



AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Contents:**Mayor's Introduction****Council Members****Employees and Volunteers****Committees and Reports****Organisations on which the Council is represented****Summary of Accounts****1: Mayor's Introduction (Councillor Kate Browne)**

The Council is pleased to have welcomed two new members, Councillor Jo Jenkins and Councillor Tony Jordan. Three vacancies remain. It has been an unusual year with the Council and strange to move back to face to face meetings after only meeting on-line during the Covid 19 pandemic. I attended five functions this year including the Somerset County Council Awards, the Remembrance Service, the revealing of the heritage plaques and the Axbridge Civic Service to celebrate the community of Axbridge. It was lovely to see so many people attend and watch the High Sheriff in Nomination present Barry Walsh with a Civic Award and Abigail Campbell with a Youth award. The Council is structured currently with two regular committees and a number of advisory groups. The committees meet in public and are the Planning and Licencing Committee and the Personnel & Protocol Committee. The advisory groups are; Administration and Finance, Cemeteries Allotments and Open Spaces (CAOS), Emergency Planning, Strategic Planning, Highways & Leisure and Recreation. New councillors would be very welcome.

2: Members serving from May 2021:

Member (still in post)	Telephone	Email
Kate Browne (Mayor)	733208	Kate.Browne@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Reece Faulkner	07703 799652	c/o Town Clerk
Ben Ferguson	07789016830	benjamin.ferguson@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Pauline Ham (Deputy Mayor)	732062	Pauline.Ham@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Jo Jenkins (from 20 th September 2021)	07539900368	c/o Town Clerk
Tony Jordan (from 18 th October 2021)	01934 844723	Tony.jordan@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Frankie Mitton	07863 163568	c/o Town Clerk
Graham Page	07974 970691	Graham.Page@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Michael Taylor	732688	Mike.Taylor@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Sarah Thomas	732072 or 07519 101813	Sarah.Thomas@axbridge-tc.gov.uk
Former Members during 2021/22		
Andy Corp (until 30 th July 2021)		
Jo Hogg (7 th Sept 2020-24 th May 2021)		
Harry Mottram (7 th Sept 2021-21 st Oct 2021)		

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

Assistant to the Town Clerk: Ms Caroline Harris (until 31st March 2022)
Mrs Katie Weir (since 1st April 2022)

Address (as above) Tel: 07834 811404 Email: assistant.clerk@axbridge-tc.gov.uk

Facilities Manager: Darren Hogarth

Town Maintenance Contractor Andrew Laken
Sergeant at Mace: John Hawkins
Town Bailiff: Frank Ferguson (until 16th May 2022)
Town Crier: Nigel Scott
Keeper of the Bells: Tricia Clark
Modern Archivist: 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 council employs 3 people; The Clerk, The Assistant Clerk & Facilities Manager. The Committee looks after the staff, civic events and protocols. We reviewed various risk assessments in light of Covid 19 restrictions. We also interviewed for a new assistant Clerk.

Planning and Licences Committee (Councillor Mike Taylor - Chairman)

The Committee is made up of the Mayor and Deputy and interested councillors. Meetings are held when planning applications and related business dictate. This can be once or twice per month. We have resumed having all meetings in public. They are usually held on the first Monday of the month but if there is urgent business, items can be included in the full council meeting or a specially convened meeting.

The committee members have dealt with extensions, works to listed buildings and plans in the conservation area on a routine basis. Also, applications for tree works, delegated to the Clerk for a response, are ratified.

This committee has a duty to comment on licensing issues such as road closures and premises opening hours. These are seldom controversial. The members also deal with various relevant surveys and questionnaires and liaise with the Neighbourhood Planning Group.

We are pleased that the Plan is now complete and in place. Its policies must be taken into account by the planning authority when they make decisions. A huge thanks must go to those who produced the plan on behalf of the Town.

Large developments have to be considered by the full council, but they take into account the recommendations made by this committee which looks at the plans in detail. Two significant large applications are now in the construction phase.

Ground works have started on the power plant at Townsend Farm. The appeal against this was lost despite strong representations by the Council. The estate of 20 affordable houses on Cheddar Road is now nearing completion. Despite raising the issue at every opportunity, the council has not been given any chance to be involved in the allocation of homes on this development. This is very disappointing. The council wishes to make sure that local people and those with a strong connection to the Town are given priority. It remains to be seen what happens.

No detailed plans for the housing on Houlgate Way have been submitted to the planning authority. This committee will be monitoring the situation closely.

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

The Group is made up of the Mayor and Deputy, interested councillors and the Town Clerk. It is purely advisory and has no powers. However, its work is important to the day to day running of the Town Council. Members of the group meet monthly by zoom to consider routine items and new issues that come up, and then report back to Council making recommendations and putting forward items for the Council agenda.

In its administration role, the group advises on grants, insurance, contracts, asset and risk management, the office facilities and communications. Oyez, our very successful newsletter, has just been reinstated after it had to be suspended during the pandemic.

Currently we are looking at our computer systems to make sure they are resilient and fit for purpose. The changes to the organisation of Local Government are likely to cause some issues for the Town Council with the disappearance of Sedgemoor District Council and the establishment of the Somerset Council unitary authority. Already our Town Council elections have been brought forward by a year to coincide with the elections for the unitary authority in May this year.

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 now in the position of reversing many of the changes made as a result of the pandemic, as in-person meetings have now been fully

reinstated for Council and Committee meetings. We are also looking at what impact future staff changes may mean to the administrative systems.

Group members 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 adoption. The external audit is the item which probably concerns the group most, but I am glad to report that for the last financial year the audit went through without comment, which is a pat on the back for the Clerk to the Town Council.

Leisure and Recreation Committee (Councillor Pauline Ham – Chairman)

This group looks after the furlong including the changing rooms, play area and public conveniences. Football on the furlong is going from strength to strength and we are hoping to have a closer liaison with the clubs. The play area looks good and we are starting a programme of maintenance on the play area, including the agility trail, and the Facilities Manager continues to make repairs and replace any damage as necessary. The cleaning contract for the public conveniences was awarded which is quite costly – the standard had fallen slight but, hopefully, it will now improve. There does continue to be a certain amount of misuse of these facilities but the Police are keeping an eye on this. Two new memorial benches will shortly be placed in the Square– replacing the ones by the bus stop which would be relocated

Highways Advisory Group (Councillor Ben Ferguson - Chairman)

This year the whole Highways working group has worked incredibly hard and had great success in tackling Axbridge's highways issues.

The Highways group has secured a good working relationship with community organisations and the Sea Cadets. This is in view of our long-term aim of securing more parking for the Town. After a year of working on the local level to identify how this is possible, we now have a clear process to move forward. We have identified the Old Train Station Building as a site that the Town could possibly take on from the County Council to allow for expansion or parking. This is also in view of helping to keep the Sea Cadets in Axbridge. Various Axbridge community Groups have also undertaken measures to bring in consultants to look at traffic flow across the whole of Axbridge. We look forward to this report in the coming months.

The Highways working group has also worked hard in tackling more immediate issues. The committee is now in regular contact with staff at the County Council to report and act on small highway issues. This contact has extended to site visits from staff working at the County Council. Our main achievement in this, by way of example, is the installation of 'STOP' signs at the end of the slip road that comes off the bypass into the Townsend Junction.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, all our community groups, the Sea Cadets and most importantly our two fantastic Clerks Vicky & Caroline for all the support I have received as chair. I look forward to further completion on our aims over the next working year.

Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group (Councillor Reece Faulkner – Chairman)

The group looks after the town cemetery (along Axbridge bypass), Shortlands (the adjoining field), the allotments at Hillside, and two areas of land at Chestnut Avenue as well as overseeing general open spaces matters within the town. Work has taken place to improve the pathways, trough provision and a new gate at the allotments. The tree policy had been reviewed and work is progressing to ensure memorabilia at the cemetery is kept to the base of the headstone to facilitate the workings the cemetery. A further memorial bench had also been placed at the cemetery.

Strategic Planning Advisory Group (Councillor Frankie Mitton)

The Strategic Planning Advisory Group had not been able to meet during the year but would be looking at long term projects and opportunities for grant funding.

Axbridge Climate Emergency group (ACE) – (David Parkin - Chairman)

Summary report -

1. Contact list now over 60 members. Difficulties due to Covid of live communication and meetings now easing. We welcome the renewal of OYEZ to communicate with the whole town.

2. An open church meeting in July '21 led to drawing up a 17 point action plan. This has been circulated but with a rather disappointing response for members to work actively on particular points.
3. A church meeting and concert for Great Big Green Week in November was well attended and probably helped raise awareness of the ACE group.
4. The Eco Garden by the Church Rooms is off to a very successful start. We expect it to become a pleasant and visible meeting place and a focus for climate change information. Thanks for the support of the Parochial Church Council and for a generous startup grant from the Combined Parochial Charities.
5. We are actively working on two major elements in the town's carbon footprint – Transport and Housing. Through bodies such as Somerset Climate Action Network and the Somerset Retrofit Accelerator we are gaining useful contacts and experience to promote local improvements.
6. A more detailed report is available through the Town Clerk.

5. Organisations on which the council is represented.

Formally represented:
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

Council Representation and Liaison:
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	Actual
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
GENERAL ACCOUNT			
RECEIPTS			
Precept received	85450.00	88500.00	93,000.00
Precept transferred out to other accounts	-2585.86	-5140.09	-
Precept transferred to other accounts	-	-	3,349.51
Grants	930.40	962.00	3,189.64
Other income	6169.20	5658.80	8,642.31
Total:	89,963.74	89,980.71	108,181.46
PAYMENTS			
Revenue Expenditure			
Administration & Finance	65023.50	66581.27	66,513.84
Cemetery, Allotments & Open Spaces	2185.73	3387.07	2,613.73
Highways	71.97	0.00	0.00
Leisure & Recreation	8039.76	8250.31	9,429.33
Personnel & Protocol	1845.84	33.00	242.14
Planning & Licences	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total:	77,166.80	78,251.65	78,799.04

Capital expenditure			
Administration & Finance	250.00	1714.00	0.00
Cemetery, Allotments & Open Spaces	0.00	410.00	5,479.97
Highways	226.95	5023.25	846.88
Leisure & Recreation	4818.51	36.00	0.00
Personnel & Protocol	0.00	0.00	0.00
Planning & Licences	119.43	159.98	-251.99
Total:	5,414.89	7,343.23	6,074.86
Grants	8,068.00	7,718.00	8,839.64
Other expenditure	2412.45	3703.86	3,155.68
Changing Rooms & Pitches Operating Account			
Receipts (including precept)	1829.16	1085.76	161.68
Payments	2666.86	1449.19	4,521.29
Car Parks & Moorland Street Land Account			
Receipts (including precept)	4706.08	6713.21	2,386.99
Payments	5091.92	4690.19	4,698.68
Maintenance Fund			
Receipts (including precept)	280.00	1000.00	0.00
Payments	0.00	0.00	0.00
SUMMARY OF ALL ACCOUNTS			
Opening Balance	83655.00	79613.06	75,236.62
Receipts	96778.98	98779.68	110,730.13
Payments	100820.92	103156.12	106,089.19
Closing Balance:	79,613.06	75,236.62	79,877.56