

LICHFIELD CITY COUNCIL

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Annual Report 2014-15
To Annual Town Meeting
20 May 2015

ANNUAL REPORT – OVERVIEW

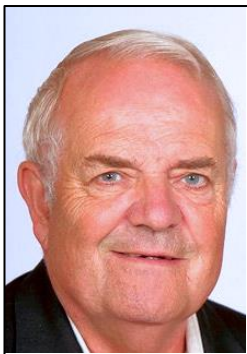
The budget set by the Council in January for the 2015/16 financial year was for a council tax of £52.75 for a Band D property, which was a nil increase on 2014/15. This means that the council tax has increased by only £1.14 (2.2%) in the past 8 years, despite ongoing inflationary pressures.

A major event of the past year was the Twinning celebrations. Each of the twin towns hosts the 'official twinning weekend' every sixth year, and Lichfield welcomed 60 visitors from Limburg in Germany, and 60 visitors from Sainte Foy in France, in October 2014.

We have also been working on production of a Neighbourhood Plan for the City which will focus on employment and economic development matters. And on related matters we have been supporting local businesses who are seeking to create a Business Improvement District (BID) for the City centre, and have also been involved in preparation of a new tourism and visitor strategy for the city, a Report on which will be published shortly.

With 28 councillors and just 13 full-time equivalent staff, the City Council is by far the smallest of the three local authorities serving the City area, and there are limitations in what we can achieve to meet the needs of over 32,500 residents. So as well as the services we provide ourselves, we work in close co-operation with the District and County Councils, and also support many local voluntary and charitable groups which play a key part in the life and well-being of Lichfield.

Residents are welcome to attend the Council meetings. Dates of meetings, contact details for City councillors and much more information about the Council and the City are available on our website at www.lichfield.gov.uk



*Cllr David Smedley
Council Leader*



*Cllr Andrew Smith
Mayor*



*Peter Young
Town Clerk*

Our thanks to Robert Yardley for permission to use some of the photographs in this Report.

Annual Report 2014-15

OPEN SPACES

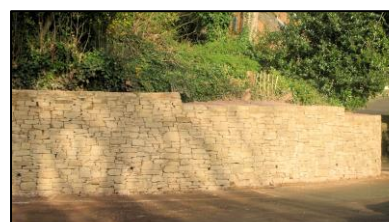


The Council looks after 76 acres of public open space, 4 miles of footpaths, 12 acres of allotments, 17 bus shelters and 120 footway lights.

Most of the routine grounds maintenance work is undertaken by Lichfield District Services under a Service Agreement. The City Council employs a part-time Open Spaces Officer, Heather Francis, to oversee the open space areas.

In addition to routine maintenance the following activities have taken place

- Involvement in a national tree awareness day to highlight the importance of trees to society, both locally and globally.
- Various improvements to Festival Gardens – including new benches and an interpretation board
- Planting a Paulownia in the Remembrance Gardens that will eventually replace the existing tree
- Taking Part in the “Heart of England in Bloom” campaign, with Lichfield winning a “silver-gilt” award
- Working with pupils at St Michael’s Primary school to plant trees in the school grounds
- Rebuilding the retaining wall at Shaw Lane which collapsed
- Running various workshops sessions at events on the Market Sq including making spoon puppets of characters from Frozen.



GUILDHALL & COMMUNITY HALLS



The Council owns the Darwin Hall, Cruck House, Curborough Community Centre, and Boley Park Community Hall, all of which are leased to local management committees. The committees manage the buildings, paying the running costs and receiving income from lettings, but with the Council responsible for maintaining the external fabric of the buildings.

The Council also runs the Guildhall which is let out for private and commercial events and for use by local organisations. It also serves as the main venue for concerts run by Lichfield Arts and is a popular venue for wedding receptions and civil wedding ceremonies.



Income from bookings 2014/15 was similar to 2013/14, but substantial savings in staffing costs and energy costs mean that the net cost of operating the Guildhall has reduced significantly.

A new cooker was installed in April to improve facilities, and the main hall floor will be refurbished this summer.

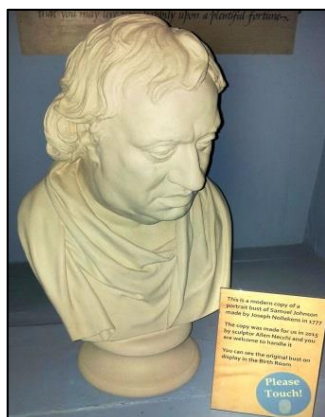
The old prison cells, which are open free of charge on summer Saturdays and staffed by a dedicated team of volunteer, continue to be a very popular visitor attraction.

SAMUEL JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

The City Council is the sole trustee of the Dr Johnson Birthplace Trust which is a registered charity. The Museum is staffed by the Museums & Heritage Officer, Jo Wilson, and four part-time attendants, supported by a team of volunteers.

Total visitor numbers for the 2014 calendar year were 17,530 making it the busiest year in the Museum's history. 700 visitors came over the weekend of the 305th birthday celebrations enjoying cake, activity trails, and performances by *Intimate Theatre* on the Market Sq. The upsurge in visitor numbers is helped by a programme of special events such as exhibitions, art workshops and a young reading club, "Bookworms United".

Shop sales have been maintained and donations have also risen. Admission to the museum is free, but donations and sales now provide more income than when admission was charged for. A new souvenir Guide book for the Museum has been produced. The Museum continues to receive good local and national publicity, and appeared on BBC1's antiques programme 'Bargain Hunt' in August. The Museum's website is increasingly popular, and includes a full 'virtual tour' of the Birthplace. The Museum has continued its use of social media via Twitter and Facebook.



New additions to the displays included a striking new copy of the Nollekens bust of Samuel Johnson which has been provided by sculptor Allen Necchi, and is designed to be handled, allowing the original 1777 bust to be protected behind glass. The Birthplace also received a very generous donation from former Curator Kai Kin Yung, of two fine drawings of Thrale Place in Surrey and of the Birthplace building in the 1830's, as well as some books for resale in the shop.

Maintenance work has included some floor repairs, resolving a long-standing problem with the museum drains, repainting some rooms and the installation of a new boiler which is far more fuel efficient than the old and unreliable boiler it replaced.

Behind the scenes, the MHO has been working very hard on preparing the necessary documentation for renewal of the Museum's Accreditation, including an updated Forward Plan. This was approved by Council in April and has now been submitted.

In addition to the running of the Museum and the Guildhall Cells, the Museums Officer plays an active role in city wide tourism initiatives including the LDFA Executive Committee, JAMWIG, Heritage Weekend, and 'Christmas in Lichfield'.



MARKETS AND MARKET SQUARE

Stall spaces on the weekly markets (Tuesday, Friday and Saturday) continue to be fully let, and net income from the Markets has increased for the third year running both from the markets themselves, from lettings on non-market days, and other special markets and events. Sunday bookings continue to be very popular and most of the Sundays in 2015 have been booked.

The third Lichfield Food Festival took place over the weekend of 30-31 August with a Food Festival Market organised by the City Council's Markets Officer, Rachel Clive. The event proved to be another great success with up to 80 stalls selling an impressive choice of food with traditional British and multi-cultural flavours.

On 5 December Lichfield Country Market (the WI Market) celebrated fifty years of trading and the Mayor presented them with a basket of assorted chocolate treats as a thank-you for their long standing support of the market.

The Chamber of Trade Christmas Market was held on the Square on Sunday 7 December as part of the Lichfield Christmas Festival Weekend.

The Shrovetide Fair was held mid February using only a portion of the Square, enabling the regular markets to continue with only some stalls relocated to Market Street.

The traders' attendance incentive was repeated in January and February 2015 offering permanent traders a 25% reduction on stall rental for every market day they attended.

Monthly repairs have been undertaken to the paving and the full Square will be repaved in 2015. A trial area in the centre of the Square has already been completed with the contractor working on non-market days so as not to disrupt the weekly markets.



CHRISTMAS LIGHTS



production, *Cinderella*, led everyone to the switch on itself at 5pm. The event ended with an appearance on stage of Santa.

The Town Crier, Ken Knowles, did an excellent job as MC – even getting the audience to cheer for our sponsors (the loudest cheer was for Greggs).

The Council provides the Christmas illuminations in Lichfield with support from the Chamber of Trade. The Mayor, together with Arthur ('good moaning') Bostrom from 'Allo 'Allo, and ably assisted by competition winners Ebony Luke-Bailey (6), and Jacob Preston (5) switched on the lights on 23 November.

Carols were sung by the Christ Church Primary School choir, and then the cast of the Garrick's panto



This was the second time that the event had been held on a Sunday rather than a weekday evening, and it proved very successful in bringing people into the city, so helping to boost trade in the local shops and cafés. Last year the size of the crowd took everyone by surprise, so this year some changes were made including the services of 14 professional stewards to assist the council's volunteer marshals, and bringing Santa on stage, rather than attempt to get his sleigh round the packed Market Square. Our thanks to all those who sponsored the event or provided help and support in its organisation.

CIVIC EVENTS

The Mayor, Norma Bacon, and Sheriff, Bob Awty, completed a very successful year of civic engagements.

On 4 August a special memorial service was held in the Remembrance Gardens to mark the 100th Anniversary of the start of World War

On 6 September, in accordance with the 1553 Charter, the Sheriff, accompanied by more than 80 riders including the High Sheriff, Mrs Ann Fisher, undertook the annual Sheriff's Ride round the city boundary.

Dr Johnson's 305th birthday celebrations were held on 20 September with a service and wreath-laying on the Market Square

Other civic events have included:

28 June, Freedom Parade by 3rd Mercian Battalion, Staffords

5 July, National Town Crier Competition

19 July, Mayor's at Home

28 September, Band Concert

9 November, Remembrance Sunday

14 November, Charity Dinner

5 December, Girls' Choir Concert

10 December, Carol Service

30 January Charity Quiz Night

17 February, Pancake Races, with over 40 children taking part

27 February, Schools Speaking Competition

20 March, Sheriff's Show

25 March, Charity Jazz Concert

29 March, Sheriff's Darwin Walk

1 April, Entertainment and Tea

5 April, Easter Sunday Service

23 April, St George's Court

The Mayor and Sheriff are delighted to have raised over £4,000 from their fundraising events which will be distributed to their chosen charities.

The Mayor for 2015-16 is Andy Smith, supported by Mike Sheldon as Sheriff.



OUTSIDE BODIES

The Council provided over £43,500 of grants to outside bodies and partner groups during 2014/15. This included £27,400 in general grants to organisations, £1,100 to the North Lichfield Initiative, and £7,000 for churchyard maintenance. £1,200 of grants for Youth Projects were also awarded, including a grant to the 9th Lichfield (Saxon Hill) Scout Group to help them attend a Lake District outdoor centre which provides challenging outdoor adventure holidays for people with disabilities.

The Council provides the secretariat for the Lichfield City Forum which brings together representatives from the local councils, residents' associations, businesses and voluntary groups. The Council is also supporting the Lichfield BID group of local businesses which is preparing a ballot for a Business Improvement District for the city centre.



TWINNING

120 guests from our twin towns visited Lichfield for the official twinning weekend 3-6 October. Many were visiting for the first time, and most of them stayed with host families. There was a varied program of activities and entertainments enjoyed by all. The Sainte-Foy team won the table tennis tournament and trophies were presented by the mayors. There was also a civic procession and a twinning service at the cathedral. The highlight was the friendship evening when all guests and hosts came together, celebrating our twinning partnership, with entertainment provided by the Sainte-Foy choir "Chantefable" who performed brilliantly. The Limburg Mayor, Martin Richard, presented our Mayor with books on Limburg, and the Sainte-Foy Mayor, Véronique Sarselli, gave some "Guignol" marionettes, which are puppets and part of the Lyon heritage and folklore.



The business meeting between the mayors, councillors and twinning association representatives focussed on the need to renew interest, be more inclusive, and concentrate on developing twinning for young people, schools and businesses. It was also suggested that the 'official twinning week-ends' be every three years instead of two.



Other Twinning events during the year have included:

- A group of 10 young musicians and their teacher from the Limburg Kreismusikschule visited Lichfield from the 1-5 May 2015, along with 20 people from the Limburg Europa Union.
- A Limburg student is studying for a year at Netherstowe High School, staying with a host family.
- A Limburg Council trainee spent a week's work experience in Lichfield.
- 2 students from Limburg have undertaken work placements at local schools.



In February 2015 two Lichfield dance groups, (Three Spires Morris and Team Catalyst International) went to Limburg to take part in their Shrovetide Carnival celebrations.

The 42 Lichfield dancers were also joined by a dance group from Sainte-Foy in France.



ELECTORAL MATTERS

In 2014-15 the Local Government Boundary Commission undertook a review of the District Council electoral arrangements. This had a bearing on the City Council, because although not part of the Review itself, the LGBCE can make changes to parish arrangements where these are "as a consequence of" changes at District level. The City Council proposed that it should have 6 wards on the same boundaries as the new 6 wards for the District in the city. However, for reasons sensible only to the LGBCE, they decided to introduce *nine* wards for the City Council, the size of which varies from under 300 electors to over 5,700 electors.

Councillor Bernard Cocksey was co-opted to the Council to fill the vacancy caused by the sad death of John Wilks in September 2014.

The May 2015 elections saw elections in all 9 wards. There are 28 councillors, of which 8 are new to the City Council. The political composition of the council is now 26 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat, and 1 Labour. The timing of the election alongside the General Election produced a record turn-out of almost 70%. Six previous councillors did not stand for re-election. These included the former Council Leader, Terry Finn, who had completed 27 years' service on the Council.

PLANNING

The District Council is the Planning Authority, but the City Council is consulted on all planning applications submitted for the city area. The City Council's Planning Committee met on 17 occasions, and examined and commented on 230 planning applications; only 10 of which were decided differently from the comments of the City Council.

The Council has commenced production of a Neighbourhood Plan for the City. The Plan will be for the entire area of the civil parish of Lichfield, but will be a theme-based Plan, based on employment and economic development issues. A 12-member Committee has been established to oversee production of the Plan.

The Local Plan for the District was finally adopted in February 2015 after a very lengthy process. The adopted Plan was subject to various modifications by the Inspector, increasing the number of houses to be provided in the City.

STAFFING

There have been relatively few staff changes. Mike Williamson who had been macebearer for over 17 years sadly died in June. At the end of September a new macebearer, Richard Hunt, was appointed. Sharon, the longstanding Guildhall cleaner retired in June, and her hours have been split between two new cleaners to provide greater flexibility. Two additional Premises Attendants have been appointed for the Guildhall from a small increase in overall hours and some redistribution of existing hours.



The Town Clerk, Peter Young, has informed the Council that he will be retiring in August 2015 after over 28 years' service with the City Council. Following an open advertisement and selection process the current Deputy Town Clerk, Christopher Moulton, has been appointed to take over as Town Clerk in August.

FINANCE

The budget set by the Council in January for the 2015/16 financial year was for a council tax of £52.75 for a Band D property, which was a nil increase on 2014/15. This means that the council tax has increased by only £1.14 (2.2%) in the past 8 years, despite ongoing inflationary pressures.

Our budgeted income and expenditure for 2015/16 is set out below. The budget takes £179,100 from balances, but the budget also provides for £258,500 of 'one-off' repair works to Guildhall, Donegal House, and the Market Square paving. The projected closing balance at 31 March 2016 is £605,200.

Budget Summary 2015/16

	Expenditure	Income	Net
Parks and Footpaths	173,850	2,400	171,450
Guildhall	116,858	65,500	51,358
Community Centres	30,024	0	30,024
Markets	119,680	165,600	(45,920)
Civic	67,485	0	67,485
Grant Aid / Partnerships	51,026	0	51,026
Arts / Tourism / Twinning	64,058	0	64,058
Johnson Birthplace	89,341	15,180	74,161
Democratic Services	120,217	0	120,217
Loan charges /Investment income	0	2,600	(2,600)
Agency work	9,656	22,000	(12,344)
Capital / Repairs & Renewals	258,535	0	258,535
PRECEPT		611,674	(611,674)
Local Council Tax Support Grant		36,676	(36,676)
From balances		179,100	(179,100)
TOTAL	1,100,730	1,100,730	0

* * *

How to Contact Lichfield City Council

Lichfield City Council, Donegal House, Bore Street, Lichfield, WS13 6LU

Tel: 01543 250011 Email: enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk website www.lichfield.gov.uk

Officer Contacts

Responsibility	Name	Tel:	Responsibility	Name	Tel:
Town Clerk	Peter Young	01543 250011	Open Spaces	Heather Francis	01543 309851
Deputy Town Clerk	Christopher Moulton	01543 309852	Twinning	Sophie Bishop	01543 309857
Finance	Alison James	01543 309855	Markets	Rachel Clive	01543 309853
Admin/Planning	Celia Freeman	01543 309858	Johnson Birthplace	Joanne Wilson	01543 264972
Civic Matters	Kate Durrant	01543 309854	Guildhall Room Hire	Sarah Wallace	01543 309850

City Council Members

Councillor	Party	Ward	Address	Telephone
Jeanette Allsopp *	Con	Curborough	House A, St John's Hospital, St John St, WS13 7LF	01543 256114
Bob Awty *	Con	Leomansley	5 Seckham Road, WS13 7AN	07587 068000
Brian Bacon	Con	Leomansley	50 Dimbles Lane, WS13 7HL	01543 264357
Norma Bacon *	Con	Leomansley	50 Dimbles Lane, WS13 7HL	01543 264357
Deb Baker *	Con	St John's	30 Longbridge Road, WS14 9EN	07785 246391
Marion Bland *	Lib Dem	Chadsmead	48 Dimbles Lane, WS13 7HL	01543 416449
Gwyneth Boyle *	Con	Chadsmead	Berry Hill House, 8 London Rd, WS14 9EJ	01543 251684
John Brooks	Lab	Curborough	37 Leyfields, WS13 7NJ	01543 252662
Bernard Cocksey	Con	St John's	28 Balmoral Close, WS14 9SP	01543 255228
David Dundas	Con	Chadsmead	45 Gaia Lane, WS13 7LW	01543 417497
Iain Eadie *	Con	Leomansley	177 Walsall Road, WS13 8AE	01543 268157
Janet Eagland **	Con	Boley Park	3 Alder Close, WS14 9UT	01543 257102
Colin Greatorex *	Con	Burton Old Rd	49 Borrowcop Lane, WS14 9DG	01543 416677
Janice Greaves	Con	St John's	9 Chapel Lane, WS14 9BA	01543 256025
Peter Hitchman	Con	Stowe	22 Swallow Croft, WS13 7HF	01543 327222
Sheelagh James	Con	St John's	4 Gorse Lane, WS14 9HQ	01543 251450
David Leytham *	Con	Curborough	45 Francis Road, WS13 7JX	01543 252122
Jayne Marks	Con	Pentire Road	64 Cornfield Drive, WS14 9UG	01543 256083
Tim Matthews *	Con	St John's	8 Wentworth Drive, WS14 9HN	01543 255729
Brian McMullan	Con	Garrick Road	2 Smithfield Rise, WS13 6SG	01543 325084
David Smedley *	Con	Stowe	17 Tudor Close, WS14 9RX	01543 410389
Andrew Smith *	Con	Leomansley	61 Alesmore Meadow, WS13 8FD	07795 661123
Christopher Spruce *	Con	St John's	22 Lombard Street, WS13 6DR	07879 714003
Antony Thompson	Con	Stowe	2 Hayworth Road, WS13 6AL	01543 253822
Mike Thompson	Con	Stowe	20 Stowe Street, WS13 6AQ	07505 952790
Lesley Warfield	Con	Chadsmead	30 Fecknam Way, WS13 6BY	01543 300934
Mark Warfield *	Con	Boley Park	30 Fecknam Way, WS13 6BY	01543 300934
Robert Yardley	Con	Boley Park	64 Cornfield Drive, WS14 9UG	01543 256083

* Also a member of Lichfield District Council

* Also a member of Staffordshire County Council