

Axminster Parish Council Annual Meeting 2019

Written report from Ian Hall, District and County Councillor

I'm really sorry that I can't be with you this evening, as I'm working nights! Here are my thoughts for your consideration:

Every year throws out some difficult challenges – and this past year has been no exception. We must stay positive, even though at times this is easier said than done, especially when we seem to take two steps forward and one step back.

The recent announcement that Trinity House will be closing in the summer is a reflection of the challenges Britain's high streets are currently facing. Whilst this feels like a setback, it could be a shining example of how we can turn a negative into a positive.

I have faith in the people of this town to bounce back from adversity and so I look forward to the future, not with apprehension but with confidence.

The Trinity House closure could be an opportunity for this iconic building to be the setting for something new and exciting. If we use our imagination, think outside the box and bring our collective energy to bear on the problem, we could turn it around.

The recent re-opening of the 'George Hotel' has been excellent news for the town and another positive factor is the imminent opening of the 'Waffle House'.

Also, Axminster has been nominated as the East Devon town that will feature in a bid for cash from the Government's 'Future High Streets Fund'. If successful, this will have a hugely positive impact on the regeneration of our beautiful town.

The very recent news that the promised £10 million HIF grant has been downgraded to a loan is a serious blow for the town and I personally feel that we have been betrayed.

It's a very serious setback and I see it as a blow that makes the agreed Masterplan no longer viable in its current form.

I met with Neil Parish MP on Saturday and I'm hopeful that my request for a meeting with 'Homes England' in Westminster this Thursday will be agreed. Perhaps, when they fully understand the ramifications of their decision, Homes England might be prepared to consider other options.

I sincerely hope that the Town Council will be in a position to complete the 'Axminster Neighbourhood Plan' and move it forward. This document will have much-needed teeth and will enable the good people of Axminster to help shape the future of our town for now and for future generations.

Axminster is the home of Community Spirit and this is the bedrock of all things good in our town – long may it continue.

Best regards

Ian