

Your Town Your Council

Axminster Town Council Newsletter

Issue 3 October 2023



Town Mayor, Cllr Jill Farrow, with newly coopted council members Cllr Mark Dowdeswell, Cllr Dianne Bruce and Cllr Paul Bridge

TOWN COUNCIL AT FULL COMPLEMENT

Unlike a lot of Parish and Town Councils in East Devon, each and every seat on our Council is now filled, mostly via the electoral process but with three members co-opted recently. This means that we are fortunate to have fifteen positive, determined and team-oriented Councillors working collectively, with a common purpose, to deliver the very best services for each and every resident of our wonderful town. Moreover, Axminster Town Council bucks the national trend with more than half of our Councillors being female, together with our elected Mayor & Deputy Mayor and also the Chairs of three of the four standing committees; Planning, Employment and Strategy & Finance (Operations Committee being chaired by Cllr. Jeremy Walden who needs no introduction).

Following the elections in May, we welcomed two brand new Councillors onto the Council, Terry Langdon and David Willey. We are grateful for the skills and valuable experience they each bring with them. Our three new co-opted Councillors are Paul Bridge, Dianne Bruce and Mark Dowdeswell, who all joined the Council via the Casual Vacancy "co-option" process but this does not mean that they hold any lesser position than those previously elected.

Being a Councillor takes courage, fortitude and patience. It involves giving up huge amounts of your spare time to try and help your fellow residents, your neighbours, your town, your community. We value their commitment to serving you all equally.

But, in bringing a new vibrant team together, we inevitably must say goodbye to councillors who have stepped down. Andrea Sedgewick, Martin Spurway, Martin Mynard, Steve Holt and Angela Huskisson all served the Council (and the wider community) with enthusiasm, dedication and passion, some over a span of many decades. Their wisdom, good humour and valuable contribution to debates will be missed and we hope that you join us in thanking them for their service.

The Town Council has been seeking to engage more with our community through outreach sessions and public events such as The Cherry Fayre, Gate to Plate and via weekly Councillor surgeries across the town. Our offices are now open Monday to Thursday, 9am until 4pm so that everyone has the opportunity to contact us in person if that is their preference. You can find our contact details on the back page.

Waffle with Cllrs Walden & Willey Axminster Town Council Surgeries

If you would like to speak to someone face to face, you can meet with Jeremy Walden or David Willey at the **Community Waffle House, every Thursday from 11am – 2pm**

Alternatively, visit our Guildhall office from 9am–4pm Monday to Thursday to speak to one of our officers.

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The Summer In Review

Message from the Mayor

Axminster really is the home of community spirit.

An extraordinary amount of work in Axminster is done by volunteers. The fifteen elected members of the Town Council do their best to make sure that every penny of taxpayers money is well spent but, we also rely on the help and goodwill of some incredible volunteers. Their hard work and commitment to the town knows no bounds and should be acknowledged.

For example, some of your council tax pays for planting in the town centre which brightens up the high street through the summer months, but these beautiful floral displays are cared for by volunteers led by Brian Ball and John Jeffery.

We are grateful for the knowledge and expertise of Mike Davis, our Honorary Tree Warden who, guides us and our staff as we care for our existing trees and embark on new biodiversity tree and shrub planting projects.

Volunteers also make Guildhall events run smoothly. Volunteers organise and run the Cherry Fayre, the Carnival, the Chamber of Commerce Axminster Banners Project, the Axminster Climate Action Group, the Community Shed, the Heritage Centre and Pippins. The list goes on and on.

So many community organisations and charities support vulnerable people in many and varied ways here. For a small town, Axminster achieves a lot, and it continues to be a great privilege to serve as its Mayor.



Town Mayor, Cllr Jill Farrow

Martin Spurway to be made a Freeman of Axminster

Former Councillor Martin Spurway was first elected to the Town Council on Monday the 9th of August 1982. Martin has served the Town for over forty years before reluctantly stepping down this May for health reasons.

In recognition of his eminent service to the residents of Axminster, the Town Council intends to make Martin a Freeman of the parish at the meeting scheduled for October the 16th. If approved, this honour will be bestowed on Martin at the meeting due to take place on November the 13th.

We hope that you will join us as we pay our collective thanks to Martin for his many years of commitment.

A bench will be dedicated to Martin in gratitude and recognition of his diligent service.



Martin Spurway

Clerk's Corner

A note from the Town Clerk, Paul

Councils everywhere are feeling the pinch.

Local Government is still feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, just like every household. We have had to adjust our budgets to reflect the tightening belt of smaller

council finances but, with canny spending, and by making the most of grant opportunities outside of the Council, we have been able to continue our goal to deliver bigger and better services year-on-year, whilst trying to keep your Council Tax increases as low as we can.

The weather this year has caused us some additional challenges, it must be said. No longer can we rely upon dry summers and cold winters to keep plant growth in check. Extended spells of rain, followed by periods of heat and unseasonably warm conditions, have resulted in extraordinary foliage growth which has put pressure on our very small team of grounds maintenance operatives (just the two of them!). They dash from here to there, covering our town cemetery, three allotment sites, a new play and recreation area, over 50 public footpaths, weeding the town's streets, litter picking, removing graffiti, repairing vandalised equipment, emptying bins – they never stop (albeit we occasionally let them both take some well-earned leave!).

We are shortly due to start work on the Green Wedge project. This will restore the embankment at the railway station to its former glory; watch this space for details of what amenities we have in store there. Please let me know if there is anything you'd like to see extra in our town.



Town Clerk, Paul

Around Our Town – The word on the street

News from the last six months:

The Town Council was delighted to welcome the Arts Café back into the Old Courthouse complex, and equally happy to welcome our newest tenant, The Fossil Academy. Sharing the space with the DVLA, these three tenants bring a wide variety of visitors into the courtyard and into the public garden, and we invite you all to come and say hello and enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

You can find the exact location on one of the eight new town maps installed across the town. These will be updated periodically to reflect any new businesses that have opened since the last published version.

Things to look forward to:

We are also looking forward to the opening of Axminster's new Banking Hub, in the former Lloyds Bank premises. Many residents and businesses have greatly missed the banking services previously on offer and the Town Council (amongst others) has lobbied to retain and improve them. This model for the delivery of financial services is ground-breaking as there are only five in operation elsewhere in the UK. We would urge all of our residents to pop in and make use of the services and facilities on offer.

Projects we are supporting:

The Town Council has had to reduce our grant award fund simply to balance our books and maintain service delivery elsewhere, but we are still committed to helping local organisations and community groups wherever, and whenever, we can as we recognise the incredible part they play in providing vital services, advice and help to so many.

If you'd like to know more, or to apply for a grant, please get in touch as soon as you can as funding is limited and available on a first-come-first-served basis.

The Town Council took the decision earlier this year to make the former museum space at the Old Courthouse available to the Chamber of Commerce Axminster Banners Project so that they would have a secure, dry and illuminated space to work in.

We can see the outcome of that partnership each time we walk through the town centre during the summer months. These wonderful volunteers have created a spectacular combination of colour and artwork, and their efforts cannot be understated.

Axminster has a bright future ahead; if we all work together, we all reap the benefits. It's a team effort!



THE FOSSIL ACADEMY

Hand painted mural on the wall at The Fossil Academy



Denise Otreba teaching Cllr Brooker how to paint a banner

Current Affairs

Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Launch

Last year we asked for your views to help us begin the process of writing a Neighbourhood Plan for Axminster. Your valuable feedback has informed our approach to drafting our policies, but we need to ensure that we are still on the right track, so would like to hear from you again!

What is a Neighbourhood Plan and why it matters?

There are three pieces of legislation which a planning applicant must comply with (large developer or an individual homeowner); the National Planning Policy Framework (set by central government), the district wide Local Plan (East Devon District Council) and the Neighbourhood Plan (developed by the community).

Each document must accord with those that sit above, and cannot contradict them, or stray into the remit of areas covered by other statutory bodies. However, each does allow a greater level of control over how house building is delivered and what associated infrastructure should accompany it. If a planning application is submitted to the planning authority (EDDC) and it accords with all three of these, it will be considered favourably. Failure to comply with these policies by the applicant could lead to a refusal of the planning application.



How can you help?

Axminster does not currently have a Neighbourhood Plan and so we have less control over which planning applications are approved or refused. We really need to change that.

There are some parts of the final plan we cannot consult upon right now as East Devon District Council and Axminster Town Council are waiting for central government to finalise any changes they want to make to planning legislation first. However, there is still a lot of work we can do in the meantime.

Your feedback is crucial to making sure that we get this right and that Axminster grows in a way which is right for our community. We ask that you take a few minutes to review each of the policies in our Neighbourhood Plan policies consultation survey.

We need your feedback!

Submit your feedback to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies Consultation, no later than midnight on Sunday 5th of November.



Scan this code or visit our web page for the online survey, or pick up a hard copy from the Guildhall.

Axminster Climate Action Group

Bringing nature back to Axminster.

It has been a busy few months for the Axminster Climate Action Group (ACAG) and there are some exciting projects on the horizon.

ACAG is tasked with finding projects based around Axminster which can help residents and visitors find ways to support biodiversity and encourage the re-habitation of local parks, gardens and open spaces with the plant and animal species which have been disappearing over the years.



ACAG's first project was to give a free packet of wildflower seed to primary school leavers, with instructions on where and how to plant them. The seeds were donated by River Cottage and were well-received by the primary schools.

Taking advantage of the empty River Cottage building during August, an exhibition was installed to raise awareness about the beauty of nature within our area. Information boards were put up to show how everybody can do something to attract insects, birds, animals and a variety of plants back into their town and gardens. ACAG have received excellent feedback for this project and have another one ready to go in November.

ACAG's next projects - and how to get involved:

To work with Tesco to plant wildflowers in the grassy areas at the entrance to the store. This will make it a more welcoming site for wildlife (and passers by!). Scatterers and seed treaders are needed!

This Autumn/Winter, we are planning the planting of a Community Orchard next door to the cemetery. We hope to plant the first fruit trees in December. Please come along and help. It's an exciting project!

For further details of how to get involved, contact: cllr.bsteadman@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

All About Allotments

Our annual allotment roundup.

It's been a busy summer at the allotments, and a challenging growing season for many due to some peculiar weather patterns. Nonetheless some crops have done well this year despite the environmental challenges facing our allotmenters.

We have now largely completed the re-mapping process at Woodbury Park. The site has now been divided into colour-coded zones. This new zoned approach and a map will improve the safety of those tending the allotments as it will make it easier for emergency services to find you if needed. It will also assist prospective new growers to find and view any vacant plots, and help our grounds team identify any plots in need of attention or clearance.

We will be providing new plot markers for Millwey Rise and North Street in the coming weeks, but we will not need to renumber these plots. Additionally, new community noticeboards will be provided at all sites for all tenants to use.

The annual allotment rents will be due from the 1st October 2023. We will be holding a meeting at The Guildhall on the 26th October where you will be able to pay for your plot and find out about our plans for the following year.

To be added to the waiting list for an allotment plot, please email the Town Council on the details on the back page of this newsletter



The Robin Cross Award

Nominations for the 2024 Robin Cross Citizen of the Year Award open on the 1st November.

Since 2017, The Robin Cross Award has been presented to recognise the everyday heroes of our town, who, just like Robin Cross, go out of their way to improve the lives of others.

Last year's winner, Mary Darlow, works with Nourish preparing food and cooking meals to ensure that

no one goes hungry. We thank Mary for her work in these very challenging times.

Do you know someone who goes above and beyond for our town? Send your nominations to us via our contact information on the back page of this publication before the 1st of December 2023.

The Town Council will consider all eligible nominations and the winner will be announced at the first full Town Council meeting in January where they will be presented with The Robin Cross Shield and asked to nominate the cause that they would like a £100 donation to be given to in their name.

Dates For Your Diary

News from the Guildhall

The Guildhall has served our town for nearly 100 years in a variety of ways; cinema, dancehall, social club, theatre, community building and arts venue. On the first of August this year, a new chapter began when the Town Council took over the overall operation of the Guildhall.

Rest assured, the venue will continue to thrive and grow with bigger performers and a wider range of events and activities. We are also looking at ways to improve the energy efficiency of the hall to ensure its long-term financial viability.

We encourage everyone to come and see what's on! You'd be surprised. There is an event for every interest, every budget and every age group.



What's on this Autumn at Axminster Guildhall

These event listings were accurate at the time of publication but are subject to change. Please visit the website for the full and up to date listings including our community groups and classes. Never miss a show by following the Facebook page or join the mailing list online. If you would like to contact the Guildhall about anything, including volunteering, making a donation or booking tickets, or to find out more about hiring the Guildhall for a private function, class or ticketed event, please contact:

 www.axminster-guildhall.co.uk
 **01297 333 33**


 facebook.com/theaxminsterguildhall

 info@axminster-guildhall.co.uk

Scan this QR code to sign up to the Guildhall mailing list 

Headline Acts

- October**
- 07** Giant Giggle at the Guildhall - comedy
 - 08** Duck Variations by David Mamet - play
 - 20** Fun Speed Dating Evening (20+)
 - 21** Elvis '56 - tribute act
 - 27** Ghost Hunt at the Guildhall (SOLD OUT)
 - 29** Glenn Miller by A.J's BIG BAND - live music
 - 31** The Absolutely Dragulous Show

- November**
- 03** BEACH BOYZ - tribute act
 - 04** Sounds Of Simon - Paul Simon tribute act
 - 07** Giggle at the Guildhall - comedy
 - 10** The Dark Prism - Pink Floyd tribute act
 - 11** Don't Stop - Fleetwood Mac tribute act
 - 17** Investigating the Paranormal - Ghost Hunt
 - 21** Psychic Medium Nikki Kitt
 - 26** Christmas Market

Council meetings coming up

You can find the latest full council agenda on the noticeboards at Millwey Rise, Woodbury Park, Raymonds Hill and outside of the Guildhall. You can also find these, along with the agendas for our smaller committee meetings on our website.

All meetings start at 7pm in the main hall at the Guildhall, unless stated otherwise. Members of the public are invited to speak at the start of the meeting in public forum, but are welcome to stay for the duration.

- October**
- 16** Full Town Council
 - 23** Strategy and Finance Committee
- November**
- 6** Operations Committee
 - 13** Full Town Council
 - 27** Strategy and Finance Committee

- December**
- 11** Full Town Council
 - 18** Strategy and Finance Committee
- January**
- 15** Full Town Council
- Please note, the date and time of meetings is subject to change. Please check our website or call our office for confirmation.

Contacting "The Council"

Stick me on your fridge!

To help you reach the right Council, we have included contact details for Devon County Council and East Devon District Council as well as our own.

If you are unsure about which of the three you need, please feel free to call us or visit our office at the Guildhall and we will be happy to advise.

If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions for us, please get in touch.

<p>Axminster Town Council</p> <p>Office Address</p> <p>The Guildhall West Street Axminster EX13 5NX</p> <p>Opening Hours</p> <p>Monday - Thursday, 9AM - 4PM</p> <p>By Phone</p> <p>01297 32088</p> <p>By Email</p> <p>enquiries@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk</p> <p>Website</p> <p>axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk</p>	<p>East Devon District Council</p> <p>Office Address</p> <p>Blackdown House Heathpark Industrial Estate Honiton EX14 1EJ</p> <p>Mobile App</p> <p>Search for East Devon District Council in your mobile App Store</p> <p>By Phone</p> <p>01404 515 616</p> <p>Website</p> <p>eastdevon.gov.uk</p>	<p>Devon County Council</p> <p>Office Address</p> <p>County Hall Topsham Road Exeter EX2 4QD</p> <p>Customer Service Line Hours</p> <p>Monday - Friday, 8AM - 5PM</p> <p>By Phone</p> <p>0345 155 1015</p> <p>By Email</p> <p>customer@devon.gov.uk</p> <p>Website</p> <p>devon.gov.uk</p>
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