



ANNUAL REPORT OF

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

2013-14



Mayors Overview

I must start by conveying my sincere thanks to friends, family, colleagues and staff for their incredible support during my term of office in this prestigious role. I am very honoured to have served my hometown as Mayor this year, in what has again been such a successful and enjoyable year in Congleton.



My term in office started on the 9th May 2013 to a full Town Hall, and a BBC North West audience, given the extensive coverage which my appointment gained. Since this date, I have fulfilled a number of engagements across the Town and in neighbouring towns, all of which I have thoroughly enjoyed'

There are indeed too many engagements to mention individually; however an over view of some of the events which I have attended is shown below:-

- **Mercian Regiment Parade;** it was fantastic to see so many people turn out to welcome home our local regiment. The community spirit of our "little town with the big heart" truly came through, giving our service personnel a deserved warm welcome to Congleton.
- **Food and Drink Festival;** this annual extravaganza again proved to be incredibly popular. It was wonderful to see the town centre thriving, with so many different ages getting involved in the activities of the festival, in such glorious weather.
- **Remembrance Weekend;** it was a pleasure to host the Princess Irene Fusiliers Brigade of the Netherlands over Remembrance Weekend, given their heritage with our town. It was again heart-warming to see so many people turn out in remembrance of those who gave and continue to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country.
- **Christmas Lights;** the excitement and celebration of the Christmas season was really special in Congleton, and it started by joining the Town Crier and Santa Claus to switch on our new Christmas lights, which looked great! It was a lovely start to a busy Christmas season as Mayor!
- **North West in Bloom;** with thanks to so many volunteers and groups, we were triumphant at the North West in Bloom competition. We now go on to represent the North West at the national competition "Britain in Bloom" in the forthcoming year. I'm confident that our floral displays will continue to rival some of the best in the country, something which we should be rightfully proud of.
- **Visits to Schools;** we benefit from such outstanding schools in Congleton; it has been a real highlight of the role to visit so many of our schools, both primary and secondary,

to take part in their many activities and celebrate their successes, whilst hopefully inspiring them to get involved in their community.

- **Theatre Visits;** having such a thriving local theatre is a great asset to our town. I have been consistently impressed with the standard of performances from all of the local theatre groups and have very much enjoyed attending.
- **Church Visits;** as part of my role, I have attended a number of church services. These opportunities have all demonstrated the excellent work of our church communities across the town, something which is so important to the caring Congleton community.

When taking office, I promised to serve the town in the best way I could and I very much hope that you feel I have lived up to this promise, promoting Congleton and all of the fantastic things which go on in our town, whilst also celebrating our success. Much of this work simply wouldn't function without the valued support and coordination of volunteers and the Congleton community spirit, which is so vastly important, and for which I am so very thankful.

During my year of office, I have raised around £6000 for my chosen charities. £3000 of this will be directed to the Macclesfield Special Care Baby Unit, in memory of my late sister, Alice, who was cared for by the Unit, with the remaining monies being split amongst other local causes. I am thankful to all those who have specifically supported my fundraising during the year.

I am again incredibly thankful for the excellent support which I have received during my term of office and I very much look forward to continuing to serve our special town, long into the future.

Councillor. G. P. Hayes

Consort: Tracey Hayes, **Cadet:** Jordan Goodwin, **Chaplain:** Sister Heather Kemball

Leader of the Council

As we come to the end of our Council year – it is time to reflect on what happened during the last year and what we have to look forward to in 2014.

Well – by last year's standards – 2013 was a very quiet year. We didn't have the Torch relay, Diamond Jubilee street parties, Luverly Jubilee Park event; it's a Knockout or the Carnival.

However, what we did have was a number of events which demonstrated that the people of our lovely Town are prepared to turn out in their thousands to support these events and help us celebrate the success of what we do.

The first major event of the year was the return of the Mercian Regiment on the 14th of June. Congleton was one of a few Cheshire Towns chosen to host and celebrate the Regiments return from Afghanistan. The march through Town saw the streets lined with thousands of spectators, young and old, who gave the regiment a wonderful welcome. After the march the soldiers were entertained to a buffet lunch before returning home to their loved ones.

We were blessed with some really good weather in June and as well as giving us a brilliant day for the Mercian march the annual Food and Drink Festival two days later saw the sun shining for another hugely popular event. The Festival, run by Congleton Community projects, goes from strength to strength.

Continuing on the good weather theme, we had our first 'Park Live' event on the 12th and 13th of July. Park Live was an experiment to give us a fill in event between the bi-annual Carnival. It also gave the new Carnival committee some experience of organising large crowd events. It was an extremely well run event and the only mishap was a case of sunstroke – not something that we have much experience of in Cheshire!

During the summer, the Cheshire East Streetscape team and the dedicated volunteers worked hard to ensure that the Town looked its very best for the annual North West 'In Bloom' judging which took place on the 22nd July. The Town did indeed look marvelous, with many new community led initiatives which resulted in Congleton being declared overall winners in the large town category. Congratulations and a big thank you to everyone who made this happen.

As we moved in to winter, the Remembrance Day parade on the 10th of November once again attracted huge crowds of people lining the streets to watch the parade and witness the ceremony at the Cenotaph. And to finish 2013 – the marvelous Christmas lights switch on. Our Town Centre is never fuller than at this event and congratulations to the organisers for ensuring the whole thing went off successfully and safely.

On Jan 1st Congleton Town Council took over responsibility for the Cheshire East Streetscape team. This makes sure that we maintain our streets, flower beds, roundabouts and Park to the high standards that we have become used to. We feel certain that we will be able to run the

team more efficiently, particularly as we have replaced some old and unreliable equipment. Hopefully we will be able to achieve more with the same resources.

Sunday 20th April saw our first monthly Artisan market take place in Duke Street and Bridge Street in the Town Centre. It was a huge success with approximately 60 stalls. I am reliably informed that most stalls have re-booked for the next one and that there is a very large waiting list for other stall holders who want to take part.

Finally, looking forward to the rest of this municipal year, there are some major events that will keep us focused. The first is the Carnival, which this year is planned to include floats once again (30 booked already) and will take place over two days with 'It's a Knockout' on the Sunday. The second is as a result of us winning North West in Bloom – this means that we are automatically entered in to Britain in Bloom. We are extremely proud that we have reached this level and know that everyone involved will put in a great effort to ensure that we do well. We are also proud to be informed that along with Manchester we are the only town in the Northwest to host the Queens Commonwealth Baton relay. If the Olympic Torch relay is anything to go by – this event will be incredibly well supported. It will be a (free) ticket only event so make sure that you get yours booked.

Once again, it has been a year of hard work, but, I have enjoyed every minute of it (well most anyway!). It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve as Leader of The Council on behalf of the Town.

Councillor Bob Edwards

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. **All seats are up for election in May 2015.**

East

Larry Barker (C)
David Brown (C)
Bob Edwards (C)
Guy Brittain (C)
George Hayes (C)
Sally Ann Holland (C)
Douglas Parker (C)
Glen Williams (C)
Rebecca Williams (C)
Paul Bates (C)

West

Dawn Allen (C)
Gordon Baxendale (C)
Robbie Brightwell (C)
Louise Bours (UKIP)
John Saville Crowther (IVC)
Amanda Martin(C)
Denis Murphy LD)
Jean Parry (C)
Neville Price (I)
Elizabeth Wardlaw (C)

C = Conservative, I= Independent, IVC=independent Voice of Congleton, LD=Liberal Democrats UKIP=UK Independent Party

Officers for the period of this annual report were:

- Town Clerk - Brian Hogan
- Support Manager - Jackie Potts
- Town Centre and Marketing Manager - Jackie MacArthur
- Admin Assistant (Mayoral) - Linda Minshull
- Administrative Assistants - Andrea Morris-Wild, Sue Trow
- Facilities Manager- Chris Jones
- Streetscape Supervisor – Ruth Boffey
- Handymen - Chris Banks, Mark Worthington
- Streetscape Operatives - 10
- 2 Halls Officers
- Casual Paddling Pool Attendants May - September
- Caretaking Staff

Council Meetings

The Council has a number of committees, most of which meet around 6 times a year. The dates for meetings in 2013-14 were:-

Community, Environment & Services 6/6 29/8 3/10 21/11 6/2 20/3

Council	30/5 4/7 19/9 31/10 5/12 16/1 6/3 17/4
Finance and Policy	30/5 29/8 17/10 28/11 9/1 20/2 27/3
Planning	23/5 13/6 27/6 18/7 22/8 5/9 26/9 17/10 14/11 28/11 9/1 23/1 20/2 13/3 3/4
Town Hall Committee	13/6 26/9 14/11 13/3

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 money comes from a precept which is added to the Council Tax levy set by the Principal Authority. In 2013-14 the precept was £618,472 with a Support Grant provided by Cheshire East Borough Council of £75,354. Below is a summary of income and expenditure for the year ending 31st March 2014.

The money is spent providing services and representing the people of Congleton. In broad terms in 2013-14 the Town Council spent the money it raised on the following:

Congleton Town Council - Management Accounts – 2013-14

	2013/14	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total
	£	£	£
<u>Finance and Policy</u>			
101 Corporate Management	123,693	137,349	13,656
102 Democratic Rep'n & Civic	44,755	51,312	6,557
107 Grants	62,616	77,033	14,417
F&P Income - Expenditure Totals	231,064	265,694	34,630
<u>Community, Environment & Services</u>			
201 Paddling Pool	24,943	22,621	-2,322
212 Propagation Unit	0	1,000	1,000
215 Floral Displays	18,280	17,500	-780
241 Allotments	175	180	5
251 Handyman service	55,108	74,311	19,203
263 Public Toilets	0	0	0
264 Shopmobility	0	0	0
280 Streetscape	34,956	37,773	2,817
301 Congleton Partnership	32,423	25,963	-6,460
302 Community Development	29,532	32,272	2,740
303 Police Community Support Officers	47,200	47,200	0
305 Christmas Fayre/lights	3,716	4,000	284
321 Tourism	2,656	3,000	344
341 Youth and Young People	1,614	2,000	386

351	Fellowship House	5,179	4,557	-622
				0
		255,782	272,377	16,595
	<u>Town Hall</u>			
221	Town Hall - Expenditure	155,210	157,560	-2,350
	Town Hall - Income	103,477	98,583	-4,894
		51,733	58,977	7,244
	<u>Total Net Expenditure</u>	538,579	597,048	58,469
	Capital Expenditure	99,169	96,778	-2,391
	Transfer to Ear Marked reserves	52,500		
		151,669	96,778	-2,391
	Total Spend 2013/14	690,248	693,826	3,578
	Precept	618,472		
	Precept support grant	75,354		
	Total	693,826		

The Town Council has supported local voluntary and community groups with approximately £64,000 worth of grants in 2013-14

Among those assisted were:

		£
Grants given to hirers of the Town Hall		4,491.50
Congleton Museum	Notional rent	4,500.00
Community Projects	Project support	16,000.00
Congleton Partnership	Rent	1,533.00
Citizens Advice Bureau	annual grant	15,000.00
Christmas Lights	Christmas Lights	9,000.00
Carnival Committee	Bi-annual Congleton Carnival	3,750.00
Mercian March	Mercian March through town	2,367.75
Royal British Legion	Remembrance Day Parade	751.00
St Peter's Church	Church clock maintenance	243.60

Vale Juniors	Girls Trophies	273.58
Cong Musical theatre	Support for the Sound of Music	250.00
Eaton Bank academy	Ann Packer Centre support	1,000.00
Congleton Harriers	Support for Congleton half marathon	250.00
Congleton Choral Society	Set up Children's Choir	250.00
Cong Jazz and Blues Festival	support for 2013 festival	500.00
Friends of Congleton Park	Cables etc. for park events	200.00
The Smile Group	1 month costs	250.00
Bromley Farm Friendship Group	Support for Christmas meals/presents	250.00
Danielle Wright-Humphreys	Support for pageant	100.00
Congleton Harriers	Support for Cloud 9 Race	250.00
Friends of Congleton Park	Brass in the Park	250.00
Ruby's Fund - auction prize		63.32
Sol Theatre School	Summer theatre school 2014	1,000.00
Bromley Farm Community Trust	Support for Bromley farm news	400.00
Congleton Building Preservation Trust	support for Physic garden	500.00
Total		£63423.75

What Services does the Town Council Provide:

1. We fund 50% of the cost of four Police Community Support Officers, without our contribution there would be none in the Town
2. We operate a Handyman Service who are responsible for cleaning up a variety of areas around the Town, removing litter, graffiti, tidying open areas, clearing pathways and alleys, anything to make the Town cleaner and tidier.
3. We operate a Streetscape Team consisting of a staff of 11 transferred from Cheshire East Borough Council on the 1st January 2014. Their role is to keep the Town tidy, empty litter bins and look after the ground maintenance activities in and around the Town and in Congleton Park.
4. We have a Market Town Manager who organises a variety of events in the Town as well as spending time promoting the Town and its businesses
5. We have restored and refurbished the Town Hall which was inherited from Congleton Borough Council; this has cost about £750,000, although there are still some projects

to complete. The finance for the work is provided by way of a low cost Government loan and an interest free loan from the former Congleton Borough Council

6. The Council returns approximately £65,000 per year to organisations within Congleton to support their various activities, including making a significant contribution to the Citizens Advice Bureau
7. The Council provides Allotments
8. The Paddling Pool is opened annually and maintained
9. All of our Councillors are volunteers and do not receive any remuneration or fee whatsoever

Congleton Town Council is the most local level of Government. It serves the town's 26,500 residents by:

- Providing an essential link between town residents and Cheshire East Borough Council to ensure grass roots views are heard and considered.
- Facilitating economic development and regeneration of the Town
- Examining all 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 the Town 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 well-being of Congleton residents.

Some of the major achievements for 2013-14 include:

- High Street facing office facilities open Monday – Friday 9-5pm
- Part-funded Four Police Community Officers for the Town (£47.2k)
- Produced quarterly Town Council and Community Newsletter (Bear Necessities)
- Transferred Streetscape operations from Cheshire East Borough Council to the Town Council
- Provided new branded vehicles and equipment to the Streetscape Team
- Continued and developed the well-respected Town Handy Person Scheme
- Worked on promotion of the Town
- Christmas Fayre and Lights Switch on ceremony
- Replaced many Xmas lights decorations
- Supported town events such as the Food and Drink Festival
- Continued to support an active Youth Committee to serve the Town
- Provided direct support to Congleton In Bloom, and Cheshire Pride Awards
- Achieved gold in North West in Bloom and became overall winner.
- Selected to represent North West in Bloom in Britain in Bloom competition in 2014
- Winner of Community Pride Award – Best kept large Town
- Won Best Kept Website for www.congleton-tc.gov.uk
- Completed improvements to Radnor Park signage
- High Profile Congleton Partnership & liaison with businesses

- Promoted business and Link2Prosperity
- Notion of a Northern Link Road adopted in Cheshire East Local plan
- Provided Town Centre Management
- Promoted the Town Hall as a Wedding Venue and held further Wedding Fayre

Some key initiatives for 2013-14 – taken from the Corporate Strategy are: -

An Active and Engaged Community

- To administer the community grant scheme to help support and develop local groups including the CAB
- Support the Congleton Community Partnership
- To operate openly and share information through the Town
- Council website, community newsletter, notice boards and the media.
- To continue to engage in the town’s next generation by supporting youth organisations & facilities and by working with the Town’s Youth Councillor Committee.
- Support sport and leisure facilities which promote healthy lifestyles including supporting Team Congleton’s activities in assisting in the Queen’s Baton Relay Event in Congleton.
- Support Congleton’s Food and Drink
- Maintained Mayor’s Cadet scheme
- Complete the Town Hall energy improvements.
- Measure the carbon footprint of the Town Hall
- Support efforts to soften and green Mountbatten Way, included in Public Realm Strategy
- Completed phases 2 and 3 of the River Dane Walkway to provide a green corridor across the town.
- Continued to facilitate and promote phase 1 of the Public Realm Strategy
- Actively support the Management Plans for our Conservation Areas
- Work with parties to ensure that regeneration and new developments reflect the heritage and traditional architecture of the Town
- Lobbied for the inclusion of the Link Road in the Cheshire East Local Plan
- Supporting the development of the Cenotaph area as a local heritage scheme

A Sustainable Environment

- Continue the Town Handyperson service and integrate with Streetscape Team.
- To directly support “In Bloom” initiatives in Congleton Bromley Farm and Buglawton
- Encourage more volunteers to become involved in the town clean teams and Congleton in Bloom
- Fund four Police Community Support Officers to work in the town and support the work of Shopwatch

A Strong and Diverse Economy

- Lobbying Cheshire East to provide a Lifestyle Centre
- Lobbied for high quality employment sites and improvement of existing Business Parks to be included in Local Plan
- Provide Town Centre Management.
- Work with partners to utilize the Town’s entrepreneurial strength

- Lobby Cheshire East for use of S106 money for Town Centre Regeneration
- Advocate for improved public transport links
- Support the Musical Festival(Jazz and Blues)
- Work with retailers to maintain trade group(s).

You can contact Congleton Town Council by:

Visiting/writing to: Congleton Town Council, Congleton Town Hall, High Street, Congleton, CW12 1BN

Website: www.congleton-tc.gov.uk

Telephoning: 01260 270350

Fax: 01260 280357

Emailing: info@congletontowncouncil.co.uk