



Cyngor Dinas Llanellwy St Asaph City Council

Annual Report 2023-2024

Newsletter Date

Foreword by the Mayor of St Asaph 2023-2024 **Cllr Colin Hardie**

Once again it has been a great honor to have been the City Mayor and represent our city at numerous city functions during the last year.

St Asaph was privileged to welcome the Royal Welsh Regiment when they accepted our gift of Freedom of the City. Our community was able to witness the spectacle of the Regiment marching along the High Street led by their regimental mascot, Lance Corporal Shenkin.

My fellow councillors and I have continued to work to maintain a safe and pleasant environment for us all to enjoy. We are extremely lucky to have large open spaces along the river Elwy which improves the general well-being of our community. Unfortunately, maintaining these areas together with the children's play areas and our library, creates a huge drain on the Council's financial resources.

I have to mention the sad passing of Mrs Susan Scott, the wife of our Deputy Mayor and County Councillor, Peter Scott. Sue has always been a huge support to Peter's work on the council and will be greatly missed.

Finally, I have to thank our local volunteers who as individuals or groups, have regularly helped in litter picking of our open spaces throughout the city. Their actions together with other volunteers who have helped to make the city attractive by painting wooden seats and generally keeping commu-



nal areas attractive and safe for everyone concerned.

What do we do?

St Asaph is divided into East Ward and West Ward and there are seven City Councillors in each ward. The Council's role is to represent the electorate of St Asaph and to manage facilities for its residents. Amongst other things, the Council is responsible for:

- * · Representing the views of the community
- * · Working with partners such as North Wales Police, Denbighshire County Council and Natural Resources Wales to deliver services for the community
- * · Maintenance and management of the Council's land at Roe Plas, The Common and Mill Race Meadow
- * · Street furniture—such as benches, bus shelters on the High Street and litter bins
- * · Play areas at Lower Street, Llys Dyffryn, Bryn Gobaith, the Trim Trail and the MUGA at Roe Plas
- * · Christmas Lighting
- * · Events, such as the Remembrance Sunday parade and service at the War Memorial

We serve approximately 3500 residents. The precept for 2023-2024 was £139,902

Meetings

The Council meets on the second Wednesday of every month, except August. The meetings are held at the Council Meeting Room at Roe Plas and also with remote attendance. The Council also has standing committees, for example the Environment & Assets Committee which oversees the management of the Council's land and buildings. If you would like to attend a Council meeting, please contact the Clerk for details.

What did we do in 2023-2024?

Events

Remembrance Sunday

The Remembrance Sunday service and parade were very well-attended in November, despite the heavy rain. This is always an important date on the calendar in St Asaph and so many residents turned out to commemorate the fallen.



The beautiful poppy curtain, created by the members of the WI, was on display in the Cathedral.



Freedom of the City

At its meeting in May 2023 the City Council passed the following resolution:

That the Mayor & Councillors of St Asaph City Council hereby confer upon the 1st Battalion of The Royal Welsh the Honorary Freedom of the City of St Asaph and all privileges, honours and distinction of marching through the streets of St Asaph on ceremonial occasions with bayonets fixed, Colours flying and drums beating, in recognition of the long association and cordial relations which have existed between the city and the regiment and the work of the British Army in helping to defend the interests of the United Kingdom.

After almost two years of preparation, the first freedom march was held on the morning of Saturday 8th July. Before being given permission to "march off", the troops were inspected by the City Mayor, Cllr Colin Hardie, Col Lock, Lord Lieutenant Henry Fetherstonhaugh and Chairman of Denbighshire County Council, Cllr Peter Prendergast to the sound of the band playing "Pack up your Troubles", a first world war song composed by the Powell brothers, who were residents of St Asaph.

The parade was attended by civic dignitaries from across North Wales and this was an opportunity to showcase our beautiful city. It was a very proud day for all.



The 1st Battalion of the Royal Welsh march through St Asaph, led by their mascot Lance Corp Shenkin IV and the regimental band.

Projects 2023-2024

City Plan

The City Plan Working Group is working to produce a medium-term plan for the Council. We are working with partners at Denbighshire to plan future projects for the benefit of our community and its residents.

Standards

The Council is continuing its work on the Self-Governance & Finance Toolkit. The Council has continued with the project to ensure that the right policies and procedures are in place to operate lawfully and effectively. The Council has also taken the Civility & Respect pledge to commit to high standards of behaviour in public office.



Pheasant Woodcarving

In October last year, during Storm Babet, the pheasant floated off downstream and washed up on Rhyl beach. Now restored to his former glory, thanks to the hard work of a talented volunteer, we have had him securely re-installed.

The pheasant is a much-loved memorial to a local resident whose family is relieved to see him back in his rightful place.

Noticeboard

The old noticeboard at Roe Plas was removed as it was in a sorry state. With the help of grant funding, we have just had a smart new free-standing noticeboard installed.

Litter Bins

The City Council is unique in North Wales in managing approximately 50 acres of open space land, which is enjoyed by residents and visitors, alike. Maintenance of this land represents approximately 45% of the Council's expenditure.

Following discussions with Denbighshire, we became aware that dog waste could be placed in the standard black litter bins, or even in the domestic black bin. We realised that continuing the use of dog waste bins was not an effective use of the City Council's resources. In other communities, where this waste is collected by Denbighshire, this service is included in the general council tax, so in effect St Asaph residents have been paying extra for emptying these red bins. The City Council therefore removed the red dog bins in April last year and has installed a new black bin at Roe Plas to replace two of the red bins.

We take four bins into storage from the end of October until the week before Easter. During Storm Babet at the end of October, one of the bins on Mill Race Meadow was washed away in the floodwater. From this year we will therefore store the bins from the end of September.

Defibrillators

The Rotary Club of St Asaph sadly closed at the end of December 2022. The Rotarians transferred the Club's defibrillators to the City Council to ensure they continued to be maintained for the community. The Rotary Club also gave a generous donation to enable the City Council to install two new defibrillators on the High Street wall of the Diocesan Office and at the New Inn. Sux City Councillors now act as Defibrillator Guardians and conduct regular checks of these devices.

Friendship Benches

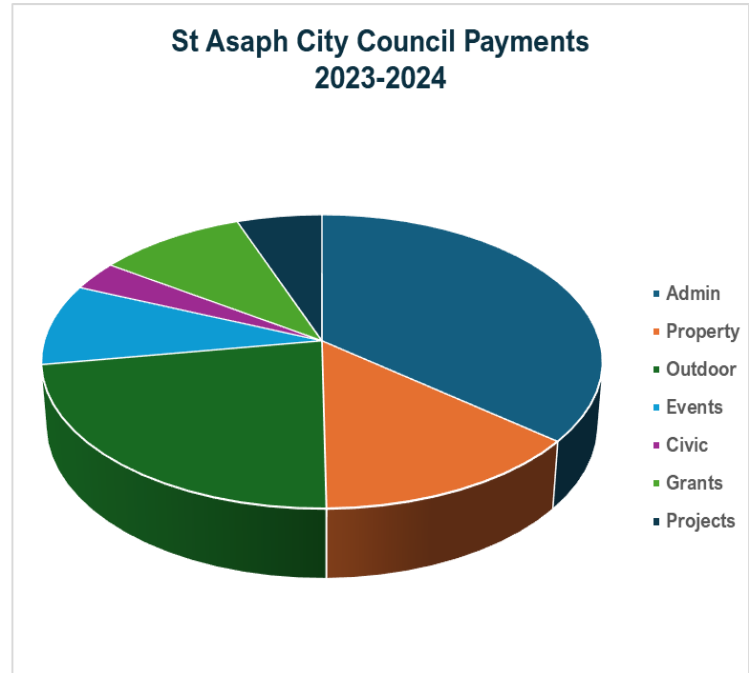
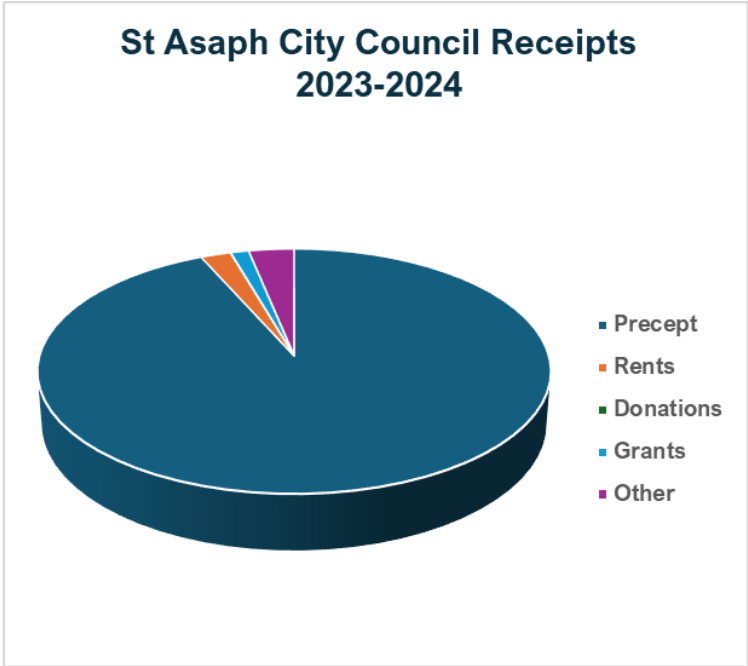
Thanks to the hard work of three volunteers, a number of the Council's benches have been painted in bright designs and colours. The volunteers wanted to provide seating for people to have a chat as a way of combatting loneliness.

The City Council had new bilingual signs made for some of the benches.

Finance

Where we get our Funding:

Precept	£139902	(93%)
Rents	£3200	(2%)
Donations	£50	(0.03%)
Grants	£1915	(1.3%)
Other	£4825	(3.2%)



How we spend our money:

Administration	£48120	(36%)
Property	£8459	(14%)
Outdoor Costs	£30265	(23%)
Events	£12018	(9%)
Civic Costs	£4322	(3%)
Grants	£13055	(10%)
Projects	£7508	(5%)

Grants Awarded 2023-2024

The City Council has a small budget for grants, which are available to community groups. The Council contributes £12,000 each year towards the upkeep of the Library to ensure that this popular and essential service is retained for the community.

In February 2024, the City Council agreed to continue its commitment to the Library by agreeing to contribute £12,000 per annum to the Library for the next three financial years.

This is how we spent our budget in 2023-2024

Organisation	£
Denbighshire County Council Library Services	12000
NWIMF	750
St Asaph Cathedral—for repairs to the Cathedral clock	750
Awarded but not yet paid	
Royal British Legion	105
St Asaph City Times	200

Biodiversity

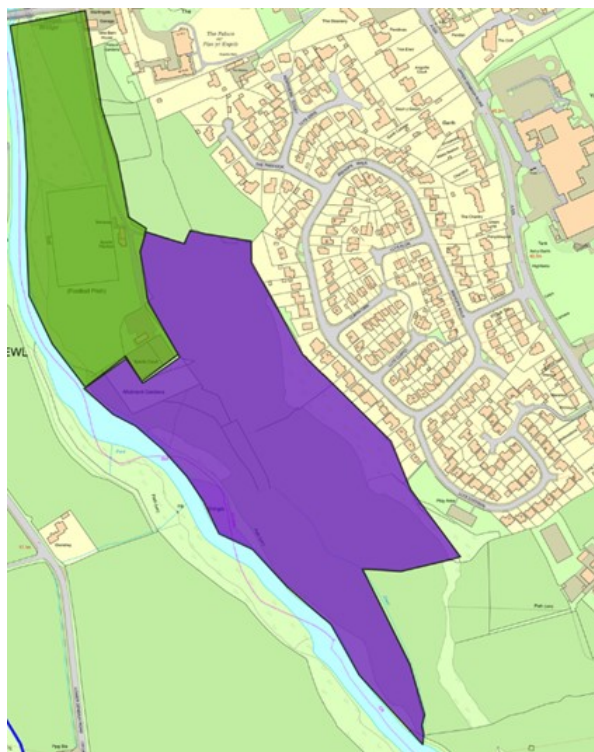
St Asaph City Council provides services to its local community which have an impact on biodiversity. We promote sustainability and biodiversity practices whenever possible. Most of our land has open access to Members of the Public and we attempt to manage all areas as sympathetically as possible to the biodiversity whilst allowing total freedom to members of the public. The City Council works with officers from Denbighshire and Natural Resources Wales to ensure that its land is managed sympathetically.

Mill Race Meadow

(Shown in purple on the plan right)

The field was purchased by the City Council in 2008. It is private property, as it is leased to a local farmer for grazing, although a public footpath does run through it.

This land is left to grow naturally and is grazed by a large flock of sheep so that no pesticides or herbicides are ever used. One third of an acre has been set aside for use as a community orchard and some twenty fruit trees of different heritage varieties were planted. Jubilee Copse was added in 2021-2022. The field has a large amount of gorse growing along the riverside which is left to grow naturally and only occasionally is this cut back to prevent over-intensification. A section of this land has been set aside as an allotment area for some twenty plots.



Roe Plas

(Shown in the darker shade of green on the plan above right)

The land was given to the St Asaph Parish Council (now St Asaph City Council) in 1946 as a celebration of the victory of the Allied Forces in the Hostilities 1939-1945, for recreation and leisure.

Fifty per cent of this area is set aside as a football facility and this grassed area is cut as necessary by personnel from the Football Club.

The remaining area is a mixture of open grassland and woodland. The grass is trimmed to a height of 65mm six times a year and the woodland is tended to ensure safety of Members of the Public. We have mature black poplars in this area, which are the only ones in the UK of the St Asaph variety.

The Afon Elwy Environment Group have worked with the City Council for many years to improve and enhance biodiversity. The AEEG was awarded the green flag in every year from 2020 onwards.

Approximately 100 whips have been planted on the small bund near the car park and along the hedge line adjoining Mill Race Meadow

St Asaph Common

(Shown in the plan, right, in darker green)

The Common is almost entirely grassland and has been managed by the Council since 1897. The grass is cut to a height of approximately 65 mm six times a year to enable members of the public to enjoy the space. It provides a home for St Asaph Bowling Club. On the west of the river there is a Trim Trail and the wildflower garden, which includes a small area of woodland.

All three areas are bounded by River Elwy.

Land behind the Library

(Shown on the plan, right, in purple)

This provides an informal parking area.

River Elwy

Like all landowners whose land adjoins the river, the City Council is responsible for the river where it meets its property, to halfway across, as riparian landowner. In practice, however, NRW deals with much of the maintenance for the river and the bunds as they form an important part of the flood defences.

What do we do?

- ⇒ Maintain footpaths and kissing gates on these three sites and provide litter bins.
- ⇒ We leave the woodland wild and do hedge layering.
- ⇒ Sections of the flood bank have been seeded with wildflower mixes, which include clover, yarrow and meddock. We have developed a bee and butterfly garden.
- ⇒ We frequently plant new trees at various locations across these three areas.
- ⇒ Most of the hedgerows are planted with trees which bear berries. These attract large numbers of Winter migratory birds
- ⇒ Each year our contractors strim any Himalayan Balsam along the riverbank and dispose of the arisings.
- ⇒ Some areas of dead wood are left for wildlife.
- ⇒ We encourage other organisations, such as the WI, local schools and Rotary Club to participate in our endeavours.
- ⇒ In 2020, approximately 64 Sakura cherry trees, gifted by the Japanese Consul were planted on four sites across the city.



Flora and Fauna

- ⇒ We have identified five different species of winter migratory birds which roost along Roe Plas and Elwy meadow
- ⇒ At least one otter holt has been identified on the riverbank
- ⇒ Native bluebells and other spring flowering bulbs have been planted in several different areas
- ⇒ We have several badger setts
- ⇒ Along the riverbank there are herons, dipper, kingfishers and goosanders
- ⇒ The river is populated by salmon, sea trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, lamprey, eels, minnows and bull-heads

Special Projects

Wildflowers

We have created a wildflower area on the west side of the Common, opposite the Doctors' surgeries, which is called the wildflower garden. This area is left uncut, with cut and collects undertaken at the end of March, June, and August.

This is the third year for the wildflower garden. In Spring 2021 a Denbighshire Biodiversity Officer conducted a species count on our behalf and identified:

Ribwort Plantain, Daisy, Dandelion, White clover, yarrow, common mouse ear, creeping buttercup, ivy-leaf speedwell, germander speedwell, forget-me-not, lords and ladies, garlic mustard, nettle, spear thistle, dock, herb roberts, common mallow, meadow buttercup, primrose, shining crane's bill, hawkweed, foxglove, lesser celandine, bluebell and *apiaceae* spp.

We continue to work with the Denbighshire Biodiversity team who are advising us on the best way to manage this site.

At Jubilee Copse and in the Community Orchards, we have the grass strimmed back just once or twice a year to ensure the trees have enough nutrients and water to thrive.

Trees

In common with other responsible landowners, the Council has had an inspection of its mature trees in 2021-2022 and remedial work has been completed. We are especially proud of our mature black poplars, which are the only ones in the UK of the St Asaph variety.

In 2020, we were delighted to receive a gift of 64 Sakura cherry trees from the Japanese Consul. These were planted on four sites across the city:

- .. By the Trim Trail
- .. In the Wildflower Garden
- .. At Roe Plas
- .. The avenue across the Common

Sadly, some of the trees have been vandalised and we have had new tree guards constructed on the Common avenue to protect the trees.



Jubilee Copse

Approximately a third of an acre adjoining the community orchard has been fenced off and planted with native trees to form Jubilee Copse. It was a fitting way to participate in the Queen's Green Canopy and to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

Planting included quercus rober, field maple, red maple, copper beech, wild cherry, holly, red hawthorn, rowan and pandora cherry trees

Thanks to a generous donation of twenty Denbigh Plum trees from one of our residents we are delighted to include these heritage fruit trees.



Other

- ⇒ The City Council continues to use the trade waste service from Ash Waste. All waste is recycled and any items which can't be re-cycled will be sent to produce energy. This reduces the Council's carbon footprint.
- ⇒ The Clerk works from home, which reduces travel to work. Councillors share travel when attending events outside St Asaph.
- ⇒ The City Plan Working Group is due to meet with the Denbighshire Climate Change Officer to consider what the Council could do to reduce its carbon footprint.

Our Plans for 2024-2025

- ⇒ Land behind the Library—we are looking for grant funding to improve the landscaping in this area. Once NRW end their involvement, we will use local contractors to cut the grass and maintain this area.
- ⇒ We continue to work with Denbighshire Biodiversity Officers towards achievement of bee-friendly status.
- ⇒ We hope to extend the wheelchair access at the wildflower garden to improve the accessibility of this area for all residents.
- ⇒ We are continuing to work on the city plan and will meet from officers from various departments at Denbighshire to explore ways of improving the services offered to the community.
- ⇒ We continue with the Self-governance review. The initial review has been completed and we now need to write and consider policies to ensure the Council has the correct procedures in place.
- ⇒ The City Council is continuing to work on plans to provide further defibrillators for St Asaph.

Thank You!

The Mayor and Councillors would like to like to express their heartfelt thanks to all those who volunteer their time and have done so much to help the Council and the Community, including the following:

- * * To all the stewards who gave their support for the Freedom of the City event.
- * * To Steve for the incredible drone photography of the Freedom of the City event.
- * * To Chloe, Dean and Jackie for their tireless work in painting benches to brighten up our city.
- * * To the Rotary Club of St Asaph for the donation of two defibrillators and for their generous donation. This enabled us to install two more of these life-saving devices.
- * * To the Afon Elwy Environment Group who have given unstinting support to the City Council over so many years.
- * To the members of Llanelwy WI who generously gave up their time to serve refreshments at the Mayor's Civic Service.
- * * To Shaun who generously gave his skills and so much of his time to restore the pheasant woodcarving to his former glory.
- * To the residents who kindly donated a picnic table to the City Council

Should you have any questions regarding the City Council's work, please contact the Clerk:

Mrs Jill Ellison- Email: clerk@stasaphcitycouncil.gov.uk Tel: 07521 641756