



# AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11



## Contents:

1. Mayor's Introduction
2. Council Members
3. Employees and Volunteers
4. Committees and Reports
5. Organisations on which the Council is represented
6. Summary of Accounts

### 1: Mayor's Introduction

The year has been busy as ever, culminating in the 4-yearly elections which saw 2 new councillors elected (John Albone and Dan Wookey), and 5 stand down after long and much-appreciated service (Jim Lukins, Dennis Bratt, Paul Passey, Liz Scott, Craig Walking).

Highlights for the year include the transfer of the management of the car park in Meadow Street to the Town Council; the first real use in anger of the Severe Weather Action Plan in response to the heavy snowfall and its subsequent review; and the first Civic Service and Civic Awards presented by the High Sheriff.

### 2: Members serving from May 2010:

Member	Telephone	Email
Jeremy Gall (Mayor)	01934 733118	<a href="mailto:Jeremy@Gall.org.uk">Jeremy@Gall.org.uk</a>
Barry Hamblin (Deputy Mayor)	01934 733939	<a href="mailto:b.hamblin2@btinternet.com">b.hamblin2@btinternet.com</a>
Dennis Bratt	01934 732352	<a href="mailto:dbratt29@googlemail.com">dbratt29@googlemail.com</a>
Mrs Kate Browne	01934 733208	<a href="mailto:kwbrowne@gmail.com">kwbrowne@gmail.com</a>
Mrs Pauline Ham	01934 732062	<a href="mailto:PAHam@educ.somerset.gov.uk">PAHam@educ.somerset.gov.uk</a>
Ian Laken	01934 732329	<a href="mailto:Laken1393@hotmail.co.uk">Laken1393@hotmail.co.uk</a>
Jim Lukins	01934 732293	
Paul Passey	01934 733373	<a href="mailto:paul@westmead31me17.freemove.co.uk">paul@westmead31me17.freemove.co.uk</a>
Mrs Elizabeth Scott	01934 733341	<a href="mailto:scottliz@tiscali.co.uk">scottliz@tiscali.co.uk</a>
Michael Taylor	01934 732688	<a href="mailto:Tay31TC@aol.com">Tay31TC@aol.com</a>
Mrs Jennifer Trotman	01934 733306	<a href="mailto:Jennifer_T@hotmail.com">Jennifer_T@hotmail.com</a>
Craig Walking	01934 732400	<a href="mailto:craigwalking@btopenworld.com">craigwalking@btopenworld.com</a>

### 3: 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
Lengthsman	Mr Andrew Laken
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

### 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.

#### Planning and Licences Committee (Cllr. B Hamblin)

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 doubt about an application it is referred to the full Council for a decision. The Committee meets twice a month to meet legislative deadlines for making comments.

The centre of Axbridge has been designated as 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. This policy resulted in negotiations with BT who agreed to put new telephone lines in Cheddar Road underground rather than install another telegraph pole and add to the unsightly overhead cables which we want ultimately to remove from our town. The Committee continues to support the steering group which was set up to formulate a Town Design Statement in order to promote more consistency and certainty with planning decisions. This document will set out the history of the town and its architectural development and goes on to state what is and is not acceptable in future development. Work on this project was delayed by the Axbridge Pageant taking up the time of the various volunteers involved. When complete the Town Design Statement 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. 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. Sedgemoor District Council's Development Management Department has at last produced the final version of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and its associated documents for submission to the Secretary of State. This set of documents covers planning policy for the period 2006-2026 and should be in place by now but its production was delayed by Sedgemoor District Council. Written comment on the various draft stages of this document was provided by the Town Council to Sedgemoor District Council. 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 the 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. Both of these projects have been in progress for over three years and in both cases departments of Somerset County Council have failed to meet reasonable time scales in their work.

#### **Personnel and Protocol Committee (Jeremy Gall as Mayor)**

This committee continues to manage the council's responsibility to its employees, including annual reviews and any increase in remuneration due to training and experience. Any changes in hours for all employees are reviewed by this committee regularly. The committee also looks at any protocol issues connected with the Town Council and its officers.

This year has seen the introduction of the Mayor's Handbook providing guidance for new Mayors and detailing the responsibilities, and the breakdown of how the Mayor's Allowance was spent.

The Clerk's pay and training has been reviewed and the Clerk is pursuing her Foundation Degree in Community Engagement and Governance, which will benefit the Town Council significantly.

On protocol matters, Sedgemoor District Council approached us early in the year, and asked if they could use the Square for their Armed Forces Day celebration. Despite the understanding that the Town Council would simply be the facilitator for Sedgemoor, the lack of involvement from Sedgemoor meant that much more work fell to the personnel committee than had been intended, and ultimately their hard work ensured that the event turned out as well as could have been expected under the circumstances.

The highlight was perhaps the recent first Celebration of Axbridge Community and the presentation of Civic Awards. This was felt to be a very positive acknowledgement of all that so many people do in the town to make Axbridge what it is. The personnel committee was instrumental in making sure that the awards were seen to be very much on behalf of the community, and laying the groundwork for a sustainable annual event.

#### **Administration and Finance Advisory Group (Cllr. M Taylor)**

The group which comprises four councillors and the Town Clerk has met regularly. Again we are pleased to report that the Council passed the Annual External Audit without any comments.

The group members continue to advise on the constant changes to the legislation affecting the council, to monitor the accounts, VAT, and insurance cover and deal with procedural problems. The group is responsible for preparing the annual budget and recommending it to council.

The Town Council is now facing up to the fact that all the regular grants from the District and County Councils have stopped. As a result, more direct funding from the precept will be necessary to continue to support services to the current standards. For next financial year the precept has been set to cover the costs of running the car park and emptying dog bins, and some of the cost of providing the public conveniences.

The group also advises on grant aid from the Town Council which this year included a £1100 grant to the local Museum Trust and £1175 for the Xmas trees and lights. The largest regular grant goes to the Town Hall to help with its maintenance. Other regular grants go to organisations which work for the benefit of residents of the Town.

#### **Axbridge Promotional Advisory Group (Cllr. P Passey)**

This group is responsible for "Oyez" and the website, which are the two main vehicles for informing the town of council and community activities.

We have produced 11 monthly copies of "Oyez" and these have been delivered by our band of 30 + volunteers. The website is now being maintained with the aid of a local resident Mr Kevin Browne, and some new ideas will serve to increase its use by the community in the coming year.

The Community Stall continues to be a part of monthly Farmers' Markets and hopefully is seen as a useful venue for community groups to make themselves and their activities known. We are grateful to Somerset Farmers' Markets for allowing us to have a pitch at no charge.

The group has publicised the elections for the Town Council, which saw five councillors standing down, and two new councillors being elected. The Council will look at co-opting the remainder of the vacancies.

#### **Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group (Cllr. J Lukins)**

This group consists of 3 councillors and 2 special representatives. All allotments are let. Two tenants have been advised that growing grass on the allotment is unacceptable and have been asked to fully crop their allotment this year. A new fence has been erected against the bypass slip road.

**Cemeteries:** A second safety check of headstones was carried out in the autumn. Where there was a problem the relatives have been informed and the necessary stabilisation has been carried out. Problems with two headstones are still being addressed. Markers are now in place on any grave without a headstone, stating the plot number and name of deceased. There have been a few minor repairs to the shed, but everything is running smoothly and we appreciate that we are able to call on the lengthsmen as required.

#### **Highways Advisory Group (Cllr. Mrs E Scott)**

The group has had a busy year as ever, dealing with numerous issues, although it continues to be frustrated by the lack of progress from outside bodies.

The Back Lane Lighting Scheme has had funding in place to proceed for some time, and we are waiting for contractors to quote for the scheme. Works were due to take place before December 2010, although bad weather may have delayed this to some extent.

Hand rails alongside Church steps have been completed and we are pleased with the result.

We have established ownership of the lay-by on the bypass, and have applied for a license from County Highways to enable us to enhance the area in the future. Remedial work to tidy the area and repair the broken bench has been carried out by the Lengthsman.

A new Severe Weather Plan was agreed and put in place by November 2010. Salt bags were strategically placed at the top of Houlgate Way and Cheddar Road by Barnabas Close. Small salt bags were made available for self-help use since the Town Council is not authorised to do this work itself. The plan is being reviewed by the Highways Committee because it was felt that the Somerset County Highways department let us down badly on the gritting of our road through the Town. We are also planning to buy grit bins, and recognise that another bag or bin of salt would be useful at the bottom of Chestnut Avenue.

A review of the Yellow lines in the town has been held up by County Highways and it will be rolled out through the district in due course. Axbridge is anticipating an October date for this review.

Major works were carried out to enhance the bus stops for disabled users throughout Town. The last remaining bus stop to be done by the reservoir entrance will be enhanced if and when money is available.

Extensive work with County Highways and District Council officers has been undertaken to progress a scheme which will improve the walkway and road from Meadow Street to The Square, and this is nearing the stage where we will be looking at a feasibility study when funding becomes available.

The Highways group has dealt with other smaller matters such as parking on verges or persistent illegal parking, organising replacement or new street name plates, rubbish and dog waste bins, and road closures for major works to name a few.

#### **Car Park Management Temporary Advisory Group (Cllr. M Taylor)**

The group was set up to look at the most effective way of managing the facility when the Council takes over the responsibility from Sedgemoor District Council. This task is now complete and the group has been disbanded leaving a final list of actions leading up to the change-over.

The Town Council is now responsible for the management and it will now be known as "Axbridge Town Car Park". The management of the facility will be overseen by the Highways Advisory Group.

#### **Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group (Cllr. Mrs P Ham)**

The Group has had a busy year. The continued problem of dog fouling has proved to be the most difficult to solve, and the group continues to do its best to address this in conjunction with the authorities.

The Sports Wall on the Furlong has been in place since the beginning of last summer and is proving very popular. Also on the Furlong, the cricket nets are now in place for the use of Axbridge Cricket Club and the general public. The soil mounds have been removed from the bottom of the Furlong and the ground flattened and re-seeded, and the scrub area on both sides of the Furlong is gradually being reclaimed, which will increase the usable area.

In the play area, the swings have been refreshed and repainted as part of our program of continuous maintenance. The Baboon slide and climbing frame are due to be done this summer.

We are currently seeking grants to add a couple of small pieces of play equipment to the play area, and are also investigating the possibility of outdoor gym equipment for teenagers and adults. Both of these will only be possible if grant funding is available so that there is no cost to the Town Council.

Although football use continues to be very intensive, the clubs are doing well, and the ground and Changing Rooms are well maintained thanks largely to the efforts of the Furlong and Changing Rooms Manager Mr Darren Hogarth. The play area also continues to be well maintained and attracts compliments from visitors.

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

Axbridge Action Group
Axbridge Community Partnership
Chamber of Commerce
Farmers' Market
Cheddar Valley Cluster Group
Axbridge & District Museum Trust
Mendip Hills and AONB Partnership Committee
Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC)
Somerset Market Towns Forum
Sports and Social Committee
Town Trust/Town Council Joint Committee

#### 6: Summary of Accounts

	2009-10	2010-11
<b>General Account</b>		

INCOME		
Precept	£56,000.00	55,500.00
Bank Interest	£39.37	25.51
Cemetery Charges	£600.00	712.00
Allotments Rents	£497.50	425.00
County Council Grants	£0.00	0.00
District Council Grants	£923.42	0.00
Recreation Ground Grants	£0.00	5,909.55
Cricket Nets Grant	£6,595.00	--
Youth Shelter Grants	£773.00	--
Jack Todd Bequest Grant for Changing Rooms	£7,800.10	7,800.10
Other	£100.00	90.00
VAT refunds	£2,904.24	3,840.25
<b>Total Income :</b>	<b>£76,232.63</b>	<b>74,302.41</b>

EXPENDITURE		
<i>Revenue items</i>		
Clerk's Salary and Administration	£21,393.96	22,263.60
Mayor's and Town Crier's allowances	£1,375.00	1,475.00
Changing Rooms loan repayment	£7,800.10	7,800.10
Car Park loan repayment	£5,201.03	10,402.06
Meadow Street Car Park purchase expenses		
Recreation Ground management and maintenance	£8,276.73	8,723.58
Cemeteries maintenance	£1,718.04	1,724.75
Allotments lease and maintenance	£214.00	390.78
Town maintenance contract	£2,700.00	2,985.00
Promoting Axbridge	£643.03	512.18

	2009-10	2010-11
<i>Capital items</i>		
Church Steps/Back Lane lighting and safety project	£2,768.00	
Allotments improvements	£793.39	
New Notice Boards on Town Hall	£550.00	
Cricket Nets	£8,089.79	3,380.21
Sports Wall		5,909.55
Clerk's course		1,282.29
Other	£2,615.52	86.84
<i>Grants made</i>		
Town Hall – general maintenance	£3,640.00	3,640.00
Planters in the Square	£0.00	300.00
Axbridge and District Museum Trust	£1,000.00	1,100.00
Christmas trees and lights	£750.00	1,175.00
Others	£475.00	625.00
VAT paid	£2,939.53	2,555.77
<b>Total Expenditure :</b>	<b>£72,943.12</b>	<b>76,331.71</b>

SUMMARY of General Account		
Opening Balance	£43,816.53	47,374.84
Total Receipts	£76,232.63	74,302.41
Total Payments	£72,943.12	76,331.71
Transfer from closed accounts	£268.80	
Closing Balance	<b>£47,374.84</b>	<b>45,345.54</b>

	2009-10	2010-11
<b><i>Car Park Account</i></b>		
<b>INCOME</b>		
Precept		1,500.00
PWLB Loan	£190,000.00	
SCC grant	£0.00	5,681.40
Vat Refunds	£1,345.20	0.00
Misc.		150.00
<b>Total Income:</b>	<b>£191,345.20</b>	<b>7,331.40</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Car Park purchase	£180,000.00	
Tax and fees	£10,983.95	
VAT Paid	£1,345.20	0.00
<b>Total Expenditure:</b>	<b>£192,329.15</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Other Accounts - Closing Balances		
Changing Rooms Operating Account	-£1,751.41	-2,532.08
Changing Rooms Maintenance Fund®	£5,189.50	5,192.09
® = Reserved Fund.		