

# Axbridge Town Council Annual Report 2008-2009

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### 1. Members serving from May 2007

Member	Telephone	Email
Mrs Kate Browne (Mayor)	01934 733208	kwbrowne@gmail.com
Mrs Jennifer Trotman (Deputy Mayor)	01934 733306	Jennifer_T@hotmail.com
Dennis Bratt	01934 732352	dbratt29@googlemail.com
Christopher Byrne	01934 732013	
Jeremy Gall	01934 733118	Jeremy@Gall.org.uk
Mrs Pauline Ham	01934 732062	paham@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Barry Hamblin	01934 733939	b.hamblin2@btinternet.com
Mrs Val Isaac	01934 733011	v.isaac@btinternet.com
Jim Lukins	01934 732293	
Andrew Matthews	07708 312087	rabmatt@hotmail.com
Paul Passey	01934 733373	paul@westmead31me17.freemove.co.uk
Mrs Elizabeth Scott	01934 733341	scottliz@tiscali.co.uk
Michael Taylor	01934 732688	Tay31TC@aol.com

### 2. Employees and Volunteers

Town Clerk: Mrs Vicky Brice  
2 Woodview Road,  
Cheddar,  
Somerset,  
BS27 3NF  
Tel: 07884 264033  
Email: [vbrice@axbridge-tc.gov.uk](mailto:vbrice@axbridge-tc.gov.uk)

Manager of the Furlong and Changing Rooms:	Mr Darren Hogarth
Sergeant at Mace:	Mr Mike Day
Town Bailiff:	Mr James McKay
Town Crier:	Mrs Yvonne Chamberlain
Keeper of the Bells:	Mr Dave Callow
Modern Archivist:	Mrs Maggie Tur

### 3. Council Committees.

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

	Chairman
Administration and Finance Advisory Group	Cllr. M Taylor
Appeals Panel -	
Axbridge Promotional Advisory Group	Cllr. P Passey
Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group	Cllr. J Lukins
Highways Advisory Group	Cllr. Mrs V Isaac
Grievance and Disciplinary Panel -	
Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group (inc Changing Rooms)	Cllr. Mrs P Ham
Planning and Licences Committee	Cllr. B Hamblin
Personnel and Protocol Advisory Group	Cllr. Mrs K Browne
Somerset Showcase Committee	Cllr. Mrs J Trotman
Axbridge Youth Partnership	Cllr. Mrs K Browne

#### **4. Organisations on which the council is represented.**

Axbridge Action Group
Chamber of Commerce
Farmers' Market
Help Make Poverty History
Parish Plan
Axbridge & District Museum Trust
Mendip Hills and AONB Partnership Committee
Quarry Liaison Committee
Sedgemoor Area Working Panel
Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)
Somerset Market Towns Forum
Sports and Social Committee
Town Trust/Town Council Joint Committee

#### **5. Mayor's report**

This has been a very busy year punctuated frequently by meetings about Meadow Street car park. I went to Sedgemoor District Council to explain how important the car park is to Axbridge. We, as a council, looked at ways to keep the facility and the best option seemed to be to purchase it for the community. We held a public meeting in September to establish if the people of the town were prepared to pay for the car park. One of the best attended meetings in recent history supported the Town Council's efforts to purchase the car park. The council have since had a number of additional meetings to look at the legal and tax implications and an advisory group has been temporarily set up to go through the documentation associated with the purchase. We hope to be able to sign a contract very soon.

The Town Council seems to be busier than ever. This is partly due to initiatives of the council and partly because of issues forced on us. This year we have more than ever relied on the Committee structure and the work done by their members. Each of these groups or committees has an opportunity to report to the full council meeting each month. The next section contains reports by the working committees and advisory groups, highlighting their achievements and work in

progress so I will not give the details in my report. We have two Standing Committees who have power to make their own decisions. These are the Planning and Showcase Committees. We have seven Advisory Groups. The busiest of these was without doubt the Highways Advisory Group.

After 3 years of fund raising, planning and organising we finally had the Youth Shelter installed on the Furlong. It was eventually delivered assembled on a very snowy day in February. The community allotments are now up and running. The Clerk has successfully gained the necessary qualifications to allow the council to pursue Quality Status. We also had an open meeting to discuss the Town Design Statement which now has a working committee; additional volunteers would be greatly appreciated.

We have also spent a large amount of time this year trying to ensure the purchase and installation of cricket nets on the Furlong. Again this is very nearly ready and purchase of the nets should happen in the next few weeks.

The new reservoir has also concerned both the local residents and the Town Council. The full public consultation process should start later this year after Bristol Water hear back from the regulatory authorities. This reservoir has been called Cheddar 2 but the Town Council feel that as it is almost entirely planned to be built in and affect Axbridge it should be called the Axbridge Reservoir. I am sure that the Town Council will continue to be closely involved with this major issue to the town.

## **6. Committee Reports**

### **Annual Report of the Administration and Finance Advisory Group**

The Administration and Finance Group consisting of four councillors and the clerk has met at least monthly during the last year. At these meetings the accounts were reviewed and analysed and it is pleasing to report that again the council passed the Annual External Audit without any comments. The Group continues to work on consolidating the council's procedures and rules into a single document for easy reference. This document has to be regularly revised as the result of changes in legislation, council structure and incidents. Policy documents also are now being brought together into a single file.

The group continues to monitor insurance cover and to check the risk assessment and its management. Other regular tasks are the production of the annual budget, setting the cemetery fees and proposing grant aid. The Council provides an annual grant to the Town Hall to help with its maintenance and regular grants to other charities which benefit the community.

This year group members have spent many hours examining in detail the contract to purchase the Meadow Street car park and the terms of the management agreement with Sedgemoor District Council. The Group has also been searching for funding for the project to try and reduce the tax burden

### **Annual Report of the Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group**

This committee consists of 3 councillors and 2 special representatives. Work at the cemetery has been made easier this year with the councils' employment of a lengths-man. Any tasks such as clearing up after hedge-cutting and general grounds maintenance work is now being carried out by him rather than the committee. At present he is clearing the brambles adjacent to the shed so that possible roof damage is alleviated. The committee suggest that grave markers be placed on all grave spaces after burial and prior to the erection of a headstone.

All the allotments are let and most are being looked after well. Any tenants not keeping their allotments tidy will need to be spoken to. The lengths-man has laid the hedge either side of the

track leading to the hill. He has also cleared a short section of dense bramble from around the south fence which is in a very poor condition. It is hoped the water trough will be installed very shortly and then at long last progress can be made on the car standing area. Most of the materials have been purchase for these two projects

### **Annual Report of the Highways Advisory Group**

This group consists of 7 councillors. 2008 has been a busy year with some progress being made on important local issues eg :-

**Lighting and Hand Rails on the Church Steps** - The funds having been made available this project has not progressed as quickly as anticipated due to a number of reasons. The lighting is now subject to a trial being completed in other parts of the district as residents requested that timers were installed to reduce possible anti-social behaviour around the Church Steps. The trial will not be completed until August 2009. The light at the bottom of the steps leading to the Youth Club has now been refurbished and is working.

**Hand Rails on the Church Steps** - A Planning Application and Listed Building Consent has had been applied for. The Town Council hoped to include tidying up both the railings around the War Memorial and those railings owned by the PCC which were missing or badly damaged. However the Conservation Officer objected to this part of the Application, as removal of the ornamental spikes was not in keeping with the surrounding area. As a result, the Town Council is now re-submitting the Application with new drawings with only the hand rails showing as part of the scheme.

**126 Bus Partnership** - The Group have been having discussions with the Local Transport Partnership to upgrade some of the 126 Bus Stops and, due to safety and access issues re-locate other Stops on the route. It is hoped that in the early part of 2009 the LTP will be able to report back on progress of the audits and suggested changes.

**Meadow Street Car Park** - As a result of a focussed and successful public campaign by various commercial and public bodies, the Town Council were given a mandate to enter into negotiations with SDC to buy on behalf of the Axbridge community this amenity. The Town Council has now set up a temporary advisory group in order to deal with the legalities and is progressing this matter forward with the SDC.

**Traffic Management Scheme** - A study organised and funded by Axbridge Action Group, proposed several inter-related schemes in order to alleviate parking and traffic flow issues within the Town and its environs. Consultations with the Highways Advisory Group will continue to ascertain if any of the proposals are feasible. The AAG and the Town Council have no funds available to make major changes, neither do Somerset Highways but they have indicated their support.

### **A38 Joint Parishes Meetings**

The Parishes of Axbridge, Compton Bishop, Cheddar and Weare have met to discuss the dangerous cross road junction at the A38 intersection. This is now linked into a larger project of the Red Route Plan 2009 for the A38. The Group is awaiting feed back from Compton Bishop as to alterations to the junction that would prevent further accidents and near misses.

**Yellow Lining Review** - Somerset Highways and the Council are having discussions about the yellow lining in the town. The Council has recommended some additional yellow lining to help ease the continuing problem of illegal parking which hinders the traffic flow in and around Axbridge. The outcome of these consultations will be known this year.

**Other Matters** - There have been numerous requests for street lighting repairs, street sign repairs, blockages of drains, repairs to paths and other matters relating to the cleanliness of the Town. The Group is currently liaising with the Post Office in respect of another post box to be installed outside of the Dr's Surgery in Houlgate Way

### **Annual Report of the Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group (incl. Changing Rooms).**

This group consists of 5 councillors.

**Play area** - The new 'gull wing' see saw was fitted last September and is proving very popular and more accessible for the smaller children than the rock n cross. The slide has been repainted and repairs to rust damage are underway at the moment. Hopefully, this will extend the life of the slide for a few more years. The Furlong manager carries out general on going maintenance in the play area and any work that needs to be carried out by the contractor is reported and actioned quickly and efficiently.

**Furlong** - 2 new litter bins have been put on the furlong, 1 by the youth shelter and 1 by the containers. The dog 'poo' bin that was by where the shelter is now has been moved to the corner of the school playing field by the top footpath and another has been fitted by the Penn Way entrance. Hopefully these will help keep the furlong poo and litter free!!!!

**Sport** - The furlong is in constant use by Saxons and Axbridge Football Clubs. There is a planned programme of maintenance for the pitches over the next couple of years. The demand from both these successful clubs, coupled with wet weather, creates a difficult maintenance situation. Additional recreation space within Axbridge would be the ideal solution! The cricket nets will hopefully be in place for this season providing an additional sporting opportunity.

**Shelter** - The long awaited youth shelter is now in place. Sadly some youths are using it as a climbing frame which is both potentially dangerous and also harmful to the framework of the shelter. The shelter was provided at the request of Axbridge youths, who also fund raised towards the cost, so it would be nice to think it was going to be respected. Once the shelter has been in use for a bit we will look at improving the facility, eg concrete flooring

**Storage** - The 2 new containers have been in place for a while now and once the weather warms up they will be painted green to blend in with their surroundings. At this time anti-vandal paint will be put around the roof to prevent climbing. This will also be painted on the shelter – warning signs will be posted.

We are very pleased with the standard of maintenance of the furlong, changing rooms and play area. Darren Hogarth continues to do a superb job

### **Annual Report Planning and Licences Committee**

The planning committee consists of 6 councillors. Under the terms of its remit the Planning Committee has powers to make decisions on behalf of the Town Council on matters of planning and development, licensing and road closures. Where a planning application relates to multiple dwellings or if there is any contention or uncertainty about an application it is referred to the full Council for a decision.

Because of the response times required by planning legislation the Planning Committee is usually obliged to meet twice a month.

The centre of Axbridge is a conservation area and the town has a very high density of listed buildings. The policy of the Town Council is to ensure that the visual amenity of the town's

conservation area is maintained and listed buildings are protected. To this end the Planning Committee has promoted the formation of a steering group to formulate a Town Design Statement in order to promote more consistency and certainty with planning decisions. This document sets out the history of the town and its architectural development and goes on to state what is and is not acceptable in future development. This should be accepted as one of the documents on which future planning policy is based and, once it is in place, all future planning applications will have to demonstrate that they comply with the requirements of the Town Design Statement.

Being mindful of the need to create employment and economic well-being in the town, any planning application which promotes business within the town is supported, provided it complies with conservation policies.

In the past year there have been cases where the work of the Planning and Highways committees has overlapped and there has been a coordinated effort on these matters. In spite of their efforts of these committees we are still waiting for satisfactory resolution of the re-instatement of the road and footpath in front of the Old Butchers' Yard development and the street lighting planned for the Church steps and the path to the Youth Club.

### **Annual Report of the Personnel and Protocol Advisory Group**

This group consists of 5 councillors. It has continued to manage the council's responsibility to its employees, including annual reviews and any increase in remuneration due to training and experience. The committee also looks at all the protocol issues with any action of the council from the Remembrance Day service to Mayor Making and general council meetings. During this year the council has appointed a lengths-man to maintain the towns' landscape. Any changes in hours for all employees are reviewed by this committee regularly

### **Annual Report of the Showcase Advisory Committee**

This committee consists of 6 councillors and 1 special representative. Showcase 2008 looked like it was going to be a complete washout. The weather forecast was so bad several stallholders either cancelled in advance or just didn't turn up. As it turned out, apart from one very wet patch in the afternoon between 1pm and 3pm, the predicted weather stayed away. The weather is sadly out of the Showcase Committee's control, and the forecast definitely didn't help, as less people attended than would have done otherwise.

There were, as always, various hiccups in the background. The market closed early due to the weather. The Children's Disco had to be re-arranged at short notice, the fireworks weren't as planned, and the bands for the evening entertainment weren't quite as planned. However things like this happen all the time, and it didn't stop the event overall from being a success.

Feedback from everyone has been fairly positive. Those stallholders who braved the elements did well and were happy to have attended. The street entertainers were great. The Beer Festival seemed as popular as ever. Once again, the Street Market, organised by the Axbridge Chamber of Commerce, went down very well. The band that played in the evening seemed very popular and this year's use of a lorry as a stage was particularly successful, allowing the musicians to be seen better, as well as being easier to set up and take away.

The Showcase receives a huge amount of support from local businesses and organisations as well as from the whole community. Without that support – both financial and otherwise – it would be impossible to run the event. This year we were lucky enough to raise £1750 in sponsorship to go with the match funding from Sedgemoor District Council. As funding becomes increasingly

scarce, such sponsorship is even more vital than event, as the costs of putting on the Showcase only ever increase.

As with all events there are always changes and improvements to be made, and these will be carried forwards to this year's Showcase, which is now being run by Axbridge Chamber of Commerce and is currently planned for August 30<sup>th</sup> 2009.

## 7. Summary of Accounts

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
General Account			
<b>INCOME</b>			
Precept	£37,500.00	£46,000.00	£46,000.00
Bank Interest	£476.23	£1,106.74	£726.19
Cemetery Charges	£1,092.00	£1,338.00	£1,310.00
Allotments Rents	£195.00	£200.00	£290.00
County Council Grants	£2,589.00	£1,667.00	£12,632.00
District Council Grants	£2,779.42	£1,419.78	£938.78
Recreation Ground Grants	£18,633.51	£8,377.49	£3,113.45
Youth Shelter Grants			£2,935.50
Storage containers grants			£3,000.00
Town Boundary and Marker stones grants		£1,110.00	
Jack Todd Bequest Grant for Changing Rooms	£7,800.10	£7,800.10	£7,800.10
Other	£215.00	£130.00	£343.03
VAT refunds	£5,924.60	£1,797.24	£4,688.29
<b>Total Receipts :</b>	<b>£77,204.86</b>	<b>£70,946.35</b>	<b>£83,777.34</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
<i>Revenue items</i>			
Clerk's Salary and Administration	£17,715.48	£19,506.61	£20,104.12
Mayor's and Town Crier's allowances	£1,100.00	£1,100.00	£1,100.00
Changing Rooms loan repayment	£7,800.10	£7,800.10	£7,800.10
Recreation Ground management and maintenance	£7,912.35	£7,974.31	£8,661.43
Cemeteries maintenance	£1,839.43	£1,606.12	£1,668.48
Allotments lease and maintenance	£185.00	£175.00	£450.58
Town maintenance contract			£2,124.02
Meadow Street Car Park purchase expenses			£1,240.00
Promoting Axbridge	£2,262.06	£610.25	£676.08
<i>Capital items</i>			
Play area fencing	£8,388.51		
"Baboon" play equipment	£10,245.00		
Springy Toys play equipment		£992.00	
"Rock and Cross" play equipment		£8,840.46	
Town Marker and boundary stones		£1,923.00	£560.00
Church clock striking mechanism		£1,900.00	

Benches (High St/West St & Bypass)		£1,376.75	
Parish Plan	£1,161.51	£82.51	
See-Saw play equipment			£3,113.45
Back Lane lighting and safety project			£280.25
Allotments improvements			£554.81
Cemetery access steps			£750.00
Youth Shelter			£7,206.60
Storage containers			£3,000.00
Other	£735.50	£519.00	£1,241.00

### **Grants made**

Town Hall - general maintenance	£3,640.00	£3,640.00	£3,640.00
Town Hall - disabled access	£1,667.00		
Town Hall - paintings restoration		£1,000.00	
Planters in the Square	£300.00	£300.00	£300.00
Christmas trees and lights	£877.16	£1,141.97	£989.00
Others	£300.00	£325.00	£720.00
VAT paid	£4,592.76	£3,784.90	£3,850.89

**Total Payments :** £70,721.86    £64,597.98    £70,030.81

### **SUMMARY of General Account**

Opening Balance	£13,535.94	£20,018.94	£30,070.00
Total Receipts	£77,204.86	£70,946.35	£83,777.34
Total Payments	£70,721.86	£64,597.98	£70,030.81
Transfer from Changing Rooms Build Account		£3,702.69	
Closing Balance	<b>£20,018.94</b>	<b>£30,070.00</b>	<b>£43,816.53</b>

### **Other Accounts - Closing Balances**

Changing Rooms Operating Account	-£572.08	-£1,212.41	-£1,643.06
Showcase Account	-£58.60	£0.00	£680.51
Changing Rooms Build Account	£3,702.69	£0.00	£0.00
Changing Rooms Maintenance Fund®	£5,000.00	£5,096.75	£5,186.66
Town Crier's Fund®	£233.80	£233.80	£268.80
Pageant Fund®	£3,435.60	£3,565.35	£0.00

® = Reserved Fund.