



# AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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### 1: Mayor's Introduction (Councillor Kate Browne)

The Town Council has 13 elected members including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The Town Council meets in the Town Hall at 7.30pm on the third Monday of the Month. The Mayor chairs the meeting and in her/his absence, the Deputy Mayor. The meetings are open to the public who are given the opportunity to address the Council on any matter for a period of three minutes. The Council employs a part-time Town Clerk, Vicky Brice, and a part-time assistant, Caroline Harris and Facilities Manager, Darren Hogarth. There are three honorary officers, the Sergeant at Mace, the Town Bailiff and the Town Crier. Due to the wide range and diversity of matters addressed by the Council there are four standing committees and six advisory groups. The various committees and group consider matters in detail and report back to the Council. In addition, the Council has representatives on many other bodies (see section 5) and also produces Oyez, manages the community table at the Farmers' Markets and oversees a Town Council website.

The Council had been sorry to receive four resignations over the year from Councillors Marcus-de-layen-vian, Joe Williams, Barbara Myerson and Barbara Wells but had been delighted to co-opt Emily Goodman, Sam Chadwick, Richard Tiffin, Sarah Thomas & Liz Foster to fill these vacancies and the one additional vacancy we had as a result of the resignation of John Kendall the previous year. It was hoped that the remaining two vacancies would be filled shortly.

I have felt very privileged to be Mayor, attending events on behalf of the Town. The carnival procession with visiting Mayors and Mayoresses was a wonderful event, if a little hot in full robes! The Civic Service, which saw the presentation of a civic award to Barbara Wells, and two young person's awards, to Jessica Cooksey and Marcus Ham, had been the highlight of the year.

### 2: Members serving from May 2019:

Member (still in post)	Telephone	Email
Helen Bridgeman	732347	<a href="mailto:Helen.Bridgeman@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Helen.Bridgeman@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Kate Browne (Mayor)	733208	<a href="mailto:Kate.Browne@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Kate.Browne@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Andy Corp	07788 581538	<a href="mailto:Andy.Corp@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Andy.Corp@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Emily Goodman	07738 233940	<a href="mailto:Emily.Goodman@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Emily.Goodman@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Pauline Ham	732062	<a href="mailto:Pauline.Ham@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Pauline.Ham@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Graham Page (Deputy Mayor)	07974 970691	<a href="mailto:Graham.Page@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Graham.Page@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Michael Taylor	732688	<a href="mailto:Mike.Taylor@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Mike.Taylor@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Sarah Thomas (from 16 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2019)	732072 or 07519 101813	<a href="mailto:Sarah.Thomas@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Sarah.Thomas@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
Richard Tiffin	07730 987163	<a href="mailto:Richard.Tiffin@axbridge-tc.gov.uk">Richard.Tiffin@axbridge-tc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Former Members during 2019/20</b>		
Sam Chadwick (until 12 March 2020)		
Liz Foster (20 <sup>th</sup> Jan - 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2020)		
Barbara Myerson (until 16 Sept 2019)		
Barbara Wells (until 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2020)		
Joe Williams (until 12 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2020)		

### 3: Employees and Volunteers

Town Clerk: Ms Vicky Brice  
Axbridge Town Council,  
PO Box 1184  
Axbridge, BS26 2WJ Tel: 07884 264033 Email: [Vicky.Brice@axbridge-tc.gov.uk](mailto:Vicky.Brice@axbridge-tc.gov.uk)

Assistant to the Town Clerk: As above Tel: 07834 811404 Email: [Caroline.Harris@axbridge-tc.gov.uk](mailto:Caroline.Harris@axbridge-tc.gov.uk)

Facilities Manager: Darren Hogarth

Town Maintenance Contractor  
Sergeant at Mace:  
Town Bailiff:  
Town Crier:  
Keeper of the Bells:  
Modern Archivist:

Andrew Laken  
John Hawkins  
Frank Ferguson  
Nigel Scott  
Tricia Clark  
Vacant

#### **4. Council Committees and Reports.**

The following committees and advisory groups were appointed at the May meeting of the Council. The chairmen were appointed by the committee or group members.

##### Personnel and Protocol Committee (Councillor Kate Browne – Chairman)

The Mayor is chair of this committee which has delegated power from the Council to deal with all personnel and protocol matters except the appointment of the Clerk and sits regularly throughout the year. The meetings are held in public session but most personnel issues are discussed with the public and press excluded. The committee deals with appraisals, training of staff and the short listing of clerk applications with any agreed recommendations. It also initially discusses disciplinary matters recommending the appointment of the Appeals Panel if required. It considers the well-being of members and volunteers appointed by the Council and decides on matters relating to ceremonial procedure, regalia, mayoral events, duties and associated matters. This year we have advised on the appointment of a part-time assistant to the Town Clerk.

##### Planning and Licences Committee (Councillor Mike Taylor, Vice-Chairman of the Committee)

The Committee is made up of the Mayor and Deputy and interested councillors. Meetings tend to be held when planning applications dictate. This can be once or twice per month. Our chairman recently resigned as a councillor and we have yet to appoint her replacement. I am deputy vice-chairman, so it falls to me to make this report. However, she has made the following observations on the last year's planning matters.

Lots of trees have been crowned. A few basic easy extensions have been built. One retrospective permission and a conversion which caused some discussion and ended in the Council objecting. We supported the outline planning for 20 houses in Cheddar Road but having seen the detailed plans we are hoping that some one bedroom properties may be included along with a rearrangement of some of the proposed properties to push them back from the Cheddar Road. As for the Houlgate Way housing development, over the past 3 years the Council has been objecting to the development for many reasons. The chair of Axbridge Planning committee along with the two 2 Sedgemoor District Councillors spoke against it at the Sedgemoor planning meeting, however, the outline permission was passed by a big majority. Axbridge Town Council continue to try to work with Sedgemoor and the developers on the reserved matters for the full planning application.

This committee also has a duty to comment on licensing issues such as road closures and premises opening hours which are seldom controversial.

##### Administration and Finance Advisory Group (Councillor Mike Taylor - Chairman)

The Group is made up of the Mayor and Deputy, keen councillors and the Town Clerk and is purely advisory, but it does very important work. Members meet monthly to consider routine items and new issues that come up and then report back to Council making recommendations by putting forward items for the agenda.

In its administration role, the group advises on grants, insurance, contracts, asset and risk management, the office facilities and communications. One significant job completed this year was the revamp of the website. Oyez, our very successful newsletter, has been given a bit of a facelift. The group is currently overseeing renewal of our open spaces contract which covers all the grass and hedge cutting and a new contract to establish and manage the safety of our trees.

The Council has recently sent staff and a councillor on a training course to use Parish On-Line mapping software which we increasingly use to record information about the Town, e.g. open spaces, streetlights and bins .

Members of the Group are constantly reviewing the standing orders, the rules by which the council operates, and monitoring changes in legislation to see what effect they might have. We are in the process of rewriting the Standing Orders using a new model produced by the National Association of Local Councils to make them easier to read, reference and update.

Members of the group also liaise with the clerk on all financial matters including the payroll, the budget, the accounts, community infrastructure levy, business rates and the annual audit. The accounts are checked by advisory group members every month and a summary is presented to Council every quarter for councillors to adopt. The external audit is the item which probably concerns the group most, but I am happy to report that for the last financial year the audit went through without comment, which is the best you can hope for!

The budgeting process is being developed. The Council's Development Group is preparing a strategy document which will guide the long-term financial planning. Committee and Group chairman detail what expenditure they are planning for the future in their areas of responsibility. This information and views then help the Administration and Finance Group in drafting the annual budget for presentation to Council.

#### Leisure and Recreation Committee (Councillor Pauline Ham – Chairman)

It seems impossible to believe that another year has passed since the last report!

We have received our annual play inspection report for the children's play area and now that the weather is, hopefully, starting to improve we will be looking at the maintenance and repairs to be done for this year. We carried out various advisory actions from the previous report and the outstanding need at the moment is repair to some of the safety surfacing.

We are currently saving towards the cost of a new activity trail. The one that is in place now, has been part of the play area since the "park" was moved from the by-pass and upgraded in 1995. It is still fit for purpose but it is starting to need more and more maintenance.

Damage and misuse of the car park on the Furlong continues. The fencing was continually vandalised throughout last year so we have just carried out an upgrade and repairs. Unfortunately, cars are still accessing the main body of the field, driving round and causing damage to the football pitches and general playing space. We have been leaving the gate unlocked as the car park has been appreciated as an additional parking area. However, now the nights are getting lighter and longer it seems we will have to start locking again. This is a great shame as it would be lovely to offer regular, much needed parking space to the town.

The football season has struggled this year as the ground has been so wet. We hope to meet with the football clubs in the near future (we have been trying to find a date when we can all make it) to find a way forward. There seem to have been rumours around the town that a bar is being planned in the changing rooms. No such plans are in place.

The public toilets have been fully refurbished and continue to be well used. Unfortunately, they also continue to be damaged and misused! Please can I stress that any member of the public should report any misuse to the police. At the moment the police are not receiving any notifications and, therefore, they do not perceive any problem. Please continue to keep the Town Council informed, but reports to the police need to be given by individuals; you do not need to give your name when reporting.

A drinking fountain has been purchased and will be fitted by the public toilets within the next few weeks. This will be both a drinking and bottle filling fountain. The funding for this has mainly come from donations.

#### Highways Advisory Group (Councillor Richard Tiffin -- Chairman)

The group finds itself in a period of transition after the sterling work carried out by our previous chairs Barbara Myerson and Barbara Wells with our new chair Councillor Tiffin having picked up the reins from February this year.

The group's remit is to make recommendations to Council and deal with any issues as instructed by the Council on matters concerning highways, footpaths, rights of way and parking within the town, which includes the car parks.

Throughout the year our members have worked closely with our Clerks, footpath liaison officer, Town Maintenance Contractor and County Council to carry out routine maintenance on gulleys, hedges, grass, and car park walls.

We have met with representatives of Somerset Highways a number of times to escalate issues that fall within their remit, these included covering items such as speeding issues within the town, parking, loading bays for the Co-op and the idea of reducing the speed-limit on the bypass.

Double yellow lines have been added to the exit slip road from the bypass which seems to have prevented dangerous parking long this route.

Lighting and signage around the town have been reviewed, with actions underway to improve pedestrian crossing signage on the bypass, entrances to the town and to promote more considerate parking within the town. This includes looking into measures which may impede our local bus.

A particular concern of residents this year has been the potential for serious accidents at the Townsend Junction. To this end the council has recently appointed a consultant to review the current junction and provide recommendations for improving the junction with the outcome of this anticipated by the end of June.

Works on keeping our local footpaths and highways clear of vegetation has continued which has included starting to clear Back Lane and the clearing of overgrowth on Hillside and Fennel Lane. We have been contacting SCC Somerset County Council in regards to clearing paths and signage after the recent Houlgate Way resurfacing.

The group will continue to champion local residents' concerns on matters within our remit.

#### Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group (Councillor Helen Bridgeman – Chairman)

##### Cemetery:-

The safety check was carried out in early April and all passed the check.

Sadly in July there was an incident of vandalism at the Cemetery, this was reported to the police and I am happy to report there have been no further incidents.

The cost of reserving a plot has had to increase to cover the cost of removing stones and bedrock.

We now have a new section, where the grave sizes have been increased and the lay-out changed to a Lawn Cemetery, this will help with the maintenance of the Cemetery.

##### Allotments:-

The new trough is in place and working well.

The Allotment Inspections are now regular events that take place in May, August and November, weather permitting. One of the plots had been really difficult to find tenants for due to its condition, I pleased to report we now have beehives on this plot, so it is once again productive.

The picnic bench placed at the allotments was not put to use by the tenants, so it has been offered to the Community Allotment, where it was felt it would be more gainfully employed.

In the next few weeks we hope to weather proof the notice board, improve the deer fencing on the allotment perimeter and level out the main path, which is badly rutted.

##### Open Spaces:-

No Parking signs will be going up in Chestnut Avenue, behind The Pennings.

The large grassed area by the church wall and its future use is under discussion.

The trees that we are responsible for are now inspected regularly for condition.

#### Development Advisory Group (Mayor – Councillor Kate Browne)

This group has recently been established to develop and maintain a long term strategy for the Town Council. It will liaise closely with the Administration and Finance Group Council on the listing, priority and funding of capital items.

## 5. Organisations on which the council is represented.

<b>Formally represented:</b>
Axbridge Community Partnership
Cheddar Valley Cluster Group
Neighbourhood Plan Group
Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)
Sports and Social Committee
Town Trust/Town Council Liaison Committee

<b>Council Representation and Liaison:</b>
Axbridge and District Museum Trust
Cross to Axbridge Safe Path Group
Farmers' Market
Pageant
Parish Path Liaison
Quarry Liaison Committee
School Governor/Town Council representative

## 6: Summary of Accounts

	Actual	Actual
	2018/19	2019/20
<b>GENERAL ACCOUNT</b>		
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Precept received	81500.00	85450.00
Precept transferred out to other accounts	-1000.00	-2585.86
Grants	8700.00	930.40
Other income	8876.69	6169.20
<b>Total:</b>	<b>98076.69</b>	<b>89963.74</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>		
<b>Revenue Expenditure</b>		
Administration & Finance	58539.83	65023.50
Cemetery, Allotments & Open Spaces	1747.18	2185.73
Highways	0.00	71.97
Leisure & Recreation	7865.74	8039.76
Personnel & Protocol	1656.22	1845.84
Planning & Licences	0.00	0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>69808.97</b>	<b>77166.80</b>
<b>Capital expenditure</b>		
Administration & Finance	2474.42	250.00
Cemetery, Allotments & Open Spaces	87.49	0.00
Highways	179.00	226.95
Leisure & Recreation	9896.00	4818.51
Personnel & Protocol	250.00	0.00
Planning & Licences	576.48	119.43
<b>Total:</b>	<b>13463.39</b>	<b>5414.89</b>
<b>Grants</b>	<b>7568.00</b>	<b>8068.00</b>
<b>Other expenditure</b>	<b>3980.53</b>	<b>2412.45</b>

<b>Changing Rooms &amp; Pitches Operating Account</b>		
Receipts (including precept)	3295.62	1829.16
Payments	2228.36	2666.86
<b>Car Parks &amp; Moorland Street Land Account</b>		
Receipts (including precept)	2458.65	4706.08
Payments	4193.88	5091.92
<b>Maintenance Fund</b>	-	-
Receipts (including precept)	1000.00	280.00
Payments	0.00	0.00
<b>SUMMARY OF ALL ACCOUNTS</b>		
Opening Balance	80067.17	83655.00
Receipts	104830.96	96778.98
Payments	101243.13	100820.92
<b>Closing Balance:</b>	<b>83655.00</b>	<b>79613.06</b>