



Annual Report of Congleton Town Council 2021-22



Congleton Town Mayor - Councillor Denis Murphy



Congleton Town Mayor
Councillor
Denis Murphy

I was elected to the 'best job in town' via a virtual ceremony on the 6th May 2021, when we were all still very much emerged in a world of COVID-19 restrictions. As the event was via zoom it is still possible to see it via you tube. The election followed a two-year stint as Deputy Mayor as the Council voted to keep the status quo in April 2020 at the start of the Covid pandemic.

Having served as Mayor in 2008/9 and again in 2014/15 I was keen to support the people and businesses of Congleton in this important Civic Role. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the start of year was different to other years. The Mayor's parade was delayed until September. Large-scale community events such as the Congleton Food and Drink Festival were put on hold.

I was delighted that Congleton Pride was able to return in July and thanks to sponsorship by the Town Council the Jazz and Blues Festival took place and was a great success in August. I also thoroughly enjoyed the scaled-back Christmas Lights Switch on and unveiling of the Elizabeth Statue in March. The national and regional in Bloom competitions were judged via portfolio and photographic evidence, rather than a large awards ceremony in Southport, the judges visited individual towns and it was a fabulous and memorable night in the Town Hall when the judges attended an In Bloom thank you night and announced that we had won gold and were the best large town in the North West!



In September it was my absolute pleasure to host a Civic Award Ceremony at the Cricket Club and award and thank around 80 'hidden heroes' for the selfless work and support that they gave to the community throughout the COVID pandemic. I appreciate this was only the tip of the iceberg of people who helped and Congleton is so lucky to have so many caring businesses, groups and individuals.

September also saw the official dedication service for the improved town cenotaph, proudly displaying more than 250 additional names. This project was promoted by the Partnership and received a lot of financial and practical support from the Town Council. The Town Council and Partnership also worked together on an important Green Fayre and Climate Week as the world discussed COP26.

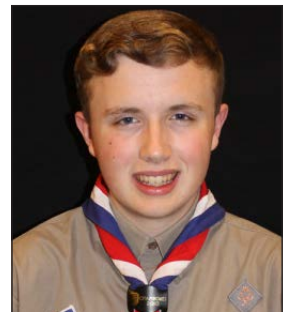
But being Mayor is not all about the mass public events. I have been able to see a lot of our very talented performers in action. I am so impressed with the talent in our town – and also with the dedication and devotion of all those who support them, coach them and work behind the scenes to make things happen in our wonderful town.

I have also been able to speak with and meet many of the wonderful charities, organisations and businesses that do so much for our town. A number of groups have celebrated major milestones, such as 75 years of Rotary, 100 years of Astbury Golf Club and 100 years of Girl Guides. This year marks 750 years since the Town was granted its first town charter by Henry de Lacy. Events started towards the end of my term in office with the Beating of the Bounds and decorating of the town centre. Celebrations will continue through until November.

As Mayor I am also the Chair of the Town Council. From June 2021 the power to make decisions remotely was removed by Government and face to face meetings returned. I would like to thank the staff at the Town Hall and my fellow councillors for the professional way they adjusted to this change whilst still ensuring measures were in place to keep us all safe.

I would also like to thank everyone who has helped me as Mayor, or the Council as a key organisation, over this past year. It has not been an easy year and many households are still coming to terms with loss or change by COVID-19. We are aware that many people in our community are struggling to make ends meet, and we are also welcoming new people from Ukraine that have escaped the war in their country. I would urge everyone to continue to show compassion and look after each other. We are a brilliant community and I have been very proud to be your Mayor over the past year.

Cllr Denis Murphy.



Mayor's Cadet
Tom Gilman



Cenotaph Opening - Sept '21



Unveiling 'Our Elizabeth' - March '22

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)
Robert Moreton (I)
Denis Murphy (LD)- 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) – Deputy Mayor*
Robert Hemsley (LD) Amanda Martin (C)
Jean Parry (C)

C = Conservative I = Independent LD = Liberal Democrat WEP = Women's Equality Party

*MAYOR & DEPUTY MAYOR WILL CHANGE 12 May 2022

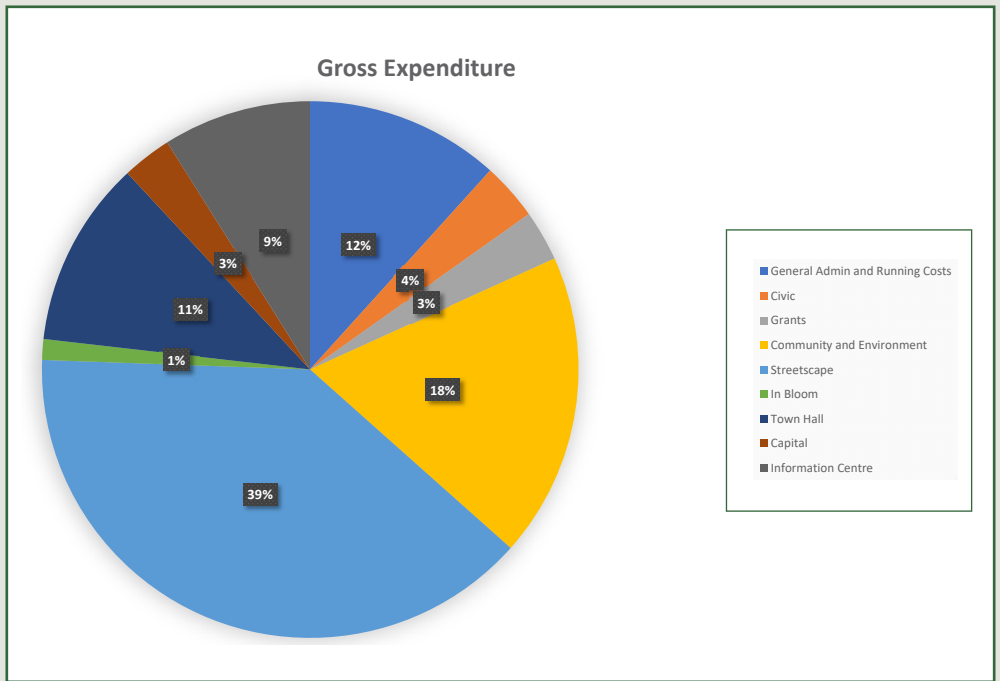
Officers for the period of this annual report were:

- Chief Officer- David McGifford
- Communities & Marketing Manager and Deputy Chief Officer – Jackie MacArthur
- Responsible Finance Manager – Serena Van Schepdael
– Jackie Potts (Retired Sept. 2021)
- Streetscape Development Manager- Ruth Burgess
- Town Hall Manager- Mark Worthington
- Civic Administrative Officer- Linda Minshull
- Administrative Assistants- Andrea Morris-Wild & Celeste Smith (from September)
- Finance Officer – Sue Trow
- Marketing & Communications Officer – Debbie Coxon
- Town Centre & Events Officer- Rachel McCarthy (started Feb)
– Martha Hayes (left Dec 2021)
- Congleton Partnership Co-ordinator- Cathy Dean (started Jan)
– Mike Smith (Retired Dec. 2021)
- Facility Officers- Pete Forster, Tim Muston, Rowan Nightingale
- Senior Information Advisor – Jessica Imber
- Information Advisors – Celeste Smith, Linda Fox, Barbara Fynn
- Casual Information Advisors – Annette Bradley, Jackie Potts
- Streetscape Supervisor Simon Farrall
- Streetscape Operatives- John Acton, Jack Appleton, Chris Banks, James Bibby, Terry Davies, Dave Foster, Mick Pritchard, Rob Serwin, Mark Stubbs, Noel Stubbs, Andy Turnock (retired Feb 21), Mike Wild.
- Casual Paddling Pool Attendants- May-September

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 our case Cheshire East Council. In 2021-2022 the Precept was £954,146. Total cost of Streetscape Services was £611,539 of which £372,888 is funded through the Cheshire East contract. Other income comes via hiring of the Town Hall, Congleton Information Centre sales and grants and sponsorship.

Full details about the Town Council accounts can be seen at www.congleton-tc.gov.uk in the Finance section of Your Council.



General Admin and Running Costs	£183,426
Civic	£54,405
Grants	£47,715
Community and Environment	£287,887
Streetscape	£611,539
In Bloom	£19,547
Town Hall	£176,394
Capital	£46,778
Information Centre	£140,224
	£1,567,915

See the website for full details

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 Council was founded in 1980 and became fully operational in April 1981. It 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 grassroots views are heard and considered
- Encouraging economic development and regeneration of Congleton
- Examining planning and licensing applications and giving opinions to the Borough Council on behalf of 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 cenotaph and provide allotments
- Providing financial support to a variety of community groups and organisations which support the wellbeing of Congleton residents
- Helps safeguard local people through paying for 24/7 monitored CCTV and an extra PCSO
- Organising and supporting events that encourage the community to enjoy and celebrate being part of the Congleton community.

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.

The Town Council is the accountable body for Congleton Partnership, and provides substantial grants to Congleton Community Projects, Congleton Partnership and Congleton's Citizen's Advice Bureau as well as running a grant scheme for local groups and organisations (see page 8)

Congleton Town Council activities revolve around eight strategic objectives, pages 9-11. The Town Council has 20 elected members based in two wards. Decisions are made via public committees and ratified at Council. The committees are Town Hall and Assets, Community and Environment, Planning, Finance and Policy and Personnel.

Council Meetings

The Council has a number of committees, the dates for the meetings in 2021/22 were:

- Council: 5/08, 21/10, 10/02, 28/04
- Planning: 17/06, 22/07, 12/08, 9/09, 14/10, 18/11, 16/12, 20/01, 17/02, 17/03, 21/04
- Finance & Policy: 10/06, 29/07, 30/09, 25/11, 27/01, 24/03
- Community, Environment & Services: 3/06, 8/07, 23/09, 11/11, 3/02, 31/03
- Town Hall & Assets & Services: 1/07, 16/09, 4/11, 13/01, 24/02, 7/04
- The Personnel Committee and Strategy Working Group: 24/06, 9/12

All agendas and minutes at www.congleton-tc.gov.uk

More on Streetscapes' work

Congleton Town Council carries out maintenance on ornamental and prestige areas, general amenity areas, public footpaths, sporting areas, recreational areas, rough cut and Conservation Areas. The Town Council no longer uses any glyphosate-based weed killer on grassy areas which are official or unofficial play areas, near schools, around trees or around street furniture and is trialing a new product with no glyphosate for other areas with the aim to reduce pesticide use as much as possible.



During the year the Streetscape service has started to invest in electrical tools rather than using fuel-based equipment. This is all part of the Town Council's Climate Change commitment to reduce its Carbon Footprint.

The Streetscape team has been helping the Congleton Tree Group with advice on planting and checking areas for planting with Cheshire East Council. Congleton Town Council only carries out minor tree work, other tree work is undertaken by a specialist Arboriculture Team at Cheshire East Council.

SCALE:

- 11 Play Areas
- 200 public litter bins emptied daily
- 138,622 linear miles of Congleton streets kept clear of litter
- 170,963 linear miles of rural streets kept clear of litter
- 120,732 m² of playing fields to maintain
- 179,010 m² of Public Open Space to maintain

2021/22– Grants Allocated

The Town Council has supported local and voluntary and community groups with approximately £47,000 worth of grants in 2021-2022. Among those assisted were:

Name:		£
Grants given to hirers of the Town Hall	Town Hall Hire	£1,540
Congleton Museum	Notional Rent	£4,500
Congleton Community Projects	Project Support	£16,000
Citizens Advice Bureau	Annual Grant	£15,000
Total		£37,040

Name:		
Congleton Bath House & Physic Gardens	Signs and Leaflet storage	£150
Congleton Harriers	Congleton Half Marathon: Medical services	£705
New Life Church	Table Tennis facilities	£200
Congleton Pub Watch	Drug detection equipment	£400
Congleton Jazz and Blues Festival	Promotional materials	£450
Heath View Residents	Plants and materials	£250
Green Tree House	Social Supermarket	£2,000
St Peter's Church	Replacement flagpole	£750
Rotary Club of Congleton	Swimathon costs	£450
3rd Congleton Guides & Brownies	Transport cost for trip	£225
Congleton Harriers	Medical cover- Cloud 9 race	£425
Congleton Live CIC Ltd	Congleton unplugged: Promotional	£500
Parents/Guardians of Smallwood School	Years6 leavers trip	£500
Friends for Leisure	Back to business project	£1,000
Congleton Pride	Towards acts for the event	£500
Mossley Old School Trust	Replacement kitchen	£1,000
Beartown Patchwork & Quilters	Hiring of equipment for show	£400
St Peter's Church	Clock Maintenance	£256
Total		£10,161

Some of the memorable achievements of 2021/22 were:

- Taking on responsibility for the Congleton Information Centre from Cheshire East Council
- Congleton Town Hall being used as a vaccination centre and supported by an amazing group of volunteers
- Returning to face-to-face meetings after more than a year of virtual meetings due to COVID-19
- Signed a new contract to deliver Streetscape services
- Completion and opening of the new look Congleton Cenotaph
- Opening of the Link Road – now named the Wolstenholme Elmy Way
- Unveiling of a statue of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy in the town centre
- Held first outdoor Green Fayre and Climate Festival



Progress on the Town Council's Strategic Objectives

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

- 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
- Witnessed the start of the Leisure Centre refurbishment following extensive lobbying
- Considered and gave feedback on Planning applications
- Worked with all the GP surgeries on a COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- Lobbied against the closure of the Household Waste Recycling Site and continue to campaign for waste and recycling facilities in Congleton

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 across Congleton
- Town Council supported Speed Watch groups across Congleton
- Commented on the Local Transport Delivery Plan
- Opened discussions with CEC on suggested list of improvements for public transport.

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

- Consider Equality and Inclusion implications of all Council decisions
- Included hate crime and sexual and domestic violence crimes in the regular antisocial behaviour working group meetings held with the Police and Cheshire East Council
- Supported My Cheshire Without Abuse to set up a regular Domestic Abuse Clinic in Congleton
- Supported the setting up of a Social Supermarket in Congleton
- Supported and encouraged vaccinations in the Congleton Town Hall.



Supporting the Social Supermarket

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

- 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
- Continued to support and liaise with town traders and create town centre events
- Introduced a first-floor grant scheme for businesses in the Town Centre
- Lobbied for a Post Office in the Town Centre (opened in November 2021)
- Working with the night time economy to ensure Congleton is a great place to come to in the evenings as well as the daytime
- Working with Cheshire East Council on town centre vitality plans

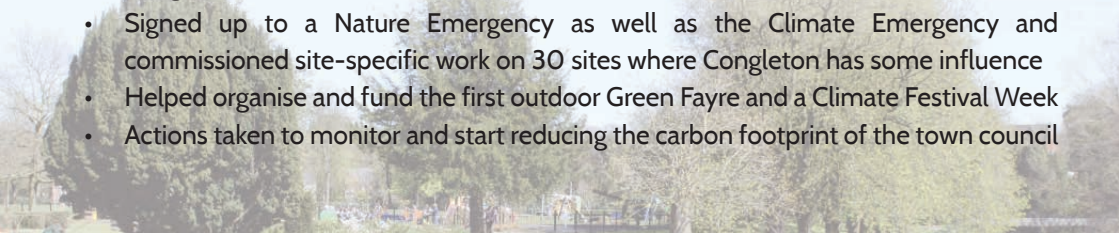
SO 5 Greater promotion of Congleton as a place to work, live, visit and do business

- Supported the work of Congleton in Bloom – winning Gold in the NW in Bloom and being asked to represent the NW in the National finals in 2022
- Major sponsor of the successful Jazz and Blues Festival so that the festival could happen in 2021 at a time when pubs were reluctant to take a chance on the event
- Gaining national coverage for the 750 Charter year celebrations
- Welcomed the gift of a statue of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy for the Town Centre



SO 6 Congleton Town Council will be sustainable and carbon neutral

- Signed up to a Nature Emergency as well as the Climate Emergency and commissioned site-specific work on 30 sites where Congleton has some influence
- Helped organise and fund the first outdoor Green Fayre and a Climate Festival Week
- Actions taken to monitor and start reducing the carbon footprint of the town council



SO 6 continued

- Supported the Trees for Congleton Group with the ambitious plans to plant 30,000 trees
- Introduced a Congleton Sustainable Living in Congleton on-line Learning platform.

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
- Worked with a COVID Community Leads group to support various groups of our community through COVID-19
- Administered the community grant scheme to help support and develop local activities
- Celebrated and thanked many of the COVID-19 hidden heroes at a CIVIC awards ceremony.



Celebrating Hidden Heroes

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

- Worked on medium and long term maintenance needs for the Town Hall
- Worked towards appointing a new commercial partner for the Town Hall
- Reviewed investment strategies
- New policies introduced to ensure smooth running of the Paddling Pool
- Encourage more staff to take the CILCA local government qualification.



Evie in the Paddling Pool

Working Groups 2021-22

The Town Council had eight working groups operating in 2021-22 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 Working 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 2020-21 year can be seen below.

750 Working Group – this group was formed in 2021 and has delegated responsibility for organising the CTC led event for the 750-year charter celebrations – Beating the Bounds, Platinum Jubilee Party, Living History Event, Medieval Festival, Medieval Banquet, Beer Festival and Ale Trail and reports to Community and Environment Committee

Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group – this group also includes the Police, Cheshire East Council and Bromley Farm Community Centre – was set up to monitor, address and reduce antisocial behaviour and its underlying causes in Congleton. It also considers Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse and Traffic issues. 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 considering the Nature Emergency and ways to increase biodiversity in Congleton. The group reports to Community and Environment Committee.

Congleton in Bloom Working Group – this is a long-standing Working Group that was set up in 2011 when the previous In Bloom volunteer group 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. It also coordinates activities around the annual In Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood competitions. It reports to the Community and Environment Committee.

Congleton Market Working Group – 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, which is owned and managed by Cheshire East Council. The group reports to the Town Hall and Services Committee and finished in March 2022. The matter will now be dealt with through a Strategy Working Group and Council as part of a wider regeneration of the town.

Health and Wellbeing Working Group - this Working Group lobbies 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. During COVID-19 it was not possible to work with the NHS on actions other than COVID-19 and this group will now re-establish. It reports to Community and Environment Committee.

Integrated Transport Working Group – this group has been considering the Local Transport Development Plan, ways to improve public transport in Congleton, infrastructure needs to make walking and cycling around Congleton safer. Most of the projects rely on large amounts of funding from CEC or central government. Unfortunately CEC was not able to attract any of the national funding for improved buses. 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. The group reports to the Town Hall and Assets Committee.

Town Hall Development Working Group – this working group considers operational matters to improve the fabric or operations in the Town Hall. It reports to the Town Hall and Assets Committee.

White Ribbon Working Group - This group promotes White Ribbon values and behaviours to end male violence against women. The Town Council received White Ribbon accreditation in November 2019. The White Ribbon charity works with men and boys to challenge those male cultures that lead to harassment, abuse and violence. Congleton Town Council wishes to end all harassment, abuse and violence. The group reports to the Community and Environment Committee.

Climate Change and Nature Emergency

Congleton Town Council declared a Climate Change Emergency on the 19th September 2019. It pledged to reduce the carbon footprint of the town council's activities and operations to net zero by 2025. The Town Council is also considering the nature emergency with proactive plans to improve biodiversity in 30 areas that it has some influence over in the town

A baseline report was conducted by Dr Barry Speed from the Congleton Sustainability Group based on the Town Council's purchasing and energy bills.

Headline Figures are now available for 2018- 2019, 2019- 2020, 2020-2021. The baseline figure for 2018-19 was 231,000kg of CO₂ or 231 tonnes. The Green Working Group of the Town Council believes it should be possible to reduce emissions by 90,000kg which would leave a residue of 131,000kg that would need to be off-set



Main areas that The Town Council can have a direct impact on are:

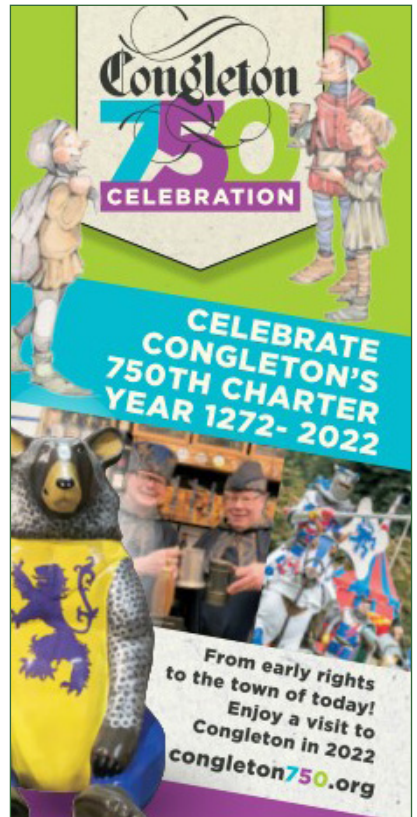
- Electric use in the Town Hall
- Gas use in the Town Hall
- Cleaning Chemicals for the Town Hall
- Lease of Vehicles
- Work-related transport costs
- Plant and compost purchasing
- Streetscape chemical use
- Councillor and Staff Travel
- Paddling Pool management
- Town Council plastic use

Other policies are being put in place to ensure that our purchasing policies are as green as possible and that we reduce the quantity of paper used.

Discover more about how you can reduce your carbon footprint. Take part in a free online course called Sustainable Living in Congleton which has been created by Congleton Town Council and Congleton Partnership [Learn.congleton-tc.gov](https://www.learn.congleton-tc.gov)

Key Priorities for 2022/23

- Introduce active measures to support the Town Council's Climate Change Emergency and nature emergency pledges to reduce the Town Council's carbon footprint and to increase biodiversity in our town
- Organise events and promotions to celebrate the town's 750 charter year celebrations
- Lobby to get CEC to change the boundaries so that the new houses within the Link Road form part of Congleton rather than the rural parishes - alternatively work with the parish councils to achieve a compromise position that will ensure plans to improve services for all can be met.
- Work with health providers to ensure the physical and mental health of residents can be treated locally
- Prepare for the changes brought about by the Local Boundary and Governance Review which introduces five wards for Congleton
- Market Congleton Town Hall and the new commercial partner and work together to reduce the cost of the Town Hall to the precept payers
- Help the Ukrainians who are escaping the war in their country to settle in Congleton and the surrounding areas
- Continue to develop the Streetscape Services and generate income to help off-set costs and maintain the high level of service that the town expects
- To help residents to understand the role of a councillor and encourage them to get involved in the Town Council elections in May 2023
- 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
- Continue supporting the Domestic Abuse Clinic in Congleton
- Obtain Gold in the National Britain in Bloom competitions



Some Key Dates to look forward to in 2022!

- 2 June:** The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration 1pm – 5.30pm Congleton Park
- 12 June:** Food and Drink Festival 10.30am – 4.30pm - Congleton Town Centre
- 19 June:** Mayor's Civic Parade – 2.15pm – High Street
- 26 June:** Congleton Lions Duck Race Congleton Park
- 5-9 July:** Behind Closed Doors 1272 Living History exhibition – Congleton Town Hall
Public viewing with speakers on 8 July at 7pm. Open the public Sat. 9 July 10am – 2pm.
- 23 July:** Pride Festival 10am - 4pm Town Centre
- 13 August:** Medieval Festival Day – 12noon – 6pm – Congleton Park
- 26-17 August:** Jazz and Blues Festival - Town Centre and 20+ venues
- 10- 25 September:** Heritage and Antiques Festival
- 24 September:** Congleton Green Fayre, Town Centre and Town Hall
- 30 September:** Medieval Banquet – Congleton Town Hall
- 29-30 October:** 750 Beer Festival – Congleton Town Hall
- 5 November:** Congleton Rotary Bonfire Night – Congleton Park
- 13 November:** Remembrance Parade – Congleton Cenotaph

Congleton Town Council

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@Congletontown



Congleton Town Council.