

Headlines 2023-24

- Created in May 2015
- 12 Councillors
- Precept: £618,312.45
- Stable Band D council tax with 0% year-on-year increase at £256.03
- Employed 5.24 FTE staff

Cranbrook Town Council



Annual Report

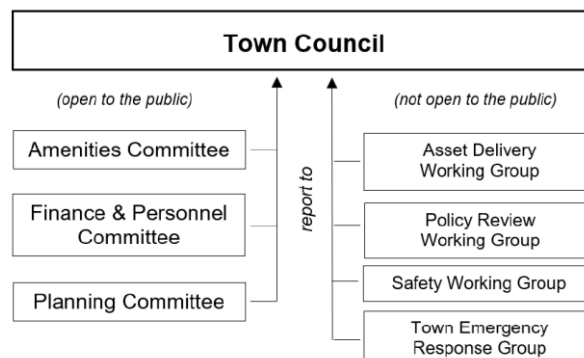
1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

Our Vision

We want Cranbrook Town Council to be a modern organisation which strives to be open to all, transparent and responsive. We pride ourselves in working with and for people in order to help create a place where everyone feels part of a strong, prosperous and vibrant community.

We want Cranbrook to be a safe, clean and green environment where everyone is proud to live and bring up their families.

Our Governance Structure



AMENITIES AND ASSET DELIVERY

Your councillors work continuously to resolve issues affecting the town, to progress improvements to existing and future infrastructure – or simply to deliver the latter, resulting in e.g.:

- Skatepark delivered and opened
- Pump track delivered and opened
- Community Garden in the Country Park delivered and opened
- Installation of a vehicle-activated speed sign which is moved between locations
- Delivery of a pedestrian link between Little Wood Close and Three Corner Field
- E.ON installed their eastern transmission main pipe to extend district heating eastwards and installed a footbridge in the Great Meadow area of the Country Park enabling pedestrian access into the nature reserve
- Treatment of weeds
- Tree planting
- Ongoing programme of path replacements where paths struggle to handle high rainfall
- Investment in high-quality sports pitches maintenance by County Pitch Advisor
- The first tranche of the town centre is taking shape, including the town square

Our **councillors are volunteers** who are not paid a salary or an allowance and who work hard to improve life and services in Cranbrook.

Town Council Office

Our office in the Younghayes Centre is open to the public on

Monday to Friday from 10:00am until 2:00pm

or at any time by prior appointment.

Elections 2023

Following the elections on 2 May 2023, our third-ever Council came into being until the next ordinary elections in May 2027. The election was uncontested, meaning we still have vacancies and if you'd like to stand as councillor or become co-opted, we'd love to hear from you!

Memberships of Outside Bodies

As well as serving on the Council, its committees and working groups, your councillors are also busy representing Cranbrook on external bodies, including the Clyst Valley Regional Park Delivery Board, Cranbrook Community Safety Group, Cranbrook Strategic Delivery Board, East Devon Arts and Culture Forum, Exeter Airport Consultative Committee, Police and Crime Commissioner Councillor Advocate, Sport England Local Delivery Pilot Cranbrook Steering Group and the Move More Group, E.ON district heating liaison, Gypsy and Traveller liaison and the Larger Councils Forum. The Council also subscribed to the National and Devon Associations of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Show me the money...

Our **Finance & Personnel Committee** develops and monitors the Council's budgets, administers the Council's grants scheme and manages employees.

Summary financial statement

We received **£618,312.45** from council tax. Other income included rent from the Younghayes Centre, allotments and open spaces. We also received funds which are ring fenced for delivering specific projects.

Our total expenditure was **£1,128,099** which included significant spending of Section 106 funds (developer contributions) e.g. for the skatepark.

The Town Council element of the council tax remained stable at **£256.03** per Band D household. We are forecasting that it will remain stable for the medium-term future in our five-year business plan.

Our **grants scheme** benefitted four community organisations at a total value of **£6,607.53** in 2022-23.

We continue to be awarded substantial assurances by both our internal and external auditors, the highest within their assurance rating hierarchies, concluding that the Council maintains a very high standard of governance, financial management and controls as well as risk management – for an incredible eighth year running!

Detailed financial information, including our five-year business plan, is available on our website at <https://www.cranbrooktowncouncil.gov.uk/finance/>.

What we spent your money on in 2023-24

Staffing costs: £223,486

Administration including audit, licenses and subscriptions, training, rent and utilities, legal costs, insurance, events etc: £61,640

Councillors' expenses: £6.30

Grounds maintenance: £186,953

Youth service: £12,885

Repairs and/or replacement of amenities following vandalism: £1,778 – which represents 178% of our annual budget and a spend of almost £150 each month

Spotlight on... our Ranger

In June 2023, the Council hired a new Ranger, Andy Chapman-New. Since arriving in post, Andy has endeavoured to become a well-known face within the Country Park and other green spaces. Andy's focus has been to involve as many individuals and groups as possible to benefit our fantastic green spaces and the habitats.

Andy hosts regular volunteer sessions for all to attend on Fridays. These are a fantastic opportunity to socialise whilst learning new skills and promoting biodiversity and conservation. Without our volunteers the Country Park would not be what it is today – thank you all. Events are regularly hosted in the Country Park with support from community groups, including:

- Tree planting
- Stream clearing and pond dipping
- Dog meets (Doodle Days, Retriever Rambles, Halloween Hounds)
- Photography walks supported by Exeter University's Photography Society
- Stargazing events co-hosted by Exeter University's Space Exe Society

Alongside these events, the Country Park has been host to school and youth group sessions such as the local Cubs and Brownies who got involved in tree walks and wildflower meadow creations, minibeast hunts, butterfly counts and bug hotel building.

Wider communication and support have been key to help the Country Park and green spaces grow. Andy networked closely with stakeholders including the Woodland Trusts and Devon Wildlife Trust – the latter provided many trees locally from its Saving Devon Treescapes Campaign. A highly popular event with folks near and far was Devon Wildlife Trust's Free Tree Hub which Andy hosted with support from the local Cubs.

Other stakeholder collaborations included woodland creation projects with the North Devon Biosphere and Devon County Council's Woodland Creation Officer. These exciting new ventures will create further volunteer and community opportunities within the Country Park with the aims to create varying environments for both nature and community to enjoy.

Andy is also in constant contact with residents, listening to their views and answering queries. One of the most positively received by residents was the creation of additional paths in the Great Meadow area of the Country Park.

To keep up to date with all things Ranger and Country Park, do follow "Cranbrook Ranger" on Facebook and "Cranbrook Country Park" on Instagram.

Should you need to get in contact with Andy please email ranger@cranbrooktowncouncil.gov.uk.



▲ Pond dipping in the Country Park; the young explorers had a blast discovering the fascinating creatures living beneath the surface of the pond.

Our **Planning Committee**

commented on 36 planning applications during the year, of which 14 were major applications as part of the construction of the town centre and expansion of Cranbrook. There were seven householder applications where occupants and a further four applications in relation to trees.

One application submitted by Devon County Council sought the creation of a new 1.5km stretch of shared use trail from Shercroft Close to Mosshayne Lane linking Cranbrook to Exeter via cycle and pedestrian route.

The Town Council does not determine planning applications but submits comments to the local planning authority East Devon District Council as a statutory consultee.

Community Safety Group

Following its first meeting in December 2023, our new Community Safety Group has established good attendance from all partners, including housing associations, police, schools, retail representatives and East Devon District Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator.

The Group obtained funding from the Devon County Councillors' locality budget for the provision of student workshops delivered at the Cranbrook Education Campus on the dangers of taking drugs, vaping and drink spiking, including how to seek help and support. The Ted Wragg Trust is now exploring whether they can train their own staff and develop workshops throughout their academies.

The Group also facilitated establishing links between Devon and Cornwall Police and the schools to assist retail units to combat the anti-social behaviour in our local shops.

East Devon District Council's dog enforcement officer has also been on hand to advise regarding responsible dog ownership.

Informal Partners' Meetings

A monthly "Partnership Board" chaired and administered by the Town Council brings together representatives of the Town, District and County Councils, the Planning Authority, Highway Authority, Developers and Consortium Consultants to identify and resolve operational issues within the emerging town.

A recent review by the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service found that the Board is valued and working well and is ideally placed to discuss and resolve operational issues as they arise. The Partnership Board identifies and reviews all known outstanding operational issues within the town including highway defects, street lighting, missing bollards, incomplete layout and all other "snagging" issues which arise. The Board follows up to ensure that, where possible, outstanding actions have been completed. The Board also reviews the status of all outstanding planning applications on a monthly basis.

If you have any item(s) which we should add to our list we'd love to hear from you!

Watch your speed!

The Town Council continues to coordinate the **Community Speedwatch** scheme in Cranbrook and hopes to grow the volunteer base so that this scheme will be sustained by the community without Council support in the future. If you are interested in volunteering opportunities, please do get in touch with us as we would love to hear from you.

The Council also operates a **vehicle-activated speed sign** (VAS), an electric sign which is triggered by vehicles travelling at excessive speeds and displays a message in order to encourage drivers to remain within the speed limit.

Councillor Advocate Scheme

Two of our councillors are Councillor Advocates with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which has given us access to contacts at high level within Devon and Cornwall Police. The Commissioner and Acting Chief Constable, together with senior inspectors, visited Cranbrook and Council meetings in August 2023 and February 2024. Raising the profile of Cranbrook with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Devon and Cornwall Police has resulted in increased level of police presence in Cranbrook.

Partner Consultations

During 2023-24, the Town Council responded to East Devon District Council's town centre consultation and Devon County Council's consultation on the Devolution Deal for Devon.

Citizen Recognition Award

In June 2023, Adam Prowse was awarded the Town Council's recognition award for always going the extra mile – quite literally.



Very sadly...

...there is not only good news. Some individuals continue to cause damage to our noticeboards, bins, trees, play equipment and to other infrastructure including bus shelters. We have a collective responsibility to conserve and protect assets of community value and we are committed to robustly respond to the few who seek to wreck these for others. Please can we urge everyone to report suspicious activities to Devon and Cornwall Police.



▲ At last! Double yellow lines! Cranbrook Town Council formally requested parking restrictions in August 2021 after having collected evidence for years. Devon County Council finally agreed to the introduction of double yellow lines last year – at the junction of Barn Orchard and Copseclose Lane with Younghayes Road, the junction of Best Park with Younghayes Road, the junction of Crabtree Close with Yonder Acre Way and the junction of Crannafor Lane with Tillhouse Road (outside the Cranbrook Education Campus). Devon County Council made an (East Devon HATOC) (Traffic Regulation) Amendment Order 2024 which came into force on 6 March 2024 and introduced no waiting at any time on specified lengths of Barn Orchard, Best Park, Copseclose Lane, Crabtree Close, Crannafor Lane, Seven Acres, Three Corner Field, Tillhouse Road, Yonder Acre Way and Younghayes Road. Yay!

Skatepark and Pump Track Open

Undoubtedly one of the highlights of our year was the opening of our brand-new skatepark just before Christmas 2023 and our new pump track in March 2024.



▲ The skatepark became very popular with predominantly children and young people as soon as it opened just before Christmas 2023.

Very soon after opening, both facilities began to enjoy fantastic popularity with residents and we are delighted to have delivered facilities which are in such frequent use by the town's young people.



▲ The pump track in the Stone Meadow area of the Country Park officially opened on 25 March 2024.

The skatepark was delivered exclusively with Section 106 (i.e. developer) contributions, whereas the pump track was financed by contributions from Sport England (£20,000), East Devon District Council (£10,000) and Cranbrook Town Council (£10,000). A huge thank you again to our partners for their contributions.

Our assets and services at a glance:

Younghayes Centre with its facilities to hire (multi-use sports hall, computer suite, small meeting room and conference room)
Country Park and Ranger
Ingrams Sports Pitches
All play areas
Crannafor Allotments
Areas of public open space across Cranbrook
Permanent barbeques and table tennis table in the Country Park

Litter picking and bin emptying away from the adopted Main Local Route (MLR)
Youth service provided by the Cranbrook Youth Club CIC

Cranbrook Youth Club

The Cranbrook Youth Club CIC continues to provide our much-valued youth service on a Tuesday evening in the Younghayes Centre. Since September 2023, the service experienced an influx of new members from the new year 7s, averaging around 25 young people per session. The young people have also started connecting more with the wider community by e.g. organising litter picks and they're planning new projects including an open kitchen.