

# Your Town Your Council

Axminster Town Council Newsletter

Issue 2 March 2023



## Message from the Mayor



Town Mayor, Cllr Jill Farrow

It's hard to believe that I've had the privilege of being Mayor for two years. It's been a heady

time. We've seen a complete change in the staff team, warmly welcoming Paul, Sarah, Katie, Neil and Brett.

It's been a joy to be working with a full Council; thank you so much to the people who stepped up for co-option and for the rich contribution they are making to the work of the various committees. As you will see from the content of this newsletter, we're working hard to get things done for the benefit of the residents of Axminster.

It has been, and will continue to be, a challenge in these economically difficult times. But I know I speak for the whole of Axminster Town Council when I say that it's an honour to serve this community.

If you are interested in speaking to the Council about something which is important to you, that you think we can help with, or you want to find out how the Town Council operates, I invite you to attend any of our public meetings. You can find out when the next one is on our website or on any one of our public noticeboards.

The local elections are taking place on 4 May, and I urge anyone with an interest in this level of local government to stand for election as a Town Councillor.

## What Does Axminster Town Council do?



Axminster Town Council is one of three tiers of local government alongside Devon County Council and East Devon District Council. The common misconception is that "The Council" is one single entity. Whilst the three councils' services do sometimes overlap, each one has defined, responsibilities and associated powers.

For example, Devon County Council is the lead authority for a great number of primary public services, including health and social care, education, children's services and highways maintenance.

East Devon District Council covers areas such as planning, kerb-side and street waste disposal, council housing, and licensing for taxis, street trading, and alcohol sales.

The Town Council is responsible for Axminster Cemetery, Jubilee Field, three allotment sites as well as the upkeep of the Old Courthouse complex and the Guildhall.

We are responsible for most bus shelters, benches and defibrillators

around town, from Weycroft Bridge to Raymonds Hill.

We seek to improve public amenity wherever possible. Sometimes we do this through collaboration with other councils, organisations and the voluntary sector. Our goal is to ensure you receive the best service we can offer and that your Council Tax is put to good and proper use. More on how we deliver you best value for money on page 3.

Regrettably, our powers are limited as we are bound by legislation so cannot always do what we would like. Our Clerk works hard to help us operate within the law and find alternative solutions if possible. This ensures we are able to make well informed and lawful decisions.

In instances where we can't help as we might wish to, our Councillors and staff will try to suggest other organisations who may be able to assist you.

We have included contact details and opening hours for all three tiers of Local Government on page 4.

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## Robin Cross Award

Axminster Citizen of the Year

The 'Robin Cross' Award was launched in 2017. Robin was well known for helping those in need wherever he could, and so this award is given to the Citizen of the Year in Robin's honour.

This year's winner is Mary Darlow. Since moving to Axminster in 2018 Mary has embraced Axminster's community spirit, getting stuck in wherever it has been needed most.

Alongside her involvement with a variety of good causes, Mary helps to run Nourish, an organisation with the aim of helping people who are in food poverty by providing tasty homecooked meals. Nourish has also run fortnightly communal dinners and picnics in the parks during school holidays.



Mayor, Cllr Jill Farrow and Mary Darlow

Over the past year, Mary's work with Nourish has been more important than ever as people battle the cost-of-living crisis in our town.

Mary received her award at the Full Town Council meeting in February. As part of the award, Mary has nominated The Food Bank to receive a £100.00 donation sponsored by Axminster Nub News.

The Year In Review

## Just a few things we have done in the last year

In 2022, Axminster Town Council was restored to our full complement of fifteen members, something which had not been the case for a number of years. The new Councillors have brought with them a wide range of skills, experiences, ideas and energy to make the town better and improve residents' lives. As a result, we have been able to complete lots of things that unfortunately had been put on hold. We are heartened that the community response to our efforts has been so positive, especially given the financial challenges we already face. 2022 was a very busy year and we have no doubt that 2023 will be even busier still!



The new climbing wall at Jubilee Field

### 1. Axminster - A skaters' paradise? It is now!

After many years of waiting, Axminster Skatepark has finally been delivered.

No one organisation was in a position to deliver the skatepark on its own and the project was only possible because multiple organisations were willing to work together.

Significant funding contributions by East Devon District Council and Axminster Town Council ensured the project could progress. Had the build not moved ahead, £150k of time limited Section 106 funding would have been lost, and with it, hope of a skatepark.

We are delighted to have played such a significant part in the delivery of the skatepark which is now run and

maintained by its users via the Axminster Skatepark Charity (ASK).

### 2. Improved town centre CCTV coverage

The Town Council and its partners have been able to assist the Police by providing additional CCTV in Trinity Square. The footage from these CCTV cameras has already helped the Police with a number of investigations.

### 3. There're plenty of places to perch, so take a seat

Axminster Town Council installed eighteen new or replacement benches last year helped by a Welcome Back Fund grant from EDDC. We now have over fifty places to sit in and around the town, with a handful more to follow.

### 4. Too fast and we're furious!

Whilst the Town Council have limited powers when it comes to the public highway, we do have the ability to site a vehicle activated sign (VAS) which we rotate between five of the worst affected areas for speeding. We are monitoring their effect on driver speed.

### 5. Trees, bees and Jubilees

Since we took ownership of the Jubilee Field around a year ago, we have been undertaking a variety of projects designed to enhance the play facilities, improve public amenity and boost biodiversity within this valued green space. We have even more planned for the future, so read more about this in the article below.

### 6. Lights, camera, action! at Axminster Guildhall

In the last six months, significant renovation work to the Guildhall has been taking place, including lighting, electrics and networking. If you have recently attended an event at the Guildhall, you might have also noticed we have hung new stage curtains and painted the stage.

Work continues, but this will enable the Guildhall to book bigger and better acts in future. Not only does this mean higher quality entertainment for all, but it also allows the Guildhall to remain a low cost option for private, community and charity bookings.

Be sure to check out what is coming up next at the Guildhall in 2023.



Photos from just some of the projects we have undertaken in the last year.

## Jubilee Field

### Find out what we have already done and what is still to come.

Since Axminster Town Council took on Jubilee Field in April 2022, we have been committed to improving this valued green space. Some great new facilities have already been installed and we have even more planned for the coming months.

In the last year, we have undertaken the following projects in Jubilee Field:

- Installed a temporary path at the Boxfield Road entrance to prevent the access becoming muddy and impassable in wet weather.
- Community daffodil planting event with extra bulbs donated by EDDC.
- We commissioned the Community Shed to build us a Bug Hotel to give our pollinators a helping hand.
- We celebrated the Queens Platinum Jubilee at a community event which included the unveiling of the Jubilee archway and stone.
- Installed more benches for you to sit at, and picnic on.
- We added some new bins, dog poo bag dispensers and noticeboards.
- Built a new climbing wall.
- Procured a new cycle rack.
- Planted fifteen trees, with more to follow soon.



Mike Davis - Tree Planting, February 2023

### Projects we are still working on:

- Siting of the Bug Hotel this spring.
- Installation of a better and more permanent path surface at the Boxfield Road entrance.
- Complete the pathway from the bottom of the bank to Dukes Way, creating a full loop to walk around.
- Plant more trees, shrubs and areas of wild flowers and grasses.
- Fit an emergency defibrillator to serve the users of the field as well as those living in the surrounding housing estates.

## Find a Defibrillator. Save a Life.

### More critical lifesaving equipment installed.

The Town Council has recently added 4 new emergency Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) to the existing town council provision of 7. This brings the town's total coverage of publicly accessible AEDs up to 16.

These life-saving pieces of equipment can be used safely by anyone at any time to provide help to someone, young or old, who is experiencing a cardiac arrest.

You can find your nearest AED by visiting our website, but we have also set up a dedicated Facebook page which will soon list each device's street address, its What3Words location reference and a photo of the AED to help you find it quickly.

Be sure to "Like" [@AxminsterAED](#) on Facebook so you have the information in the event of an emergency.



## Your Neighbourhood Plan

A Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) is a valuable document in the

policy framework that enables EDDC to determine planning applications so that they better meet the needs of those that live there. NHPs sit alongside the East Devon Local Plan (LP) but unlike the LP, which largely considers district-wide planning policy, an NHP is written by its residents, focuses on local issues and gives the community a greater level of control over their own future.

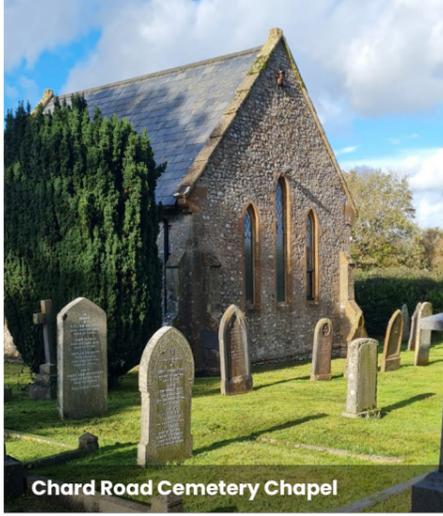
Our NHP Steering Group has already undertaken several consultations to find out what is important to you, but will soon be asking for your feedback on the first draft of the Axminster NHP. We welcome your views so that we can ensure the plan works for everyone who lives in, works in, and visits Axminster.

More here: [axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk/Neighbourhood\\_Plan\\_40791.aspx](http://axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk/Neighbourhood_Plan_40791.aspx)

## The Year Ahead



Co Bikes electric bike hire



Chard Road Cemetery Chapel

### 1. Improved town map and signage

We will soon be installing an updated version of the town map originally produced for the Axminster Chamber of Commerce.

This will be installed in eight new locations around the town, along with brand new dementia friendly signposts and four new town boundary signs.

### 2. Ongoing improvements to our Guildhall

Works at the Guildhall continue, including fibre broadband, improved safety and security systems and the installation of an evacuation chair to be used in the event of an emergency.

### 3. Street bin recycling trial with the District Council

EDDC have kindly allowed us to undertake a dual waste bin trial on the corner of South Street. If it is successful, we may be able to replace more of the ordinary street bins with recycling bins.

## Plenty to look forward to in 2023

We are always looking to enhance amenities and services for our residents whilst being mindful of the budget and legal constraints which apply to a Town Council. We hope that the list here gives you a flavour of some of the exciting new projects on the horizon, but rest assured, there is plenty more to come and we look forward to sharing more details with you soon.

**If you have an idea for a future project, why not get in touch, or join us at our next full council meeting? For more details, call us or visit our website.**

### 4. Development of new public open space

We are actively exploring how we can acquire or improve more open spaces in and around town to provide greater amenity for visitors and residents alike.

### 5. Making it easier for you to access information

We recently increased our office opening hours, which are now 9am to 4pm Monday to Thursday, but we are also looking to make improvements to our website, to help you find the info you are looking for more quickly.

### 6. Axminster collaborative e-bike project

With support from the District and County Council, we recently put in a grant application to South Western Railways to extend the CoBikes e-bike network into Axminster. We are eagerly awaiting SWR's decision.

### 7. Flying the banner for Axminster

We are delighted to assist Axminster Banners Group this year by providing them with a painting venue for their next batch of banners.

## Axminster Climate Action Group

Working together to help our environment recover.

Axminster Climate Action Group (ACAG) is a new community group originally initiated by Axminster Town Council to improve the lives of people living in Axminster by enhancing our environment and boosting biodiversity in small but rewarding ways.

Would you like to learn how to grow your own fruit and veg?

Would you like fruit trees growing on our green spaces where you can pick free fruit with your family?

Perhaps you would like free trees or seeds to plant in your garden or window box? Who wouldn't?

We are currently planning a variety of projects which allow us to give a little bit back to nature and reap the rewards. If you want to help or you have an idea you think we can build on, please let us know.

For more information or to offer your help, please get in touch with our ACAG Councillors: Bernie Steadman, Becky Lippett and Sarah Birnie.

You can find their contact information on our website.

## All Things Allotments

Improving your amenity and getting ready for growing.

As the ground starts to thaw, we are looking forward to a productive year at the allotments. We have a re-mapping process underway at Woodbury Park and investigations into acquiring additional allotment space at North Street. We will also be organising skips to be at each allotment site, dates tbc; please keep an eye out for the signs on the noticeboards.

If you would like to be placed on the waiting list for an allotment, please give us a call.

Allotment holders can also benefit from becoming a member of an Allotment Association. Find out more about allotment associations from the National Allotment Society by visiting their website [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk) or call them on 01536 266576.



## Money, Money, Money

### Funding Support

#### Grants provided to groups and charities in Axminster

In the last financial year, we have provided a total of over £42,000 in small grants to nearly 20 charities and community groups, including:

- Plastic Free Axminster
- Axminster Food Hub
- Axe Vale Netball Club
- Axe Valley Ring and Ride
- East Devon Citizens Advice
- Action East Devon

This year, we do not have quite as much available in the kitty, but we do still have some grants available. We encourage those looking for funding to contact us to find out if they would be eligible under our 2023 grant schemes.

### Understanding your Council Tax bill, and how we are keeping our part of your bill as low as we possibly can.

During the last six months, the Town Councillors have thought long and hard about the needs of our residents before finally setting the level of next year's 'precept' (the little bit of your overall Council Tax bill that funds the Town Council - marked in the red box).

The Council has kept its portion of the Council Tax bill as small as possible for many years and it remains amongst the lowest of the major towns in East Devon, even though we have probably the largest number of public buildings and amenities to maintain in relation to the size of our population.

The Council has a legal obligation to agree a 'balanced budget' that ensures that the Town Council can keep on delivering (and where we can, improve) the services that our citizens (and taxpayers) quite rightly expect. However, inflation is running at over 10% which is directly affecting the

Council in terms of contractor, supplier, goods and services costs.

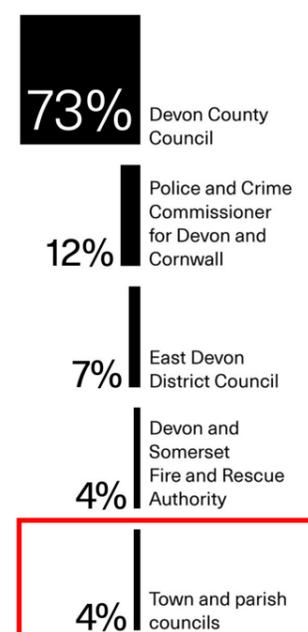
After reviewing and revising the budget and having taken into account all other possible sources of income, the Town Council have voted to add a small rise to the average (based on a Band D household) Council Tax bill for next year. This will add £9.34 per year, taking the annual precept for a Band D household to £102.73.

In real terms, this £9.34 represents an increase of just over **2p per day**. Whilst the Councillors understand that every household in Axminster (themselves included) is feeling the pinch, they felt that adding a small increase was the only real way to protect the services that we all rely upon each day.

We remain committed to making sure that every penny we spend on your behalf delivers best value for all.

### Your Council Tax

#### Where does Council Tax go?



Council Tax breakdown as of March 2023  
© East Devon District Council

The May 2023 Local Elections

## Things to know before the elections on May the 4th.

The May 2023 elections are a perfect opportunity for you to exercise your democratic right. Turnout at the polling stations is typically quite low, which is what makes your vote so important. Town, District, County and Parliamentary elections do not all happen at the same time. This May, you will electing representatives for the next four years at the Town and District Councils. Read below to find out about the new requirement to have photo ID to vote, postal voting and about how to stand in the forthcoming Town Council elections.



### Voter ID – Don't be caught out

#### Are you ready for the introduction of Voter ID?

New Government rules mean you will only be able to vote in future local and parliamentary elections if you can present a valid form of photo ID. But not all photo ID is acceptable at the polling station, so don't get caught out.

#### What photo ID will be accepted at the polling station:

If you have a valid UK photo driving licence, passport or any of a host of other approved forms of photo ID, you will be able to vote. However, not all photo ID is accepted. Check to see if your ID appears on the approved list.



#### What to do if you don't have a valid form of photo ID.

You can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) which contains your name and photo, and this can be obtained free of charge from the Government Voter ID portal following verification of your identity online.

The deadline for applying for a VAC is 5pm, 6 working days before polling day. For the election on May the 4th, the deadline is April the 25th.

#### Other ways to vote:

If you are registered to vote but do not have valid photo ID or do not want to vote at the polling station on polling day, you can apply to vote by post.

Further information about Voter ID and Postal Voting can be found here:

[eastdevon.gov.uk/elections-and-registering-to-vote](http://eastdevon.gov.uk/elections-and-registering-to-vote)

Or call **01404 515 616** and ask to speak to the electoral services team.

### Have you considered becoming a Councillor?

#### Why not become a Town Councillor and have a positive impact on your community? Find out how below.

Parish and Town Councils are the cornerstone of democracy and their members serve on the front line when representing their communities

Unlike the District and County Council, Axminster Town Council is not a party-political council. It means you don't have to be selected by a political party to stand for election.

We have found this works very well indeed as we leave politics at the door and focus on just getting things done for our residents.

We really value diversity within our Council as this helps us to ensure that the decisions we make are well rounded and representative of the needs of our community.

So, no matter what background you are from, your race, gender or age (18+), if you are interested in becoming a Town Councillor, we would be delighted to hear from you.

There are some very basic qualifying requirements that you must meet to legally become an elected member of Axminster Town Council, but Paul, our Town Clerk, would be more than happy to discuss these with you and give you some advice about what you need to do to stand in the May 2023 elections.

Please be aware that, if you are considering becoming a Councillor, you will need to have submitted your nomination paperwork to East Devon District Council by the 4th of April.

If you would like to learn what it means to be a member of our Town Council, please reach out to any of our serving Councillors. You can find their details on our website under the 'Your Council' tab.

### Other ways to get involved with Axminster Town Council

#### You don't have to become a Councillor to participate in Town Council initiatives; there are other ways you can contribute.

Your Town Councillors are all unpaid volunteers and they give up their time freely and willingly to help their fellow residents. Even if you can't offer the commitment of becoming a Councillor yourself, you can still work with us by sharing your ideas in the public forum of our regular meetings, contributing to our consultations on a

variety of subjects, or by getting involved with our working groups, such as the Neighbourhood Plan or Climate Action groups.

Alternatively, simply joining any one of the numerous community groups and organisations who work with the Council on a daily basis will help us all to assist those people within our community who need the most support!

Axminster is frequently called the "home of community spirit" and here at the Town Council, we are pleased to play our part in our community.

### Contacting "The Council"

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.

#### Axminster Town Council

##### Office Address

The Guildhall  
West Street  
Axminster  
EX13 5NX

##### Opening Hours

Monday - Thursday, 9AM - 4PM

##### By Phone

01297 32088

##### By Email

[enquiries@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk)

##### Website

[axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk](http://axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk)

#### East Devon District Council

##### Office Address

Blackdown House  
Heathpark Industrial Estate  
Honiton  
EX14 1EJ

##### Mobile App

Search for East Devon District Council in your mobile App Store

##### By Phone

01404 515 616

##### Website

[eastdevon.gov.uk](http://eastdevon.gov.uk)

### Stick me on your fridge!

#### Devon County Council

##### Office Address

County Hall  
Topsham Road  
Exeter  
EX2 4QD

##### Customer Service Line Hours

Monday - Friday, 8AM - 5PM

##### By Phone

0345 155 1015

##### By Email

[customer@devon.gov.uk](mailto:customer@devon.gov.uk)

##### Website

[devon.gov.uk](http://devon.gov.uk)