

For Council: 20 April 2026 APPENDIX 2

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer



The Guildhall became a hub of celebration and empowerment for International Women's Day on Sunday 8 March, with the event beginning at 2pm. Organised by the civic officer, the afternoon was led by the Mayor of Lichfield, Cllr Claire Pinder-Smith, alongside Deputy Mayor Cllr Rosie Harvey-Coggins and Cllr Ann Hughes.

A programme of activities took place throughout the afternoon across both the Guildhall and the Guildroom and included an open mic session and live performances from Cloudy Galvez and Cathy Lamb's children's choir. Visitors also had the opportunity to browse a range of stalls from local women-led businesses and charitable organisations, including the Listening Centre, Pathway Project and local author Saida Chowdhury. The event encouraged networking, fostered new connections and promoted community engagement.

The Mayor and Sheriff once again hosted their Entertainment and Tea event for the over-70s on Friday 20 March in the Guildroom at the Guildhall. Guests enjoyed a high tea served by Lichfield City Council officers and Councillors.

The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Jake Lane from Lichfield General Market kindly provided bunches of daffodils for the table decorations. This year's entertainment was provided by local duo *The Two of Us*, who sang a wide variety of songs from across genres and decades, along with a surprise appearance from Queen Elizabeth I (Lesley Smith), who delivered an informative talk and stayed afterwards for photos and shout-outs.

The afternoon concluded with thanks from the Sheriff to all the helpers, with a special mention to Travelwood Ltd for providing transport and enabling many residents to attend.



This year, Easter Sunday fell on Sunday, 5 April, when the Civic party made its way from the Guildhall to the Cathedral. Following the Eucharist service at Lichfield Cathedral, guests gathered at the Guildhall for refreshments, including the traditional Simnel cake. This event provided the final opportunity for the 2025/26 Mayor and Sheriff to express their gratitude to all who had supported them throughout their tenure. Councillors Andrew Fox & Ann Hughes offered toasts, commending them for a successful year in office

Unfortunately, due to low attendance, the Mayor and Sheriff's final civic event, Curryoke, was cancelled. While disappointing, the decision was taken with careful consideration to ensure the best use of time and resources, and the Mayor and Sheriff remain grateful for the support shown throughout their civic year.

At the time of compiling this report, preparations are ongoing for April events, including the ever-popular St George's Court on Thursday 23 April and the Sheriff's Darwin Walk on Sunday 26 April.



2. Open Spaces: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer and Jane Varley, Clerical Officer

Christian Fields (Site 1)

Significant site improvements funded and managed by LCC on the section of this open space that is owned by this council, to enhance the work being undertaken by LDC across other areas of the site. This work emerged from discussions instigated by LDC that only began in February of this year. The following works have now been completed:

- Car park extended and improved including replacement of height restrictor, excavation and removal of vegetation, extension of bund around new section, regrade and compact surface.
- New steps formed with sleepers and creation of woodland path.
- Pothole repairs and resurfacing to access road



Other matters progressed/completed since the last report and in addition to routine inspections include:

- **Festival Gardens (19C)** – work undertaken to 14 x Lime Trees, including crown lift to 2.5m, removal of all major deadwood together with any basal growth. Also crown lift and deadwood 1 x Cherry Tree. Supplementary pest control measures introduced in identified areas
- **The Windings (Woods Croft to Swallow Croft, FP27)** – Holly tree removed at request of resident, ivy cut back from fence and holly growth cleared from around lamp post.
- **Ash Grove (17C)** – Removal of Cherry Tree leaning over into resident's garden
- **St Chad's (12A)** – high broken limb hung up on cedar tree removed by tree surgeon
- **Hazel Grove (Site 20)** Cut back of foliage and general re-establishment of green space which had become overgrown over time.
- **Kings Hill to Hill Side via Gazebo (FP5)** – fallen tree blocking path has been cleared.



Spring bulbs have brightened several LCC open spaces over the past few weeks; we are investigating opportunities for similar planting on other LCC open spaces.



3. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums & Heritage Officer

Spring has well and truly arrived at the Birthplace, with events and seasonal activities engaging audiences of all ages. Highlights included Easter trails, family crafts, talks, and tours. Behind the scenes, the site has been busy with building improvements, staff and volunteer training, and the development of new displays and interactive content.

Building Improvements

Improvement works focused on upgrading the staff kitchen and welfare facilities have been successfully completed. All work was carefully designed to protect the integrity and historic fabric of the Grade I listed building, ensuring that modern hygiene and health and safety standards were met while respecting the character of this nationally significant site.

Works commenced on 2 February and were completed in early March. To minimise disruption to visitors, the museum and bookshop were closed for a short period from 2 to 10 February and reopened on 11 February.

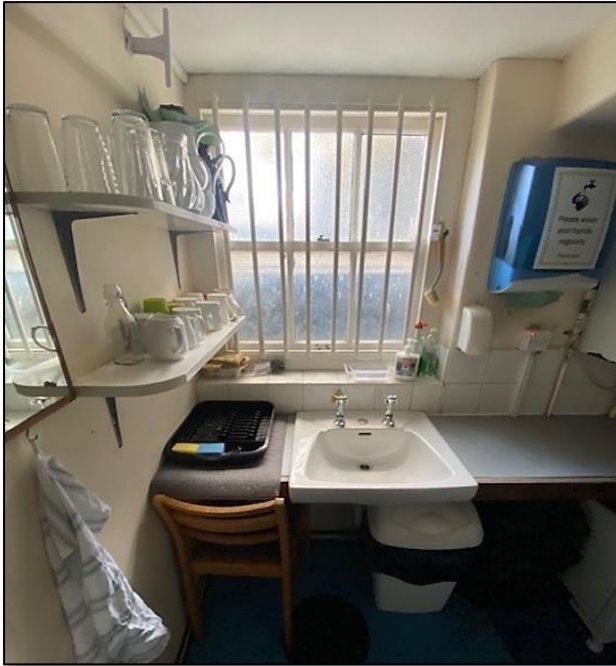
The improvements include:

- Reconfiguration and upgrading of the kitchen, including new appliances (under-counter fridge and dishwasher), stainless-steel sink and taps, improved storage, new hygienic worksurfaces, replacing tiles, replacing shelving, and painting walls/ceiling/woodwork.
- Refurbishment of the WC, including the installation of a compact two-in-one toilet and sink unit for improved hygiene and painting walls/ceiling/woodwork.
- Improved heating and ventilation, including installation of radiators and an extractor fan.
- Installation of a new water heater to replace a rusted and undersized unit, using the existing service routes.
- Plumbing and waste drainage upgrades, with new waste pipes serving the kitchen and cleaner's sinks, all connected to the existing ground drain and using existing holes.
- Installation of new electrical sockets.
- Installation of a new cleaner's sink repositioned slightly from its current location to improve usability.

Toilet – Before and After:



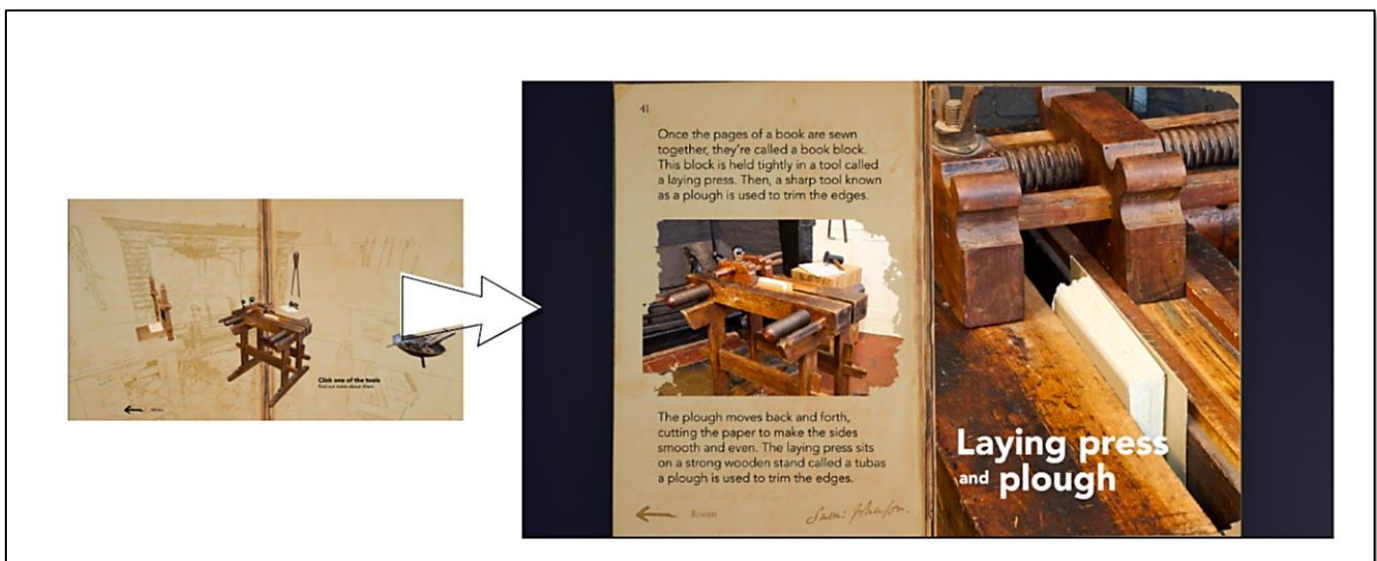
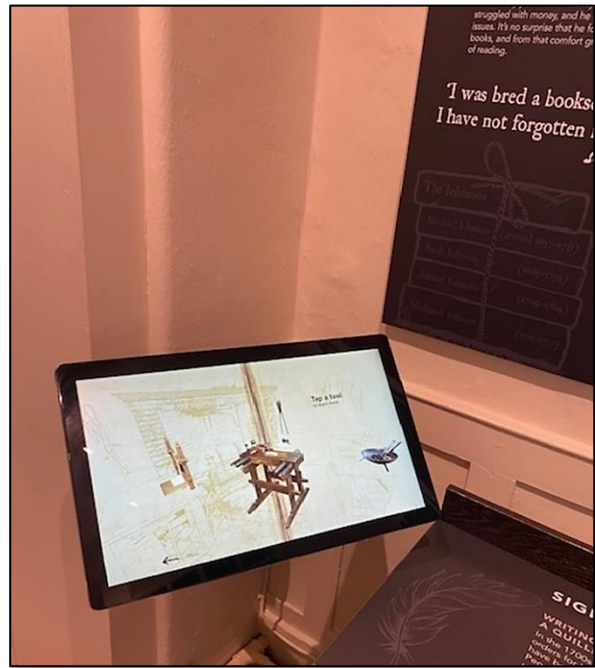
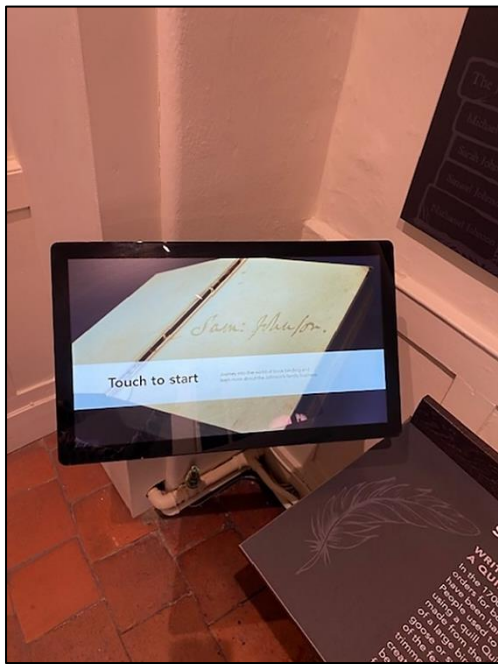
Kitchen – Before and After



Enhancing Interpretation and Displays

A new touchscreen has been installed in the Workroom to enhance interpretation and visitor engagement. The screen offers a range of interactive content, including a short film, *How to Bind a Book*, featuring bookbinder Arthur Green. The film demonstrates the skilled process of bookbinding, helping to illustrate the type of work that would have been undertaken in this room in the 1700s.

The touchscreen also features an interactive element titled *Tools of the Trade*, which supports the Workroom display. This focuses on the tools currently exhibited in the space, of the kind that would have been used by Samuel Johnson's father, Michael Johnson, in his work as a bookseller. Visitors can explore the content by touching the screen, triggering an animation that transforms the room into an illustrated scene and highlights key tools. Selecting individual items reveals further information and detailed images, offering insight into their function and historical use.



A student placement from Keele University has curated a mini display for the Attic, including interpretive panels written by the student. In addition, three of Johnson's letters, together with a letter from Anna Seward, will be on temporary display. Installation of the panels and letters is scheduled for April.

Chair Ceremony

The Johnson Society held its annual Chair Ceremony at the Birthplace on 2 March to mark the anniversary of Samuel Johnson and David Garrick's journey from Lichfield to London. The oak chair that inspires the event is believed to have been used by Johnson at his short-lived school at Edial Hall. The chair was later donated to the Society on the understanding that the ceremony be observed each year. The ceremony includes traditional toasts to "Bon Voyage to Johnson and Garrick" and "the immortal memory of Samuel Johnson," followed by a reflective silence.

Audience Consultation

The *Opening Chapters* audience consultation project has come to a close, with findings presented to stakeholders in March. The project included workshops, focus groups, in-gallery consultation, and a new visitor survey, designed to help staff better understand the needs, expectations, and barriers experienced by existing and under-represented audiences, including why some people may not be visiting.

Bespoke voting stations invited visitors to share their views using wooden tokens, with questions updated regularly to reflect a wide range of interests. Insights from the project explored what visitors want to know more about and how they can connect with Samuel Johnson's story and the wider history of Lichfield in his era.

The consultation has provided valuable learning, helping to shape future exhibitions, displays, and programming. The Birthplace plans to continue engaging with audiences in this way to ensure experiences remain meaningful, accessible, and responsive to visitor needs.

This project was supported using public funding from Museum Development Midlands (MDM) and Arts Council England.



Supported using public funding by

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Conservation Care Training

Staff and volunteers recently took part in conservation care training led by Jane Thompson-Webb, Conservation Manager at Birmingham Museums Trust. The session, *What's Eating Your Collection?*, focused on integrated pest management, an essential practice in museum care. Participants learned how to identify pests, recognise signs of infestation, understand the damage pests can cause, and apply effective methods for treatment and prevention. Insects, the most common type of museum pest, can pose a threat not only to objects but also to the building itself. The training offered practical guidance to protect the collection and support long-term preservation.

Guildhall Cells Re-open

The Museums and Heritage Officer also manages the Guildhall Prison Cells, which reopened on 4 April. The Cells are open on Saturdays throughout the summer season until October. Preparations for reopening were led by the Museum Support Officer, including a spring clean and general tidying of the space, coordinating the volunteer rota, and ensuring that everything was in place for the start of the season.

4. Markets: Jeremy Williams, Markets Officer/Michelle Read, Office Administrator

On Monday, 16 February, Chinese New Year was celebrated with festivities including dragon dances and other entertainment on the Market square.



Tuesday Market/Wednesday Trading Update

There are currently three pitches available on the Tuesday market, however having additional space proved beneficial on 17 February as the Shrovetide Fair could be accommodated without losing any traders.

In addition two new casual traders *Peak Sales Basket & Giftware* and *Rewind Vintage Toys* are providing some cover.

An additional trader has joined Wednesday trading, *Poppies* now operates alongside the Fruit & Vegetable stall, offering flowers and floral displays.

Friday and Saturday Markets Update

Both the Friday and Saturday markets remain full. On 28 March, due to the predicted high winds, the market was restricted to trading from vehicles only. Unfortunately, only 8 traders attended.

Additional Sunday Markets

At its meeting on 9 March 2026 Council resolved to establish a market on each Sunday of the year under the provisions of the Food Act part III The aim being to attract other potential market operators to the city and to the square without incurring street trading charges.

Thanks to these efforts, the Markets Officer has contacted various operators and successfully arranged a new Antiques and Vintage Fair, with its first event taking place on Sunday, 12 April, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Another fair is scheduled for Sunday, 10 May, and if these events prove successful, they are expected to become regular fixtures.



Vegan Market

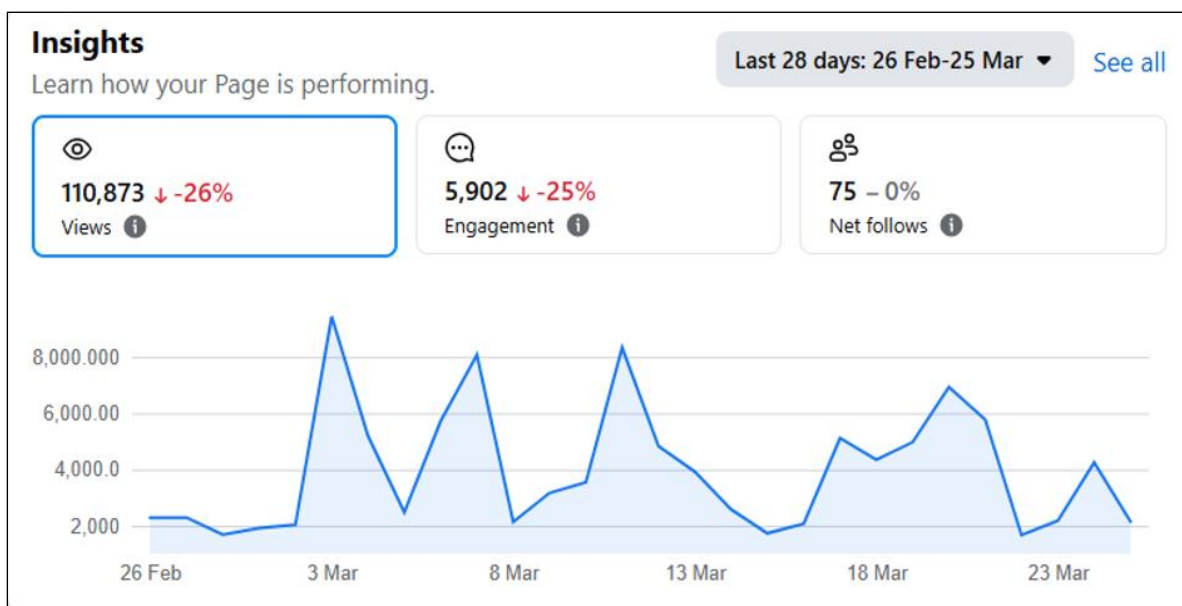
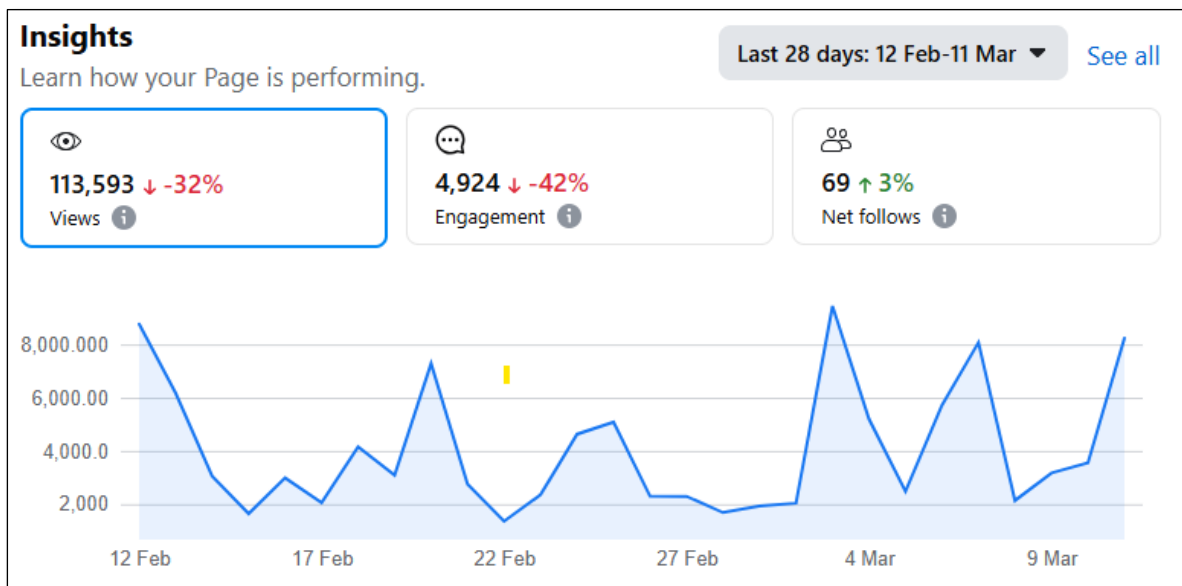
The Vegan market will return on Sunday 17 May 2026 but only has a further three dates booked for 2026 due to poor trader attendance last year. It is hoped that the same operator will also hold a biodiversity market on Sunday 20 September 2026 and that this may prove more successful.

Producers Market

The Producer's Market, managed by CJ Events, takes place on the first Sunday of each month. The event consistently attracts approximately 30 participating traders and enjoys strong customer support, with many individuals returning regularly. The market features a diverse range of vendors, which may vary from month to month, each offering a wide selection of goods.

Social Media

The statistics below shows Facebook followers and interaction over a 28-day comparison from February to March. New traders that come onto the market are given an in-depth showcase on social media to help promote their arrival on the Market and to help increase footfall and their sales.



5. Guildhall & Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Bookings Officer

Guildhall bookings have included the following since my last report.

Civic Events

The Entertainment and Tea for the Over 70's was held in the Guildroom on 20 February. The room was full to capacity, and entertainment included singers and Lesley Smith (Queen Elizabeth I). International Women's Day was also celebrated in the Main Hall. More information on these events can be found in the Civic Officer's report.

Other City Council meetings/events include Full Council, a Commercial Services Committee Meeting, Labour Group Meeting, Birthplace Museum consultation events and a College Workshop.

Charity/Voluntary Rate (SUBSIDISED RATE)

Bookings in this category include our regular hirers: Bridge, Chess, U3A, and RSPB, Chess, Band Practice, RSPB and the National Trust. The City of Lichfield Concert Band held their Spring Concert. Other bookings in this rate included 4 meetings, a workshop and educational booking.

Lichfield Arts have held a concert in March featuring the return of King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys. They have also held volunteer training sessions.

As part of the Literature Festival, Tracy Borman presented a talk on The Stolen Crown.

Private Bookings (STANDARD RATE)

2 meetings have been held under this category. Other bookings have included 2 parties to celebrate 40th Birthdays. A local group's held auditions for a forthcoming production and a talk on ADHD has taken place in the Guildroom.

The Worshipful Company of Smiths held for their Annual Feast at the beginning of March.

Commercial Bookings

A local historian held a talk in the Main Hall, and a craft fair took place in March with a further craft fair over the Easter weekend.



It is with sadness that after almost 27 years, Slimming World held their last meeting at the Guildhall at the end of March.

The decision to leave has been attributed to the increase in the Commercial hire rate, which was recommended by the Commercial Services Committee and subsequently approved by Council. As Slimming World is part of a national company, the organiser was unable to increase her member rates to cover the increased rent.

This represents a significant loss of income to the Guildhall; Slimming World having been the main 'commercial rate' hirer for many years. We wish Lisa and her members well in her new venture at The Bowling Green.

Maintenance

The Guildhall Roof repairs are scheduled to start on 6 May and will have a major impact on weekday daytime bookings.

The Ashmole Room is looking wonderful after a new carpet was recently fitted.

Boley Park Community Hall

During February and March, apart from the regular hirers, there have been additional bookings at the hall including 6 children's birthday parties, an anniversary party, stamp fair, barn dance and holiday playscheme.

During February half term, planned maintenance work included replacing the outside lights, and the hall's periodic Electrical Certificate (EICR). There is still some minor electrical work needed, which has been scheduled in the diary.

The new price increase of 3.4% which was agreed by the Management Committee, came into force for new bookings (and regular hirers) after 1 April. There is a waiting list for regular hire slots.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

Administrative tasks have included providing secretariat support at full Council meetings and preparing agendas for the Commercial Services Committee and Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee. Unfortunately both of which had to be cancelled due to insufficient attendance.

The Deputy Town Clerk is working closely with the new RFO in streamlining internal processes, particularly in relation to document management and much progress has already been made.

Community engagement continues with organising the next three Community Days. The Deputy Town Clerk has also worked closely with other Officers to facilitate ongoing projects, such as Sunday markets, Freedom, and the Twinning weekend.

Additionally, work on the new Markets microsite is nearly finished, and the Deputy has been supporting the Town Clerk with confidential staffing matters.

7. Responsible Financial Officer – Lisa Davies

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), Lisa Davies has now joined the team and over the first few months will be undergoing an induction programme. The new RFO is a qualified accountant and a Fellow member of the Association of Accounting Technicians, with experience in accounts, payroll, VAT and audit.

The RFO has already attended an Audit Committee meeting and Full Council meeting and will be involved in the upcoming year end accounts procedures and supporting the Museums & Heritage Officer, with funding and grant applications.

The RFO has identified the sales invoicing processes as an area that she would like to focus on initially. This will be to review current systems and, due to the recent price increases and potential change in usage, highlight any areas of risk or potential for improvement.

An initial and notable achievement is the completion of the FiLCA (Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration) course. This is a sector specific online training and assessment tool offered by SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) and provides essential, practical training on local council finance, covering subjects like audit, VAT, budgeting, and bank reconciliations

The RFO would like to thank everyone for welcoming her to the team and looks forward to meeting everyone in due course.