

Tax rise is 22 per cent

● BILLERICAY residents are set to pay more council tax next year, but not quite as much as the Echo reported.

Last week, the Echo reported Billericay Town Council had agreed to up its council tax precept by 27 per cent.

The article reported this would mean residents paying an extra £3.50 over the year, April 2010 to March 2011.

Although the £3.50 figure is accurate, this is not an increase of 27 per cent as stated, but actually a rise of just under 22 per cent.

The Echo apologises for the mistake.

Grain trailer fire put out

● FIREFIGHTERS were called to tackle a blaze in a trailer containing 20 tonnes of grain.

The trailer and hopper was parked in Tilbury Dock, in Thurrock, when it caught light.

Firefighters, including two crews from Orsett, two from Grays, two from Rayleigh and one from Basildon, raced to the scene at around 7am on Christmas Eve.

After about 90 minutes they managed to bring the blaze under control and continued to douse the grain, which was smouldering.

Trio on trial for stabbing

● THREE men will stand trial accused of stabbing a man in Grays.

Nana Gyamfi, 23, of Milton Keynes, Twanda Shana, 21, of Southend Road, Grays, and Terence Mashozhera, 19, of Dunlop Road, Tilbury, all deny causing grievous bodily harm with intent and violent disorder, in connection with an attack in London Road, on June 20.

They will stand trial at Basildon Crown Court on January 18.

Thieves steal £1k in goods

● THIEVES broke into a house in Grays and took £1,000 of goods.

The house, in Hathaway Road, was broken into between 1.50pm and 4.45pm, last Tuesday.

The burglars forced open the front door, causing £300 damage, and raided cosmetics, a watch and clothing.

Anyone with information can call police, on 0300 3334444.

● A WHITE Vauxhall Vivaro, containing £140 cash, was broken into in Stephenson Avenue, Tilbury, last Tuesday, between 12pm and 12.10pm. Call police with information, on 0300 3334444.

DNA liquid aids fight against house thieves

- ❑ Forensic liquid leaves a code on expensive items
- ❑ Free offer to houses in high-risk burglary streets

By GINA MARDEN
Crime reporter
gina.marden@nqe.com

A REVOLUTIONARY forensic liquid, which can link thieves to the scene of their crimes, is again being used by police in a new campaign against burglaries.

The SelectaDNA system was used in Basildon and Thurrock earlier this year.

But, following a recent spate of break-ins, it is being relaunched to cut the number of incidents.

The liquid, which contains a unique DNA code registered to a property, can be applied to valuable possessions, including televisions, bikes, iPods and other expensive goods.

The system allows anything which is stolen during a break-in and later found to be directly traced back to the property.

It will also link a burglar directly to the crime scene, increasing the chances of a successful conviction at court.

The product, which is free, is being offered to specific roads in Basildon and Thurrock, which have been identified as high-risk burglary zones.

As well as getting the liquid, signs are also put up in the street to warn off burglars, and residents are given window stickers to say their homes are protected by SelectaDNA.

Supt Ivor Harvey, of Basildon and Thurrock police, said: "This product is a proven way to reduce burglaries.

"Residents do live in a safe place here, but burglary can have such a devastating effect on the whole family.

"One burglar is one too



■ Burglars beware – PCSOs Paul Merritt and Jonathan Shepherd with a SelectaDNA sign

many for us, so we are doing everything we can to prevent it.

"The product is almost invisible when applied to valuable property.

"No burglar wants to be caught with DNA coded property, so with this system and correct signage, your property will

be less attractive to potential thieves."

Supt Harvey added: "I would like to stress this product is completely free to the residents being offered it, so if you have a visit from us, please take advantage of it.

"It only takes a small amount

of time, which would be less than the time you would waste sorting out the misery a burglar causes."

In streets where the liquid is being offered, residents will be visited by a PCSO or receive a letter with details of how they can get SelectaDNA.

Man punched in the face, but escapes street thugs

A MAN was punched in the face by would-be robbers during a terrifying assault.

The 37-year-old was walking in Calcutta Road, Tilbury, when the attack happened.

He was approached by two men, who demanded he hand over his wallet. They punched the man in the face, but the victim managed to escape and nothing was stolen.

Detectives are now investigating the attempted robbery and are appealing for witnesses.

Laura Anderson, spokeswoman for Thurrock police,

said: "Thankfully, the victim wasn't left with any visible injuries. But he will have to live with the emotional scars for months to come."

One of the attackers was described as a 6ft tall man, of medium build, with short, shaved dark hair and a ginger beard. He wore a three-quarter length black coat. His accomplice was a white, shorter man, who was wearing an earring.

Witnesses to the attack, which happened at 7.30pm, on Tuesday, December 22, can contact police on 0300 3334444.

Council cancelling housing benefit cheques to save cash

BASILDON Council is to stop paying housing benefit by cheque in a bid to save cash.

The authority is paying most people directly into their bank accounts. But around 100 people across the district still wait to receive theirs by cheque in the post.

The council says paying this way costs around £10 for each payment, covering costs such as postage and processing, lost, or out of date cheques.

However, it only costs the council around 80p to pay each person directly into their bank accounts.

Phil Turner, Basildon councillor responsible for resources, said: "Paying benefits directly into someone's bank account means there are no problems with claimants waiting for cheques which are delayed, or even lost in the post.

"The council is serious about operating as efficiently as possible and using taxpayers' money wisely."

Each month, on average, Basildon Council pays out more than £100,000 in housing benefits by cheque, and nearly £3million directly into bank accounts.