

Billingham Town Council – Consultation Responses

Do you agree that Billingham Town Council should be abolished?

Yes 3705

Comments

1. What is needed is a body to look after the interests of Billingham and its residents. This Town Council has failed to do so and has failed to community generally.
2. No point in it, Stockton still gets better thought of.
3. All the money seems to go Stockton so what's the point of a council for Billingham?
4. The streets are dirty and there is no law enforcement whatsoever.
5. Waste of money.
6. They are surplus to requirements. Money better spent on ensuring continued weekly refuse collection.
7. Unrepresentative now.
8. If it saves on council tax.
9. They say they are working with community groups. I'm involved with several groups and they have not been in contact with any. Why are working with people outside Billingham instead of Billingham groups?
10. Not done enough to justify money.
11. It's an expense we don't need.
12. Not before time. An absolute waste of money. Compare town centre of now with Town Centre when opened by Prince Phillip. Stockton also a disgrace.
13. Don't give support to local events i.e. Billingham Carnival. Did not know Council existed, low profile. No information from them. Rather than abolish, will change of council officers improve situation.
14. Unless there a positive changes.
15. Waste of money.
16. As long as Billingham has the same benefits as Stockton. The seats in our new bus stands the same standard as Stockton's new bus stands would be appreciated very much.
17. As do not bring anything to Billingham just extra wage bills.
18. Money wasters. As these voting slips prove.
19. Waste of our hard earned money.
20. A bunch of misfits constituting a complete waste of money.
21. Waste of money.
22. An unnecessary expense. Too expensive!
23. And sort Stockton Council out too.
24. Including Stockton Council.
25. Had the Town Council done what we expected of them and wasted the funds on stupid expenditure it would have been a good thing for everyone and not just the chosen few.
26. Money down the drain. Could be spent to better use.
27. I would like to know if this money will be spent on Billingham.
28. Waste of tax payers money.
29. Don't agree with BTC's policies. They have done of great importance for Billingham.
30. Cannot see any benefits.
31. Didn't know we had one. What do they do?
32. The annual increase in precept and corresponding expense on Members Allowances is disgraceful in these times of austerity.
33. Agreed with the views of local Billingham paper for abolishment.
34. Unless it is reformed and no longer wastes money.
35. Waste of money.
36. I have not use for it.
37. Scrap it. Needs updating asap.
38. We never got a newsletter regular which they said they would.

39. In my view what should have happened is it should have had a floor put in for the library alone or move the council offices to the old building which would be more appropriate for the community.
40. Doesn't really affect me because of no bus service. I rarely go to Billingham now.
41. Do not need their authority. Stockton Council has served us well in the past.
42. I did not know we had one.
43. Not needed. They are law unto themselves. Get rid.
44. Didn't want them in the first place. Always knew they would cost more. More expensive every year.
45. Attended meeting where our presence was only just tolerated. Questions dismissed as Members self-importance and inability to stop talking was passionate. Waste of time and money as became apparent later.
46. They do nothing for our town.
47. No need for them, as they take credit for jobs Stockton Council do.
48. Should be enough councils with Stockton.
49. Please give more young children's play areas. A play area for every neighbourhood.
50. When Billingham council came into being, I thought they would be able to negotiate for a better deal for Billingham i.e. money so that could be spent on Billingham instead of Stockton which is the case. How many times does the High Street need to be improved. All that has happened is that an historical high street has been destroyed. Billingham residents pay enough Council Tax and should get a fair reward. The Town Centre is taking forever and still there is no sign of decent shops. You just need to look at Thornaby Town Centre to see what can be achieved if the will is there.
51. I would rather have pavements not overgrown by grass.
52. Waste of money. Achieved nothing.
53. Waste of money. Achieved nothing.
54. Just another tier of unnecessary politicians. Costly politicians.
55. Have done nothing for Billingham of worth.
56. It is a waste of tax payers money.
57. The Town Council have squandered the opportunity and seem interested only in looking after themselves.
58. Billingham Town Council are just lapdogs for Stockton Borough Council. They have no interest in the people of or town of Billingham except as a means to line their own pockets at our expense. Leeches. They should be made to pay back all they have robbed from our town.
59. We do not need another tier of local government. This town council has increased our rates enormously with no benefit to the community. The local population has not had wage rises as this council has.
60. What have we got reps on Stockton Council for?
61. It would be nice for them to be abolished and the residents of Billingham to receive new bins with appropriate recycling bins.
62. What a waste of money.
63. Waste of time and money. Get rid.
64. We all understand that monies are tight and the percentage of funds to town council seem excessive if they have no overriding powers to made decisions on where funds are allocated. If salaries are account for within the amount allocated to the Council, would they be prepared to do it on a voluntary basis.
65. Whilst I believe in local government, I'm not sure an extra tier is required for Billingham in addition to Stockton Borough Council. Improvements to Billingham are happening despite and not because of a Town Council.
66. Why has this situation and utter waste of money been allowed to continue for so long?
67. My wife and I came to Teesside some seven years ago.
Fairly early on we picked up the chatter that rightly or wrongly Billingham was perceived as the "Cinderella partner" to Stockton when it came to handing out resources etc.
Not being politically motivated, I nevertheless respect the view that 2700 people are prepared to see the abolition of Billingham Town Council.
By ticking a "YES" box, I would just add the caveat that for the sake of Billingham residents, future resources will be fairly distributed to both districts from the "one pot".
68. I am writing in connection with the above. I telephoned for advice this afternoon but the contact centre was unable to get a response.

I was told verbally last week that there was a public consultation about the future of the town council.

To date I have received no information on this, save for the "propaganda" leaflet distributed by the town council that arrived a few days ago.

Please advise me as to whether there will be vote on this matter and if so how do I get one.

In the meantime, if this counts as the consultation I would support the disbandment of the body. I would be prepared to elaborate further if necessary.

I would also like to complain about the newsletter, it appears to take credit for many matters that I know have been initiated or developed by Stockton Council officers or Voluntary Groups other than the town council. It also states that without the town council a range of services or facilities would be lost, including facilities in John Whitehead Park, this is nonsense and very misleading. I have complained to them before about the increases in the precept but to no avail. I don't know how much this glossy leaflet has cost but the town council was supposed to be low cost, it appears to be run by an empire builder, my opinion.

69. See attached.

Community Governance Review – Billingham Town Council

This petition may only have some 2700 signatures but I suspect it would be more if the vast majority of Billingham residents actually stirred themselves to action.

Were most householders to sit down and analyse their Council Tax Bill and its composition I think they would all say let's get rid of a service (and I use the term loosely) that is costing us money each year, however little that is claimed to be. The Borough Council is hard pressed enough making savings and cutting much more important services without having a leeching precept demand from Billingham Town Council every year.

They are providing no real service or added value to what already existed in consultation procedures on council policy. Most of us would rather see even this small amount be put into the overall council pot to ensure more vital services remained in place.

If it was proposed that we return to the days of the old Billingham Urban District Council which had real income and real application then I suspect many older residents would support that. But that is unlikely to happen and as imperfect as the umbrella of Stockton Borough Council is over Billingham, that is what we are stuck with and must work on to improve within the existing structure.

My letter of May 2012 (attached) to the Billingham newsletter still stands in my opinion. I was at one time a councillor for Wolviston Parish Council and although that organisation has some revenue raising capability and the power to spend it within the parish it was still nothing more than a talking shop for some ego trippers. I suspect Billingham Town Council is worse!

So please make the sensible decision to get rid of Billingham Town Council and save us residents some money in these hard pressed times.

MAY 2012

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LETTERS

Billingham Town Council

Dear Billingham,

This is no vendetta by the press or the ratepayers but merely a desire for accountability and value for money. All we need to really be bothered about is the following.

1. Does Billingham Town Council have real revenue raising capability? Currently the answer is "no" other than enough to cover admin costs.

2. Is BTC ever likely to get revenue raising ability for Billingham only and the organisation to spend and administer it? I and many others think the answer is "unlikely" or a definite "no". Stockton Borough Council will not relinquish their hold.

Therefore, if 2. is the real and likely outcome for BTC then let's get rid of it and the albeit trifling yearly cost to us ratepayers and let us ensure that the current Borough Councillors do their job effectively for Billingham ratepayers and if they don't, then get rid of them and replace them.

I am not interested in maintaining an organisation for ego trippers and power seekers. From my observations and discussions, BTC has not really truly added value to what already existed but merely provided another layer of ineffective bureaucracy.

S.J Lyddon, Billingham

No – 3859

Comments

1. Billingham needs a voice!
2. I am afraid that Stockton Council will not acknowledge local residents wishes!
3. Billingham needs a Council to speak for the area.
4. I don't agree. We always need our Council; they do a good job.
5. Offensive language relating to lack of support for working men/women.
6. Billingham will be unattended and given second priority if Stockton take over Billingham Council. Billingham should remain an independent Council to ensure Billingham is financially provided for and maintained.
7. I feel Billingham will suffer financially if abolished. Stockton will fund Stockton first and Billingham will receive what's left if anything.
8. Who are these people? Shame on them!
9. It is so disappointing when we see all the alterations which have been done in Stockton over the years and we in Billingham have had new pavements plus bus shelters which don't even have a seat in them. What we need is shops. The people of Billingham would be able to shop in their own town then instead of travelling out all the time. I think Stockton treats us badly.
10. Billingham needs its own Council.
11. We need local Town Council knowing and living with what is going on locally.
12. I think Billingham Town Council do a very good job.
13. We have been side-lined sufficiently in the past few years. With abolition we would be ignored totally!
14. Billingham Town Council should concentrate on Billingham. Like tidying it up. We have never seen it look so overgrown and untidy and colourless. The gardens and green areas are a disgrace.
15. Too much money is spent on Stockton and as a Billingham resident I would like the Billingham money to be spent on the Town.
16. Stockton Borough Council have taken everything away from us. It is time it was stopped.
17. Just get rid of the fat cats at the top who are creaming off high salaries whilst sat on their arses – these are people I can't abide and should be sacked.
18. I do think Billingham Council do a lot for us. And no one else will fight for our rights like they do. I think they are doing a good job.
19. Billingham needs to retain its identity within the Borough.
20. We need a town council to look after the needs of Billingham. We don't get as much as Stockton now so we'll get nothing with the town council.
21. So local views are heard and new town centre and bus stops.
22. We need our own Town Council.
23. If Billingham Town Council is abolished will we part of Stockton Council? I think we will see less events and improvements in Billingham and the focus will be all for Stockton if it is abolished.
24. Billingham people should have a representative.
25. Don't get rid of Town Council. Just get rid of all old aged Councillors. They have been there far too long. You need some younger blood.
26. Didn't know there was a petition.
27. But the Council should stop paying themselves too much money.
28. Why?
29. We need our own voice about what happens in Billingham so that we are not overshadowed by Stockton and other areas as I believe happens!
30. Please stay separate.
31. Billingham people should be represented by local people who know the area more and have more interests in Billingham area.
32. Leave us alone.
33. I trust only Billingham residents will be allowed to vote on this!
34. There have very well for my last 75 years keep as.
35. If anything abolish Stockton Council.
36. At this moment in time they are doing a fantastic job.
37. If Stockton wants they will get. We need a voice for Billingham. It's all down to money honey.

38. Keep it as it is.
39. It is town and growing in size. We need support here on this.
40. Stockton Council sold Billingham Town Centre for 23 million pounds. Then spent 20 million on their High Street. What do you think?
41. Do not agree.
42. No why should we have to travel to get information and complain.
43. I think the question is misleading. I have talked to people who answered "yes" because they feel strongly in Billingham Town Council. They didn't understand the question.
44. Last year a lady asked me to sign a petition. She said Billingham Town Council was costing every tax payer in Billingham £700 a year for their expenses. This was obviously incorrect. More information from each side would help with a considered vote.
45. They should be re-elected.
46. Will it make any difference if it was abolished?
47. Just know Billingham Town Council are doing a good job and brought more to Billingham Town.
48. If it is Stockton's hands we will be the town who is forgotten as usual.
49. Without our town Council, Stockton would forget we exist.
50. Who else would look after Billingham?
51. Although there should be an election as the current seem to do nothing but party!
52. It's helpful to have a voice.
53. You have just built new Council offices, please use them.
54. We could do with more information!!
55. Not enough information!!
56. Billingham Council do a very good job.
57. 2,700 signed for abolishment. How many people would have signed a counter petition?
58. It needs to attract new shops. Make it more attractive to these companies i.e. drop the rates.
59. How much has it just cost to build. Now you want to flatten it? What a sheer waste of tax payers' money!
60. If Stockton took over Billingham would be forgotten.
61. Let's have somebody trustworthy to run it?
62. We don't need Stockton Council.
63. I would like an independent Council similar to previous urban district.
64. No I don't agree with it.
65. This Town Council is pretty useless but it should still be maintained and improved upon.
66. Things have just started to come together in JW Park and Town Centre. What would happen if no Council there? We would be back to square one. Nothing happening for Billingham once more.
67. Leave us alone.
68. Seats at bus stops in Billingham same as Stockton has.
69. Without its own Council, Billingham has no voice.
70. Abolish the bedroom tax.
71. Definitely not. It would be disastrous!
72. Leave Billingham Council alone.
73. If Billingham Council was to be abolished, Stockton would therefore look after Stockton only and Billingham would get looked over as usual. I would therefore like to see big improvements on the Town Centre, i.e. better shopping facilities, shops, to actually make you proud of our town centre as Stockton seems to be getting everything done at the minute and been such a small town we seem to get overlooked a lot. I know the park has been done which is great for children but we could do with upgrading the selection of shops and bring rates down for them to survive in the town centre, as it stands its full of charity shops which get funded and the Town Council used to be a thriving place and not no one wants to go as nothing to bring folk in.
74. Stay as it is.
75. We have lost so much already. Our town is ours – not for others to decide – as long as all is fair.
76. It is our sole identification within Stockton.
77. Bring some "young" blood in David
78. Because Stockton already spends too much money on riverside developments and white water rapids etc.
79. We need the Town Council money for Billingham not Stockton shops.

80. But reduced.
81. We should never have gone in the first place.
82. I feel Billingham would lose its history and identity.
83. Council knows what needs doing locally.
84. Get rid of Stockton Council.
85. We need a voice for the people in the town.
86. I would like to keep Billingham Town Council as they are doing a much better job than Stockton Council has done in the past. Stockton Council just seemed to collect taxes from Billingham and waste them on projects in Stockton such as re-paving of Stockton High Street with very little improvement for the public as it was already OK. The Stockton Council spends large amounts of money on Stockton festival while buildings are neglected. I do not wish to see Billingham Town Centre go the same way and believe the best way to avoid this is to have Billingham Town Council who have done a brilliant job at improving Billingham Town Centre.
87. I have lived in Stockton for 55 years. I think we should keep Billingham Town Council since they took over from Stockton Council Billingham has improved tremendously after Stockton Council has neglected Billingham for decades and just concentrated on Stockton. Under Billingham Town Council the local park has been greatly improved for children and adults to enjoy. The fantastic Billingham Forum thank goodness was saved and improved and the lovely theatre saved. Also the Billingham Town Centre has also been greatly improved. Hooray! At last! After being neglected by Stockton Council for decades! Stockton Council has wasted thousands of pounds on Stockton Town Centre replacing paving stones and renewing them every few years! At last Billingham Town Centre has new pavement, lighting been painted, has a fantastic new library, new pub The Half Moon. Now under Billingham Town Council I feel proud of Billingham Town Centre. Under Stockton Council the town centre in Billingham was a complete dump sadly neglected. I felt ashamed and angry and sad. Hooray for Billingham Town Council. Good work.
88. It is our view that Billingham Town Council should not be abolished for the following reasons:
- It is important that the town of Billingham retains a sense of its own identity, especially within the government body of Stockton-on-Tees
 - The sense of identity fosters community cohesion by an encouragement to residents to be more involved in day to day activities within the town.
 - The efforts that have been made in John Whitehead Park by Stockton Council and Billingham Town Council are to be praised. It is clear that the park is now being used effectively on a daily basis, as originally envisaged.
- It is our hope that in time, and through experience, Billingham Town Council will be allowed to take on more governance of the town.
- As to the precept; it is to be recognised that some people may find the extra money difficult to justify, especially in times of austerity, however for the reasons stated we feel the cost is value for money.
89. Same comments as above.

Comments where respondents did not indicate “yes” or “no”

1. Don't know enough to comment but born in Billingham. I've seen little progress in town square. Shopping is hopeless. Not enough food supermarkets and even if there was, there is absolutely no parking available ever!
2. Not sure, have never given if any thought.
3. What a waste of money. Three envelopes for one household. Try using money for more important matters like schools, hospital, police etc.
4. I'm ambivalent but suggest they are given two more years with a review at the end i.e. jerk them up a bit!
5. Unable to vote due to the fact I do not know what this Council does for this area.
6. Another YES/NO vote. I want Billingham to have some representation but there should be scrutiny over this Council's activity – certainly a cap like all other departments in the country. It would be nice to have regular comments/ discussion in the local paper as we do not know who is representing us or what they think.

Elton Parish Council – Consultation Responses

Do you agree that Elton Parish Council should be abolished?

Yes – 30

Comments

1. The ones who were on the previous council would not listen to your concerns so it is a waste of time having one after all this time.

No – 44

Comments

1. I understand a few residents are now willing to stand as Councillors for Elton
2. I have no idea about this and have never before seen anything about parish elections
3. Please note we have a number of residents who are prepared to stand as members of Elton Parish Council. This includes some Members who resigned due to abuse at the meeting of Elton Parish Council last 2008
4. Elton Parishioners are not now kept informed regarding planning applications etc. Residents who had concerns could approach the Parish Council anonymously. I'm told that residents who have concerns do not voice them to the Borough Council as they are then identified and friction can be caused.
5. I am willing to become a member of the Parish Council as is my husband and several others. I have had no notification ever of SBC trying to re-establish the Council.