



Annual Report of Congleton Town Council 2016-17



Congleton Town Mayor- Cllr David Brown



Being the Mayor of Congleton is a huge honour and a humbling experience. As I near the end of my third time as Mayor, I am as much in awe of the role, the history and the people that we have in Congleton as I was on my very first day as Mayor back in May 2003.

As Mayor you get to meet many groups and organisations that contribute to life in town. In 2003 I thought we had a lot of volunteers, but this has increased vastly over the past 14 years. The work that volunteers carry out in Congleton – from running clubs, events and organisations, to renovating and running the Old Saw Mill and litter picking – is immense and adds huge value to our town.

It's literally been an action packed year! One of the year's highlights was Congleton hosting the start of day three of the Tour of Britain in September. Congleton people turned out in their thousands and we were able to show the nation and the world our fabulous town. It was fantastic having so many elite cyclists in our town as well as so many children taking up the cycling challenge. It's one thing watching cyclists, I never thought seven months later I would be on a bike completing my first ever triathlon in aid of the Town Mayor's charities! I'm pleased to say that after some intensive training I swam, cycled and ran and along with fellow councillors, staff and friends raised over £4000 for my charity East Cheshire Hospice.

In July 2016 Congleton Town Hall celebrated 150 years of being at the heart of civic life in the town. Lord and Lady Congleton, previous Mayors of the Town and many civic guests were among those who helped mark the occasion. This was followed by three days of a living history exhibition on Victorian Congleton that was attended by around 500 young people. The historic traditions continue as next year we get ready to celebrate 700 years of Mayoralty in Congleton. The first Mayor, Philip son of Richard was made Mayor of Congleton in 1318.

Congleton bloomed in the summer – gaining gold at both Britain in Bloom and North West in Bloom. The town won Best Large Town in the North West for the third time in four years. Work is well underway on the 2017 entry with the aim of getting back into the Nationals in 2018. This is a huge community entry with hundreds of people involved.

There were numerous other highlights to my year including:

- Attending the Annual Food and Drink Festival in June
- My Civic Parade in June
- Cheering on Congleton Carnival in July
- Enjoying some top music events at the Congleton Jazz and Blues Festival in August and Congleton Unplugged in March
- Representing the town at the Britain in Bloom presentation night in September
- Meeting representatives of the Princess Irene Brigade who came over from Holland for the Remembrance Sunday Parade in November
- Christmas festivities including the Christmas Lights Switch-on in November
- Watching many fantastic performances in the Town Hall, Daneside Theatre and other venues
- Being inspired by young people at visits to schools, clubs and at the Junior Council meetings held in the Town Hall.
- The great turnout and fun had at the Mayor's Ball in March
- Surviving my first 'sprint triathlon' in April

As Mayor I have also had the privilege of being the Chairman of the Town Council for the year. I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support and for the decisions taken this year. It was good to see action being taken on improving the public toilets, the changes in the luncheon club that are benefiting more people, refurbishing the paddling pool, working with Cheshire East on the pedestrian area improvements which are due to start this summer and seeing the Neighbourhood Plan moving towards the referendum - all of which will benefit Congleton residents. Town Councillors are unpaid elected positions and I really appreciate the hard work that fellow councillors put in behind the scenes to improve our town.

I would like to thank my daughter, Jane Brown, for being my Mayoress, Daniel Bonney from the ATC for the superb role he has played as my Cadet and Cllr Charles Booth for his active role as Deputy Mayor. I would also like to thank the Chief Officer, David McGifford, Civic Administration Officer Linda Minshull and other members of the Town Council staff for all their support.

I wish the next Mayor, who will be elected by fellow Councillors on Thursday 4th May, all the very best and hope that they enjoy the year as much as I have.

Councillor David Brown



Mayor Cllr David Brown with Daughter, Mayoress Jane Brown & Grandson Benjamin



Mayor Cllr David Brown with Cadet Daniel Bonney



Mayor Cllr David Brown prize giving at the Tour of Britain



Mayor Cllr David Brown finishing his first Triathlon
(Photograph by Beartown TV)

Leader of the Council - Cllr Bob Edwards

It always fills me with pride to see how Congletonians turn out in their thousands to support the many events that are organised in the Town over the course of the year. To name just a few of those events from last year – the Food & Drink festival in June was an outstanding success with over 100 stalls and more than 20,000 visitors despite the wet afternoon.

The bi-annual Carnival attracted thousands of people lining the streets to watch the procession of floats and marching groups and bands – despite the atrocious weather.

The annual Jazz & Blues festival in August which features more than 30 different acts performing in a variety of locations throughout the Town is particularly successful in filling the venues, most often to capacity. The owners of Capitol Walk were kind enough to open the facility, firstly for the Jazz & Blues festival and then again for the Tour of Britain, creating 'Ale Avenue'. Every shop was taken over by local breweries and pubs and once again the Town's people filled the venue on both occasions.



I can't let this moment pass without mentioning the Tour of Britain. When I wrote this article for last year's annual report we knew that we would be hosting the start of the 3rd stage of the cycling Tour of Britain in September but at that stage didn't have any detailed plans. What an incredible event it turned out to be! Apparently it was one of the most successful and well attended events the organisers had ever seen. More than 15,000 visitors attended the spectacular show.

There have been many more events equally well supported, Congleton Unplugged; Lions Duck race; Rotary Bonfire; Remembrance Day Parade and the Christmas Lights Switch On. On behalf of the Town Council, I would like to thank all of the individual organisers for all the hard work that goes on in bringing these events into the Town.

Another thing that fills me with pride is the Town's success in the 'In Bloom' competitions. I am proud not only of our success, overall winners of NW In Bloom and gold medal winners of Britain In Bloom, but also of the people that make these things happen. The Town Council's Streetscape team are responsible for the wonderful flower displays in the Town centre, along Mountbatten Way, the roundabouts and the park. Their efforts are supported by the many volunteers that regularly meet to add the finishing touches by litter picking and weeding to make sure that when the 'In Bloom' judges arrive we can show off the Town in its best light. A huge Thank You to everyone involved.

I mentioned last year that we were working hard on the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan is a document that both supports and compliments 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 and will help us determine how the Town will evolve over the course of the next 15 years especially in dealing with the housing development that is planned – particularly outside of our Town boundary. The work is now almost complete. It is now ready to be submitted to Cheshire East for inspection (this process is called Regulation 14) and following any amendments by them it will go out for Public Consultation – probably late summer. If all goes to plan, The Town centre refurbishment will start soon. The design has been signed off, all of the materials and street furniture have been chosen and Cheshire East is in the process of inviting tenders for the work. Once the successful contractor has been appointed the work can commence.

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

Councillor Bob Edwards



Cyclists on the start line at the Tour of Britain Cycle Race



Congleton's Big Spring Clean Volunteers



Congleton In Bloom Celebration Evening



Congleton Youth Council



Celebrating 150 Years of Congleton Town Hall

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 life-span 2015-2019 are:

East Ward

Larry Barker (C)
Charles Booth (C)
Peter Broom (C)
David Brown (C)- Mayor
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)

C = Conservative

L = Labour

UKIP = UK Independent Party

Officers for the period of this annual report were:

- Chief Officer- David McGifford
- Support Manager- RFO- Jackie Potts
- Town Centre and Marketing Manager- Jackie MacArthur
- Facilities and Development Manager- Chris Jones
- Streetscape Development Manager- Ruth Burgess
- Town Hall Supervisor- Mark Worthington
- Civic Administration Officer- Linda Minshull
- Administration Assistants- Andrea Morris-Wild & Sue Trow
- Marketing and Administration Assistant- Martha Hayes
- Congleton Partnership Co-ordinator- Mike Smith
- Town Hall Caretaker- Tim Muston
- Facility Officers- Pete Forster, Melvin Hulme, Rowan Nightingale
- Streetscape Operatives- Chris Banks, James Bibby, Terry Davies, Simon Farrall, Dave Foster, Mick Pritchard, Rob Serwin, Mark Stubbs, Noel Stubbs, Andrew Turnock, 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 2016-17 were:

Council: 12/5, 16/6, 7/7, 18/8, 15/9, 27/10, 1/12, 19/1, 2/3, 13/4

Planning: 2/6, 23/6, 14/7, 18/8, 22/9, 13/10, 3/11, 17/11, 5/1, 26/1, 9/2, 9/3, 6/4

Finance & Policy: 9/6, 8/9, 20/10, 24/11, 12/1, 16/2, 23/3

Community, Environment & Services: 30/6, 25/8, 6/10, 10/11, 2/2, 16/3

Town Hall: 23/6, 22/9, 9/3

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 2016-17 the precept was £784,342 with a Support Grant provided by Cheshire East Borough Council of £24,945 which has been halved from the previous year. Total cost of Streetscape Services was £523,902 of which £362,596 funded through the Cheshire East contract.

Below is a summary of income and expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2017. The funds are spent providing services and representing the people of Congleton. In broad terms in 2016-17 the Town Council spent the money raised on the following:

Congleton Town Council Management Accounts March 2017

Congleton Town Council - Management Accounts - March 2017

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	% of Budget
Finance and Policy Committee				
Corporate Management:-Expenditure	123,640	130,584	6,944	95%
Corporate Management :- Income	-29,310	-2,500	26,810	1172%
Civic Expenditure	49,755	50,049	294	99%
Grants	67,429	70,983	3,554	95%
F&P Net Expenditure Totals	211,514	249,116	37,602	85%
Community and Environment	203,945	215,800	11,855	95%
Streetscape	143,662	160,306	16,644	90%
C,E & S Income - Net Expenditure Totals	347,607	376,106	28,499	92%
Town Hall - Expenditure	152,459	155,892	3,433	98%
Town Hall - Income	-116,107	-98,150	17,957	118%
Net Expenditure over Income	36,352	57,742	21,390	63%
Capital Expenditure	96,778	96,778	0	
Total Net Expenditure	692,251	779,742	87,491	89%
Precept 2016/17	784,342			
Underspend	92,091			
Transfer to Ear Marked Reserves	88,000			
To General Reserve	4,091			

Grants Given

The Town Council has supported local voluntary and community groups within approximately £66,000 worth of grants in 2016-17. It also supported Partnership Projects with £15,000 and Police Community Support Officers with £47,000. Among those assisted were:

Name		£
Grants given to hirers of the Town Hall	Town Hall Hire	3,111
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		47,611

Name	Project	£
Congleton Cricket Club	Safety Netting Facilities	250
Congleton Talking Newspaper	Repairs to Studio	250
SOL Theatre Group	SOL Theatre Summer School	1000
Congleton Harriers	Congleton Half Marathon	250
	Cloud 9 Hill Race	250
Congleton Jazz & Blues	Jazz & Blues Festival	500
St. Peter's Church	Maintenance of St Peter's Clock	265.20
	Phase 2 Ceiling Repair & Restoration	1000
Congleton Carnival	2016 Carnival	1290
Congleton Musical Theatre	Production of "Sister Act" Musical	500
St. James Church	Replacing Heating System	1000
Congleton Town Football Club	Refurbishment of Clubhouse Roof	250
Trinity Methodist Church	Refurbishment of Westwood House Roof	1000
Congleton Police- SpeedWatch	SpeedWatch Hi-Viz Jackets	40
St. John's Community Centre	Renovation of the Church Hall	1000
Minerva Arts	Promote Congleton's Heritage in performance	250
Congleton Bowling Club	Improvements to the Bowling Pavilion	250
Friends of Congleton Park	Brass on the Grass	300
Congleton Unplugged	Congleton Unplugged Festival	500
Congleton ATC 230 Squadron	Exercise Confidence Course	350
New Life Church	Defibrillator	200
Congleton United Reformed Church	Congleton "Big Heart" Lunch Club	829
Congleton Community Projects	Food & Drink Festival Road Closures	715
St. Mary's Parish Centre	Defibrillator	213
Congleton Pentecostal Church	Church Hall Refurbishment	500
Congleton Community Credit Union	Membership of CE CVS	45
	Account Software Update	240
Town Hall Group	150 Year Celebrations	5000
TOTAL		18,237.20



Congleton United Reformed Church



Congleton Unplugged Festival



Friends of Congleton Park



Minerva Arts

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, 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 tips, litter picking and generally keeping Congleton a safe and tidy town to live in.

Each year the Streetscape team plant around 36,000 summer bedding plants and 30,700 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 11 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 of 2016/17 were:

- Providing direct support to Congleton in Bloom which won the North West in Bloom and Pride of Cheshire East competition
- Completed the much needed renovations of the Market Street Toilets
- Changed the luncheon club arrangements to benefit more socially isolated residents within the same budget
- Worked with Cheshire East on the design for the improvements to the pedestrian area
- Hosted the Start of Stage Three of the Tour of Britain Cycle Race
- Marked the 150th anniversary of the Town Hall with a three day living history exhibition for 500 school children
- Increased the revenue raised through the hire of the Town Hall with income £17,000 over budget and expenditure on the Town Hall £2,000 under budget.
- One of seven UK towns involved in an Innovate UK funded Big Data Small User project to understand ways to improve footfall and sales in the town centres.
- Delivered the first community Triathlon in Congleton Park

Some key areas of work for 2016/17 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)
- Continue to develop the Town Council website - it receives around 3,000 unique visitors a month. Update the Town notice boards weekly. Increase the Town Council's Social Media presence. Produce Bear Necessities four times per year
- Continue 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, promoting the town's play areas, supporting the Youth Forum and engaging with the schools.
- Support sport & leisure facilities, which promote healthy lifestyles, including activities to improve cycling and walking facilities around the town and promote the Tour of Britain Stage three.
- Encouraged more people to join in In Bloom and Community Pride competitions by offering opportunities to get involved.
- Maintain the 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

- 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.
- Installing measures to improve energy efficiency in the Town Hall
- Working with Congleton Partnership to 'green' Mountbatten Way



A Celebrated and Protected Heritage

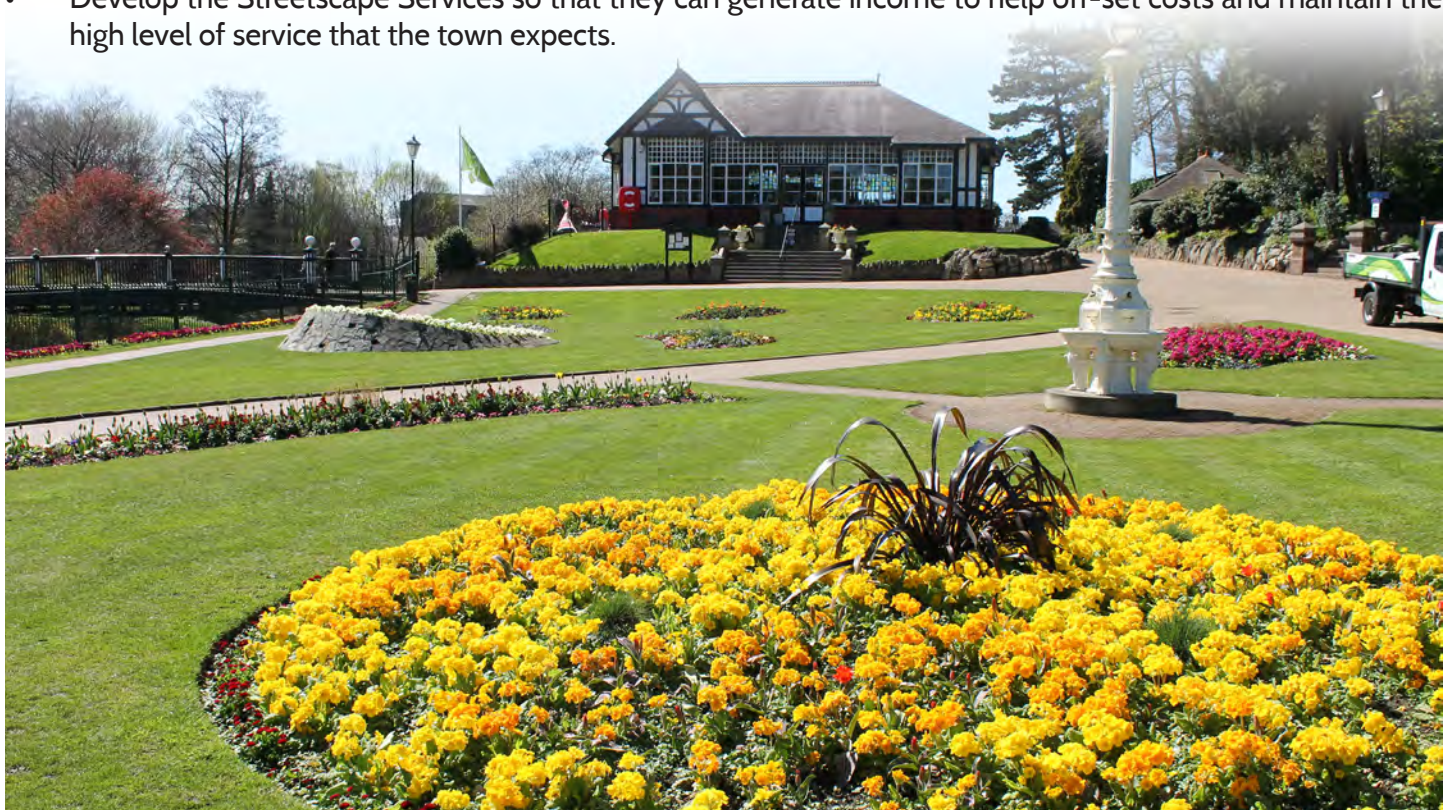
- Celebrated the 150th year Anniversary of Congleton Town Hall
- Continued to support Congleton Museum's acquisition of Bradshaw House
- Promoted the Town Council's Civic Role through Mayoralty and Town Crier activities
- Worked with third parties to ensure that planned regeneration and new developments reflect the heritage and traditional architecture of the Town
- Promote access to Town Treasures and the Town Hall

A Strong and Diverse Economy

- Continue to facilitate and promote the Public Realm improvements planned for 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 and other green area improvements, most recently Moody Street Garden
- Lobby Cheshire East to provide an upgraded Leisure Centre for Congleton
- Encourage and support activities to increase the number and dwell time of visitors to the Town Centre through working with the Traders Group and the Innovate UK Big Data Small User project
- Lobby for high quality employment sites and improvement of existing Business Parks to be included in the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan
- Promote Congleton Link Road to improve access to the Town Centre and Business Parks, reduce congestion and improve air quality

Key Priorities for 2017/18

- Further reduce the deficit on the Town Hall working budget
- Obtain Gold Level Accreditation with the Local Council Award Scheme
- Get the Neighbourhood Plan through to Referendum
- Support the development of a Congleton Sports Trust and lobby to improve the playing pitch provision in Congleton
- Introduce more quality events for Congleton
- Seek to win the North West in Bloom large town category
- Work with the Police and other parties to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour in the town
- Develop the Streetscape Services so that they can generate income to help off-set costs and maintain the high level of service that the town expects.



Key Events

May

- 4th- Mayor Making, Congleton Town Hall
- 27th- Paddling Pool Opens

June

- 11th- Congleton Food & Drink Festival, Congleton Town Centre
- 13th- Teddy Bears Picnic
- 18th- Congleton Brass on the Grass, Congleton Park
- 25th- Congleton Mayor Civic Parade

July

- 1st- Cheshire East CVS Celebration, Congleton Park
- 9th- Lions Youth Brass Band, Congleton Park
- 16th- Audley Brass Band, Congleton Park
- 23rd- Dog Show, Congleton Park
- 30th- Rode Hall Silver Band, Congleton Park
- Congleton in Regional North West In Bloom Competition

August

- 3rd- National Play Day
- 13th- Salt City Jazz Band, Congleton Park
- 20th- Rode Hall Silver Band, Congleton Park
- 25th-27th- Congleton Jazz & Blues Festival

September

- 7th-10th- National Heritage Days
- 9th- Congleton Horticultural Show, Congleton Town Hall
- 10th- Paddling Pool Closes
- 17th- Lions Duck Race
- 29th- Senior Health & Wellbeing Fair, Congleton Town Hall

November

- 4th- Rotary Bonfire, Congleton Park
- 12th- Remembrance Parade
- 25th- Congleton Christmas Lights Switch On

Contacts

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