



Whitchurch Town Council

## WHITCHURCH: An Overview of the Town and Town Council

Whitchurch is situated in north Shropshire, close to the Cheshire and Wrexham County Boundaries and in particular the towns of Wrexham, Nantwich and Crewe. The town has a thriving town centre and has the benefit of A49 and A525 bypasses around the town. The Whitchurch arm of the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal is an important tourist facility bringing visitors to the town. It is the oldest continuously inhabited town in Shropshire and is twinned with the French town of Neufchâtel-en-Bray, a town also famous for its cheese production.

Originally a settlement founded by the Romans around AD 52 or 70, it was called Mediolanum, meaning the place in the middle of the plain. Roman artefacts can be seen at the Whitchurch Heritage Centre. The current name comes from 'White Church', which refers to a church from Norman period made from white stone. The current impressive church is St. Alkmund was built in 1712 of red sandstone and stands on the site of the earlier Norman architecture church. It is an important Grade I Listed building.

Whitchurch is the home of the JB Joyce tower clocks company, established in 1690, the oldest clock tower making company in the world, earning Whitchurch the reputation as the Home of tower clocks. Famous past residents of the town include composer Sir Edward German, who was born in the town in what is now a pub (the Old Town Hall Vaults). He is buried in the local cemetery. Locally, the Sir Edward German Music Festival - is hosted by St. Alkmund's and St. John's churches. Also buried in Whitchurch is a medieval warrior Sir John Talbot, a military commander, who in 1429 fought French armies inspired by Joan of Arc. The local secondary school "Sir John Talbot's" is named after him.

The Town centre of Whitchurch combines historic old buildings and landmarks alongside 1960s and later developments. It is an important service centre for the surrounding area and has a weekly charter market. The majority of shops are independently owned but there are some branches of national chain stores.

There is a range of community-based facilities including a library, swimming pool, leisure centre, community hospital, day care centre, two community centres, youth centre, heritage centre, four places of worship (and two other Christian groups who meet in community buildings) and a multipurpose Civic Centre. Statutory education is provided by separate Infant, Junior and Secondary schools, and a private Primary school.

Whitchurch has many voluntary organisations and groups including successful sports clubs, service organisations like Rotary, youth groups, drama groups, Photographic Society, History and Archaeology Group, Wildlife Trust, and Waterways Trust. The Chamber of Trade supports local businesses, and other groups are active within the tourism sector. Many national and local charities have branches in Whitchurch. Whitchurch Rugby Club, founded in 1936, plays at Edgeley Park. The local football club, Whitchurch Alport F.C., known as the Allbran Allstars, now play in the Mercian Regional Football League.

Significant growth in Whitchurch took place in Victorian and Edwardian times and then at the end of the Great War, when much new housing was provided by the Urban District Council (UDC). Slum clearance and greater demand for housing after World War 2 led to the development of more council estates, scattered around the town. Remnants of the surrounding open countryside remained as green corridors into the Town centre. Early private housing estates were constructed mainly on infill sites. Since 1970 most private building has been on the edges of the built-up area. In the Town centre there has been some more recent building of apartment complexes. The upper floors of some commercial premises have been converted into living accommodation.

**Whitchurch** is a market town in Shropshire and forms the Whitchurch Urban civil parish. It is bordered to the south and south east by the Whitchurch Rural parish, to the north by Cheshire and to the west by Wales. Whitchurch was granted 'town' status in 1284 and has a market charter dating from the 16th century.

Whitchurch Town Council is one of the largest of 153 local councils within the Shropshire. Within this number, 16 are Town Councils of which Whitchurch is the fifth largest. Shropshire Council is one of two principal councils in the ceremonial and historic County, the other being Telford and Wrekin Borough Council.

Whitchurch was granted 'town' status in 1284 and has market rights dating from the 16th century.

Modern local government for the Town was originally formed as Whitchurch and Dodington Urban District, in 1894, replacing the Local Board, which had been established in 1860. The name of the district was altered to Whitchurch Urban District, in 1895, and a Council, consisting of twelve members was formed. In 1967, it was amalgamated with Ellesmere Rural District, Wem Rural District, and the urban districts of Ellesmere & Wem, as well as Whittington from Oswestry Rural District, to form the North Shropshire Rural District Council.

At this time, Whitchurch Parish Council was formed as the local council for the civil (urban) parish of Whitchurch

The North Shropshire Rural District survived until 1974 when it was abolished under the Local Government Act 1972 to form part of a new, larger North Shropshire District, by combining with Market Drayton Rural District. At this time, the Parish Council was designated as Whitchurch Town Council, which effectively had exactly the same legal status, powers and duties as a parish council but had a civic mayor as oppose to a chairman of council.

The district and its council were abolished on 1 April 2009 when the new Shropshire unitary authority was established, as part of the 2009 structural changes to local government in England. Whitchurch Town Council remained unchanged. The historic and ceremonial county of Shropshire, England, located in the West Midlands region, has two unitary authorities as the local authorities (Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Borough Council. Whitchurch Town is located within the Whitchurch and Prees Local Joint Committee Area.

Whitchurch is part of the North Shropshire constituency for Parliamentary elections and part of the West Midlands constituency of the European Parliament.

The Town Council has a coat of arms, the motto of which is *Floreat Concilia Salopiae* which translates as "Develop Shrophire's Councils"

The Council is composed of 15 Councillors, representing 3 the three wards of South, North and West. Council elections take place in May every 4 years, when a new Council is elected

Councillors have to agree to follow a code of conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties which includes the declaration of interests in matters considered by Council. The Standards Committee of Shropshire Council is responsible for promoting and ensuring the standards of conduct by unitary, parish and town councillors. Shropshire Council's Monitoring Officer deals with complaints about the behavior of councillors under the Code.