

Evesham Town Council



An introduction to Evesham

The town and civil parish of Evesham lies on a natural loop of the River Avon in Worcestershire. The historic centre of Evesham surrounds the remains of Evesham Abbey, once one of the largest and most significant in England but destroyed at the dissolution and now little more than broken stones. The exception is the magnificent Bell Tower, one of only two free-standing bell towers in the country and saved from destruction by the townspeople who purchased it for their own use when the abbey was demolished.

Modern Evesham is an attractive riverside town that is a popular leisure and recreational destination. As well as the abbey ruins, the riverside meadows and parks form a continuous green corridor through the heart of the town. The river and parks play host to a number of events throughout the year, including the River Festival, the annual Regatta, the Evesham Angling Festival, and the Battle of Evesham Festival which celebrates the town's links with Simon de Montfort, the founder of representative democracy.

On the edge of town are several key employment sites, including Vale Business Park which is home to leading food, retail and technology suppliers. The A46 trunk road, part of the long-distance Midlands Connect route, runs alongside Evesham on the eastern edge of town and the A44 links Evesham with Worcester and Oxford. Birmingham is under an hour's drive away and is the source of many of the town's recreational visitors. The town is linked by rail to Worcester toward the west and Oxford and London toward the southeast.

Evesham Town Council came into existence in 1604 when the town was granted a Royal Charter by King James. The original, handwritten charter itself is now preserved in the Almonry Museum, a Grade I listed building which was formerly part of the abbey estate and now owned and operated by the Town Council. The Town Council has gone through a number of different forms – and names – over the centuries, but the current incarnation dates from the 1974 reorganisation of English local government.

As a historic charter council, the Town Council's Members retain the right to wear ceremonial robes at key civic functions. The role of Mayor of Evesham has existed continuously since the council's founding in 1604. The council currently comprises 24 elected members representing six wards, although a review into district ward boundaries currently being conducted by the LGBCE will have a knock-on effect on the Town Council and our own electoral geography will be very different at the next set of elections in 2023.

As well as the Almonry, the Town Council is also responsible for the Town Hall – itself a listed building which dates back to the medieval era but was extensively remodelled by the Victorians and updated further more recently – as well as allotments, cemeteries, closed churchyards and the Battleton Brook Open Space. Battleton Brook is one of the tributaries of the River Avon, and as it approaches the confluence it flows through a section of former orchards that once belonged to Evesham Manor. Now managed by the Town Council as a

public open space, the brookside has recently been the subject of a major Natural Networks project to improve biodiversity and enhance the public realm.

Alongside the Town Council's own property portfolio, the council is also a partner with other authorities in a number of public realm projects in Evesham. These include the "Enlighten Evesham" project which provides coloured floodlighting for the Bell Tower and War Memorial as well as projection mapped images onto the Almonry, the Evesham Lock Island Project which aims to restore the iconic A-frame lock-keeper's cottage and make it available for public use, and the Cloister Gardens project which is an ambitious plan to create an entirely new public open space in the midst of the former abbey cloisters.

While the river provides Evesham with much of its appeal, it can also be the source of its worst problems. The river is prone to flooding, and properties on low-lying streets close to its banks are regularly affected. The Town Council is a key partner with the district council in providing support to local residents and businesses affected by flooding. The river also acts as a natural barrier to infrastructure and, with only two bridges crossing it within the town, it contributes significantly to congestion on the roads. The A46 is chronically over capacity, adding to the general problem. The Town Council is a member of the county council's Transport Stakeholder Group which aims to find solutions to the town's traffic issues.

The Town Council faces a number of challenges as we look to recover from the Covid pandemic. In common with town centres across the country, Evesham's retail and hospitality sector has been hard hit and not all have survived to reopen after lockdown. Working with our counterparts at district and county level to support our local businesses, while at the same time doing our best to help minimise the impact of inflation and the cost of living on our residents, is a key priority.

The incoming Town Clerk will also need to pick up the reins on a number of internal council projects. These include continuing the process of transferring control of our allotments to self-administered Allotment Societies, accelerating the search for new cemetery space, and overseeing the work necessary to carry out essential repairs on the Almonry and Town Hall – and help secure the funding for it!

Modernising the Town Council's working practices is also an ongoing process. Moving towards a paperless office and updating our IT systems is necessary, but can be painful. Covid, and the need to shift to remote working temporarily, has exposed significant gaps in our provision. The incoming Town Clerk will need to be comfortable with technology and have the skills – and patience – to assist councillors and officers in getting to grips with it.

If, despite these last few paragraphs – or, even better, because of them – you feel you are the person for the job, then please get in touch. In return for the candidate with the right combination of experience and forward thinking, we offer an attractive financial package, a well-equipped, modern office, and the chance to work in what The Guardian has described as "a delightful little town". We're not going to pretend it will be easy. But for the right person, it will definitely be rewarding.