



Axminster Town Council
Annual Newsletter 2020 – 2021
May 2021



The past 12 months have been difficult and challenging for all of us in and around Axminster. Our plans and everyday activities have been put on hold or done in different ways. The work of the Town Council has been affected too – many of the projects we had hoped to undertake have had to be postponed and our meetings have been held remotely.

The responsibilities held by the Council, the services provided, and the work undertaken are to support the quality of life of our community.

The aim of this newsletter is to provide information about the projects completed in the past year, how the Council works and where our budgets are spent.

The Council is currently working to:

- Restore the Jubilee Fountain in Trinity Square
- Create a climbing wall and play facilities at Raymonds Hill
- Install ‘vehicle-activated’ speed control signs on the entry roads into the town
- Create new maps and finger post signs around town for visitors
- Install CCTV cameras - a Safer Towns Project in partnership with the Police
- Support the ‘Action in Axminster’ regeneration project
- Improve facilities at the Guildhall
- Complete a Neighbourhood Plan of policies to inform land use from 2023 – 2030

What do you think?

Axminster Town Council is **your** Council. We welcome and value the views of all residents and businesses to guide our work and to act on your concerns. We will do this with the priorities to:

- Improve emergency resilience.
- Enhance and support the infrastructure of the town.
- Enrich the quality of life for residents through support of community and not-for-profit groups.
- Support health, safety, and environmental interests.

You can make your voice heard, ask questions, and get the latest Council news in whichever way suits you best:

- **Attend the Annual Parish Meeting at The Guildhall on Monday 24th May at 7.00pm to ask your questions**
- Join the Town Forum at a full council meeting on the second Monday of each month
- Send in your thoughts and views through the website
- Email Jill Farrow, the Mayor: mayor@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk
- Post a letter to the Council addressed to the Mayor at the Guildhall.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The work of the Council is undertaken by the staff and ten Councillors through full council meetings and four committees. Meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. The agendas and minutes of meetings are posted on the Council website. There are currently five vacancies for Councillors, please get in touch with the Mayor or the Town Clerk to find out more. This is an interesting role and there is lots of training and support for new members. The committees discuss:

- strategic and financial issues
- planning applications
- operational matters
- the employment of Council staff

The work of the Planning Committee

The role of this Committee is to respond to the planning and licensing applications for the Axminster area. We act as a consultee for the District Council, consider applications in detail and give our recommendations. We do not make decisions. We meet at least once a month, and all meetings are open to the public. Applications are available for everyone to view on the EDDC website prior to meetings. In 2020 we have seen applications for home improvements, agricultural buildings, tree management, new businesses and for the regeneration of some of the buildings in our town. We always value the opinions and expertise of the residents of Axminster and welcome public attendance at meetings.

The work of the Operations Committee

The Operations Committee is responsible for all aspects of our estate and property, including the upkeep of buildings: the Guildhall, the Old Courthouse and the Cemetery Chapels; management of the allotments -140 spread over 3 sites, with 150 tenants and a waiting list of 15; upkeep of the cemetery– we have plans to make access to newer graves easier and to prepare more spaces for the next decade; and the maintenance of footpaths. We replace or provide two seats and benches per year – a new one is to be placed outside the cemetery in honour of former councillor Sue Spiller’s 25 years’ service. Bus shelters are in continuous repair, and floral displays are maintained by valued volunteers led by Bryan Ball and John Jeffery. A local contractor has been engaged to clean and restore the Jubilee Fountain in Trinity Square during 2021.

Funding the work of the Council

Each year Axminster Town Council receives a share of the council tax paid to East Devon District Council known as the ‘precept’. With some of the planned projects postponed due to the pandemic, the Council has held funds in reserves with a view to re-starting them as soon as possible.

Because of this postponement and out of respect for the changing financial circumstances of some Axminster residents due to the pandemic, the Council has taken the important decision not to increase the precept for the 2021/22 financial year. As a result, the precept portion of the council tax for each household will be the same as last year.

In 2020-2021, the precept of approximately £250,000 and funding from reserves was spent on:

- Allotments ... £2,930
- Amenities ... £10,670 (upkeep of street furniture: bus shelters and benches, maintenance of footpaths and verges)
- Cemetery ... £10,440
- Staff and Council running costs ... £150,470
- Guildhall and Old Courthouse maintenance ... £33,112
- Other expenses ... £13,780 (for example, work on the War Memorial, tree work, equipment, general repairs)
- Added to reserves ... £57,460

£12,690 was donated to community projects that help to make Axminster a thriving place to live, work and shop:

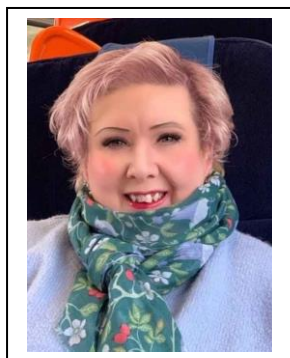
- Axe Valley & West Dorset Ring & Ride – a donation of £1,000
- Axminster Job Club – a grant of £1,000
- Totally Locally - £250 a donation for high street website development
- The Community Waffle House – a grant of £5,500
- Axminster P.C.C. - £750 for maintenance of the town clock on the Minster
- Verge project - £91.50 of wildflower seed to replant verges
- Justgiving.com - £100 a donation to the memorial fund for a volunteer who sadly passed away

Axminster Community Emergency Fund (ACER) was allocated a budget of £4,000 at the beginning of the pandemic. From this, shopping vouchers were funded to assist those self-isolating. Community organisations who could assist residents were given grants, for example, Nourish who delivered meals to those in need were given a grant of £500 from this fund.

An increased budget of £15,000 has been allocated for community projects in 2021-2022. If you run a community project or know of a not-for-profit organisation that would benefit from these funds, direct them to the Financial Information page on our website to find out how to apply for a grant.

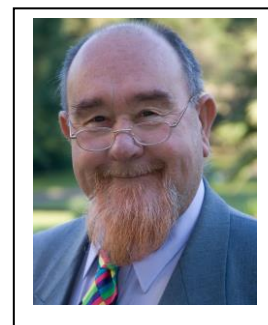
Axminster bids farewell

During 2020, Axminster lost two of its most devoted public servants, each enthusiastically dedicated to the wellbeing and development of our town.



Anni Young was a councillor for five years and was elected Mayor of Axminster in March 2019. She was extraordinarily proud to serve her community in this way. She had so much she wanted to achieve as Mayor, she developed the ‘Welcome to Axminster’ coffee mornings and ran the first Environment Day in 2019. Anni played a key part in the formation and operation of ACER to co-ordinate the volunteer support for the community during the pandemic. Anni had a strong vision as the Guildhall Manager, it was her dream to hold big-name events in the centre of Axminster, bringing top-class entertainment to us. She is greatly missed.

Douglas Hull was well-known locally for his public service having held a series of elected roles over a period of more than 50 years. He served as Mayor of Axminster three times, in 1989/91, 2003/05 and 2015/16. From 2005 to 2013 he sat on the Town, District and County Councils simultaneously. Of all the things he achieved in the political sphere, the one of which he was most proud was the establishment of the Millwey Industrial Estate, without which Axminster would be a much less prosperous and viable community. The changes which he helped to bring about in Axminster and beyond are testament to the heartfelt compassion and empathy that he had for others.



Thanks and farewell to two faces at the Cemetery



Our longest-serving member of staff, John Hoden was appointed Cemetery Caretaker in 1989. After 32 years, he is leaving to enjoy a well-earned retirement. Generations of local residents have benefited from John's kindness, help, and sympathy when visiting the Cemetery, often at times of intense personal sadness. Over the years he has got to know the regular visitors and it has been one of the aspects of his job which has given him real pleasure. Working in a cemetery does not appeal to everyone but John has always said that he loves the tranquility of the surroundings. Our thanks go to John for his dedication to keeping the Cemetery in fine condition and for his loyal service. We give our warm wishes for a long, happy and restful retirement.

We are also bidding “thanks and farewell” to Ned Cutler, who joined the Cemetery staff in 2018. One of his special responsibilities was to look after the crescent bed which is used for the scattering of ashes and now gives visitors entering the cemetery a colourful welcome.

We will miss his enthusiasm and wish him well in his new job.



Who's Who at Axminster Town Council

 Cllr. Jill Farrow Mayor Chair of the Council and Strategy & Finance Committee	 Cllr. Andrea Sedgewick Deputy Mayor Chair of the Employment Committee	 Cllr. Jeremy Walden Chair of the Operations Committee	 Cllr. Sara Leat Chair of the Planning Committee	 Cllr. Carol Doherty
 Cllr. Martin Spurway	 Cllr. Steve Holt	 Cllr. Oliver Tucker	 Cllr. Martin Mynard	 Cllr. Simon Sleigh
 Miss H. Kirkcaldie Town Clerk	 Mrs. Z. Adamson-Drage Deputy Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer	 Mrs. Sue Gay Administrative Assistant	 Mr. Jonathan Hall Handyman	 Mr. Dave Bennett Lengthsman

Message from the Mayor

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. The Councillors and staff count it a privilege to serve the people of our beautiful town. As we return to physical meetings in the Guildhall, please join us to share your views in Public Forum on how we can do so better.

With best wishes
Jill Farrow

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