

An aerial photograph of a valley. In the center, a river flows through a green field. The surrounding hills are covered in a mix of green grass and brown, autumnal trees. In the background, there are more hills and a small town or village. The sky is clear and blue.

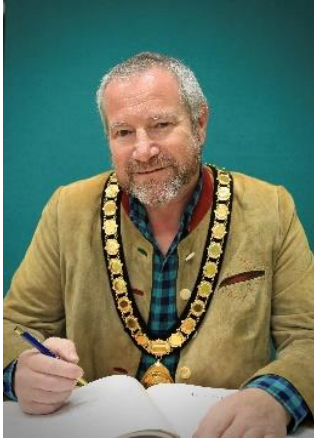
# **LLANGOLLEN TOWN COUNCIL**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**Civic Year  
May 2023 – April 2024.**

Photography by courtesy of Kim Price Evans

## Welcome to this Annual Report.



Welcome to this Annual Report, and I am sure that you will enjoy reading about the work of the Town Council and the positive impact that we have upon the local community.

It has been an honour, and a privilege, to be the Mayor of Llangollen, an office that is steeped in history and tradition. I have met so many wonderful people throughout my time in office. I would like to thank my fellow elected Members and officers of the Town Council for their hard work and wish my successor every success when they take over the chains of office.

Cllr Paul Keddie  
Town Mayor.

### Town Clerk's Statement.

The pressures faced by Town Council from the recent economic events have eased and there is greater stability in the fixed cost of the Council, However there is no time for complacency and continued care must be taken in managing budgets to ensure value for money for the residents of Llangollen.

The Town Council has continued to invest in its own assets and has provided support to a number of local organisations. Inroads have been made in terms of the Town Council's commitment to climate change mitigation, but it is recognised that more could be done within the community to provide a collective solution.

I welcome and thank the new Councillors who have joined the Council over the last year and for all of the contributions that they have made to the operation of the Town Council. This together with the strong sense of community and civic pride, along with the remarkable volunteering efforts by residents, gives me confidence that Llangollen will adopt and thrive as we move forward.

Gareth Thomas  
Town Clerk  
May 2024

## About Llangollen Town Council.



Llangollen Town Council was created in 1974 following local government re-organisation and the disbanding of Llangollen Urban District Council. It is one of 37 city, town and community councils in Denbighshire.

Llangollen Town Council serves a community of approximately 3,900 residents (3,362 electorate). It consists of eleven Councillors elected for a term of 5 years. The Councillors who took office in 2022 will hold office until May 2027.

Meetings of the Town Council are held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall on the third Tuesday of every month at 6.00 pm and the public are welcome to attend either in person or via video conferencing which is now a legal requirement for all Town Council meetings. Meetings of the Asset Management Committee, Climate, Ecology and Cittaslow Committee and Human Resources Committee are held quarterly.

The Town Council has a legal identity as corporate bodies and are separate and distinct from the persons who, comprise an authority for the time being. As such, they can hold property, employ staff, and sue or be sued in their own name. This means that individual councillors are not personally liable for acts done in good faith by the Council. However, Local Authorities derive their powers from statute and do not exist independently of it. This means that, although they may properly lobby for changes in the law, in their day-to-day conduct of affairs they must act within the law as it stands. It also means that councils are subject to the ultra vires doctrine and cannot act beyond the powers bestowed upon them by statute.

### Councillors.

Llangollen Town Council has 11 elected Town Councillors. The members individually contribute to the work of the whole Town Council by:

- attending meetings when summonsed.
- engaging in constructive debate.
- commenting on proposals to ensure the best outcome; and voting to enable the Town Council to make decisions.
- responding to the needs and views of the community.
- representing their constituents.
- suggesting ideas.

Members are elected to office and normally serve on the Town Council for a term of five years. The most recent election was held on 5 May 2022. A Town Councillor is a holder of a public office, not a volunteer, and can receive a range of mandatory payments.

The Town Council holds an Annual meeting in May and ordinary meetings are held at 6.00 pm on the third Tuesday of every month (except August) and it is also much easier to be involved in council business through remote meetings via Teams or Zoom.



The Town Council conducts its business through Council and committee meetings to which members are summoned to attend. These meetings are supported by formal agendas compiled, sanctioned, and authenticated by the Clerk which specify the business to be transacted.

The Town Council has appointed standing committees (committees which meet on an on-going basis) which enjoy delegated powers to make decisions on the Town Council's behalf. The Town Council's standing committees are currently. Asset Management, Ecology, Climate and Cittaslow and Human Resources.

Additionally, Members actively support other local and national groups and there are Member representatives on the following outside bodies: -

- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Denbighshire Tourism Destination Partnership.
- Dementia Friendly Llangollen
- John Mathews Trust.
- Llangollen Christmas Festival.
- Llangollen Parks Project
- Llangollen Silver Band.
- Llangollen Youth Trust.
- One Voice Wales.
- Plastic Free Llangollen.
- Ysgol y Gwernant.

The past year has seen a period of change in the Membership of the Town Council with a number of resignations which have been a loss to the Council. Fortunately, the town Council has been able to recruit excellent replacement Councillors, a process that is continuing.

## **Finance.**

The Council derives funds from generated income and the precept. The precept is an additional amount which is added to Denbighshire County Council Tax bills based upon Llangollen Town Council's estimated expenditure.



The Council has maintained relatively healthy financial reserves and balances and can be assured of the continued payment of the precept which is a statutory requirement placed on the County Council.

Town Council Receipts and Payment 2023/24

Cost Centre	Cost Code	Budgeted	Actual	Variance
Administration	Fees and charges	£2,050	£2,793	-£743
	Cloud services	£3,500	£4,482	-£982
	Health and safety	£2,500	£2,009	£491
	Insurance	£6,000	£5,550	£450
	Licenses	£550	£383	£167
	NNDR	£13,000	£11,365	£1,635
	Payroll	£750	£1,181	-£431
	Subscriptions	£1,500	£1,089	£411
	Staff Training	£1,600	£1,427	£173
	Expenses	£0	-£273	£273
	Centre totals	£31,450	£30,006	£1,444
	Asset Management	Receipts		
Equipment		£22,000	£20,545	£1,455
Projects		£0	£0	£0
Cleaning		£3,000	£4,101	-£1,101
Grounds maintenance		£12,000	£16,933	-£4,933
Christmas illuminations		£9,800	£10,808	-£1,008
Repairs and renewals		£20,000	£17,734	£2,266
Waste collection		£1,700	£634	£1,066
Water charges		£2,000	£733	£1,267
Centre totals		£70,500	£71,488	-£988
Community	Community grants	£3,000	£950	£2,050
	Donations	£3,000	£2,000	£1,000
	Cittaslow	£2,000	£2,000	£0
	Centre totals	£8,000	£4,950	£3,050
Cost of Democracy	Election expenses	£0	£0	£0
	Civic costs	£2,300	£1,165	£1,135
	Civic events	£3,600	£1,787	£1,813
	Remuneration	£2,000	£1,436	£564
	Member Training	£2,000	£0	£2,000
	Centre totals	£9,900	£4,388	£5,512
Energy Costs	Electricity	£12,000	£7,306	£4,694
	Gas	£16,000	£5,067	£10,933
	Centre totals	£28,000	£15,627	£15,627
Office Costs	Office supplies	£1,000	£746	£254
	Telephone and broadband	£1,800	£576	£1,224
	Photocopier rental	£1,100	£1,436	-£336
	Photocopying	£1,000	£104	£896
	Translation	£1,700	£288	£1,412
	Computer hardware	£0	£190	-£190
	Centre totals	£6,600	£3,341	£3,259

<b>Staff Costs</b>				
	Salaries	£38,150	£39,260	-£1,110
	Pension	£4,500	£3,252	£1,248
	HMRC	£13,500	£11,521	£1,979
	Centre totals	£56,150	£54,033	£2,117
<b>Total payments</b>				
		£210,600	£183,832	£26,768
<b>Income</b>				
	Precept	£170,525	£155,677	-£14,848
	Interest	£200	£4,176	£3,976
	Room hire	£13,750	£15,370	£1,620
	Photocopying	£25		
	Rents	£23,100	£26,672	£3,572
	Grants	£0	£3,267	£3,267
	Tenants' recharges	£3,000	£973	-£2,027
	Donation	£0	£150	£150
<b>Total Receipts</b>				
		£210,600	£206,284	-£4,291

Throughout the year members received regular updates on the financial position of the council and as a result have managed the affairs very effectively throughout the financial year, which is resulted in an overall saving of £22,477. This was largely attributed to significant reductions in energy costs than was budgeted and a modest recovery in income generation post the pandemic.

This surplus is accrued will be used to strengthen reserves in particular the in particular relation to a Town Council's assets.

#### Internal and External Audit.

In terms of the internal and external audit process the Town Council received very favourable comments and continue the Town Council received an unqualified audit from the Wales audit office for the 2022-23 financial year.

#### Administration.



The Town Council employs a Town Clerk who manages the councils' activities and provides administrative assistance and professional advice. As its chief officer, the Town Clerk protects the Town Council as a corporate body.

A council must also appoint a Responsible Financial Officer to manage its finances. The Town Clerk fulfils both these functions.

In addition, the Town Council employs a part time Facilities Officer whose role is to work flexibly to ensure the necessary cover is provided to support the Town Council's

business needs and assist in the maintenance of all Council premises, property, open spaces and recreation areas, street furniture and any other item controlled by the Council.

The post holder has regular contact with suppliers, local community groups, tenants of the Council and liaises with architects, engineers, etc. on various schemes and projects and is responsible for the engagement and supervision of contractors working on the Council's property and estates. In addition, the role encompasses the arrangement of civic events,

## **Governance**

In line with the town council's business plan objective of being a council that champions good governance and financial integrity Members utilised the Finance & Governance Toolkit for Community and Town Councils developed jointly by One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and Welsh Government, with commentary from Audit Wales, this toolkit aims to support community and town councils in Wales to:

- review the financial management, governance and accountability arrangements in place; and
- consider how effective these arrangements are, and how they might be improved.

The results of the exercise identified the following actions that needed to be addressed:

- The HR Committee to consider policies to address the gap in provision
- The Town Council to consider preparing, a community engagement strategy, a constitution describing its general governance arrangements, an emergency plan to help support community resilience and a data audit.

All these actions have been completed except for the work on community resilience which is in progress.

The current powers the Town Council has to control and operate the Centenary Square were not sufficient to deal with parking of vehicles on the Square and therefore, the Town Council has adopted an appropriate bylaw including, but not limited to, parking of any vehicles on the square. The contravention of said byelaw would then be an offence liable on a summary conviction to a fine.

The Town Council continued to actively promote the views and interests of Llangollen at the national and county level on a host of consultative matters.

The Town Council has continued to be vigilant in scrutinising planning proposals and has made careful and considered recommendations to 21 planning applications received. Even though the Town Council has limited powers in respect of planning, on the whole recommendations have been noted by the County Council's Planning Committee.



Since May 2023, the Town Council also responded to consultations on the following:

- Denbighshire County Council's Four Great Highways project. scheme.
- Denbighshire County Council's active travel proposals
- Denbighshire County Council's Local Development Plan Candidate Sites
- Denbighshire Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy 2021-22 / 2029-30.
- Denbighshire County Council's consultation on Hackney Carriage Fare Review 2023
- Denbighshire County Council's consultation on Library and One Stop Shop Opening Hours consultation
- Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales annual report
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's consultation on improving the future of emergency cover in North Wales
- Welsh Government consultation exercise on the Road Safety Strategy
- Welsh Government consultation for future spending purposes for Dormant Assets funding in Wales

### **Assets.**

The Town Council has brought considerable investment into its assets during the financial year which have included emergency health and safety works in terms of the electrical supply to the Christmas illuminations and supporting the Llangollen Recreation Ground Trustees by undertaking essential tree surgery work on the recreation ground.

The iconic Chain Bridge also underwent vital repairs from in April 2024, to ensure its continued safety and integrity. The Town Council engaged the expertise of Beaver Bridges Limited, based in Shrewsbury, to execute these essential works, with a total investment exceeding £20,000.

The decision to undertake these repairs follows a recent comprehensive survey, which highlighted several minor defects in the bridge's structure. While seemingly insignificant, if left unattended, these issues could lead to accelerated deterioration, potentially compromising the bridge's stability and safety.

Continued improvements were made the Town Hall with investment in equipment, new chairs, painting of key areas and minor repairs to ensure the ongoing sustainability of this critical town centre asset.

### **Community Support**

Town Council continues to encourage and promote the social, economic and commercial vitality of the town and support existing major employers and more generally help to nurture new and innovative businesses. to create locally tailored solutions that will deliver more economic support, social benefits and resilience.

More generally the Town Council actively supports local support groups and will work



in collaboration with local providers and the third sector to improve access to activities and opportunities for older people; improving access to activities for young people; supporting and enabling better sports provision and local healthcare needs.



As a Cittaslow town the Town Council works with the principles that each Cittaslow town agrees to adopt in respect of community cohesion. The Town Council actively supports policies and programmes to reduce the discrimination of minority groups and promote multicultural integration within society.

Members of the Town Council support a range of Community groups which include: -

- Dementia Friendly Llangollen.
- Friends of Pengwern.
- Llangollen tidy Towns Team.

In addition, direct financial support was provided to the following groups.

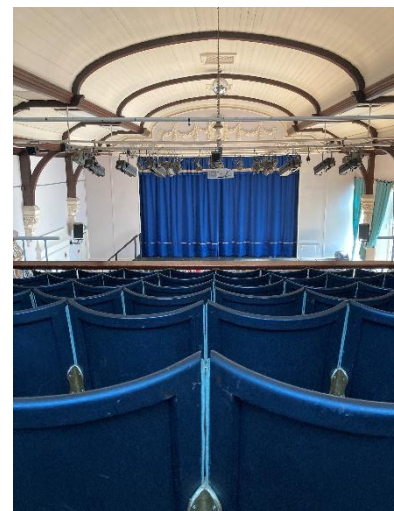
- Llangollen Community Christmas Lunch.
- Llangollen Recreation Ground Trust.
- Llangollen Silver Band

The annual allocation of the five free car park days offered to the Town Council by Denbighshire County were used to support the Llangollen food Festival, Llangollen Christmas Festival and to support retailers in the run up to Christmas.

## Events and culture

the Town Council continued to acknowledge the importance of a number of community events, run solely by volunteers, which benefit the town. Llangollen Hamper Food Festival, the Christmas Festival, the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod and the Llangollen Fringe and the Women's Festival which all add to the vibrancy and culture of our town.

The Town Council continues to subsidise hire fees for charity and not for profit groups by offering a 50% reduction of fees and special rates for rehearsals. Equally a 25% discount is offered to Local sole traders and individuals wishing to hold parties in the council's facilities, costing the Town Council just over £15,000 in 2023/24.



Direct financial support was also provided to cultural organisations such as the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod and Llangollen Silver Band



The Town Council has again in 2023 supported Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych to engage in a St. David's Day window competition with the aim of instilling positivity into the town centre after two exceedingly difficult years of trading.

## Civic events

This Annual Remembrance Day Service organised by the Town Council was held on Sunday 12 November on Centenary Square and was again well supported by the Llangollen Branch of the British Legion and by local residents. Deputy Mayor Cllr Aled Morris had the honour of placing the wreath at the war memorial.

The Town Council were very grateful to Mr Daniel Williams, Sunbelt Rentals Limited for the provision of the Traffic management at no cost to the council.

Saturday, 6 May 2023 saw the coronation of Charles III and his wife, Camilla, as king and queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms, and to commemorate this historic event the Town Mayor presented a commemorative Coronation mug, marking the coronation of King Charles III, to all the pupils of town's primary schools Ysgol y Gwernant and Ysgol Bryn Collen



## Community engagement.

The Town Council continues to make public information accessible through a variety of formats utilising newsletters, social media, and the Town Council's own website [www.llangollewntowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.llangollewntowncouncil.gov.uk)

The continued use of hybrid meetings had provided more opportunities for public participation and webinars have presented opportunity for more engagement and the use of online collaboration tools has provided the employees and Members with more freedom to work where they want, while doing so more efficiently.

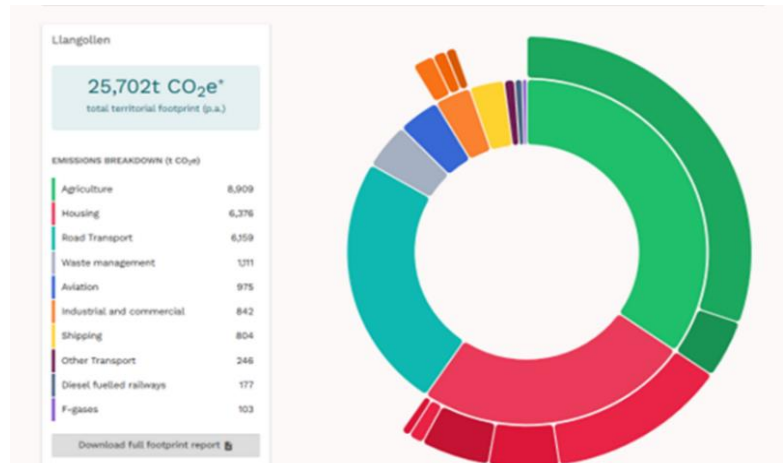


With online collaboration it easy to bring individuals working together into an online workspace, it can increase engagement with external stakeholders more than by using traditional methods such as meetings, audio and video calls, paper surveys, press advertisements and similar. This brings diversity to real time communication, resulting

in more creativity and the creation of stronger and healthy relationships with the added benefits of reducing commuting with the knock-on effects of reducing CO2 emissions further contributing to the Town Councils pledge to work towards making Llangollen carbon neutral by 2030.

## Climate change and Biodiversity.

The Town Council continues to deliver on actions within its own climate action plan. The Town Council renewed its contract with Good Energy the provider of 100% green and ethical energy supplies and has initiated the remote control of heating systems throughout the Town Hall to accurately control the heating systems for events.



Additionally, the Town Council has replaced a considerable number of the theatrical stage lights to LED units to further reduce energy consumption.

However, the Town Council recognises that there is still work to be done in terms of community engagement to drive forward significant change in the volumes of greenhouse gasses generated within the community and to support the identification of alternative methods of energy production.

Therefore, during the year climate change awareness events were held with Congleton with the Vader forgotten Rotary Club and the Town Council have actively supported initiatives that enhances biodiversity to facilitate healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and have the capacity to adapt to change.

The Town Council continues to monitor biodiversity through its Biodiversity Action Plan stimulated by the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes biodiversity an important consideration for all local authorities.

Section 40 of this act sets out the duty to conserve biodiversity: “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.



A number of projects have been undertaken by the Town Council in terms of tree planting and the council has purchased additional planters for Centenary Square which have been populated with pollinators to support the work of Bee Friendly Llangollen another organisation that has the full backing of the Town Council.

## Looking Forward

In the coming 12 months the Town Council will improve and maintain its services and infrastructure. Proposals are in place to continue the conversion of the theatre lighting in the Town hall to LED units to further reduce energy consumption in line with the Council's climate change action plan

Work will commence on the refurbishment of the Town Hall garage to provide a greatly improved facility which will be more in keeping with its surrounding being situated between two listed buildings. Other works, utilising grant in aid to support the Town Councils budget, are proposals to upgrade the Town Hall outbuildings and the historic town morgue.

Additionally, again supported by external funding, the Town council are keen to develop Pen y Bryn Cemetery as a Memories Garden - Gardd Atgofion Pen y Bryn. The primary objectives of this project would be to:

- To create a memories garden that respects the historical and emotional significance of the site.
- To provide a space for remembrance, reflection, and community gatherings.
- To ensure the long-term sustainability and maintenance of the garden.

This project would retain and restore existing structures such as headstones and memorials and create an improved layout with new pathways and seating areas. A focal point would be created to honour those interred at the cemetery and to allow others to commemorate the passing of loved ones. By allowing the scattering of ashes.

The Town Council will continue to award grants to local organisations to assist them to achieve their aims and objectives. The Council has a policy of only assisting truly local community groups, and this is interpreted to mean those organisations based in the Llangollen Town Council area or national bodies with an independent branch in the same area, providing support to the residents of the town. Applications will be encouraged from properly formed group, club, committee or charity, which must show that the group has charitable/community aims and benefits. The grants will be considered by the Town Council on a rolling programme until the funds are expended

Additionally, the Town Council will continue: -

- Support, develop and assist implementation of agreed community actions and projects either directly through Town Council or in partnership with other
- bodies and service providers through the Caru Love Llangollen Place Plan.
- Assist with the set-up of new/other groups to enhance community engagement
- to strengthen and develop the Council's social media presence to ensure community engagement
- to develop and improve the Council's websites to include online payments for hall hirers to make the process of booking and payment easier for the hall hirer
- to fund Hanging Baskets throughout the Town and develop a 'peat free' provision for the future
- to support the Christmas Festival programme by providing the 'Town's festive lights.

These are changing times, politically, economically and socially. County Councils are facing many cuts which will impact Community and Town Councils as they now face running services that would otherwise be lost.

Llangollen faces many new challenges, and it is important that The Town Council is ready to embrace these challenges to be fit for the future.

The Town Council will reach out to community groups and working in conjunction with them in order to deliver projects on behalf of the Community as a whole. The Town Council will aim to avoid duplicating the work currently being carried out by other community groups.

## Contacts



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