



Annual Report of Congleton Town Council 2015-16



Congleton Town Mayor- Cllr Elizabeth Wardlaw



Interesting, delightful, challenging, eventful, exhausting, an honour, illuminating, humbling, and overall a real privilege; these are just some of the words and phrases that spring to mind when thinking about my year in office! With just two weeks to go I'm sure these sentiments will continue....

As Town Mayor I have attended around 100 functions either in the town or representing Congleton. I have witnessed some of the very best of Congleton. As Mayor you get to appreciate just how much blood, sweat and tears people put in behind the scenes to make our town the community that it is. I've had the honour of meeting many fantastic people from a wide variety of organisations, businesses and groups and of all ages from tots at the Teddy Bears Picnic to senior residents at luncheon clubs and care homes. I've experienced the most wonderful concerts and performances - Congleton certainly does have talent - and after my year in office I fully intend to continue attending these performances.

The year started at pace with the launch of Every Step Counts the weekend after I was elected to the Town Council and just before Mayor Making. This was a campaign led by Team Congleton and as a practice nurse in the town the sentiments of the campaign - to get more people more active more often - were ones that I very much identified with.

There have been many, many highlights of the year. Probably some of the biggest were:

- Attending a ceremony in Southport where Congleton was announced as the North West in Bloom Winners- and picked up a host of other awards.
- Enjoying the town's festivals - Food and Drink, Brass on the Grass, Jazz and Blues, Teddy Bears Picnic - even the very wet Christmas Lights Switch-on!
- Welcoming guests from neighbouring towns and as far away as Holland to the Town's Civic Events - the Civic Parade, Mayor's Ball and the Remembrance Sunday Parade.
- Being able to congratulate my Mayor's Chaplain - Steve Hodgkinson and the Town Crier - Douglas Parker on receiving MBEs in the New Year's Honours List.
- Visiting 10 Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament with our Town Council Youth Council.
- A fabulous ladies lunch at Pecks - where there was much fun, frivolity and funds raised for my charities!

As Town Mayor it is my duty to Chair the Town Council Meetings. The local elections in May saw nine new Councillors elected onto the Town Council, so it has been a time of change at the Town Hall.

It has been a year of change in other ways too. In December we said goodbye to Liz and Steve from Posh Nosh Catering, who had been the commercial partners at the Town Hall for six years. On 1st March we were delighted to welcome Congleton Town Hall Events and Parties as the new partners - and I must say they did fantastically well at their first big event - my Mayor's Ball on 11th March! In January our Town Clerk of six years retired, and we welcomed David McGifford into the new post of Chief Officer.

I want to thank my husband Bruce for being my Mayor's Consort, Mayor's Cadet Charlotte Frost and Deputy Mayor, Councillor David Brown for the fantastic support that they have given me this year. I hope that they will have fond memories of this year too! I would also like to thank the Town Council staff, particularly the former Town Clerk, Brian Hogan, the new Chief Officer David McGifford and the Civic Administrative Officer, Linda Minshull for their help and also my fellow councillors for their support.

During the year I have supported three charities; the Alzheimer's Society, The Royal British Legion (Congleton Branch) and the Autism Society and I look forward to being able to give them a donation later in the summer. The next Mayor- I believe number 698th for Congleton - will be elected at the Annual Town Council Meeting on Thursday 12th May. I wish them all the very best and hope they find the year as rewarding, interesting and fascinating as I have.

Councillor Elizabeth Wardlaw



Town Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Wardlaw at the opening of the Antrobus Street Garden.



Town Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Wardlaw with the Youth Council outside No. 10 Downing Street on their trip to Parliament.

Leader of the Council - Cllr Bob Edwards

It's the time once more to look back at some of the memorable moments of the 2015/16 municipal year and look forward to some of the things that the Town Council is working on for 2016/17. Outwardly it's been a fairly quiet year, but behind the scenes we have been pedalling fairly hard!

The first significant event of the year in early May was the Town and Borough elections. These are held every four years. To most of the public this is a one day event, but to those involved in planning, canvassing, leafleting, organising and recording the elections, it takes many weeks of hard work. The elections saw nine new Town Councillors elected and 11 returned to office, as well as four town councillors gaining new seats on the Cheshire East Council to accompany the re-elected Congleton Cheshire East Councillors - Dave Brown, Gordon Baxendale and Peter Mason. Sadly, Peter passed away at the end of July and in October Town Councillor Geoff Baggott was elected onto Cheshire East Council.



We had no major national events this year like the Olympic Torch relay or the Commonwealth baton relay, but we did, and hopefully will continue to, host an exciting calendar of events and festivals that are popular with many residents and visitors to the town. Of particular note is the Food & Drink festival, the Jazz & Blues festival, the Teddy Bears Picnic, the Arts festival and the Christmas lights switch on. Not only is it a big thank you to the thousands of residents and visitors who turned out and supported these events but also thanks to the many volunteers who tirelessly gave up their spare time to make all these events so successful. Worthy of a special mention is the Congleton Community Projects team and the Town Council Streetscape and marketing team.

The Town Council Streetscape team, aided by many volunteers, carry out a fantastic job making the town centre, park, roundabouts, Mountbatten Way and green open spaces spectacular. This horticultural excellence is one of the main reasons the town has consistently received Gold standard at the North West in Bloom Awards. But the planting and displays only represent 50% of the marks. The rest of the marks are made up from environmental excellence - cleanliness, lack of litter, weeds and graffiti, amount of recycling etc. and Community Participation - local people getting involved, greening grey areas, litter picks, plant-ups, spectacular front gardens, shops buying hanging baskets, businesses showing support for in Bloom. We are fortunate that so many people get involved in Congleton.

There are 15 categories in the marking sections, each having marks out of 10 or 20. In last year's results we mainly got 9's or 18's (No-one ever gets full marks)- making us not only the most successful large town in the whole of the North West being awarded winners of North West in Bloom but also making us good enough to be entered in to the Britain in Bloom finals for 2016! A very special effort is required this year but we know we will do well. We anticipate a gold medal but - who knows - maybe overall winners?

Lots of work has been going on behind the scenes on important issues around developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Congleton and making the first stages of the Public Realm improvements a reality. The Neighbourhood Plan is a document that both supports and complements the Cheshire East Local Plan. The CE Local Plan deals with the high level issues affecting the Borough as a whole. The Neighbourhood plan deals with the detailed needs and aspirations of the Town. There have been approximately 30 volunteers with wide and varying areas of expertise helping put together the policies that support the plan. We have already conducted two questionnaires amongst the general public. The results of which will help us produce the final version which will go out to public consultation later in the year.

The Public Realm Strategy was developed in 2011 identifying projects that we would like to achieve within Congleton when funding becomes available. Thanks to a grant of £1m from Cheshire East, work is able to start on the first projects - renovation of the pedestrian area in the middle of Town and the two junctions at either end (Mill Street and Market Street). Consultation on the design and materials is currently under way and work is planned to start early in 2017.

After years of promises and behind the scenes work, Cheshire East has now committed in the region of £8 million to improve Congleton's Peter Mason Leisure Centre. The focal point will be a brand new swimming Pool and work should start on this project within this municipal year.

The Town Council appointed a new Chief Officer, David McGifford to replace our retiring Town Clerk Brian Hogan. David took up post in January, and joined us from Cheshire East, where he was the Senior Regeneration Officer. Many thanks to Brian for his dedicated and very appreciated years of service and welcome and good luck to David.

During the late summer of 2015, our catering partners in the Town Hall announced that they were planning to retire at the end of the year. This is an important role for the Town Hall and the recruitment process took time. After sifting through a number of applications we interviewed four potential partners and finally awarded the contract to Annette Kanauros, Joe Kanauros and Becky Lawton, who have now formed Congleton Town Hall Events and Parties. They have made an excellent start to their new contract organising and catering for some significant events.

A quiet 'behind the scenes' past year – but things now start to get busy. We can look forward to a busy few months – including:

- The Food & Drink Festival on 12th June – With a huge array of quality food stalls and lots of tasty treats to try, entertainment to enjoy and hopefully blessed with good weather!
- The Bi-Annual Carnival on July 16th- Get your glad rags on – the theme is musicals. There will be the usual procession with floats and performing teams who will parade through town and head for the park where there will be stalls, music, games, food & drink and entertainment.
- Stage three of the Tour of Britain Cycle Race comes to Congleton on Tuesday 6th September - This will include many of the world's best cyclists and is expected to attract thousands of people... the race will start mid-morning, but the excitement will build from very early!

I would like to finish by saying once again, as a member of the Town Council that I am proud to represent the people of Congleton, and as Leader I thank each and every one of you for the support that you have given us in the past year.

Please check out our newly designed website – www.congleton-tc.gov.uk to keep up to date with things that are happening in Congleton which have not been mentioned in this foreword.

Councillor Bob Edwards



Some of the In Bloom group with judge David Bielawski celebrating being entered into Britain in Bloom 2016

Town Council

The Town Council has 20 Councillors, who are elected to represent one of the two wards in the town. Councillors are elected to serve a period of four years. The election was held on 7th May 2015.

The Councillors serving during this lifespan 2015-2019 are:

East Ward

Larry Barker (C)
Charles Booth (C)
Peter Broom (C)
David Brown (C)- Deputy Leader
Bob Edwards (C)- Leader
George Hayes (C)
Sally Holland (C)
Anna Morrison (C)
Harvey Richards (C)
Glen Williams (C)

West Ward

Nick Adams (C)
Suzanne Akers- Smith (C)
Dawn Allen (UKIP)
Andrea Armitt (C)
Geoff Baggott (C)
Paul Bates (C)
Robert Boston (L)
Amanda Martin (C)
Jean Parry (C)
Liz Wardlaw (C)- Mayor

C = Conservative

L = Labour

UKIP = UK Independent Party

Officers for the period of this annual report were:

- Chief Officer- David McGifford (from January 2016)
- Town Clerk- Brian Hogan (until January 2016)
- Support Manager- Jackie Potts
- Town Centre & Marketing Manager- Jackie MacArthur
- Facilities & Operations Manager- Chris Jones
- Streetscape Operations Supervisor- Ruth Burgess
- Town Hall Supervisor- Mark Worthington
- Civic Administration Officer- Linda Minshull
- Administrative Assistants- Andrea Morris-Wild & Sue Trow
- Congleton Partnership Coordinator- Mike Smith
- Junior Administration & Marketing Assistant- Martha Hayes
- Handyman- Chris Banks
- Town Hall Caretaker- Tim Muston
- Facility Officers- Pete Forster, Melvin Hulme, Rowan Nightingale, Al Shaw
- Streetscape Operatives- James Bibby, Terry Davies, Simon Farrell, Dave Foster, Mick Pritchard, Rob Serwin, Mark Stubbs, Andrew Turnock, John Tryno, Pete Whiston
- Streetscape Apprentices- Jack Appleton, Jonathan Murrell
- Casual Paddling Pool Attendants, May-September

Council Meetings

The Council has a number of committees, the dates for the meetings in 2015-16 were:

Council- 28/5 11/6 9/7 20/8 17/9 29/10 3/12 21/1 3/3 14/4

Planning- 4/6 18/6 16/7 20/8 24/9 15/10 5/11 19/11 7/1 28/1 11/2 10/3 7/4

Finance & Policy- 4/6 10/9 22/10 26/11 14/1 18/2 24/3

Community, Environment & Services- 25/6 27/8 1/10 12/11 4/2 17/3

Town Hall- 18/6 24/9 5/11 10/3

The Personnel Committee and Strategy Working Group are held as and when necessary.

How is the Town Council Financed?

The majority of the Town Council's funds come from a precept which is added to the Council Tax levy set by the Principal Authority. In 2015-16 the precept was £665,630 with a Support Grant provided by Cheshire East Borough Council of £49,890 which had been reduced by £15,668 over the previous year. Below is a summary of income and expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2016.

The funds are spent providing services and representing the people of Congleton. In broad terms in 2015-16 the Town Council spent the money raised on the following:

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	% of Budget
<u>Finance and Policy</u>				
Corporate Management- Expenditure	129,970	124,069	-5,901	105%
Corporate Management - Income	-53,736	-53,890	-154	100%
Democratic Rep'n & Mgmt/Civic:-Expenditure	46,112	47,472	1,360	97%
<u>Grants</u>	62,595	65,983	3,388	95%
F&P Income - Expenditure Totals	184,941	183,634	-1,307	101%
<u>Community, Environment & Services - Net expenditure</u>				
<u>Streetscape</u>				
Streetscape Expenditure	667,261	504,872	-162,389	132%
Streetscape - Income	-552,859	-359,375	193,484	
Net Expenditure over Income	114,402	145,497	-146,531	79%
<u>Town Hall</u>				
Town Hall - Expenditure	161,159	153,273	-7,886	105%
Town Hall - Income	-117,385	-101,050	16,335	116%
Net Expenditure over Income	43,774	52,223	8,449	84%
<u>Capital Expenditure</u>	96,778	96,778	0	100%
<u>Total Net Expenditure</u>	633,020	681,306	48,286	93%
<u>Precept 2015/16</u>	665,630			
<u>Underspend 15 16</u>		32,610		

Congleton Town Council Management Accounts March 2016

Grants Given

The Town Council has supported local voluntary and community groups within approximately £60,000 worth of grants in 2015-16. Among those assisted were:

Name		£
Grants given to hirers of the Town Hall	Town Hall Hire	2,361
Congleton Museum	Notional Rent	4,500
Community Projects	Project Support	16,000
Citizens Advice Bureau	Annual Grant	15,000
Christmas Lights	Christmas Lights	9,000
TOTAL		<u>46,861</u>

Name	Event	£
Congleton Jazz & Blues Festival	Festival	500
Congleton Harriers	Congleton ½ & ¼ Marathon	250
	Cloud 9 Race	250
Congleton Choral & Children's Choir	Choir Performance	250
Plus Dane	Raft Race	450
Beartown Patchwork & Quilters	Exhibition of Quilts	100
Congleton Musical Theatre	Production of "Whistle Down the Wind"	500
St. Peter's Bellringers	Pennon for Flag Pole	176
Congleton "Our Gang"	Production of Gang Show	500
Margaret Williamson Trust Fund	Donation to fund	5,000
Royal British Legion	Remembrance Day Parade	933
St. Peter's Church	Maintenance of Church Clock	258
Congleton Pantomime	Production of "Cinderella"	400
Congleton Fairtrade	Promoting Fairtrade in Congleton	300
Congleton Rotary	Swimathon	200
Friends of Congleton Park	Brass on the Grass	300
Congleton Youth in Action	2016 Play Scheme	500
Congleton Community Credit Union	CVS Membership	45
Bromley Farm CDT	Bromley Farm News	400
Visyon	Visyon Sensory Garden	500
TOTAL		<u>11,812</u>



Gang Show



Visyon



Congleton Pantomime



Congleton Rotary Club

Services Provided

What Services does the Town Council Provide:

Congleton Town Council is one of the largest of the 108 Local Councils in East Cheshire. It was founded in 1980 and became fully operational in April 1981 to provide the local council tier of local government for Congleton.

It serves the local community by;

- Providing an essential link between town residents and Cheshire East Borough Council to ensure grass roots views are heard and considered
- Encouraging economic development and regeneration of the Town
- Examining planning and licensing applications and giving opinions to the Borough Council on behalf of local residents
- Managing a range of local services and facilities to benefit Congleton including the Town Hall, handy-man service, streetscape and grounds maintenance services, paddling pool and allotments
- Providing financial support to a variety of community groups and organisations which support the wellbeing of Congleton residents

Congleton Town Council covers an area of 2255 hectares (22.55 sq km or 8.7 square miles) with a population of around 26,900.

In January 2014 the size of Congleton Town Council staff increased dramatically when the Council's long term desire to take on the streetscape operation as a devolved service was realised. Streetscape delivers Grounds and Cleansing Services for Congleton Town Council, which includes grounds maintenance- mowing, hedge cutting, pruning of shrubs etc. and street cleansing functions- emptying of over 120 litter and dog bins each day, removal of fly tipping, litter picking and generally keeping Congleton a safe and tidy town to live in.

Each year the Streetscape team plant around 35,955 summer bedding plants and 30,674 winter plants, these plants are for all the different bedding areas throughout Congleton - key areas including roundabouts, Congleton Park and other recognised public open spaces. The team consists of 10 Operatives, 2 Apprentices and 1 Supervisor.

Congleton Town Council activities are based around five key goals

- An Active and Engaged Community
- A Sustainable Environment
- A Celebrated and Protected Heritage
- A Strong and Diverse Economy
- Operational Quality



Key Achievements

Some of the major achievements for 2015/16 include:

- Provided direct support to Congleton In Bloom, which won the North West in Bloom Competition, Pride of Cheshire East Competition and an Environmental Award for Local Authorities
- Support to the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan team – including managing two of the best supported public consultations in Congleton
- Appointed a New Chief Officer, David McGifford
- Appointed New Commercial Partners for the Town Hall, Congleton Town Hall Events and Parties
- Pushed for the development of the Public Realm Town Centre Improvements – consultation on which has now started.
- Recruited two apprentices for streetscape and made the Town Council office apprentice a permanent post
- Induction of nine new councillors following the May 2015 elections
- Upgraded the website to be mobile and tablet friendly
- Renovating and improving the Antrobus Street Garden

Some key areas of work for 2015/16–taken from the Business Plan were:-

An Active and Engaged Community

- Administered the community grant scheme to help support and develop local groups including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Congleton Community Projects and Congleton Partnership (see page 8)
- Updated and redesigned the Town Council website to be mobile and tablet friendly. Since the launch of the new site the bounce rate has dropped considerably. Town noticeboards are updated weekly. Over 3500 tweets have been sent and @CongletonTown currently has more than 2,500 followers. Bear Necessities produced four times per year
- Continued to engage in the town's next generation by supporting youth organisations and facilities, working with the Town's Youth Council Committee, hosting the Teddy Bears Picnic and supporting the Youth Forum and first Youth Celebration Day
- Supported sport & leisure facilities, which promote healthy lifestyles, including Team Congleton's Every Step Counts Walking Campaign
- Encouraged more people to join in 'In Bloom and Community Pride competitions by offering opportunities to get involved
- Maintained Mayor's Cadet Scheme
- Support the work of the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan team, with assistance from volunteers and key members of the community

A Sustainable Environment

- Work of the handyman and streetscape services target issues that protect and enhance the local environment, improve green open spaces and create more sustainable planting areas
- Encouraged more volunteers to become involved in the town clean teams, RHS It's Your Neighbourhood schemes and the wider Congleton In Bloom campaign
- Making the town safer by part-funding four of the six Police Community Support Officers, supporting Cheshire East with winter gritting, funding CCTV in the town and supporting Pub Watch and Shop Watch groups
- Installing measures to improve energy efficiency in the Town Hall
- Supporting efforts to soften and green Mountbatten Way, included in Public Realm Strategy
- Worked with Congleton Partnership to help complete phase 4 of the River Dane Walkway, to provide a green corridor across the town



A Celebrated and Protected Heritage

- Continued to support Congleton Museum's acquisition of Bradshaw House
- Promoted the Town Council's Civic Role through Mayoralty and Town Crier activities
- Worked with parties to ensure that planned regeneration and new developments reflect the heritage and traditional architecture of the Town
- Supporting the development of the Cenotaph area as a local heritage scheme
- Promote access to Town Treasures and the Town Hall

A Strong and Diverse Economy

- Continue to facilitate and promote phase 1 & 2 of the Public Realm Strategy, which involves improving the pedestrian area and the Market Street and Swan Bank ends of the area
- Lobby Cheshire East for use of S106 money for Town Centre Regeneration
- Lobbying Cheshire East to provide an upgraded Leisure Centre/Lifestyle centre for Congleton
- Encourage and support activities to increase the number and dwell time of visitors to the Town Centre
- Promote Congleton as a great place to live, work and visit
- Liaise with retailers in town and provide Town Centre Management
- Lobby for high quality employment sites and improvement of existing Business Parks to be included in the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan
- Promoting Congleton Link Road to improve access to Business Parks and reduce congestion

Key Priorities for 2016/17

- Upgrade the Town's Public Toilets
- Work with the Neighbourhood Plan team to get a Congleton Neighbourhood Plan to Referendum
- Work with Cheshire East to gain maximum benefit to Congleton from the Public Realm works
- Represent the North West in Britain in Bloom
- Host the Start of Day Three of the Tour of Britain
- Increase the revenue raised through greater use of the Town Hall
- Seek Gold Level Accreditation with the Local Council Award Scheme
- Lobby for the Improved Leisure Centre works to start
- Improve Moody Street Gardens in Town
- Introduce Town Welcome Maps
- Support and encourage new quality events for Congleton
- To support the development of a Congleton Sports Trust



Key Events

APRIL

28th- 1st May- Alternative, Electric Picture House

MAY

12th- Mayor Making, Congleton Town Hall

28th- Paddling Pool Opens

JUNE

12th- Congleton Food and Drink Festival, Congleton Town Centre

14th- Teddy Bears Picnic, Congleton Park

19th- Congleton Mayor Civic Parade

19th- Congleton Brass on the Grass, Congleton Park

JULY

3rd- Lions Youth Band, Congleton Park

10th- Audley Brass Band, Congleton Park

10th-13th- Congleton 150 year celebrations of the Town Hall

16th- Congleton Carnival

24th- Rode Hall Brass Band, Congleton Park

Congleton in Regional North West In Bloom Competition

AUGUST

8th- Congleton in Britain in Bloom Judging Day

14th- Salt City Jazz Men, Congleton Park

27th-28th- Congleton Jazz & Blues Festival

SEPTEMBER

6th- Tour of Britain- Start of Day 3

11th- Paddling Pool Closes

18th- Lions Duck Race

NOVEMBER

5th- Rotary Bonfire, Congleton Park

13th- Remembrance Parade

25th- Congleton Christmas Lights Switch On

Contacts

You can contact Congleton Town Council at:

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