

# Leek Town Council



## Annual Report 2020-21

*Leek Town Mayor, Cllr. Stephen Wales*

It has been a great privilege to serve as Mayor, albeit this during the COVID pandemic which has dominated my term of office. This has given me both a unique - and equally a frustrating year. Making a connection to the various organisations across the town has been impossible as everybody has been either locked down or severely constrained in their liberty. Using social media, aided by Leek TV and with the benefit of a monthly column in the Leek Post and Times, this at least allowed me some community engagement. It was vital to give encouragement to our townsfolk as they grappled with the changing landscape of daily life under the cloud of Covid.

This scourge has of course denied us the traditional Civic Service and Civic Reception, reciprocal civic events with neighbouring towns both in the Moorlands and beyond. Also lost was the trip to Este, experiencing the local Arts, Club Day, Scooter fest, Leek Show and those many wonderful highlights of a Mayoral year - not least of course the Mayor's Charity Ball. I witnessed the Christmas Light switch on in a totally deserted Derby street as the town mourned its many losses. That time was a low point for many people in the town, and we needed some hope and light in the town.

In Council there have been some positive highlights as we quickly switched to Zoom meetings to keep in touch and then worked on the issues facing us. We worked with other organisations and individuals in reacting to the crisis and we pressed for the implementation of safety measures.

The long overdue refurbishment of our Stockwell Street office and its meeting room has been completed. Now fully redecorated and refurbished to a high standard and in keeping with the civic pride felt within this council.

I was also able to arrange the return of a valuable artwork, *Rain Storm Over The Roaches*, by Robert Dawson, which had been on loan to SMDC for some considerable time.





I also worked alongside our Leek Town Crier, Bill Lomas, who celebrated his 5 years of service this year. Together we reached out to the town and encouraged a safe return into our streets.

The positive engagement with our District Council is now reaping rewards as we see improvements to our street scene in the town.

I have recently completed the management of the Russell Street Garden project which has now delivered a real community asset with a year-round floral display



replacing the former wasteland. Finally, we said goodbye to Support Staffordshire our longstanding tenants in Bank House. We as a council are determined to repurpose the building and then ringfence the net income for Leek's community projects in the years ahead. In many ways this has been the most productive year I have had as a Councillor, and I am proud of our achievements this year.



**EVENTS COMMITTEE** The challenges of Covid have presented the events committee with constant challenges. The committee has worked closely throughout with SMDC Licencing, and the Safety Advisory Group, in ensuring that public safety and adherence to Covid regulations and guidelines are a priority. Party in the Park was an early victim, and the planned autumn arts exhibition had to be postponed, but is now re-scheduled for October 2021. We were able to hold an appropriately respectful Remembrance Day service at the Nicholson War Memorial, with Councillors Ottewell, Molson and Benefer ensuring the event ran smoothly, and safely. Covid regulations prevented a formal lights switch on event at Christmas, but the lights were installed, and ran throughout the Christmas period. The committee has met via Zoom throughout the lockdown, and expanded its membership, welcoming representatives from Leek Arts Festival, the Blues/Americana Festival and the new Churnet Sound Radio Station. We are currently

supporting a number of small initiatives as the town opens up. There may be an opportunity for increasing the profile of music at the popular Sunday Supplement Markets and the upcoming arts exhibition. We have identified opportunities to improve the way the town looks in the summer, with extra bunting now installed in Russell Street. This connects with the Mayor's project, regarding the development of the area at the bottom of Russell Street.

Initial planning has begun for the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. A range of events are being discussed, and Cllr Mike Ottewell is coordinating a 'register of interest' for community groups.

## ALLOTMENTS

Leek Town Council is responsible for 235 full plots and 50 half-plots spread over seven sites. There is still a growing demand for allotments with 70 people on the waiting list. The allotments have proved especially popular during lockdown as government restrictions allowed sites to remain open.

Due to Covid, the annual allotment competition organised by Leek Allotment Holders & Gardeners' Association was cancelled, but the Best Allotment competition took place and the winners each received certificates and a discount on their annual rent.

The rent remains the same this year at £35.00 for a full plot and £17.50 for a half plot.

## **WAR MEMORIALS COMMITTEE**

Condition surveys were carried out for the Nicholson War Memorial and Ball Haye Green War Memorial, which established no major repairs were needed. Over the Summer, the flagstones around the Nicholson War Memorial were repointed and the cockerel benches painted.

Unfortunately, the guided tours and flag flying days for 2020 were cancelled due to coronavirus. However, on Remembrance Sunday a small service attended by the Mayor and members of Leek Royal British Legion took place at the Nicholson War Memorial. Wreaths were also laid at Ball Haye Green, Leekbrook and St Edward's Church War Memorials.

The newly formed War Memorials Committee is currently planning events to mark the centenaries of St Edward's Church and Ball Haye Green war memorials in 2022.

## **LEEK TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

The revamped town council website is now being used to update residents on council activities and announcements. Developments during this year include the voluntary appointment of Cllr. Mike Ottewell as Social Media Editor to support the Town Clerk. This additional capacity has enabled a more pro-active communications strategy using Leek Town Council's Facebook as a means of creating greater interaction within the local community.

An important contribution was also made by the Mayor, Councillor Stephen Wales with the introduction of a monthly report for the Update Newsletter. These reports together with advance notice of dates, agendas and minutes of monthly meetings have helped to keep Leek residents fully informed.

Following a request from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Leek Town Council has taken over responsibility for the consultation website together with hosting the domain [LoveLeek.org](http://LoveLeek.org).

## **FINANCE**

Leek Town Council's element of the Council Tax, was £181,285, representing £27.92 per annum for a Band D household. This will remain the same in 2021/22.

During the year, £16,498 was donated to the following organisations: Leek Citizens Advice Bureau, Support Staffordshire, Leek Sports Council, Leek Blues & Americana, Haregate Community Centre, Brough Park Running Club, Douglas Macmillan Hospice, RAFA Leek, Moorlands Voluntary & Community Transport and Leek & District Foodbank.

## **COUNCILLORS**

Leek Town Council has twelve councillors, who were elected in May 2019 to represent one of the six wards in the town and they have a four-year term of office.

### **Leek North**

Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst  
Cllr. Ben Benefer

### **Leek West**

Cllr. Ben Emery  
Cllr. Bill Cawley

### **Leek South**

Cllr. Sue Coleman  
Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst

### **Leekbrook**

Cllr. Mike Ottewell  
Cllr. Roy Molson

### **Leek East**

Cllr. Brian Johnson  
Cllr. Pamela Wood

### **Birchall**

Cllr. Stephen Wales  
Cllr. Mike Worthington

## MEETINGS

The Town Council meets monthly on the third Tuesday (except August and December) in the Council Chamber at Moorlands House, Stockwell Street, Leek at 7.00pm.

The remaining meetings for the year are:

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May – General Purposes Committee at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June – Town Council and General Purposes at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July – Town Council and General Purposes at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September – Town Council and General Purposes at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October - Town Council and General Purposes at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> November - Town Council and General Purposes at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

### Leek Town Council Financial Statement for 12 months to 31 March 2021

	Income £		Expenditure £
Balance b/fwd	51,187	Staff/Office/Admin/Storage	74,092
Allotment rent	9,235	Allotments	6,935
Precept	181,284	Grants	16,498
Vat	17,389	Vat	16,518
Christmas	750	Flags and Bunting	3,406
SMDC	5,400	Christmas	36,160
Sundry	258	Bank House	15,453
Bank House	11,468	War Memorials	9,889
		Sundry	1,416
		Mayor/Deputy Allowance	3,150
		Street lights	2,306
		Ball Haye Green	594
		Summer flowers	2,344
		Benches	1,649
		Insurance	3,294
		Elections recharge	4,936
		Audit	780
<b>Total</b>	<b>276,971</b>		<b>199,420</b>
<b>Cheques unpresented</b>	<b>5,880</b>	<b>Bank accounts</b>	<b>83,431</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>282,851</b>		<b>282,851</b>