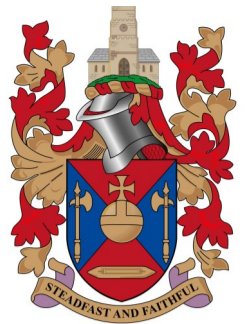


Your Town Your Council

Axminster Town Council Newsletter

Issue 5 November 2024



GROW YOUR OWN Allotments available now

Axminster Town Council is excited to announce that allotment plots are now available to rent.

The Council currently operate **three allotment sites** at **Woodbury Park, Millwey Rise, and North Street**. These locations offer a fantastic opportunity for residents keen to grow their own fruits, vegetables and flowers while embracing the benefits of outdoor activity and sustainable living.

Allotments are more than just a place to plant – they offer a peaceful escape to nature, an opportunity to reduce your environmental footprint and the satisfaction of producing fresh, homegrown produce.

However, we want to remind potential applicants that having an allotment requires a significant commitment and regular maintenance, such as planting, weeding and watering, is essential. But, the benefits are vast for those ready to take on the challenge including; improved well-being, an opportunity to get out in the fresh air and a strong sense of community among your fellow allotment holders.

If you are a resident of Axminster interested in renting a plot and becoming part of the allotment community, you can find out more, including how to apply, by visiting the allotment page of our website or by calling our office during opening hours. You will find all of our contact information on the back page of this newsletter.

Remember, October marks the start of our allotment year so now is the time to begin preparing your allotment ready for planting in the spring. Don't delay, as availability is limited! Start your journey toward growing a bountiful harvest in the Summer and Autumn 2025!



Who is your community champion?

Nominations for the Robin Cross Citizen of the year 2025 open on the 1st of November. Who will you nominate for this year's award? Axminster is built on community spirit and each year Axminster Town Council recognises someone who regularly goes above and beyond the call of duty for the community. To find out more, or to nominate someone online, visit our website or pop in to the Town Council Office at the Guildhall (details on the back page) for a paper form. Nominations close on the 1st of December.

Movie Magic

It has been an exciting three years at Axminster Guildhall. "New" Manager, Leigh Conley, has revitalised the Guildhall with a vibrant updated schedule of events that include big names such as Shaun Ryder, Johnny Rotten and Paul Young as well as some important refurbishments to lighting and sound and the dressing rooms. However, the latest update is actually a massive step back in time!

The Guildhall originally opened as a cinema in 1931 for the introduction of a brand-new idea "Talkies" and now, 90 years later, and with the help of kind donations from Axminster citizens, they have

installed a brand-new state of the art cinema screen and projector.

Officially opened in July 2024, to show the European Cup Final, the cinema was then utilised to great effect during the Summer Holidays when the Guildhall showed a series of kid's films at the incredibly low price of just £2. In the end, 500 visitors enjoyed everything from "If" to "Wonka" and even a few "Trolls" along the way.

What does the future hold for the Guildhall Cinema? Well at the moment, that's a little unsure. During September, the Guildhall attempted a series of 80's blockbusters but had to cancel due to low numbers. The cinema will really get up and running in the New Year with some afternoon showings of movie classics, a few evening specials and the return of the 'Summer Family Film Festival'. However, the Guildhall welcomes any ideas or suggestions of what you would like to see.

In the meantime, coming up next is the Star Wars Original Trilogy on November 3rd – all three films showing back-to-back for only £9 and with the added bonus of a Pizza Van in the Car Park – for those mid-film munchies. After that, the Guildhall is showing "The Muppets Christmas Carol", on Christmas Eve, with free drink and mince pie, for only £1. Tickets for The Muppets and Star Wars are available on the Guildhall website now.

Keen walker? Can you help us by becoming a footpath monitor?

Each year, we undertake maintenance of a number of footpaths and report back to the County Council (the body responsible for public rights of way) when there is a problem preventing people from enjoying these key routes. But, we can't be everywhere at once. If you would be willing to help us keep these public rights of way open, while exploring some new walking routes, then we would like to hear from you!

In this issue

- **Setting The Budget** **P. 2**
Message from the Mayor, Clerk's Corner.
- **Current Affairs** **P. 3**
Community orchard Update, Town Twinning, Inclusive play for all.
- **Understanding Co-option** **P. 3**
How Councillors are appointed to the Town Council mid-term.
- **Dates For Your Diary** **P. 4**
Axminster Town Council meetings and surgeries, Axminster Guildhall events.
- **Contacting "The Council"** **P. 4**
Contact information for each of your local Councils.



Setting a balanced budget 2025–2026

Message from the Mayor



Town Mayor, Cllr Jill Farrow

Since the Spring edition of 'Your Town, Your Council' the membership of Axminster Town Council has changed a little. Bernie Steadman and Andrew Bourne have stepped down to pursue other interests and we welcomed newly co-opted Council-

lors Roy Osborne, Jack Price and Trish Warwick to the group. I'm delighted that we continue to have such diversity of opinions and interests to draw on as we try to do our best for our town.

Council meetings are usually held on Mondays and are publicised on the Axminster Town Council website as well as our Facebook page and on the notice board outside the Guildhall. All meetings are open to the public and we would welcome your attendance to see the breadth of work we cover. You might wish to make a comment during the public forum at the beginning of each meeting or even to consider joining the Council yourself.

Former Councillor Martin Mynard died peacefully in June this year. Martin's passing was met with great

sadness from the Town Council although his funeral was a true celebration of his life; the Council has placed a bench in his honour on the grassy areas near the Axminster Railway Station, to mark his enduring love of trains.

The Guildhall goes from strength to strength. The wide variety of tribute bands have been much appreciated by audiences, including the Beatles, Abba, Pink Floyd, David Bowie and Phil Collins. The musicianship displayed by all the acts is quite extraordinary and we're fortunate to have a venue in the town which offers such high-quality acts and entertainment. The various dance and exercise classes are very well attended, and the building tries hard to offer something for everyone.

As Mayor I had the great pleasure of attending the official opening of the new wing of Axminster Community Primary Academy. I enjoyed being a character for the scarecrow trail in May; more seriously, the erection of the D-Day commemoration banner painted by the Axminster Banners group at the Banking Hub and the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of that day were extremely moving.

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes in this town to offer support to those who need it. Axminster Care Service and Axminster and Lyme Cancer Support held informative annual general meetings, highlighting the breadth of their work, and the

Community Shed, in its new premises at Cross Keys House on the Axminster Hospital site had their open day in September.

The highlight of the year for the mayoral robes is leading the Carnival Parade. Thanks must go again to the organisers and the marshals for their sterling work in keeping that show on the road. The other major Axminster event, the Axe Vale Show, was a great success again in June and is seeking additional volunteers to support it next year.

I'd like to end by thanking my fellow Councillors for the work they do preparing for and attending our meetings. I'd also like to thank Axminster Town Council's staff, working in the Guildhall and outside in the town, often going above and beyond their duties to make sure everything that needs to be done is completed. You are greatly appreciated.



Martin Mynard's memorial bench

Clerks Corner - Setting the budget and planning for 2025



Paul, the Town Clerk

All town and parish councils in the UK are legally obliged to set a balanced budget each year and, in the interests of transparency and probity, their spending transactions and processes are audited in multiple ways, and open to the public for scrutiny. Therefore, it is paramount that for every single pound that the Town Council spends, a legal power exists to do so and that any and all spending decisions are made by Councillors in an open and transparent manner. Furthermore, the Council must consider where and when to best spend taxpayers money and, mindful of any possible financial risks, that the Council follows a diligent and well documented procurement process.



This level of financial responsibility, regulation and governance means that planning for the year ahead and setting a cautious yet ambitious budget is a crucial part of the fiscal year for any small local authority such as Axminster Town Council. Consequently, it is at this time of the year when councils turn their attention to what we will ask of you through your council tax bill from April next year. It should be noted by all residents that the percentage of your overall council tax bill that is received by Axminster

Town Council is very small - at around 6% of the total amount charged to you. The vast majority goes to the County Council (71%).

The Town Council does have other sources of income; from cemetery burials, allotment rents, rents paid by our commercial tenants, grant funding received, donations, bank interest and of course - as from August 2023 - all ticket sale and hire income from The Guildhall, although we are of course responsible for all of the associated costs

and expenditure for these too!

However, these sources of income are not fixed and vary considerably year-to-year, and the services we provide for the town are needed 24/7 and 365 days a year and so the Council must balance the need to minimise the demand upon taxpayers through their Council Tax bill against the requirement to maintain sufficient funds to pay for those services, regardless of whether our income from other sources increases or decreases.

All Councillors recognise the financial challenges facing Axminster households once again in 2025, and spend many hours debating, recalculating and reassessing our Town Council finances as they understand that people rely on the Town Council for a great many different amenities and facilities.

We strive to make the best possible use of our 6% of your Council Tax and liaise endlessly with the District Council, County Council and Fire/Police services to ensure that the remaining 94% is spent by them in ways that make your life safer, healthier, happier, more comfortable and more secure.

Find out what the Town, District and County Councils each do in our handy guide.

Available on our website or pick up a paper copy from our office at Axminster Guildhall.



Current affairs

Getting the Community Orchard ready for you to enjoy.

It's been a very positive 12 months for the orchard, as many trees struggle to get their roots down in their first year. However, we still have our 40 trees growing well, and have just picked our very first, admittedly tiny, harvest!

We are now preparing to open to the community, but as the trees are young and susceptible to damage, this will be in the spring when the blossom and the wildflower meadows are beginning to bloom. Watch out for information regarding the opening ceremony. Before then we hope to install a noticeboard to give you the information needed before you pick the fruit e.g. when is it ready to pick and if it's an eater or a baker, and we will also be improving the pedestrian access to the field.

If you haven't been following the orchard's progress, you can get a good view of the trees and see how well they are growing, by looking over the gate to the left of the cemetery on Chard Road.

This project could not happen without a small team of volunteers who give up an hour on a Saturday morning once a month to help look after the trees, and our Town Council grounds team, who cut the grass and keep a watchful eye on them in between. If you'd like to get involved in a project which will be there for you and your grandchildren to enjoy in the future, we'd love a few more volunteers!

Hands across La Manche – celebrating 25 years with Douvres-la-Délivrande.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Axminster Twinning Association and the beginning of our town's partnership with the French town of Douvres-la-Délivrande. To celebrate, Axminster representatives welcomed a delegation from Douvres on October 20th.

The occasion began with a breakfast event at Axminster Guildhall, hosted by the Twinning Association and funded by the Town Council. Town Mayor Jill Farrow and MP Richard Foord were present to warmly welcome our French cousins, officially marking the start of their visit. Richard even stayed to help with the washing up!

Over the past 25 years, the twinning of the two towns has fostered meaningful cultural exchanges and strengthened international ties, enriching both communities. The breakfast event allowed both local and French representatives to reflect on the positive impact of this longstanding relationship.

This anniversary is a real milestone in celebrating international friendship between our towns, and we look forward to continuing to build on these ties for many years to come.

**Co-option, what's it all about?**

If you're eager to get involved in local governance but don't want to wait for the next formal election, co-option may offer you a timely opportunity to get involved.

But what is co-option?

Co-option is the process that allows town and parish councils to fill vacancies arising between elections, which are usually held every four years. It also gives engaged community members a chance to step in and contribute. For Axminster, the next full election is in May 2027, so co-option could fast-track your path to becoming a councillor.

Vacancies at town and parish councils are common. Councillors often step down for a variety of personal reasons like relocation, health issues, or changes in work or family commitments. When a seat becomes available, a Casual Vacancy notice is issued by the Town Clerk—you will find these on our website and on the Town Council noticeboard found outside the Guildhall along with details of our next meeting.

At this stage, a by-election may be triggered, but only if requested by enough electors. Usually, this doesn't happen so the council will proceed to co-opt instead. They do this by inviting applications from interested members of the community. In Axminster, applicants are required to submit a form outlining their interest and skills. This helps councillors to consider all applicants on an level playing field. Upon review of the candidates, the council will choose the applicant they feel is the best fit, by way of a vote.

The co-option process is inclusive and accessible. Axminster Town Council welcomes applications from all parts of the community, as diversity supports well-rounded decision-making. There's no formal education required, but a couple of qualifying criteria must be met to legally hold the role. A passion for local issues and a commitment to serving Axminster residents is crucial.

Co-option is an excellent way to get involved in governance without waiting for the next election. It offers the chance to make a real difference, especially for those keen to support their community and its future. Keep an eye out for upcoming vacancies – you might be just what the town needs!

Inclusive play for children of all abilities

Axminster Town Council is in the early stages of an exciting project to create a fully inclusive play area on the Millwey Rise estate, designed to allow children with disabilities—whether neurological or physical – to play alongside their able-bodied siblings and friends. The new play area aims to fill a gap in accessible play facilities that local families have highlighted, as disability-friendly spaces are difficult to find across Devon.

The project is funded through a Section 106 agreement, which channels developer contributions into local community projects under legally binding conditions. In this case, the funds must be spent on enhancing play facilities on Millwey Rise. The Town Council's vision includes expanding the existing East Devon District Council (EDDC) managed play area into an adjacent, unused plot of land that has long been earmarked for such a purpose.

EDDC is supporting the project by agreeing to lease the currently neglected area to Axminster Town Council. This partnership will allow the council to proceed with its plans and deliver an innovative play space that can be enjoyed by all children, regardless of their abilities.

Axminster Town Council is committed to ensuring that this new facility meets the needs of the entire community. While the project is still only in its initial stages, consultation with children, parents, and residents will be a key part of the development process once some design schemes have been drawn up. The aim is to build a safe, welcoming, and engaging space that reflects the wishes of local families.

The council is also looking at ways to enhance security for both the new and existing play areas. Initial discussions have already been had with the local policing team and the Council is exploring the possibility of installing CCTV to help deter antisocial behaviour and create a safer environment for children, families and neighbouring residents alike.

Axminster Town Council continues to pursue all opportunities to provide more amenities, whether play areas or other facilities, for the benefit of local residents. Particularly where external funding can be sourced, the Council is committed to delivering positive and sustainable improvements to the community. This project at Millwey Rise is just one example of these efforts.



Dates for your diary

Headline acts at Axminster Guildhall this summer

These event listings were true at the time of publication but are subject to change. Visit the website for the full and up to date listings including our community groups and classes.

If you would like to contact the Guildhall for more details about anything, including volunteering, booking tickets, or to find out more about hiring the Guildhall for a private function, class or ticketed event, please contact the Guildhall Manager, Leigh:

 www.axminster-guildhall.co.uk

 facebook.com/theaxminsterguildhall

 info@axminster-guildhall.co.uk

 **01297 333 33** (enquiries)

 **0333 666 33 66** (tickets)

Scan this QR code to sign up 



- November**
- 02** Repair Cafe - community
 - 03** Star Wars Trilogy - cinema
 - 12 - 16** Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat - theatre
 - 23** Christmas Eco Fair - shopping
 - 24** Ronnie, Reggie and Me - talk
 - 26** Nikki Kitt - psychic medium

- December**
- 01** Christmas Market - shopping
 - 07** Repair Cafe - community
 - 13** Absolutely Dragulous - entertainment
 - 19 - 21** Oliver - theatre
 - 22** Christmas Concert - music
 - 24** The Muppets Christmas Carol Christmas Eve cinema event
 - 28** Axminster Bricktacular - family fun

- January**
- 04** Repair Cafe - community
 - 10** The Rat Pack, Las Vegas Live - music
 - 11** Ring Wrestling Stars - sports
 - 17** Underground and Classic House - DJ
 - 20** Dire Streets - music

Council meetings coming up

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

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 most welcome to stay for the duration of the meeting.

- November**
- 11** Full Town Council
- December**
- 02** Strategy & Finance Committee
 - 09** Full Town Council

- January**
- 13** Full Town Council
 - 24** Operations Committee
 - 27** Strategy & Finance Committee
- February**
- 24** Strategy & Finance Committee

Please note, the date and time of meetings is subject to change. Please check our website or call our office for confirmation or to let us know if you would like to speak in public forum.

Want to speak to someone from Axminster Town Council?

We run a Town Council surgery most Thursdays from the Community Waffle House where you can chat to one of the Town Councillors about your concerns. Alternatively you are welcome to visit the Town Council office at the Guildhall.

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.

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

Website

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

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

Website

devon.gov.uk