

Annual Report of Congleton Town Council

2019-2020



Congleton Town Mayor- Cllr Sally Ann Holland



Cllr Sally Ann Holland

When I was elected Mayor on May 23 2019, I could never have anticipated the year ahead! Having already experienced the honour of serving as Congleton Town Mayor in 2012-13 (the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Torch relay) I was thrilled to be elected to the role for a second time. I was looking forward to a full year supporting local groups and organisations, attending functions on behalf of the Town Council, chairing the Town Council and being able to raise funds for two fantastic local charities, Visyon and Congleton and Macclesfield Hospital League of Friends.

Mayor Making was attended by around 100 people, including 12 new councillors elected for the first time, seven re-elected councillors and one Councillor returning after a four-year gap. The occasion was also used to say a public thank you to Douglas Parker MBE who had served as Congleton's Town Crier for 34 years and decided it was time to ring the changes and hand over the bell!



Cllr Sally Ann Holland with Retiring Mace Bearer; Douglas Parker MBE

The summer started at a pace. We welcomed Mayors from across the area to the Mayor's Parade and Civic Service on the 2 June. Mayor Bear made an entrance at the Food and Drink Festival where the intention was to make him a raffle prize. He proved such a hit that it was agreed the raffle would be extended until the end of my Mayoral time, which I expected to be May 2020! Mayor Bear became part of the Mayoral team spreading the word about what a great town Congleton is!

In July I was honoured to help open Congleton's first Pride event, which was held in the town centre. Organised by members of the LGBTQ+ community, it brought added colour, excitement, activities and pride to the town. The summer also saw the 10th anniversary of the Congleton Jazz and Blues Festival with even more events in more venues including the Town Hall and Bath House gardens.

After attending numerous litter picks, planting sessions and In Bloom activities I was delighted to attend the North West in Bloom award ceremony in Southport with some of the Congleton in Bloom team. Congleton received gold standard for the 13th time and was invited to represent the North West in the Large Town category in the National in Bloom Finals to be held in summer 2020.

Thousands packed into the town for the Annual Remembrance Service – the last at the current cenotaph, and again for the annual Christmas lights switch on. I was also honoured to read a poem at the town's first Tree of Light switch on – organised by the Town Council and Congleton Partnership.





But being Mayor is not all about the mass public events. During the year I have been honoured and blessed to meet and spend time with so many wonderful Congleton people. People in care homes, youth groups, schools, businesses and community groups. I have been bowled over with the talent of our local performers and the dedication and devotion of all those who support them, coach them and work behind the scenes to make things happen in our wonderful town.

Pre-COVID-19 I had attended more than 100 events representing the Town Council, both in the town and at events in Cheshire East where I was able to tell people about Congleton. I met the Cheshire High Sheriff, Mark Mitchell, who went on to visit Congleton several times. I had hosted several fundraisers including an 'Afternoon tea with the Mayor', a 'Mayor's Winter Warmer' and completed a school Calendar project. More fundraising events were in the pipeline including the almost sold-out Mayors ball, a charity golf tournament and a charity family walk.

Having experienced so much of the good in Congleton as Mayor, it came as no surprise to see the brilliant way that the town pulled together when COVID-19 struck in March 2020. Although I shared the disappointment of others as event after event had to be cancelled, I was immensely proud of how the community rallied round and supported each other. Staff and councillors were quick to work with others to establish a COVID LEADS group, upload useful information on the website, run a COVID community Facebook, set up an information phone line, support the Congleton Hubbers (who were in the Town Hall for the first month) and support the Big Heart Lunch club to switch the luncheon clubs to home delivery meals.

The Town Hall office operations were quickly moved online so that work and meetings could continue remotely, and COVID-19 secure working arrangements were put in place so that the Streetscape team could continue their work keeping the town looking good for everyone. It was truly amazing how people worked together.

As Mayor I am also the Chair of the Town Council. This year we had 13 new councillors elected to office and I would like to thank all my fellow councillors, who are unpaid, for their hard work throughout the year. In October 2019 we signed a climate change emergency pledging to reduce our carbon footprint. We also launched a new Business Plan with a sharper focus on creating a vibrant, inclusive, enterprising and sustainable town. You can find out more about the achievements of the Council during 2019-20 in this report.

Towards the end of my term as Mayor it became clear that it was going to be a long time before civic events were going to be able start again, and so councillors took the decision to cancel Mayor Making and to retain the status quo for another year. Therefore, I will remain Mayor for a further year. I am delighted that my husband, Dave Holland has agreed to stay as Mayor's Consort, Eloise Williams Congleton West Ranger will remain as my Mayor's Cadet, Reverend Andrew Lindley as the Mayor's Chaplain and Cllr Denis Murphy will continue as Deputy Mayor. I look forward to a time when COVID-19 restrictions are no longer necessary and when there will be the opportunity to pick back up with community events and fund raising and hope that this will be reflected in my Mayor's report of 2020-2021.

*Congleton Town Mayor Cllr Sally Ann Holland
2019-2020*

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 Councillors serving from May 2019 until May 2023 are:

East Ward

Duncan Amies (I)
David Brown (C)
Robert Douglas (LD)
George Hayes (C)
Sally Ann Holland (C)- Mayor
Robert Moreton (I)
Denis Murphy (LD)- Dept. Mayor
Mark Rogan (I)
James Smith (LD)
Kay Wesley (WEP)

West Ward

Suzanne Akers Smith (I)
Dawn Allen (C)
Martin Amies (I)
Russell Chadwick (I)
Paul Duffy (LD)
Suzy Firkin (LD)
Margaret Gartside (LD)
Robert Hemsley (LD)
Amanda Martin (C)
Jean Parry (C)

C = Conservative I = Independent LD = Liberal Democrat WEP = Womens Equality Party

Officers for the period of this annual report were:

- **Chief Officer-** David McGifford
- **Town Marketing & Events Manager and Deputy Chief Officer-** Jackie MacArthur
- **Support Manager-** Responsible Financial Officer- Jackie Potts
- **Streetscape Development Manager-** Ruth Burgess
- **Town Hall Manager-** Mark Worthington
- **Civic Administrative Officer-** Linda Minshull
- **Administration Assistants-** Andrea Morris-Wild & Sue Trow
- **Events & Marketing Officer-** Martha Hayes
- **Congleton Partnership Co-ordinator-** Mike Smith
- **Facility Officers-** Pete Forster, Tim Muston, Rowan Nightingale
- **Streetscape Operatives-** John Acton, Jack Appleton, Chris Banks, James Bibby, Terry Davies, Simon Farrall, Dave Foster, Mick Pritchard, Rob Serwin, Mark Stubbs, Noel Stubbs, Andrew Turnock, James Vickers, Pete Whiston
- **Casual Paddling Pool Attendants-** May-September

Council Meetings

The council has a number of committees, the dates for the meetings in 2019-20 were:

Council: 23/05, 13/06, 11/07, 08/08, 19/09, 17/10, 05/12, 23/01, 20/02. Cancelled due to COVID-19: 02/04

Planning: 30/05, 20/06, 18/07, 08/08, 05/09, 03/10, 24/10, 28/11, 09/01, 06/02, 05/03. Cancelled due to COVID-19: 26/03

Finance & Policy: 06/06, 12/09, 10/10, 21/11, 16/01, 13/02, 19/03

Community, Environment & Services: 27/06, 01/08, 26/09, 07/11, 30/01, 12/03

Town Hall & Assets: 25/07, 14/11. Cancelled due to COVID-19: 23/04

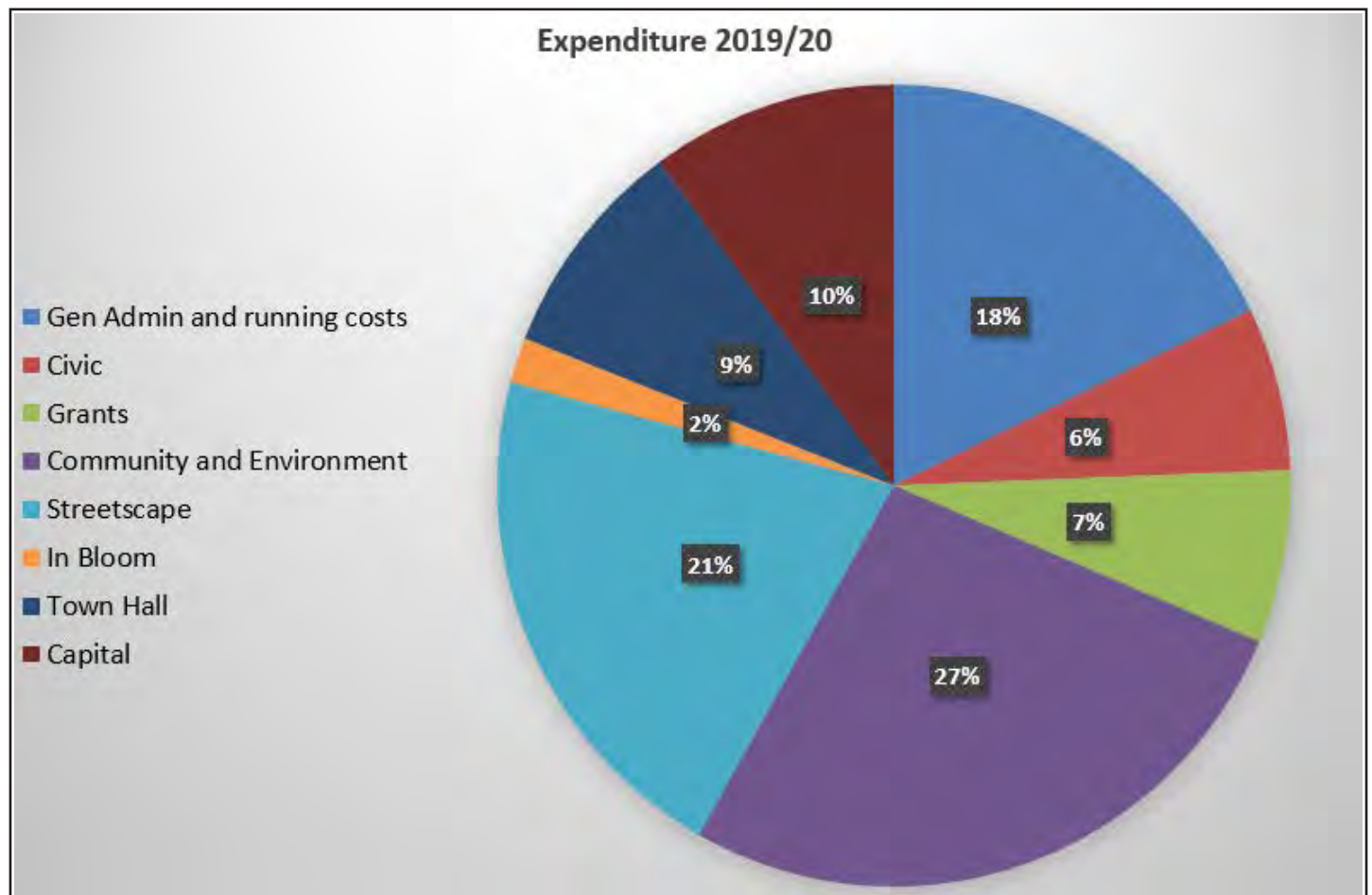
The Personnel Committee and Strategy Working Group are held as and when necessary.

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 2019-20 the precept was £884,151. Total cost of Streetscape Services was £578,721 of which £366,706 is funded through the Cheshire East Council contract.

Below is a summary of the income and expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2020. The funds are spent providing services and representing the people of Congleton. In broad terms, in 2019-20 the Town Council spent the money raised on the following:

Congleton Town Council Management Accounts- March 2020



Gen Admin & Running Costs: 141,279 ~ Civic: 52,376 ~ Grants: 55,460 ~ Community & Environment: 212,932 ~ Streetscape: 166,571

In Bloom: 14,407 ~ Town Hall: 71,277 ~ Capital: 79,778

TOTAL: 794,080

Grants Given

The Town Council has supported local voluntary and community groups within approximately £61,000 worth of grants in 2019-2020. Among those assisted were:

Name		£
Grants given to hirers of the Town Hall	Town Hall Hire	£5,500
Congleton Museum	Notional Rent	£4,500
Congleton Community Projects	Project Support	£16,000
Citizens Advice Bureau	Annual Grant	£15,000
Royal British Legion	Remembrance Day	£1,000
Total:		£42,000

Name	Project	£
St. Peter's Church	Clock Maintenance	300
Congleton Bowling Club	Floor Maintenance	250
	CCTV Contribution	250
	W/C Floor	200
Congleton Harriers	Half Marathon	650
	Cloud 9 Event	375
Friends of Congleton Park	Event Equipment	250
	Brass on the Grass	200
Dane Valley Swimming Club	Training Equipment	415
Jazz & Blues Festival	Music Festival	750
Congleton Pentecostal Church	Chairs	500
Congleton URC	Kitchen Equipment	1,000
Our Gang	Gang Show	600
CCCU	CVS Membership	45
Girl Guides Eurojam	Six Members	900
Congleton Musical Theatre	Performance Support	600
Congleton Unplugged	Event Support	500
Astbury Mere Trust	Activity Centre Works	1,500
Congleton Pride	Pride Event	700
Inner Trust CIC	Music Workshops	1,000
Ruby's Fund	Teddy Bears Picnic	500
Home-start Cheshire	Paediatric FA Courses	224
SOL Theatre School	Summer School Places	600
Total:		£12,309



Services Provided

What Services does the Town Council Provide:

Congleton Town Council is one of the largest of the 108 town and parish councils in Cheshire East. The Town Council was founded in 1980 and became fully operational in April 1981. The Town Council provides the most local tier of 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, street cleansing 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
- Streetscape Services in the surrounding parishes

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 (figure from the 2011 census).

Since January 2014 the Town Council has delivered Grounds and Cleansing Services for Congleton, via a devolved services agreement with Cheshire East and ANSA. This includes grounds maintenance - mowing, hedge cutting, pruning of shrubs etc. and street cleansing functions- emptying of over 175 litter and dog bins each day, removal of fly tips, litter picking and generally keeping Congleton a safe and tidy town to live in.

The Town Council is the accountable body for Congleton Partnership, and also provides substantial grants to Congleton Community Projects, Congleton Partnership and Congleton's Citizen's Advice Bureau. In addition Congleton Town Council supports the full costs of an additional Police Community Support Officer for the Town.



Key Achievements

Some of the memorable achievements of 2019-2020 were:

- Record number of candidates put themselves forward for the May 2019 Town Council elections with 48 candidates standing for the 20 posts, compared to 33 candidates in 2015. The new council included 12 first-time councillors
- Signed a Climate Change Emergency pledge to cut the Town Council's carbon emissions
- Created a new Business Plan with aims and objectives for 2019-2023
- Agreed the work plan for the new look Congleton Cenotaph

Progress on the Town Council's Strategic Objectives:

SO 1 Ensure growth of the town is matched by adequate services and infrastructure

- Set up meetings with the NHS to lobby for better health provision and services in Congleton
- Liaising with Cheshire East on S106 and CIL contributions towards infrastructure projects in Congleton
- Continued work on the Neighbourhood Plan to create a community plan for Congleton's future
- Continued to lobby for a start date for an upgraded Leisure Centre for Congleton
- Considered and gave feedback on 213 planning applications

SO 2 Ensure transport infrastructure is integrated and sustainable

- Planning committee commented on the transport infrastructure on all relevant applications
- Work ongoing on plans to improve walking and cycling routes to schools
- Town Council supported Speed Watch groups in across Congleton
- Held a consultation meeting to make it easier for residents to have their say on the CEC proposed changes to Padgbury Lane
- Sent CEC a suggested list of improvements to bus services in Congleton

SO 3 Reduce economic, social and health inequalities within our community

- Health and Wellbeing Group exploring ways to get a Mental Health drop-in centre in Congleton which is professionally run and available for adults
- Introduced a new Equality and Inclusion Policy
- Actively supported the campaign to save Ruby's Fund Sensory Centre
- Changed Council to use gender-neutral term 'Chair' instead of 'Chairman'; the Congleton Chronicle followed suit
- Raised awareness of domestic abuse and reported on domestic and sexual violence as well as street-based antisocial behaviour in public meetings
- Ran a Childcare Workshop with parents, providers and others, and developed plans to improve information and provision



SO 4 Ensure that the town centre is fit for 21st century

- Signed up to support the White Ribbon Campaign
- Making the town safer by funding an additional Police Community Support Officer, supporting Cheshire East with winter gritting, funding the coverage of CCTV in the town and supporting Pub Watch
- Increased the number of events in the town centre with the intention of encouraging greater footfall and new visitors into the town centre
- Continued to support and liaise with town traders and create town centre events
- Prepared a plan to upgrade the pump and surface of the town's Paddling Pool

SO 5 Greater promotion of Congleton as a place to work, live, visit and do business

- Produced an Event and Attraction guide for Congleton 2019
- Supported the work of Congleton in Bloom – winning Gold and to represent the NW in 2020
- Supported Congleton Pride to add a new event to Congleton's event calendar

SO 6 Congleton Town Council will be sustainable and carbon neutral

- Made a Climate Change Emergency pledge
- Supported Congleton's first Green Fayre
- 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
- Supported objectives of Plastic Free Congleton and removed plastic cups from the Town Hall

SO 7 Ensure we effectively communicate with all sections of our community

- Continue to develop the Town Council website, it is visited by more than 3,000 unique visitors a month. Update the town noticeboards weekly. Increased the Town Council's social media presence. Produce Bear Necessities four times per year and other promotional material
- Continued to work with Congleton Partnership towards creating a Dementia Friendly Town
- Continue to engage in the town's next generation by supporting youth organisations and facilities, working with the town's Youth Council Committee, promoting the town's play areas, assisted with a play day in the town centre, supporting the Youth Forum and engaging with the schools
- Administered the community grant scheme to help support and develop local group
- Monthly usage of www.congleton-tc.gov.uk up 33% to 4,200 active people per 28 days

SO 8 Ensure a high standard of operational quality and asset management

- Developed a medium and long term maintenance strategy for the Town Hall
- Added new emergency lighting in the Town Hall
- Worked towards Gold Accreditation
- Reviewed investment strategies



Working Groups Active in 2019-2020

The Town Council had eight working groups operating in 2019-20 to help develop its work. Working groups are generally proposed by a Town Council Committee when there is a specific subject that would benefit from more in-depth work than can be carried out via a committee. Sometimes working groups co-opt non-council people who have an interest or expertise in the subject to contribute to the group either as a regular member or as a guest to the meeting.

Each working group will generally have its terms of reference. The groups are not decision-making bodies and return their findings to the committee from which it originated. Unlike committees, working groups are not open to the press or public unless specifically invited. Their minutes, membership and actions can be seen on the Town Council's website.

A brief summary of the active Working Groups during the 2019-20 year can be seen below:

Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group

This group also includes the Police, Cheshire East Council and Bromley Farm Community Centre. It was set up to monitor, address and reduce anti-social behaviour and its underlying causes in Congleton. This Working Group reports to the Community & Environment Committee.

Congleton Green Working Group

This group also includes a few members of the Congleton Sustainability Group. It was established following the Town Council's Climate Change Emergency pledge in September 2019. It is working on a priority list for reducing the carbon footprint of Congleton Town Council activities, based on a baseline data spreadsheet of activities. It is also working on a Green Living e-learning course for Congleton residents and potential off-setting local options for Congleton. The group reports to Community and Environment Committee.

Congleton In Bloom Working Group

This is a long-standing Working Group that set up in 2011 when the previous In Bloom wished to retire after 13 successful years. It is made up of councillors, officers and volunteers. The Congleton In Bloom group works alongside many community and youth groups in Congleton, as well as businesses to help make Congleton an attractive, cleaner and greener town to live, work and visit. It also coordinates activities around the annual In Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood competitions.

Congleton Market Working Group

This group was established 2019. It is made up of councillors, officers and representatives of Congleton Market and was established to consider the possibility of Congleton Town Council taking over the management and responsibility of Congleton Market. The group reports to the Town Hall and Services Committee.

Health and Wellbeing Working Group

This Working Group exists to deliver 6.1 and 6.4 of the Town Council's Business Plan for 2020-2023 to lobby for adequate Primary Health Care facilities that relate to the growth of the town and to develop and promote initiatives or events relating to improving physical and mental health within Congleton. In 2019-20 its focus was on raising awareness of the importance of mental health and accessible rapid help for those with poor mental health.

Integrated Transport Working Group

This Working Group first met on the 3 February 2020 just before the COVID-19 crisis. It's main aim was to ensure that the town's transport infrastructure is integrated and sustainable. CTC intends to develop a sustainable, flexible transport system that meets the needs of all residents and creates a cleaner, better connected Congleton by 2030. This is closely connected with the Congleton Green initiative to reduce our carbon footprint and improve air quality. The group reports to the Community and Environment Committee.

Streetscape Development Working Group

This Working Group considers ways to improve the work of the Streetscape services for the residents of Congleton whilst ensuring the team are meeting the quality standards set and working within Health and Safety Guidelines. In 2019-20 the focus was on the upcoming contract negotiations with Cheshire East.

White Ribbon Working Group

This group was formed in August 2019 when the Town Council signed up to the White Ribbon campaign. The Working Group promotes the White Ribbon values and behaviours as a White Ribbon Town Council. White Ribbon UK was founded in 2005 and is part of a global movement to end male violence against women. It is a charity that works with men and boys to challenge those male cultures that lead to harassment, abuse and violence. The group reports to the Community and Environment Committee.



Key Priorities for 2020-2021

- Help the Congleton community through the COVID-19 emergency through partnership enabling and working
- Reduce the Town Council's carbon footprint and develop plans to meet the Climate Change Emergency pledge
- Complete the work on the Congleton Cenotaph ahead of Remembrance Day
- Continue to develop the Streetscape services, gain a new contract with CEC and generate income to help off-set costs and maintain the high level of service that the town expects
- Make sure that the Congleton Neighbourhood Plan is fit for purpose and one that local people will want to support at Referendum
 - Support the development of high quality indoor and outdoor recreational facilities
- Improve the marketing of the town as a great place to live, work, visit and do business
- Work with all political parties to safeguard local health services for Congleton and the surrounding area
 - Achieve White Ribbon Accreditation for Congleton Town Council
 - Deliver a Domestic Abuse Service in Congleton
- Obtain Gold Level Accreditation with the Local Council Award Scheme
 - Obtain Gold in Britain in Bloom

Contacts

You can contact Congleton Town Council at:

Congleton Town Council, Congleton Town Hall, High Street, Congleton, CW12 1BN

www.congleton-tc.gov.uk ~ 01260 270350 ~ info@congleton-tc.gov.uk