



Buckley Town Council

Annual Report

2023/2024

Council Offices, Mold Road, Buckley, Flintshire. CH7 2JB

01244 544540 / 07310016328

email: townclerk@buckleytc.gov.wales



Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer from January 2024 - Karen Brown

Locum Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer - Shaun Jones to December 2023

Personal Assistants to the Town Clerk - Lynne George & Tracey Reece

Serving the Community Since 1974

www.buckleytc.gov.wales

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Introduction from the Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer

As your new Town Clerk, I am delighted to present the Buckley Town Council's 2023/24 Annual Report. This report offers an overview of the Council's wide-ranging work, the community groups it supports, and the progress we have made together. This report details the Council's activities and achievements, the wards and elected members, the structure and membership of the committees and summarises the Council's finances and plans for the future.



Mrs Karen Brown

As Flintshire's largest town, Buckley Town Council is comprised of 20 passionate Councillors who work on behalf of our community, making key decisions that I, as Town Clerk, am proud to implement.

On behalf of the Council, I extend my gratitude to Shaun Jones for his work as Locum Clerk and for ensuring a seamless handover.

Alongside our committed staff team, I am dedicated to serving the Buckley community with the utmost integrity and delivering continued success for the town.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible and working together to maintain and enhance all that makes Buckley a thriving community.

In May 2022, 20 seats were available at Buckley Town Council. Listed below are the appointed Councillors who will serve until the next elections in May 2027.

2023 / 24

Buckley Mountain Ward

C Ellis *

C Cordery (Town Mayor)

L G Fox

Bistre East Ward

A Parry

A Woolley *

J Jones

R Jones *

V Blondek

Pentrobin Ward

D Mackie

E J Hutchinson

H D Hutchinson *

I Peters

M Peers *

E L Preece

R Stewart (Deputy Town Mayor)

Bistre West Ward

C Preece *

D Ellis

L Rathbone

I Howes

D Rose *

*** Signifies Town Councillors who are also County Councillors**

The Council operates from a large building that houses its staff offices and a designated Council Chamber. The building's first floor is rented out to business tenants, and other areas are used for community services, including a community food fridge, school uniform exchange, counselling hub, Welsh Border Community Transport and community rooms. The building requires ongoing maintenance and refurbishment.

The Council has a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor (elected annually) who represents the Council at many civic functions throughout the year.



Additionally, the Council has two contractors who provide cleaning services for the Council Building and Public Conveniences, and a Town & Events contractor who leads on supporting the businesses within the town and organising the Annual Buckley Show, Fireworks and Christmas Light Switch On as well as a range of smaller projects throughout the year.

The Council offer a bursary and community grant scheme.

The Council ensures it has all the necessary resources to enable the successful governance of the organisation.

Mayor & Deputy Mayor

Annually, the Council appoints a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor.

The Town Mayor's role is primarily ceremonial and does not grant any additional authority. However, the Mayor serves as Chair of the Council, presiding over all Full Council meetings during their term of office. Both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor also represent the Council at various civic functions throughout the year.

Town Mayor 2023/24 - Councillor Charles Cordery

Mayor - Cllr Charles Cordery

Cllr Cordery attended over 40 civic engagements throughout the year.

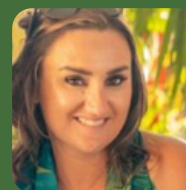
Fundraising totalled £2,970 during the year and was distributed amongst the Mayor's chosen charities of:

- Buckley Food Bank
- Buckley Boxing Club
- 1st Bistre Scouts



Deputy Mayor Cllr Rhian Stewart

Cllr Stewart attended 2 civic engagements as Deputy Mayor during the year.



Committees and Members

The Council has four Standing Committees which include all members of the Council and are held monthly on the same evening as the Council Meeting. These are:

- **Finance & Economic Development Committee** - Chair - Cllr J S Jones, Vice Chair - Cllr R B Jones
- **General Purposes Committee** - Chair - Cllr H D Hutchinson, Vice Chair - Cllr D Mackie
- **Highways & Leisure Committee** - Chair - Cllr D Ellis, Vice Chair - Cllr M J Peers
- **Planning Committee** - Chair - Cllr M J Peers, Vice Chair - Cllr L Rathbone

In addition to the Standing Committees, the Council appoints the following Committee's and Members to meet as and when required.

- **Establishment** (Staffing) Sub-Committee. Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Chair/Vice Chair of Finance and Economic Development Committee, Chair/Vice Chair of General Purposes Committee Cllr V E Blondek, Cllr D Ellis.
- **Exceptional Weather Conditions** - Contingency Planning Working Group. Town Mayor, Chair of Highways and Leisure Committee, Cllr H D Hutchinson, Cllr R B Jones, Cllr M J Peers, Cllr I Peters, Cllr C A Ellis, Town Clerk & Financial Officer, Town Events Organiser & Town Centre Support Provider (Contractor), Flintshire County Council - Mark Edwards (Area Supervisor)

- **Finance Sub-Committee (Bursary Award Panel)**
Chair of Finance & Economic Development Committee, Cllr V E Blondek, Cllr A Drury, Cllr C A Ellis, Cllr E J Hutchinson, Cllr E L Preece, Cllr D Mackie.
 - **Finance Sub-Committee (Grants).** Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair/Vice Chair of Finance & Economic Development Committee, Cllr V E Blondek, Cllr C A Ellis, Cllr L G Fox, Cllr D Rose, Cllr D Mackie.
 - **Flintshire Local Development Plan** - Delivery Agreement, Approval/Call for Candidate Sites - Working Group. Town Mayor, Chair of Planning Committee, Cllr A Drury, Cllr C A Ellis, Cllr E J Hutchinson, Cllr R B Jones, Cllr I Peters, Cllr E L Preece.
 - **Highways & Leisure Review Group.** Chair/Vice Chair of Highways & Leisure Committee, Cllr L G Fox, Cllr H D Hutchinson, Cllr R B Jones, Cllr A Woolley.
 - **Regeneration Working Group.** Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr C A Ellis, Cllr E J Hutchinson, Cllr R B Jones, Cllr M J Peers, Cllr C M Preece, Cllr E L Preece, Cllr L Rathbone.
 - **Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group.** Town Mayor, Chair of General Purposes Committee, Cllr I Peters - Pentrobin Ward, Cllr R B Jones - Bistre East, Cllr L Rathbone - Bistre West, Cllr C A Ellis - Buckley Mountain.
- Communications Task & Finish/Working Group.** Cllr A Drury, Cllr V E Blondek, Cllr L G Fox, Cllr D Rose, Cllr E L Preece, Cllr R L Stewart.

Council Assets and Services



Play Area Renovation

The Council invested £10,000 to match fund Aura Leisure in upgrading Lyme Grove Park area with this new piece of play equipment.

Town Clock

The Council keeps the iconic Buckley Silver Jubilee clock ticking.



Hanging Baskets in Town Centre

The Council continues to provide colourful summer hanging baskets and flower troughs throughout the town centre.

In 2023/24 baskets were planted, displayed, watered and fed on a regular basis throughout the flowering season.



Coronation Gardens

The Council owns and maintains the Coronation Gardens for all residents to enjoy.

Christmas Lights

Each year, the Council funds the installation and removal of Christmas lights in the Town Centre. While the 2023 display was visually appealing, it faced several challenges, including storm damage and the need to use a mix of different lights, which impacted on consistency. To address these issues, repair works were scheduled for 2024. Unfortunately, the Council is not responsible for Christmas lights in the Precinct due to it being under private ownership.

The Council had approved the purchase of a new, cohesive Christmas light scheme to enhance the display for Christmas 2024.

Summer Playschemes in all Four Wards

Buckley Town Council funds the Flintshire Play Development Team to run four playschemes in the summer holidays. In the summer of 2023, a total of 1,317 children attended the play sessions. They are run for 4 weeks, 5 sessions per week per venue and for 2 hours with a supervised playworker.

The four venues are: Elfed - 192 attended. The Common - 390 attended
Westwood - 372 attended, Drury - 363 attended.

They are always popular and Buckley Town Council is happy to support the wellbeing of the younger residents.

CCTV

The Council funds a range of CCTV around Buckley Town Centre to support public safety.



Defibrillator

The Council provides a defibrillator outside its Council Building on Mold Road. This forms part of a wider network of defibrillators across Buckley.

Mental Health Counsellor

As part of our wellbeing commitment, Buckley Town Council funds the Counselling Hub Charity, who support Buckley residents with suicide provision, self-harm and depression management. During the year commencing 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024 a total of 823 hours of therapy was provided via face-to-face, online or telephone support.

In addition, the Counselling Hub ran a Christmas stocking appeal and handed out approximately 50 gift bags to Buckley children in financial distress.

Buckley Town Council provides the Counselling Hub with complimentary office facilities for their in-person sessions in the Old Library Building.

Free Car Parking

Buckley Town Council co-funds the car parking subsidy in the Flintshire Council short-stay car park to enable 1 hour of free parking.

During December Buckley Town Council funds free parking in all Flintshire County Council car parks in the Town.



Public Conveniences

The fully accessible public toilets are open all day, Monday to Saturday and are free to use.

Contribution to Maintenance of The Commons and Burial Grounds

Buckley Town Council contributes funds to Flintshire County Council to maintain Middle and Lower Common. It also provides a financial contribution to Emmanuel Church, Bistre, St Matthew's Church and St. John's United Reformed Church towards upkeep and maintenance of the burial grounds

Community Grant Scheme

Annually, local organisations can apply for a small grant from Buckley Town Council. In 2023/24 the following groups were supported with financial assistance:

Buckley Cross Methodist Church - £400

Buckley Jubilee Committee - £400

Wales Air Ambulance - £200

50+ action group (Flintshire) - £200

Buckley Town Football Club - £1,000

The Council also support the Welsh Culture and Arts by providing grants to:

National Eisteddfod - £200

Urdd National Eisteddfod - £200

Llangollen International Eisteddfod - £200

Buckley Town Council Bursary Scheme

Buckley Town Council operates a bursary scheme designed to provide financial support to residents in meeting tuition fees charged by universities and colleges of higher education. Eligible applicants must either be preparing to attend or already enrolled at a university or college of higher education.

In the 2023/24 academic year, the Council awarded a total of £3000 in bursaries, benefitting six successful applicants.

Full details about the Community Grant and Bursary Schemes, including eligibility criteria and application processes, are available on the Council's website.

Council Community Events

The Council values the importance of community events which continues to go from strength to strength. The Council funds these events so they can be free and accessible to all Buckley residents.

Annual Buckley Show - 7th May 2023

Live Music Stage

Wildlife Show

Falconry

Stalls

Fun Fair

Food

Vintage Tractors

Classic Cars and the main

Stunt Show act



Fireworks Display 2023

There was an amazing fireworks display held on 5th November 2023 on Buckley Higher Common



Christmas Lights Switch on 2023



Granting the Freedom of Buckley Town

In September 2023 the Council adopted a new policy in relation to granting the Freedom of Buckley Town. Granting the Freedom is the Highest honour that Buckley Town Council can bestow.

In October 2023, the first Freeman of the Town was recognised with a formal ceremony at the Council Chamber.

John Thornton was awarded the honour to recognise a lifetime of service to the town. John, aged 100 years old, was a former Buckley Councillor who served as Mayor three times during his 54 years as a Councillor

Mr Thornton's community work in Buckley included his initial involvement with the development of the Jubilee Court Community Centre, a place for pensioners to socialise, have dinner, play bingo and plan group trips. Mr Thornton continued to be and was still involved with the community centre all these years later ensuring its ongoing success. Mr Thornton said 'I'm the first to have the Freedom of Buckley and I'm very proud of it'

Mr John Thornton sadly passed away on 22nd July 2024.

Council Website

The Council's website www.buckleytc.gov.wales contains a vast range of information for the public to view.

The Council is committed to being open and transparent to the people it serves.

The following information can be found on the website:

- About Buckley
- Bursary Scheme
- Councillors
- Council Agendas
- Council Meeting Dates
- Council Minutes
- Council Policies/Documents
- Council Wards
- Declaration of Interest
- Events
- Financial Information (including): Budget, Audit reports, Annual Return, Members' Allowance and elector's rights.
- Financial Regulations
- Latest News
- Town Council Staff
- Town Events & News
- Town Mayor

One Voice Wales Membership

Buckley Town Council became a member of One Voice Wales. One Voice Wales is our sector's representative body. As members we now receive access to a wide range of legal and governance advice and information, support services, sharing of sector best practice and access training and development. One Voice Wales also lobby for the sector in consultation with Town & Community Councils.



Financial Information

Council Finances 2023/24

Buckley Town Council set a budget to spend £415,378.

Most of this (80%) is funded through the 'Precept'. Residents pay a proportion of the total precept which is collected as part of your Council Tax bill.

The remaining income (20%) is earned through renting out office spaces within the Council building, community room hire and investment income.

At the year-end the Council spent less than budgeted - total spend = £375,249 split across the following areas.

The full breakdown of the Council's budget, year-end financial statement/annual return and audit outcomes are published under the Financial Information section of our website.

Budget Area

Finance & Economic Development Committee

Covering: Staff salaries, Council building utilities, cleaning maintenance, Mayors and Civic expenses, Town Centre & Events contractor, bursary scheme, mental health counsellor, IT, printing, stationery, insurance, community grants, membership, audit fees, free car-parking scheme and training.

Budget Set

£266,550

Actual Spend

£269,287

Highways & Leisure Committee

Covering: Public toilets - cleaning, utilities and cleaning materials, renovation of play area (Lyme Grove), contribution towards the maintenance of the Commons, summer playscheme in 4 wards, the annual Buckley Show, Coronation Gardens, bench installation and defibrillators.

£71,850

£53,760

General Purposes Committee

Covering: Annual fireworks display, Jubilee bunting, CCTV, Town Clock, elections, contribution towards maintenance of burial grounds, Christmas lights and hanging baskets.

£76,978

£45,933

Earmarked & General Reserve

0

£6,269

Total

£415,378

£375,249

Additional Achievements during 2023/24

Old Buckley Baths Project

In partnership with Flintshire County Council, an idea is being developed relating to the Old Buckley Baths to re-engage the community using a film and consultation project.

Coronation of King Charles II

Buckley Town Council funded Commemorative Coronation Coins. These were distributed by the outgoing Mayor Julia Jones and were gifted to all the school children in Buckley, Councillors, everyone involved in the Fun Day 2023, all members of the Royal Buckley Town Band and all residents in care homes in Buckley.



Improved Investment Strategy

An improved investment strategy was implemented yielding positive income for the Council allowing the precept to be kept lower.

On-line Video Meetings

The Council moved to Zoom Video conferencing platform for better engagement. The public (or Councillors) may join any Council meeting via Zoom to listen or watch meeting proceedings.

Improved Tendering Exercise

Two large Council contracts were due to expire, so a new and improved tendering process was followed to successfully appoint the Council's cleaning contractor and the Town and Events contractor (new contracts to commence from 1st April 2024)

Event Infrastructure

80 crowd control barriers were purchased to sustain future event costs.

War Memorials

Buckley Town Council is entrusted with the custodianship of the towns war memorials which includes insuring and maintaining the monuments.

Transforming Towns - Property Improvement Grant

Buckley Town Council was successful in getting £12,565 of grant funding from Flintshire County Council to support a total spend of £17,951. This grant money was used for:

- New clock dial on the Buckley Town Clock
- Roofing repairs to the Council Offices
- Gas boiler replacement and new heat exchange for the Council Offices
- New exterior door for tenants entrance of Council Offices building

Flintshire Standards Committee

Flintshire County Council Standards Committee sent an independent Committee Member to attend as a member of the public on the 23rd January 2024. The meeting and minutes published by the Standards Committee on 4th March 2024 stated that positive feedback be provided to Buckley Town Council.

The Number of Complaints

The Council received 3 complaints during the year which were resolved.

Key Council Objectives for the Year 2023 / 24

In the absence of a permanent Town Clerk, the Council's main objective for the year was to recruit a permanent Town Clerk.

The Council was successful, following a lengthy recruitment process and appointed a new Town Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer in November 2023 who commenced work for Buckley Town Council in January 2024

Progress against objectives

The Council has historically not set objectives and this is an area for development of the Council going forward.

Planned Activities for 2024 / 25

The Council, in setting the 2024 / 25 budget, agreed to prioritise the following activities:

- New Christmas Lights for the Town Centre in 2024
- Accessibility Audit for Coronation Gardens to look at improvements.
- A new bleed box is to be installed and replacement pads and batteries for defibrillator.
- Review of Governance by new Town Clerk.
- Support the Old Buckley Baths - Flintshire County Council project.



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