

**.BOLLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL: GOLD STANDARD
CE Bollington Ward Councillors Report to BTC for their July Council Meeting
2024.**

We present this Report for consideration and discussion as required.

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**We look forward to working closely with Town Councillors in supporting
our new Town Clerk from June 1st.**

Nikki Antoney is now leading the Staff Team.

**We look forward to our Well Dressing Ceremony on Saturday 29th June
2024**

**We welcome Cllr. Judy Snowball as the Mayor of Bollington for 2024-25
And wish the Mayor every success in that important role in offering
leadership to our local community.**

S106 Funds for Bollington Recreation Ground.

The Community consultation on the use of S106 funds from developments in Lowerhouse has at last been produced and is with ANSA. The recommendations and hopefully implementation will be discussed with the Bollington Town Council in due course. The sum involved is modest, approximately £34,000. It is understood the recommendations for lighting the Skate Park and improving tennis courts have been made.

We note that although the Recreation Ground and associated play area and car park across the Adlington road is owned by Cheshire East Bollington Town Council has spent significant sums on the available public toilets and recently raised funds to contribute to the new Cricket Nets through Cllr. Stewarts Mayoral Fund Raising. In reality there is an 'unofficial' partnership in maintaining our Recreation Ground. It is important to note that although ANSA's budget has been reduced there is still a strong commitment to maintaining the Bollington Recreation Ground's Green Flag status. We welcome the contribution of Chris Bennett and the Friends of the Recreation Ground to the management of this vital facility and would suggest a more formal partnership with ANSA and CEC might be beneficial.

Further funding

We note funding for improvement of Tennis Courts is available through the Lawn Tennis Association to CEC. The funds available for the year 23/24 have not been accessed but there are plans to renew the grant application this year 24/25.

Bollington Health and Leisure

We congratulate BHL on applying for and being successful in receiving two significant grants for the swimming pool at the Leisure Centre for a protective cover and solar panels. The grants were facilitated by Cheshire East and have now been confirmed.

Bollington and Peaks and Plains Housing Trust Ltd.

It has become apparent over the last 3 months that Peaks and Plains Housing Association who are responsible for over 300 socially rented properties in Bollington had particular problems with semi detached bungalows on Crossfield Road West Ward.

Residents voiced concerns over accommodation being left empty with surrounds neglected and the building being used for storage. A resident, Mr. Simon Smallwood, No. 11 took it upon himself to act as community spokesperson and approached Borough Councillors

Supported by Borough Councillors Mr. Smallwood sent letters to Peaks and Plains setting out the residents concerns.

As a response Peaks and Plains organised meetings for residents to explain their actions.

It had become apparent that water flows under the site had caused structural problems in some properties.

Officers had been tasked with investigating these problems and had developed four options to be presented to their Directors for decision in August.

The 4 options were:

1. Do nothing
2. Repair empty bungalows.
3. Survey and repair all bungalows with problems.
4. Redevelop the whole site including Kent Avenue and the Green and move residents to alternative accommodation.

Surveys on properties and the surrounding ground are being carried out currently.

Bollington Town Council has now held a meeting with Residents and Peaks and Plains officers Weds 26th. June. See Mayors Report.

Residents are requesting BTC's support for a decision by Peaks and plains that enables them to stay in their homes in Crossfield Road and Kent Avenue.

Bollington Ward and Cheshire East: The General Election called for July 4th. 2024 has dominated political news.

The impact on local politics is profound both immediately in terms of the pre-election or 'purdah' period restricting any decisions that might be controversial and the longer term impact of the result which possibly will bring changes to local government arrangements.

The Local Government Association has calculated there is at least a £6 billion deficit in local government funding if the level of services provided in 2010 are to be maintained.

We have set out the financial situation in Cheshire East and listed its impacts on local services.

Last year there was a balanced budget proposed over 4 years.

This year Cheshire East has a balanced budget for one year only and that is dependent on some very tough decisions on cutting services being made.

The projection now is for a £100million over all deficit over the next four years and a Transformation programme is being worked up to tackle that deficit. The Government has offered some conditional financial support to this process.

There have been strong reactions from our local Community in relation to the plans made to reduce services.

- 1. The recently formed Friends of Bollington Library had a very successful launch and a very successful Literary Quiz.**
- 2. A Childrens March to support the Library on Saturday July 6th. Please join Parents and Children supporting our Bollington Library.**

On learning of the specific plans for changes to library provision in Cheshire East the 'Friends' took swift community action led by Councillor Nigel Macartney and their Committee.

The Cheshire East plans were to create a 'tiered ' approach with Bollington Library to be offered to be run on a voluntary basis financed by the Town Council and if that was not possible to be closed permanently.

FOBL as it is affectionately known organised a leaflet drop to all residents urging us to join or rejoin the library supported by Borough Councillors. The lobbying of decision makers and coaches to take people the Environment and Communities Meeting Scheduled for June 6th. Was planned.

This meeting has now been postponed until the 25th. July. We await the Agenda to be published 5 working days beforehand on July 18th. to discover if any changes in the proposals have taken place.

Your Borough Councillors welcome this strong community support and are both completely opposed to the closure of Bollington Library, a public and now statutory service that has been with us since the beginning of the nineteenth century and has evolved as needs change as a continuing vital support to our local education system as well as community life.

- 3. Bollington HWRC. The mothballing and possible eventual closure of our recycling centre has also generated strong community reaction to preserve a vital and valued local service.**

Bollington Town Council received during May a demand from Cheshire East for a sum of £59,400 to keep the HWRC running until April 2025. The Council responded positively to the general idea of keeping such a necessary service open BUT had to

point out the total impracticality of meeting such a demand. To meet it mid year would require the Council to override all its precautionary financial procedures as well as cut its reserves well below any recommended safety level. The Town Council and the community await a response to the situation. Meanwhile the HWRC remains open pending the results of a Consultation.

Mothballing the HWRC

Cheshire East has stated that ‘mothballing’ the HWRC will occur in the next two months but has given no specific date.

Community response:

A vigorous campaign to ‘Save our Tip is being organised by Cllr. John Stewart.

The campaign has recruited volunteers to collect information on the current use of the HWRC. This is a valuable and useful exercise given the information used by Cheshire East comes from figures collected in 2022 and 2023.

The campaign team at the HWRC received hearsay information from a passing motorist regarding a document reported as ‘seen’ which as a plan for drainage from United Utilities for housing on the HWRC site indicated Cheshire East was thinking ahead of the results of the consultation. This statement was reported in such a manner as to be treated as a ‘fact’ both to Town councillors then on social media then on our local Canalside Radio.

Your Borough Councillors have taken note of this report and are investigating its basis.

So far no evidence whatsoever has come forward to confirm its existence. CE Cllr. Ken Edwards has made a local radio appeal for that documentary evidence or the person who has seen the document to come forward.

Meanwhile the existence of such plans has not been established through the Planning Authority or the Property and Assets Department of Cheshire East.

We understand that the statement has been described to Bollington Town Council as ‘baseless speculation’ by a senior responsible officer of CE Council.

We would note that we, as Borough Councillors and representatives of our community’s views, will support campaigns to protect services but there must be a responsible attitude to openness and trust if we are to be able to work effectively with colleague elected Councillors, including the prior investigation and confirmation of ‘hearsay’ information. In this case there has been no such confirmation so far. Your Borough Councillors are still asking relevant questions and have committed to reporting back on local radio if invited.

Current situation re Bollington HWRC

- 1.The Consultation on HWRC provision for Cheshire East closed on June 16th. 2024. The HWRC. We expect a strong response from Bollington residents.
- 2.The HWRC is expected to be ‘mothballed’ during the next two months.
3. Nearby HWRC’s will open longer.
4. A ‘booking system’ is being explored for weekends and bank holidays to reduce waiting times.

5. The renewing contract will be explored and confirmed.
6. The consultation results will be considered and the considerations published.
7. Recommendations will come for to the Environment and Communities Committee for the renewal of the HWRC Contract including proposals for the retention/permanent closure of current HWRCs.

4. **Pool Bank Car Park:** Cheshire East Council has decided to implement an increase in car parking charges on all car parks currently charged for on July 8th. 2024
This order does NOT AFFECT Pool Bank Car Park.

It is unfortunate and your Borough councillors apologise on Cheshire East's behalf that such an order that could, and has, caused confusion, was posted. Charging, we are told, will commence 'some time before October 1st 2024, as originally decided.

Note:

The charging arrangements will be:

1. **Charged hours: 8 am. to 6 pm.**
2. **Days charged: Monday to Saturday**
3. **The 'free after three' policy would be applied.**
4. **Initial rates of charge proposed are:**
0-1 hr 60p 1-2hrs £1.00 2-3hrs £1.50 3-4hrs £2.10 4-6hrs £3.00 6-10hrs £3.40

Quarter Permit £163 Annual Permit £490

Comment from Cheshire East Leader Cllr. Sam Corcoran

- a) car parking charges were last increased in 2018
- b) the increases were approved at a Highways & Transport Committee Agenda for Highways and Transport Committee on Thursday, 25th January, 2024, 10.30 am | Cheshire East Council.
- c) the council needs the extra money to repair roads because the government has cut funding to councils
- d) car parking revenue is legally ring-fenced for highways work
- e) There is no plan to introduce charges to our car park in July.

Children in Care Report

Councillors will have seen in the press reports of a very disappointing and highly critical Report from Ofsted after their Inspection of Cheshire East Local Authority Childrens Services.

The Report was particularly critical of the services in terms of planning and support for our children in care and the criticisms focussed very much on older children and young people 16-25 years old. The service here was regarded as inadequate.

Your Borough councillors are pleased to see there has been a rapid response and an acceptance by Senior Management of the need to introduce change and to provide the resources necessary for that change in spite of budgetary constraints.

We will report from time to time on progress in this vital service.

The future

Currently the future of local government is very uncertain due to the election on July 4th. It is obvious a change in funding arrangements must take place in our pattern of local service delivery is not going to collapse completely. But neither major party has been clear in their manifestos as to how that welcome change is to be brought about. We shall see.....

Cllr. Ken Edwards

Cllr. John Place