

Macclesfield Town Council Annual Report 2020-21

Macclesfield Town Council, Councillors, Officers and Meeting Information

Councillors representing Macclesfield during the period of this annual report, 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021:

Cllr Sarah Bennett-Wake, Hurdsfield Ward

Cllr Lloyd Roberts, Tytherington Ward

Cllr David Edwardes, Tytherington Ward

Cllr Fin Shenton, Broken Cross and Upton Ward

Cllr Alift Harewood-Jones MBE, West and Ivy Ward

Cllr Mick Warren, East Ward

Cllr Mike Hutchison, West and Ivy Ward, 29th July 2020 onwards

Cllr Chris Wilcock, Broken Cross and Upton Ward

Cllr Janet Jackson MBE, Central Ward

Cllr Fiona Wilson, South Ward

Cllr Neil Puttick, South Ward

We often get asked “How much do the Town Councillors get paid?”

The simple answer is all of the Town Councillors are volunteers.

Officers for the period of this annual report

Town Clerk, Laura Smith, 3rd August 2020 onwards

Admin and Governance Manager, Harriet Worrell

Events and Communities Manager, Helena Gowler

Project Officer, Gillian Ainley

Events and Communications Officer (Town Centre Manager), Abigail Sherratt, 16th November 2020 onwards

Council Meetings for the period of this annual report

A full list of all council meetings for the period of this annual report can be found on the council website [agendas and minutes](#) page.

The Town Council's Strategy and Vision

To act as a focus and catalyst for community empowerment, driving Macclesfield forward and promoting it as a centre for commerce, retail, administration and tourism, providing and supporting inclusive and sustainable services and constantly working towards continuing improvement for residents, businesses and visitors to Macclesfield. Taking account of the climate emergency and in all considerations, services and actions seeking to make Macclesfield a greener and more sustainable town.

The Town Council's strategic objectives form part of a living document that is revisited and revised on a regular basis and can be found on the council website [strategy](#) page.

The Mayor's Annual Report

In a year defined by Coronavirus, lockdowns and virtual meetings, Cllr Sarah Bennett-Wake was elected as the 2020/2021 Mayor of Macclesfield in a Zoom meeting on 29th June 2020. Stella Wake-Bennett was her Mayoress.

The Mayor selected Cre8 and the Macclesfield Seals Swimming Club as her charities for the year. Cre8 runs a variety of community projects to encourage health and well-being through music, education and access to green spaces for growing plants and vegetables.

The Seals was established in 1957 and is a swimming group for children and adults with disabilities.

The Mayor's theme was kindness, reminding us to be kind to ourselves and others, particularly during the pandemic.

Due to national lockdown, the Civic Diary has been quieter than previous years. The Mayor attended several re-openings in July following the end of the first lockdown and in late summer was able to visit some local organisations. Later in the year, the Mayor adapted to 'attending' engagements through Zoom and MS Teams.

Remembrance Sunday was particularly poignant in 2020. Lockdown rules prohibited a parade, but the Mayoral party laid wreaths in a socially distanced event followed by representatives of organisations.

Fund raising efforts during Cllr Bennett-Wake's term as Mayor have also had to be adapted as the usual calendar of charity events could not be held. The Mayor championed her charities in radio interviews and raised hundreds of pounds through an online fundraising page. The Mayor's Book of Kindness, an anthology of poems, short stories and illustrations from local primary school children, not only showcased the pupils' work but was sold in aid of the charities. To finish the Mayor's Charity

Online Auction, with many lots connected to Macclesfield, was a sell-out and raised £1000.

Finally, the Mayor would like to extend her deepest thanks to the Deputy Mayor, Councillors, Mayoress and Town Council officers for all their support during her term in office.

Community Engagement and Events

Events

2020 was a particularly unique year due to the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic. Government restrictions meant a national lockdown, and social distancing, hand sanitisers and face masks became the norm.

This resulted in no 'live' council events. However the Town Council showed how adaptive and creative it can be, and still managed to deliver a programme of well received events.

20th April 2021 ongoing – Park Fit

Park Fit, the Town Council's weekly keep fit session taking place in South Park and then All Hallows during the colder months, became an on-line event with personal trainer Matthew Rigby doing Facebook live videos, twice a week. These have been very popular and over the year Matt has completed 90 workouts under the Park Fit banner.

1st - 24th December 2021 – Advent Window Trail

The Advent Windows, organised for the Town Council by LIT, were an extremely successful example of a socially distanced immersive art trail. Some retailers remained open in the town centre, and it was the perfect opportunity to showcase both those businesses and the artwork of schools, community groups and well known local artists such as Ralph McGaul and Jacki Clark, by lighting up windows with pictures and stories.

1st December 2020 - 7th January 2021 – Tree of Light

Unfortunately, due to restrictions the usual tree of light celebrations, whereby people hang messages to their loved ones on the tree, could not go ahead. The Town Council again worked with LIT and local art collective IDST to trial a innovative interactive message approach. The tree was dressed with strings of coloured lights, and when a message was sent to a specific number, the message was transferred into Morse code and displayed up and down the tree. The lights were accompanied by music, specially written by local musician Charles Ormrod.

12th - 23rd February 2021 – Chinese New Year

What is normally a very well attended town centre event this year had to go virtual. The Town Council worked with members of the local Chinese community who were able to provide videos of Chinese greetings, messages from school children in China and information about the celebrations themselves. Art Space were again commissioned to provide a large Ox as part of the festivities and this was included in a parade style video through the town. The Town Council also worked with artist Jacki Clark to produce Augmented Reality art work from drawings of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac submitted by residents of Macclesfield. The subsequent AR versions of these drawings, were activated by trigger images of well known businesses and buildings around Macclesfield which were displayed on the Council's social media pages. They could then be turned into gifs, or selfies.

Our Communities

The national lockdown and restrictions imposed on the country led to hardships for many. Children were schooled at home, employees were furloughed from work and fundraising for charities dried up.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Macclesfield Town Council issued emergency grants to specific community groups directly involved with the response. Grants of up to £4,000 each were given to local groups Cre8, Cheshire Streetwise, Green in the Corner, the Hope Centre, Calvary Church and CORE. These grants went directly towards providing a local response to the issues created by the outbreak.

They helped to provide essential items to those in need such as food parcels or care packages. A list of the projects which were supported and funded by Macclesfield Town Council is detailed below:

- Cre8 Project Grow - This local charity based on the Moss Estate provided deliveries of food packages and as time went on, they adapted their grocery offer to be covid safe.
- The Hope Centre provided home cooked meals as food packages. They also provided a listening service for those in need of someone to talk to throughout such a challenging time.
- Calvary Church on the Weston Estate delivered food and care packages to the local community.
- Cheshire Streetwise provided food parcels to be collected from their Mill Street premises.
- CORE (Church of the Resurrection) on the Upton Priory Estate provided food and care packages for local residents.
- Green in the Corner based on the Hurdsfield Estate re-launched their Fair Share food distribution and adapted to meet local demands for home cooked food.

- Macclesfield Town Council also provided emergency funding to East Cheshire Hospice who faced losses of £1 million due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Town Council also engaged and supported many other initiatives including:

- Working with Macclesfield Pride to plan the Macc Pride events in a different format for 2021.
- Working with Just Drop In and Allgood Cycling to plan the Macclesfield Bikeathon.
- Attending and contributing to partnership meetings across the Town.
- Encouraging community groups to apply for Town Council grants.
- Ongoing work with SPARK - Friends of South Park.
- Working with Treacle Market organisers to plan and secure road closures necessary for the event to take place.
- Working with the Macclesfield Food Network.
- Supporting the local Citizens Advice, who have seen a large increase in people needing their services.
- Working with CVSCE to revamp our grants programme and introducing micro grants.

Examples of grants awarded in 2020/2021

Water Street residents in Macclesfield - awarded £250 for a community planting project

Tytherington Juniors Football Club - awarded £1668 towards defibrillators

Cygnets - awarded £250 for a youth theatre production

Macclesfield Rugby Union Football Club - awarded £2000 for CCTV

A full list of all community grants awarded in 2020/21 can be found on the Town Council website [community grants](#) page.

Local Service Delivery

The last year and the challenges that COVID-19 has brought, has seen the Town Council work more closely and effectively than ever with Cheshire East Council, particularly as part of the Town Centre Recovery Working Group and projects that have developed from that group such as the pocket park on Mill Street near the bus station, and the ongoing work into bolstering the outdoor hospitality offering in Macclesfield.

The Town Council was a key player in setting up the Town Centre Recovery Working Group during the pandemic along with Cheshire East Council, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Community and Voluntary Services Cheshire East, Make It Macclesfield and Macclesfield Museums. The group sought input and feedback from

business and residents, and held live virtual events to collect views and the resulting plan can be found on the Town Council website [town centre recovery plan](#).

Subgroups have been created around communication, outdoor hospitality, art and culture and the environment to feed into the group, and we are seeing results including the new outdoor eating area at the beginning of Market Place and the introduction of branded bespoke hand sanitisers distributed to town centre businesses to help the Hands Face Space campaign and ensure people are and feel safe in the town.

Making the town look attractive is a key wish of the Town Council and residents. It is regularly noted in correspondence, on social media and in conversations how loved the festoon lighting around Macclesfield is not only for aesthetic reasons, but also in terms of the feeling of safety they bring during the evening. The Town Council is committed to ongoing work to repair and replace the festoons in various locations around the town centre, and have recently added festoons on Back Wall Gate and replaced festoons on the pedestrianised areas of Chestergate and Market Square.

The Town Council's Ranger Service has long had an extensive fan base, with the cleaning of grot spots, excellent repair work on benches in Victoria Park, and the work on floral planters around the town. Recently a new ranger team was brought on board and they have hit the ground running. The feedback from the public continues to show what an excellent asset to the council the team are, with suggestions being submitted by residents and businesses on a daily basis for the team to tackle.

Allotments remain a popular asset in the town, as people increasingly choose to grow their own food. The Town Council works closely with allotment associations and holders of the plots, and has helped to provide fencing, helping remove rubbish, tree maintenance plus many other things. The Town Council has cleared and re-let several allotment plots to many grateful residents.

For details on our allotments please visit the council website [allotment](#) page.

In November 2020 the Town Council employed a dedicated Communications Officer to work on and improve communications from the Town Council to members of the public and other stakeholders. The creation of this post has seen a significant increase in social media posts and subsequently an increase in followers. The communications are more varied and frequent, and many new relationships with town centre businesses are being forged.

As part of the Communication Officer role and in conjunction with the Town Centre Recovery Plan, an ongoing promotional drive of local businesses has been in place since November, as part of a Shop Local Macc campaign. This has led to individual businesses approaching the Town Council to enquire about joint initiatives, mutual support etc.

As part of the Town Council's commitment to Art and Culture, it has undertaken a number of projects over the last year. After consultation with local residents, the Town Council commissioned an architectural metal mural which reflected

Macclesfield's rich historical heritage. The artwork designed by artist Tim Davies and incorporating input from local school children, was installed on a prominent wall at the station exit.

Work on the Tunncliffe Art Trail, showcasing the works of Macclesfield born Charles Tunncliffe OBE on public buildings around the town centre, bringing accessible art to all, has been ongoing with council staff working hard to obtain the necessary permissions from building owners.

Although delayed by the pandemic, a fantastic mural commission on the substation in Churchill Way car park, by local artist Becca Smith, has proved a talking point throughout the year, and has recently been completed. The mural was designed to blend in with the surroundings and feedback from the community has been immensely popular.

The Town Council has remained committed to having a large input into parks in the town; Windmill Street park has just completed Phase One, Lanark Walk has been refurbished and funding given towards Cheshire East Council's redevelopment of Banbury Close open space.

The Town Council continue to assist in supporting Cheshire East Council's CCTV provision in the town, and contributions this year will result in an increase in mobile CCTV cameras to 3, to help in the fight against crime and antisocial behaviour.

The most frequent of Town Council committees is the Planning Committee which meets every three weeks and examines planning applications and gives opinions to the Cheshire East Council on behalf of local residents. If particular opposition or support is felt, a member of the planning committee can be nominated to speak at Northern Planning or Strategic Planning Meetings.

Priorities for 2021/2022

The Town Council has an ambitious strategy for the future, including transferring ownership of South Park Pavilion from Cheshire East Council. This process is underway and will continue to progress through 2021/2022

The Town Council has had an ongoing commitment to lighting up part of the Middlewood Way with solar lanterns to encourage and maintain the safety of cyclists and pedestrians who use this popular route. This has recently taken a big step forward and the council aims to complete the work this year.

Macclesfield Town Council is currently working on a Conservation Area Appraisal of Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area with heritage consultant Donald Inall Associates to update the 2005 appraisal which was completed by Macclesfield Borough Council. The appraisal is an assessment of the current condition of the built environment and character of the landscape within this particular designated Conservation Area. The Town Council is thrilled by the amount of groups and residents who have been involved, including the Civic Society and Tytherington school, plus the process highlights the great effort many local business have gone to

when creating and installing their shop fronts. The final document will go out for full consultation by Cheshire East Council.

At the start of the 2021/2022 financial year the Town Council relaunched its grants programme, adding the new option of a micro grant of £100 to the existing options. The micro grants are aimed at individuals or small groups of residents who may want to do some planting on shared land, or set up a walking group for example.

The Town Council has made the decision not to pursue the Britain in Bloom application in 2021/2022 due to the changes within the ranger team and work with local communities halting due to the pandemic. However the new Lead Ranger has brought with him a number of ideas, and the council will be exploring these and implementing them in readiness for next year with a desire to aim for a Gold award.

Council Finances

How does Macclesfield ToFwn Council decide the precept?

Each year Macclesfield Town Council undergoes a budgeting exercise to decide how much money is required to provide, manage and run the services that the Council delivers for the people of Macclesfield.

The amount of income that is estimated as part of the budget, is deducted from the amount of projected expenditure. This sum is known as the precept, and is added as an additional amount to residents' Council tax bills.

Why has it gone up so much?

The precept for 2021/22 has increased from £48.90 for a Band D household, to £50.93. This is an increase of £2.03 on last year which equates to 17p extra per month. Each household is now paying £4.24 per month (for a Band D household). That's less than the price of two takeaway coffees.

What is it spent on?

Events and Projects including the Remembrance parade, public art such as the proposed Tunnicliffe Trail, the Eco Summit and public access defibrillators

Citizens Advice Bureau, offering free, independent and confident advice on employment, housing, debts etc

Play Parks in Macclesfield, such as the revamp of Windmill Street park, and funding for Lanark Walk and Banbury Park

Planning, as well as consulting on applications, the Town Council funded a Conservation Area Appraisal for the town centre

Communities to support delivery of community activities such as enforcement, transport, community centres

Grants and Donations to support local groups, charities and events

£50.93 per year pays for...

- Town Ranger, Floral Displays, Festoon Lights, Allotments everything that keeps Macclesfield looking nice plus 3 rangers to do the work
- Visitor Information Centre and promotion of Macclesfield
- Christmas celebrations including the tree and the light switch on event
- CCTV contribution helping to keep Macclesfield safe with the increase of mobile cameras to 3
- Administration of the council including 5 permanent members of staff plus the Mayor of Macclesfield
- Other - including free town centre Wi-Fi, Covid-19 recovery fund, ward budgets
- Staying Active free fitness sessions such as Park Fit, Pram Fit and Street Sports for children

Macclesfield Town Council's ambitious strategy for the town shows key areas for investment. The annual budget for Macclesfield Town Council for 2021/22 is £1,188,618 and full details on the council's income and expenditure for 2021/2022 can be found on the council's website [budget for 2021-22](#) page.