't wait to share with everyone as our relaunch approaches.



TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

Chairman of the Council: Cllr Clare Gamble

Vice Chairman: Cllr Gina McCall

Billingham Town Council meets six times a year. In addition to these meetings, the Council has three committees; Finance & General Purposes, Planning & Services and Community Wellbeing that meet monthly and have responsibilities for certain aspects of the Council's overall duties. Furthermore, there are various Sub Committees such as Staffing, that meet when required.

Planning & Services Committee

Chairman: Cllr Colin Pollard

Vice Chairman: Cllr Gina McCall

This committee considers all planning applications for Billingham to ensure the best possible options are secured for our local area. To date, approximately 116 planning applications have been considered this year.

It also considers, reviews and comments on regeneration projects being proposed for Billingham, economic development and the promotion of new initiatives in the town and local transport systems in conjunction with Stockton Borough Council.

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Chairman: Cllr Jim Scollen

Vice Chairman: Cllr Gina McCall

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.

Community Wellbeing Committee

Chairman: Cllr Ann McCoy

Vice Chairman: Cllr Helen Atkinson This committee was set up in March 2021 and meetings will commence in April 2021. This committee will lead on the strategy for Community Wellbeing and oversee an action plan to improve the mental wellbeing and physical health of our local residents.

GRANTS, SUBSIDIES & SPONSORSHIP

Small Grants

Billingham Town Council manage a small grants programme which allows organisations to apply for a grant of up to £500 to support projects which are delivered to benefit residents of Billingham. During the last year, due to groups being unable to meet, we did not receive any requests for grant funding.

Subsidies

During 2020 / 2021, we launched our Subsidy Programme which is designed to support local organisations delivering within the town with a 3 year funding commitment for larger projects. The application process was launched this year and we agreed to fund BCT Aspire, BELP and Billingham Boxing Academy with £12,000 per year each over 3 years, starting in 2021 / 2022.

Sponsorship

Each year, the Council allocates a budget for sponsorship which is used to sponsor events and organisations within Billingham. Over the last year, we have sponsored the following:

BCT Aspire CIC – £2000 to sponsor their Duke of Edinburgh award programme.



COUNCILLOR INFORMATION

The Town Council has 15 Members who are elected to represent one of the five wards in the town. Councillors are elected to serve a period of four years. The Councillors serving from May 2019 until May 2023 are:

Billingham Central

Clare Gamble

email: cgamble@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Gina McCall

email: gmccall@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Ann McCoy

email: amccoy@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Billingham East

Michelle Bendelow

email: mbendelow@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Royce Sandbach

email: rsandbach@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Mick Stoker

email: mstoker@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Billingham North

Mark Burdon

email: mburdon@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Colin Leckonby

email: cleckonby@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Jennifer Shotton

email: jshotton@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Billingham South

Angie Bentley

email: abentley@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Jim Scollen

email: jscollen@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Sheila Smart

email: ssmart@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Billingham West

Helen Atkinson

email: hatkinson@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Sandy Peebles

email: apeebles@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Colin Pollard

email: cpollard@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE 2020/2021

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.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of scheduled meetings did not take place until the Government changed the law to allow Councils to meet virtually using technology rather than in person.

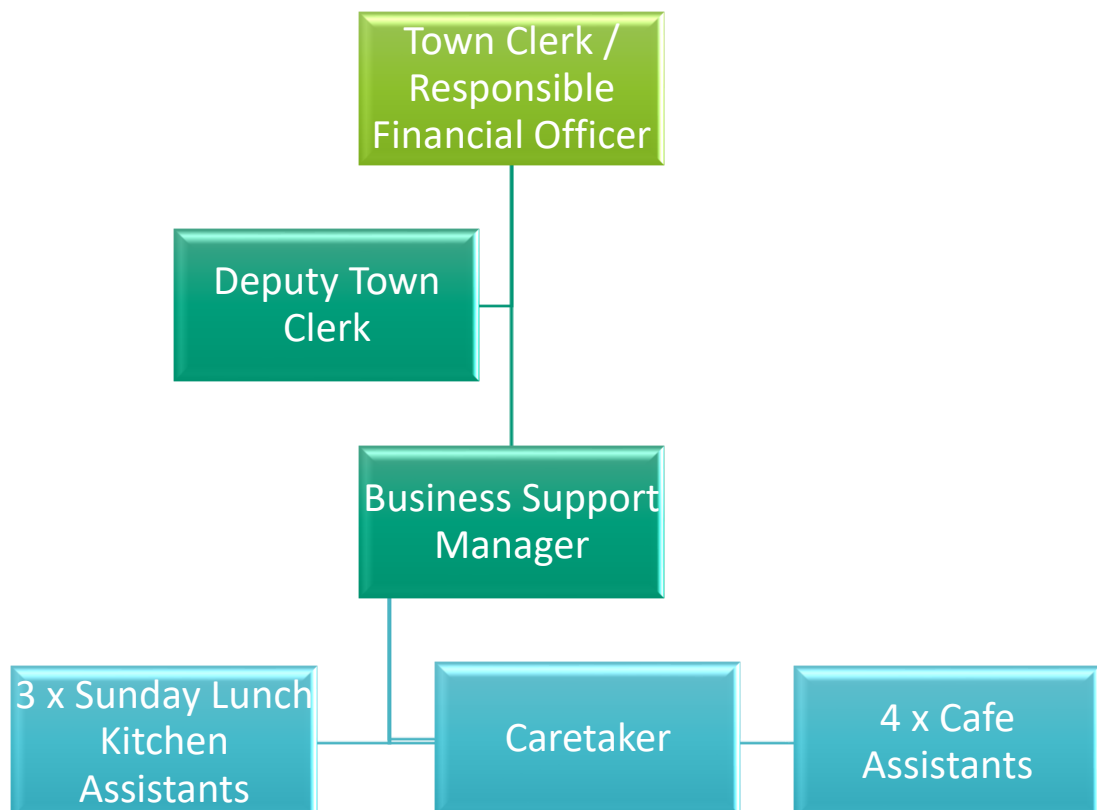
ATTENDANCE FOR ALL MEETINGS

COUNCILLOR	TOTAL NUMBER OF MEETINGS	MEETINGS ATTENDED	%
H ATKINSON	7	7	100
M BENDELOW	21	19	90
A BENTLEY	20	4	20
M BURDON	13	4	31
C GAMBLE	21	21	100
C LECKONBY	13	8	62
G MCCALL	21	19	90
A MCCOY	7	7	100
A PEEBLES	13	12	92
C POLLARD	20	18	90
R SANDBACK	13	9	69
J SCOLLEN	20	18	90
J SHOTTON	8	5	63
S SMART	21	18	86
M STOKER	6	6	100

NB: Attendance is not an indication of performance.

STAFFING

Billingham Town Council employs 3 Full Time office staff, a Part Time caretaker and 3 Part Time kitchen assistants who work on our Sunday Lunch project. These staff are all funded by our annual precept. We have a further 4 Part Time café staff who are paid directly from the café's business takings. Our organisational chart can be found below.



FINANCE

The final accounts are currently being prepared in line with Government timetables and will be approved at the Full Council meeting on 24th June 2021.

A summary of the precept for 2020/21, incorporating the budget for the following year i.e. 2021/22 is presented below.

SUMMARY OF PRECEPT 2020/21		SUMMARY OF PRECEPT 2021/22	
Management & Support Cost	£130,965.77	Management & Support Cost	£140948.00
Running Costs	£31050.00	Running Costs	£27575.00
Recreation & Leisure (Events)	£19834.00	Recreation & Leisure (Events)	£40450.00
Environmental Projects	£5000.00	Environmental Projects	0
Community Projects (inc JWP)	£51297.00	Community Projects (inc JWP)	£24000.00
Grants	£10000.00	Grants	£41000.00
Election Costs	£13000.00	Election Costs	£8000.00
Other	£29808.23	Other	£7082.00
GROSS PRECEPT	£290955.00	GROSS PRECEPT	£289055.00
LCTS GRANT	£23509.00	LCTS GRANT	£23509.00
NET PRECEPT	£267446.00	NET PRECEPT	£265.546.00