

Lichfield City Council

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Annual Report 2019-20

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ANNUAL REPORT – OVERVIEW

2019/20 began as another full year for the City Council. As detailed in this report, a number of notable projects were undertaken, together with a full civic diary incorporating the City's traditional events, alongside the more general operations of the council such as acting as a consultee on all planning applications submitted within the City boundary.

The Guildhall continued to be a very popular venue for weddings, wedding receptions and concerts as well as for our many regular commercial hirers. The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum enjoyed its most successful year in terms of visitor numbers, and Nick Burton, the City Council's Open Spaces Officer, played a pivotal role once again in the 'Bloom' competition that resulted in a 'gold' award for the third consecutive year.

The City Council allocated a considerable percentage of its Community Infrastructure Levy to various projects and improvements that will have a positive impact on the City; further CIL allocations will be made during 2020/21. The City Council also provided more than £27,000 of grants to local good causes during its annual grants programme.

With 28 councillors and just 14 full-time equivalent staff, the City Council is the smallest of the three local authorities serving the City area. The budget set by Council for the 2020/21 financial year is based on a precept of £67.41 for a Band D property and totals £817,890.

At the time of compiling this report the country is in the midst of the lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many functions of the City Council are not operating in anything like their usual manner; Markets, Civic Matters, Twinning, Birthplace Museum, Guildhall and community centres all carry a common thread of public involvement and are therefore severely affected currently. It is hoped that normality will soon return, and the thoughts of the council's members and officers are with those who have suffered with this virus, their families and friends.

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 Mark Warfield
Council Leader*



*Cllr Deborah Baker
Mayor*



*Tony Briggs
Town Clerk*

ANNUAL REPORT – 2019-2020

OPEN SPACES

The Council looks after 76 acres of public open space, 4 miles of footpaths, 12 acres of allotments, 17 bus shelters and 140 footway lights. A major focus is to ensure LCC owned and managed footpaths, churchyards and open spaces are as secure as possible for users and to avoid damage to property. The City Council has a Service Agreement with Lichfield District Services to undertake most of the routine grounds maintenance on City Council land.



A major project during the year was the continuing repairs to LCC Footpaths to remove potential trip hazards and improve uneven surfaces. Seen here are the repairs adjacent to the red bridge in the Festival Gardens.

An inspection at Christchurch showed a number of tree issues; this followed considerable work at St. Michael's last year. A schedule of work was agreed and completed over the course of the year. A failing tree in the Christchurch Extension was cut as a 7 m monolith for wildlife. Logs and brash were left near the site where possible in order to create other natural habitats.

During 2019 a larger area of the Festival Garden was left largely unmown to create a meadow. A metre strip by all footpaths was cut short to allow access. The meadow was cut once in June and the grass cleared and mixed with free woodchip from tree surgeons to create compost. The City council was assisted by sixth form students from King Edward's School in this project.

The meadow still required maintenance and volunteers helped to clear the ground of unwanted thistles and docks. The meadow was cut in August and the grass used in composting at the Dovehouse Community Garden; this reduces the fertility levels over time so wildflowers can thrive against the grasses.



Also in the Festival Garden, the annual visit of the Countryside & Parks Conservation Group (CPCG) took place in September. CPCG cleared around the brook to ensure the healthy flow of water and to reduce clogging by the marginal plants. Lichfield District Council have been instrumental in the organisation of this event and in clearing the undergrowth around Franciscan Heights.



The plant quality of the annuals in the formal beds around the City was especially high, with the beds at the Friary Clock Tower looking particularly splendid and generating positive comments.

The plants become established quickly, perhaps in part due to the weather, which was notably wet, especially after the exceptionally dry 2018 that led to a particularly slow growing season. The weather caused some difficulties in keeping footpaths open; the growth from the sides of the hedges and the footpath margins was so great that the hedge maintenance programme was brought forward by two months to compensate.

Clearing up tree branches in the exceptional summer winds was also been necessary.

Preparation for the Sheriff's Ride began with the clearance of gateways and tracks. A new route to avoid using Eastern Avenue was suggested and a green lane which has been unused for 5 years was cleared. Two mature trees that had fallen across the path were removed and Miller homes helped in improving the access by removing some fencing.



The opening of this route would not have been possible without the help from Miller Homes for their access, ACW Arb for their tree clearance and Lichfield District Council for their heavy-duty equipment to clear the green lane. The reintroduction of this route has contributed to the safety of the Sheriff's ride by negating the need to use Eastern Avenue, with its heavy traffic.



Many mature trees lost branches during the autumn, possibly due to the very dry summer of 2018 and the very wet weather of 2019. Unfortunately, the Clock Tower Cedar lost three large limbs and its proximity to the highway meant for safety reasons it had to be felled. It is hoped that other trees such as a Fir in the Festival Gardens, both Blue Cedars at St. Chad's and a large black Poplar near the Gazebo can be managed and made safe without felling.



The late fall of leaves also meant more work than usual was required in the Garden of Remembrance to keep it clear in readiness for the wreath laying ceremony and Act of Remembrance.

As part of the preparations all the paths and railings were jet washed to ensure the Gardens were at their best for this poignant day. All the leaves collected were turned into leaf compost for use in forthcoming years.

With the excessive rainfall during the autumn, water overflowed the banks of Curborough Brook onto the path and cycle track between Netherstowe School and the allotments. Lichfield District Council keeps the culverts clear weekly, but in December they also removed the undergrowth to improve the flow. Further work to reduce some of the silt build-up was undertaken in March 2020.



During the Winter months, while most trees are dormant it is a good time to cut back branches from lights, raise canopies for pedestrians, and remove epicormic growth from paths. It is also a good time to maintain mature trees by formative pruning. December and January proved incredibly mild, however, so much so that the grass grew at a faster rate than usual resulting in early mowing in several areas.

A review of all Lichfield City Council owned lights resulted in the approval of a project to switch to low energy LED lighting. A total of 132 lamps will be replaced with LED alternatives, with more than 40 lamps modified during 2019/20. After the project has been completed there will be only 6 stylised lamps not lit by LED as these are not suitable for conversion.

The brighter LED lights may generate comments from nearby residents but the new lamps can be fitted with shields to reduce the glare.

February was dominated by Storm Ciara, which brought down several branches in the plantations north of Eastern Avenue and closed the footpaths at Christchurch and Manor Rise. These footpaths have been made safe again with debris cleared, but several other trees require continued monitoring due to storm damage.

In March, thinning of the trees on the south border of St. Michael's was completed with the removal of several diseased trees.

Heart of England in Bloom

Following the success of 2017 and 2018, preparations for the 2019 entry began in earnest during the spring with the roses in the Heather Gardens getting some much-needed attention. New additions on the judges' route this year included Erasmus Darwin's Herb Garden, Monks Walk Garden, Spires Care Home, and new projects from the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust, Swinfen Hall and the Dovehouse Community Garden. Plant donations from residents were very much appreciated; this represents a move from the less environmentally friendly annuals to established perennials, which need less water and less manufactured compost.

The Bloom judges are always pleased to see project legacies, such as the Greyfriars Garden flower bed, which is now a colourful display thanks to the hard work of the 1st Lichfield Scouts.



Judging took place on 17 July with some fabulous projects for the Judges to see such as 'Monks Walk' with its perennial beds. The City Council would like to extend its thanks to Lilas Rawling for her organisation, Harry Wiggins for his Chauffeuring and everyone else who helped on the day.

The results were received on 5 September and it was rewarding for all those involved that for a third consecutive year, Lichfield received a Gold award. Both Lichfield District and City Councils make a large contribution to this project and this is a huge achievement for the City as a whole. The improvements made at the entrances to the City by the addition of new colourful planters were a factor in this success and represent a collaboration between the BID and the City Council. The natural meadow in the Festival Garden was also mentioned in the judge's report, with them commenting that *"it offers visitor and residents the opportunity to view less formal wild species of flowers alongside the softer grass such as bents and fescues"*.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 competition has been cancelled.

GUILDHALL & COMMUNITY HALLS

The Council owns Darwin Hall, Cruck House, Curborough Community Centre and Boley Park Community Hall, all of which are usually operated by local Management Committees. The Committees manage the buildings, paying the running costs and receiving income from lettings, but with the Council being responsible for maintaining the external fabric. Since January 2016, the City Council has taken control of Boley Park Community Hall after key members of the management committee stepped down after many years' service.

During 2018, as well as the regular hirers, there were 84 other bookings including 54 children's parties, 3 Baptism celebrations, sales events, 6 Stamp Fairs, 3 dances, an Art Exhibition, New Year's Eve Dance and on Christmas Day, a family dinner party.

The Council also owns and manages the Guildhall, which is let for private and commercial events and for use by local organisations. It serves as the main venue for concerts organised by Lichfield Arts and is a popular venue for wedding receptions and civil wedding ceremonies. The popularity of the venue continues to grow and the City Council has developed a medium term repair and renovation plan to ensure the building offers appropriate facilities while retaining its historic nature.

The Guildhall has seen considerable improvement over the past few years, and this continued during 2019/20 with a focus on preparations for the renovation of the main hall, including restoration of the timber panelling, redecoration and replacement floor. In addition, there were some relatively minor but necessary repairs to window frames in the Moulton Room and Ashmole Room, as well as the dormer window in the stairwell area to the rear of the building. Lights in the ground floor Guildroom were replaced with energy efficient LED fittings and considerable redecoration has been completed. At the time of compiling this report, the first phase of the renovation of the main hall has been completed, with the second phase due to begin in August.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an extended closure of the hall and the need to reschedule several bookings as a result of the necessary restrictions that have been imposed. We look forward to welcoming our hirers back to the Guildhall as soon as possible

In addition to the many regular bookings, highlights at the Guildhall included 9 wedding receptions, 2 wedding ceremonies and 24 private parties (including anniversaries, birthdays, a corporate dinner, banquets, lunches, Erasmus Darwin House Celebration Dinner, Worshipful Company of Smiths Annual Feast, Johnson Supper, Celebration of Life, a wedding thank you party and charity dinners). There were 19 craft fairs/fabric sales and the ever popular Lichfield Leather handbag sale was also held at August bank holiday and Christmas.

Exhibitions were held by Lichfield Camera Club, Lichfield Society of Artists, Bower Model Fair, Bramshall Art Group, bible exhibitions (3) and there were 3 Art displays in the Corridor Gallery. 169 meetings were held in different rooms in the building.

Concerts were held by Lichfield Arts (24) plus their Jazz Festival, L2F, and Beer Festivals. Other societies who held concerts were Lichfield Sinfonia, U3A Band, City of Lichfield Concert Band and Lichfield Musical Youth Theatre. Lichfield Festival also held several events during the summer.

Educational bookings included the Lichfield College Fashion Show and South Staffs College Students Film Show.

During February the main hall was taken out of use for maintenance work and the Ashmole Room was used to store furniture during this time. Phase one of the work was completed in April. During this time we were still able to accommodate some bookings in the other rooms.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19 and the Government lockdown, there have been cancellations since mid-March. Weddings have managed to rebook the same weekends next year and other hirers have enquired about alternative dates or have been given a full refund.

In addition to the above, the regular civic events and fundraising evenings have also been held in the Guildhall.

Darwin Hall, Curborough Community Centre and Cruck House are all operated by management committees under licence from the Council. All three facilities are extremely popular and well run, and the City Council would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the management committees, staff and volunteers for their hard work over the past year. Together with a contribution from the City Council's portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy, the City Council funded the replacement of the external doors at Curborough Community Centre during 2019/20 and has approved funding for further work in 2020/21.

A quinquennial architect's inspection of Cruck House was carried out during May 2019 that has informed the programme of repairs and improvements approved as part of the 2020/21 budget; this will include refurbishment of the toilet accommodation and disabled access.

As with the Guildhall, the City's community centres have been closed following the COVID-19 pandemic.

SAMUEL JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

Visitor figures at Johnson's Birthplace continue to rise annually, with a record 21,555 visitors to the Museum in the 2019 calendar year.



The 2019/20 financial year began with a busy Easter period. Activities for families over the school holidays included an Easter trail devised by volunteer Margery Dunlevy, an Easter branch to decorate and a 'Crafternoon tea party' craft event created by Attendant, Kevin Lynch. For adult visitors, Attendant Sue Bray hosted another popular History Workshop and behind-the-scenes library visit on the subject of Johnson and women, and a temporary exhibition 'Imagination and Reality: Johnson and the Use of Travelling' researched and written by volunteer Nicola Young, was opened.

Filming took place for an ITV segment on language in the region with news presenter Samenna Ali-Khan, which was aired over the summer. The Birthplace episode of 'Walks of Life', filmed in July 2018, was aired in May and featured an interview with the Museums and Heritage Officer by presenter Mehreen Baig.

Amongst the regular publicity and promotion for Museum activities, Museum Administration Assistant Penny Taylor wrote an article about Councillor Yardley's digital enhancement of the painting of a Prospect of Lichfield, which was published on the Birthplace Museum Blog and as a full-page feature in City Life Magazine.

The Summer months were also full of visitors and activities at the Museum. 3000 visitors came in July alone, consistently high compared to 2018, but with a 25% increase on income from donations and shop sales this year. Some August days saw over 150 visitors to the house. Current events include 'Paintings in Focus', a self-guided trail of the Museum's Art Collections and associated hands-on art and sketching activities, and the popular 'Summer Fun at Sam's House' family craft sessions on Thursdays, themed this year on Johnson's Travels. The Birthplace is also part of the Lichfield Planetary Trail for the summer, in partnership with Lichfield Library.



As part of the Paintings in Focus programme, Museum Attendant Sarah Dale led two public guided tours of the art collections and hosted an event for the Lichfield Society of Artists, which is hoped to be the start of several collaborations with the Museum. Attendant Sue Bray gave a talk to a full house at the Great Wyrley History society.

The Museum also hosted two work experience weeks for Sixth Form students from Landau Forte Academy, Tamworth and Netherstowe School, and a research visit from a Harvard University PhD candidate. Francesca Blanch-Serrat from the University of Barcelona, a pre-doctoral research fellow working on Anna Seward, undertook a three-month stay as visiting scholar, working with the Birthplace Seward manuscript collections and using Lichfield as a base for her work in archives across the UK. Her residency at the Birthplace ended with a fascinating training session on Anna Seward collections for the Museum team.



A total of 2,750 visitors came to the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum in September, with 450 attending on Saturday 14 September for Johnson's 310th Birthday celebrations. Visitors enjoyed cake and activities including original letterpress printing with the Small Print Company inside the house, as well as a programme of performance on the Market Square. Following the Civic ceremony, visitors were entertained by the Intimate Theatre, Wildfire Folk, Three Spires Morris, Lichfield Mysteries, the City of Lichfield Concert Band and the mini-town crier competition.

The Museum also loaned a painting of 'Johnson visiting Lichfield Cathedral' by John Fulleylove to the Cathedral, to be displayed alongside the iconic portrait of Samuel Johnson by Joshua Reynolds. The Birthplace also supported the exhibition by providing text for the display and offering training on Samuel Johnson for Cathedral volunteers.

2000 people visited during October, including organised groups and school visits from the Hallamshire Arts Society, Erasmus Darwin Academy and Pingle Academy.

A number of events took place including a 'craft and cuppa' morning for Silver Sunday, a day aimed at combating loneliness in older audiences. Another highlight was the partnership with Lichfield Arts during the L2F Festival of Folk. The Birth Room became the studio venue for 'The Museum Sessions' on Saturday 19 October with over 200 visitors attending throughout the day of talks and performances relating to folk music, history and language. Museum staff and volunteers took part in the Heritage and Arts procession through the streets, and for the first year also hosted the L2F Art Competition.

Younger visitors enjoyed half term activities including 'creepy creatures' craft activities on October 31 based on animals from the Dictionary, and the Birthplace joined in with 'Visit Lichfield' Trick or Treat tours to be a stop for families. Lichfield Storytellers presented 'Tales from Beyond the Grave' in a popular ticketed evening event for adults on October 23.

Christmas events included late-night opening for the Christmas Lights Switch On with refreshments and activities. 'A Johnson Family Christmas' weekend was held over November 30 – December 1 with performances from Lichfield Singers and Lichfield Poets, a display of automata, craft activities and stalls from local authors and craftspeople. On Sunday 8 December a fairy craft session and storytelling day, inspired by Johnson's fairy tale 'the Fountains', attracted a full house of families. A Christmas Mouse trail for young visitors ran throughout the Christmas holidays. The festive season saw 3,136 visitors to the Birthplace Museum in November and December, with over 600 attending special events.



The Birthplace Museum was recognised with a bronze award in the 'Small Visitor Attraction of the Year' category at the Staffordshire Good Food and Tourism Awards, presented at an awards ceremony at Aston Marina.

The excellent news came that Keele University has received an award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a PhD studentship in partnership with the Birthplace from October 2020. The collaborative doctoral research project entitled 'Samuel Johnson, Lichfield Literary Culture and Life Writing, 1775 – 1835' will use the Museum archive as a starting point for original research and the student will create displays and events as part of their project, which will be jointly supervised by Dr Nick Seager at Keele, Dr Mark Towsey at Liverpool, and the Museums and Heritage Officer.

Becki Morris, Director of the Disability Collaborative Network, visited the Museum to carry out an access audit focussing on welcoming neurodivergent visitors, funded by West Midlands Museums Development.

The final two months of the year brought several challenges, beginning with a flood of the Museum basement at the end of February following unprecedented rainfall. The source was identified as a blocked foul pipe under a neighbouring property and the area is drying out ahead of repair to the wall affected. The present reporting period ended with the Covid-19 pandemic. The Birthplace Museum closed to the public on Wednesday 18 March and cancelled all events and activities for the foreseeable future.

Since the temporary closure, the Museum Administration Assistant has devised creative ways to increase our online audience by sharing some of our favourite objects from the collection. It has proven popular so far, with other groups and organisations engaging and over 1500 people following our Instagram and Twitter pages, drawing more attention to our online catalogue and continuing to communicate with our audience regularly during closure. The whole Museum team continue to work on projects at home, and we are keeping in touch with our wider community of groups and volunteers.

Development Project

Preparations are underway for a redevelopment of the museum to include disabled access, new technology, revitalised displays, and increased community engagement and volunteering opportunities. Work on this project during 2019/20 has included developing potential designs for DDA compliant ground-floor access, receiving feedback from local planners and Historic England, and submitting a Project Enquiry to the National Heritage Lottery Fund. The initial feedback was very positive, but all applications are currently on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Work continues on the design and content of new displays in the meantime.

Guildhall Prison Cells

The Birthplace Museum team also look after the Guildhall Prison Cells, which are open every Saturday from April - October. The fourth cell was opened to the public in April 2019, and students from South Staffordshire College used the display area as a set for filming projects. The Cells closed for the season in October with an average of 150 visitors on open Saturdays since April. The Cells were reopened for two Saturdays prior to Christmas and welcomed 773 visitors, as well as an organised group visit of students from the University of Birmingham. In addition to the regular openings, there were also 35 other organised Cell Tours.

A programme of minor repairs and improvements was undertaken during the year, notably to the lighting. The City Council aims to further improve the visitor experience and develop the cells as a tourist attraction in the City over the coming years.

MARKETS AND MARKET SQUARE

The changes to the shopping habits of the public, relying ever more on online sales to the detriment of local shops, puts all markets under pressure due to falling trader attendance and footfall. The trend cannot be dismissed and the City Council is keen to promote the market and ensure its vitality for many years to come.

During the summer months, routine maintenance was carried out on the marquee fixings on the Market Square in preparation for the Samuel Johnson Birthday celebrations. The installation of bollards around the St Mary's end of the Square is working well and has assisted in deterring unauthorised parking. The City Council's stall contractors are also monitoring any vehicles that are parked on the Square and report back to the Markets Officer.

Following representations from Traders regarding the use of the Market Square skip, a report was submitted to Council. At its meeting on 30 July, the Council resolved to retain the provision of refuse facilities for the Friday and Saturday Markets.



Stall occupancy was good throughout the summer has been maintained throughout, with Tuesday and Saturday markets running at almost full capacity. However, the Friday market remains of concern, with occupancy continuing to fall. The Markets Officer is working with Councillor Checkland and the Deputy Town Clerk to look at ways to increase stall occupancy and footfall to all the Markets, but with particular emphasis on the Friday Market.

On 13 October, the inaugural Community Day was held on the Market Square. Local charities and service providers were invited onto the Square, free of charge, to promote their activities and engage with the public.

Charities such as the Greyhound Trust and the Royal British Legion stood alongside representatives from the Police, Staffordshire Libraries and the NHS. Members of the public were entertained by Liberty Staffordshire who sang and signed several popular chart songs. This was their first public performance and many proud parents also came along to offer encouragement.



The event proved hugely successful, attracting a good footfall and generating a lot of interest on Social media. Feedback from the exhibitors was positive, with many requesting to attend again.

A second Community Day was held on 18 March, however due to concerns around COVID-19, most groups and charities chose not to attend the event. The Royal British Legion did attend and were accompanied by the Mayor and Sheriff, who together handed out self-isolating help cards to the public.

A festive market was organised to coincide with the Christmas Lights Switch-on on 24 November. The Markets Officer worked closely with Licensing Officers at the District Council to ensure all those standing were compliant, as well as contacting local businesses to keep them informed of the event and resolve any issues before the day.



At its meeting of 21 October, the Council resolved to establish a Markets Working Group to investigate the decline of the Market and report back to Council. The second meeting of the Working Group took place on 17 December 2019; the minutes and recommendations were subsequently adopted by Council and included the creation of a 'Producer's Market' to be held on the first Sunday of each month. The 'Producer's Market' is launched in partnership with CJ Events, who also organise the artisan market at Barton Marina.

Unauthorised parking on the Market Square remains of concern, notably following the opening of St Mary's library and the potential for accidents with vehicles driving on the Square and a greater number of pedestrians now going to and from the St Mary's building. "No Parking" signs have been put up on the Market Square and we are working closely with Staffordshire County Council to try and resolve the issue. On non-Market days, the Square is coned off and bollards reinstated in an effort to ensure the safety of members of the public accessing the library via the Market Square.



Market Closures

Much like last year, the winter of 2019/2020 began relatively mild and calm compared to some years. Unfortunately, the calm weather did not last and a number of markets once again had to be cancelled during early 2020 due to high winds. In total there were seven cancelled markets during the Winter period, the same figure as 2018/19 and 2017/18.

In line with Government guidelines issued on 23 March, all General Markets and the Producer's Market were cancelled until further notice. However, essential traders are permitted to stand such as the fruit and vegetable stall and the fresh fish stall. Traders report a steady flow of customers, all adhering to social distancing.

Market Traders' Liaison Committee

A Traders' Liaison meeting was held in November 2019, a further meeting scheduled for April 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next meeting scheduled for November 2020.

Social Media

The dedicated Lichfield Markets Facebook page is now into its third year and is proving very popular, with over 650 "likes" and growing. The instant nature of social media makes the page a great asset in advising of latest developments with the market and Market Square, be they of a positive nature such as the Community Day, or of a negative nature such as informing traders and customers of cancellations due to bad weather.

The page can be viewed at www.facebook.com/lichfieldmarkets and includes general market information, historical information and new photos of current stalls. Visitors to the page also have the option to immediately call or message the markets team.

The Lichfield Markets Twitter account has an increasing online presence and furthers the outreach of the markets across social media platforms.

The page can be viewed at www.twitter.com/LichfieldMarket and includes concise information regarding general market details, historical facts and upcoming events on the Market Square.

CIVIC EVENTS

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Deborah Baker and Sheriff, Dr Daryl Brown, completed a very successful year of civic engagements, supported by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Robert Yardley and consorts.

On Sunday 26 May, the Civic party led by the RAF Marching Band processed to St Michael's church for the annual Bower Sunday Service that was conducted by Revd Simon Baker. The Mayor gave a reading, as did the Chairman of the Bower Committee, Mr Michael Mullarkey.

On Wednesday 17 July, the Mayor led the Lichfield City Council team in the annual Swinfen Broun Challenge Trophy bowls match against the Lichfield Museum



Bowling Club. Despite the best efforts of the City Council team, the Bowling Club took the trophy once again with a score of 108 to 44. After the match the Mayor, accompanied by the Sheriff, presented the trophy to the President of the Club, Mr Geoffrey Parkinson and thanked everyone for taking part and supporting the event. The challenge match has been played since 1924, but it was not until 1926 that the trophy was donated by local benefactor, Colonel Swinfen Broun.

On Saturday 7 September the Sheriff successfully completed the Sheriff's Ride. In keeping with this historic tradition, 51 riders joined the Sheriff on the 20-mile perambulation of the City boundaries. The High Sheriff of Staffordshire, Mr Ashley Brough was also in attendance and accompanied the ride in a spectacular horse drawn carriage with the Sheriff's parents and Consort for the first and final parts of the ride. The Sheriff's father, Dr Neville Brown was himself Sheriff of Lichfield in 2011, making them the first father and son to have held this position.

At the end of the day, the Ride was escorted back into the City by the Sword and Mace Bearers. The Sheriff was welcomed into the Close by the Dean and representatives of the Chapter at Lichfield Cathedral before continuing onto the Guildhall where the Ride culminated with three cheers for the Sheriff and applause for all the riders that completed the Sheriff's Ride.



The Johnson Birthday Celebrations were held on the Market Square on Saturday 14 September. In keeping with tradition, just after midday, the Mayor placed a laurel chaplet on the statue of Dr Samuel Johnson after which St. Michael's choir sang Johnson's last prayer to music by Peter Hawksworth, their Musical Director.

As part of the Heritage weekend, the celebrations and activities continued throughout the day including a Mini Town Criers' competition carried out under the watchful eye of the City's Town Crier, Ken Knowles and Mace Bearer, Richard Hunt. The Mayor and Sheriff both judged the competition and the worthy winner was Sophia, aged 7. The Entertainer toy shop kindly donated a £15 gift voucher to the winner.

The annual Remembrance service was held in the Cathedral on Sunday 10 November. Following the Cathedral service, the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr James Leavesley DL, accompanied by the Mayor, led the civic party into the Remembrance Gardens to observe the national two minutes silence and to perform the wreath laying ceremony. The Dean of Lichfield, the very Reverend Adrian Dorber, then gave the blessing.



After the wreath laying ceremony in the Remembrance Gardens, around 80 guests returned to the Guildhall for light refreshments. The Mayor gave thanks on behalf of Lichfield City Council to all those involved on the day and Mr David Haynes gave a toast on behalf of the Royal British Legion.



From left to right: DMS Whittington Wing Commander Mrs Susan Power; Mercian Regiment Major General Mr Ian Cave; Vice-Lord Lieutenant, Mr James Leavesley DL; Mayor of Lichfield, Cllr Mrs Deborah Baker; Deputy Mayor, Cllr Robert Yardley; Sheriff of Lichfield, Dr Daryl Brown; The Dean of Lichfield, The Very Reverend Adrian Dorber and Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend Nest Bateman.

On Tuesday 25 February, the traditional Pancake Races took place on Bore Street at 12 Noon. The weather was very wet but that did not spoil the occasion. Over 30 people took part in the Ladies, Men's, Under 10's and Mascot's Races. The winning prize sponsors included City Jewellers for the Mascot Race, Lunch at Loafers for the Ladies Race, The Entertainer for the Under 10's Race and The Horse & Jockey Pub for the Men's Race. After the races were completed and in keeping with tradition, the Civic party processed to the Market Square to officially open the Shrovetide Fair. Refreshments were then served in the Guildhall including the traditional Simnel Cake. Cllr Christopher Spruce gave a toast to "The Old Fair and Pancake Races".



City Jewellers proudly sponsor the Mascot Race.

Other civic events have included:

- 13 May, Mayor's Banquet
- 26 May, Bower Sunday
- 27 May, Court of Arraye and Bower Procession
- 27 July, Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Indoor Street Party
- 5 December, Mayor's Carols

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions on movement and gatherings prevented a number of events from going ahead, notably the Easter Sunday service, St George's Court, the Sheriff's Show at the Friary School and the Sheriff's Charity St George's bonfire. Despite this, a series of well attended charity events during the earlier part of the civic year, plus other donations led to a total of approximately £9,400 being raised for the Mayor and Sheriff's 2019/20 Charities - Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust, St. Giles Hospice and Voluntary Transport for the Disabled. The sum will be split equally between the charities. The Mayor and Sheriff would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed in any way to this fantastic total.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 outbreak and changes in legislation, the City Council has opted to extend current civic appointments into 2020/21. Councillor Deborah Baker therefore remains Mayor, Councillor Robert Yardley Deputy Mayor and Dr Daryl Brown remains Sheriff. The Mayor elect for 2020/21 is Councillor Robert Yardley, supported by Councillor Deborah Baker as Deputy Mayor elect and Mr Peter Hitchman as Sheriff elect. It is hoped that these individuals can be officially appointed during 2020/21, but it may be that appointments are deferred until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2021.

OUTSIDE BODIES

During 2019/20 the Council gave grants totalling £27,690 to the following organisations as indicated below. Grants to organisations marked * are made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, this being expenditure which in the opinion of the Council is in the interests of the whole area or some or all of the inhabitants and will bring benefit in a manner commensurate with the expenditure:

	Organisation	Amount
	Lichfield District Arts Association	£4,100
*	South East Staffordshire Citizens Advice Bureau	£4,000
	Lichfield Greenhill Bower	£3,000
	Erasmus Darwin Foundation	£2,500
	Lichfield Festival	£2,000
*	Lichfield Trent Valley Community First Responders	£1,000
*	Voluntary Transport for the Disabled	£1,000
*	City of Lichfield Branch Royal British Legion	£520
	City of Lichfield Concert Band	£500
	City of Lichfield Friends	£425
	Abacus Pre-School Playgroup	£200
	Friends 2 Friends	£300
*	Lichfield & Burntwood Social Club for the Blind	£200
	Open Door of Hope	£350
	Lichfield Festival of Music	£100
	Darwin Walk Trust	£100
	Speakers' Corner Lichfield	£50
	Beacon Park Tennis CIO	£2,000
*	Parkinson's UK Lichfield Branch	£1,500
	Wade Street Church - Friday Night Youth	£845

	Lichfield Talking News for the Blind	£600
*	MHA Lichfield & District Live At Home Scheme	£500
	Support Staffordshire	£900
	Lichfield Round Table Football Club	£250
	Wildfire Folk	£250
	Dovehouse Community Gardens	£300
	Lichfield Singers	£200
		£27,690.00

TWINNING

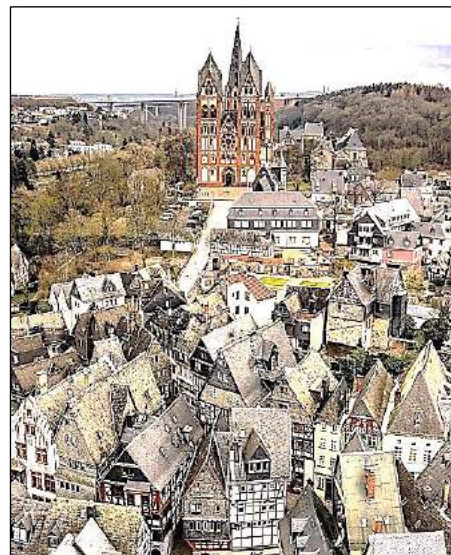
On 12 April, Lichfield welcomed a group of 16 friends from our French twin town of Sainte Foy-les-Lyon. It was a busy weekend with a packed programme of visits that included afternoon tea at Elford walled gardens, a guided tour of Lichfield and a friendship evening with buffet and piano entertainment. As one of his last duties as Mayor before leaving office, Cllr David Leytham welcomed the group to the Guildhall where they enjoyed a tour of the Old Prison Cells and the Mayor's Parlour before heading off to the Wedgwood Factory and Museum at Barlaston. The group returned to France with fond memories of an enjoyable friendship weekend.



From 11 – 18 May a group of 16 students and their 4 teachers from the Limburg FDS vocational college took part in the first ever exchange programme with the Lichfield Campus of the South Staffordshire College. They joined the Lichfield students in lessons every morning for a week and arranged excursions and visits in the afternoon. Excursion highlights included trips to London, Warwick Castle and Birmingham. They were also treated to a guided tour of Lichfield and enjoyed attending the City Council's Annual meeting.

All the students were accommodated by Lichfield host families. The headteacher of the German college, who accompanied the students, thanked everyone involved for a wonderful week and it is hoped that there will be further exchanges in the future.

During the official opening of the Peace Woodland in Beacon Park on 4 June, the artist Peter Walker informed the assembled crowd that the woodland has been seen by the City of Limburg as a cultural link and a symbol of peace. Plans by the Mayor of Limburg, Dr. Marius Hahn, include the dedication of 2 trees from the original exhibition "Imagine Peace" outside the Lichfield Cathedral last August, to this project.



Nathalie and Henry, Limburg City Council's latest public office apprentices, arrived in Lichfield on 5 October for their annual one-week work experience. The aim was for them to learn about the differences in public service provisions in both countries. The students spent time at the City, District and County Council Offices, as well as the Library, Tourist Information Centre, Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum and Erasmus Darwin House.

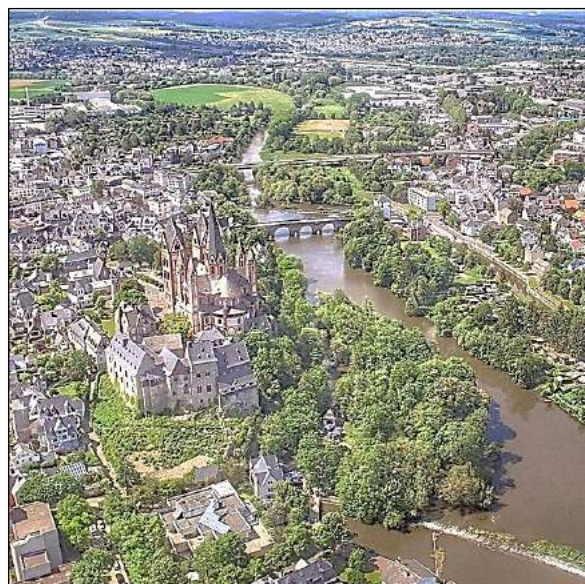
Both the students were hosted by a family from the Lichfield Twinning Association and flew back to Limburg, full of new impressions of work and social life in Lichfield.



The Chairwoman of the Limburg Twinning Association, Mrs. Heide Bein, visited Lichfield in October on the occasion of former Lichfield City Councillor, Doris English's 90th birthday. Doris is a longstanding member of the Twinning Association and has maintained close links with Limburg. Whilst here, Heide also met with the Chairman of the Lichfield Society of Artists, Jason Reakes, to discuss a possible art exhibition in Limburg in 2020. Jason presented Heide with a copy of the society's 75th anniversary history book. The

book documents the society's involvement with Twinning since the 1990s, as well as the intention to play a part in maintaining the close cultural and artistic links between the two cities in the future. Initial discussions relating to Limburg's anticipated contribution to the Lichfield Festival of Artists were also held.

The main focus in the Twinning calendar this year was to be the official Twinning celebrations hosted by Limburg (Germany) from 25 - 28 September. Over 100 guests had been invited to attend, but unfortunately due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the event has been rescheduled for September 2021.



CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Once again the City Council was responsible for the Christmas lights in the City centre and the 'Switch-on' event that took place on Sunday 24 November 2019. Sound and staging contractors were on the Market Square from 6.00am to ensure that everything was ready for the entertainment to begin at 2.00pm. This year the Switch On stage was home to local bands: The Hustle, Punch the Air and for the first time, Lichfield Rock Choir. In addition, links with the Three Spires Precinct were re-established so shoppers were also entertained with performances from Liberty Staffordshire 'Shine & Sign' Choir and children from Stagecoach. The City Council organised a festive themed market to run alongside this event.



A crowd of approximately 4,500 then gathered in the Market Square in anticipation. The cast of the Garrick Pantomime, Cinderella, performed songs from the show and the children of Christ Church School sang traditional Christmas Carols. The lights were officially switched on by competition winners Chloe Maslen, Age 6 and Jacob Aston, Age 9 - ably assisted by the Mayor, Cllr Deb Baker.



Independent Lichfield, a small independent film company, were on hand throughout the day to capture all the activities. The result is a short film which captures the mood of the day and can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/pHLYLJe-Xjs>.

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 **11** occasions, and examined and commented on **228** planning applications; only **27** of these were decided differently from the comments of the City Council.

A full calendar of Planning Committee meeting dates can be found on the City Council's website.

LICHFIELD CITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (LCNP) AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by government as part of its Localism agenda and is a way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work in

conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan (as developed and adopted by Lichfield District Council).

The Lichfield City Neighbourhood Plan (LCNP) referendum was held in February 2018 and become part of the Planning framework for the City. The LCNP focuses on economic and employment issues rather than housing. The City is well positioned to increase its economic base, with a highly skilled workforce and excellent road and rail links. The City also boasts numerous attributes and attractions that encourage tourism.

Where a Parish Council has a neighbourhood plan in place, it receives 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions from a developer, as opposed to 15% without a Neighbourhood Plan. The existence of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan ensures that as much CIL money as possible is retained by the Parish in which the development is taking place, to be spent in consultation with residents and in accordance with the priorities laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

There are many competing demands for this funding and a small cross-party working group of City Councillors has been established to consider how this money is allocated. The City Council has received approximately £58,000 in CIL monies and has allocated approximately £44,000 of that amount. Allocations for the 2019/20 financial year are detailed below:

Project	Location	Contribution	Status
Replacement CCTV at Curborough Community Centre	Curborough Community Centre, Reynolds Close, Lichfield	£3,000	Complete
Refurbishment of signage	Entrances to the City	£2,350	Complete
Renewal of outer doors at Curborough Community Centre	Curborough Community Centre, Reynolds Close, Lichfield	£3,337.24	Complete
Infrastructure support to Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust (LHCRT)	Areas of the canal within City boundary	£10,000	Invoiced in part
Replacement of SOX/SON streetlighting with LED alternatives	City Council owned lighting, notably along footpaths	£8,000	Ongoing

Residents are strongly encouraged to have their say on CIL allocations and are invited to contact the Town Clerk by post or email for further information.

The Lichfield City Neighbourhood Plan can be downloaded from the City Council's website at: https://www.lichfield.gov.uk/Neighbourhood_Plan_1085.aspx.

ELECTORAL MATTERS

The May 2019 elections saw elections in all 9 wards. The political composition of the council is now 16 Conservative, 8 Liberal Democrat and 4 Labour councillors. No by-elections were held during the remainder of 2019/20.

FINANCE

The budget set by the Council in January for the 2020/21 financial year was for a council tax of £67.41 for a Band D property.

Within the 2020/21 budget are ambitious proposals for the renovation of the Guildhall main hall to include new floor, restoration of oak panelling, floor to ceiling redecoration and improvements to lighting. This work is being undertaken over two broad phases in order to minimise inconvenience to hall users and represents far better value for money than undertaking the work on a piecemeal basis over three or four financial years. This work also represents the culmination of several years of improvements to the Guildhall and neighbouring Donegal House following their acquisition by the City Council.

Together with other proposals, including the completion of the project to replace SOX/SON streetlighting with energy efficient LED alternatives, considerable renovations and improvements to Cruck House, addressing required repairs at Curborough Community Centre and progressing the Birthplace Museum redevelopment project, the 2020/21 Repairs and Renewals programme is the most ambitious that the City Council has undertaken for many years and promises to bring considerable benefit to those who utilise its facilities.

The comparison between the 2019/20 and 2020/21 budgets is detailed overleaf.

<u>Net Expenditure</u>	BUDGET 2019/20	BUDGET 2020/21
SERVICE AREAS	£	£
<i>Parks and Footpaths</i>	231,998	247,126
<i>Guildhall</i>	73,505	99,939
<i>Community Centres</i>	15,130	16,573
<i>Markets</i>	-30,175	-9,023
<i>Civic</i>	86,022	98,494
<i>Grant Aid/Partnerships</i>	51,366	52,376
<i>Arts/Tourism/Twinning</i>	65,790	68,936
<i>Johnson Birthplace Museum</i>	98,349	108,324
<i>Democratic Services</i>	152,326	125,235
<i>Investment Interest</i>	-4,890	-22,490
<i>Loan Charges</i>	0	0
<i>Agency</i>	-18,174	-13,409
<i>Repairs and Renewals</i>	90,933	192,940
Total Service Cost	812,180	964,571
<i>Capital Contribution</i>	0	0
<i>Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</i>	0	-16,854
SUB TOTALS	812,180	947,717
PRECEPT + LTCSG	757,180	817,890
To/(From) Balances	(55,000)	(129,817)

<u>Balances and Reserves</u>	BUDGET 2019/20	BUDGET 2020/21
	£	£
<i>Opening Balance (1 April)</i>	708,879	2,635,273
<i>To/(From) balances</i>	(55,000)	(129,827)
<i>Closing Balance</i>	653,879	2,505,446
<u>Closing balance held as:</u>		
<i>Repairs/Renewals (Revenue)</i>	353,000	1,724,640
<i>Rent Deposit Deed Reserve</i>	450	0
<i>Parish Election Reserve</i>	0	20,000
<i>CIL Reserve</i>	14,037	37,008
<i>General Revenue Reserves</i>	286,392	723,928
TOTALS	£653,879	£2,505,446

<u>Council Tax Analysis</u>	BUDGET 2019/20 £	BUDGET 2020/21 £
<i>Precept</i>	757,180	817,890
<i>Apportioned Tax Base</i>	12,017.80	12,133.00
RESULTANT BAND D TAX	£63.00	£67.41

CITY COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT:

‘To improve the quality of life of residents of Lichfield City’

TO BE ACHIEVED BY:

- Making best use of the resources and powers available to us to provide high-quality cost-effective services to help meet the needs and wishes of the residents
- assisting and encouraging other bodies to provide such services

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- 1 To help residents enjoy high-quality social, recreational, and cultural facilities, and to maintain or improve the standard of these facilities
- 2 To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the city
- 3 To protect and improve the high-quality environment of the city and promote sustainable development to meet the needs of present and future generations
- 4 To preserve the ancient traditions and unique identity of the city
- 5 To represent the views and wishes of the citizens of Lichfield and to promote the interests of the city for the betterment of the local community
- 6 To help to create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, culture, income, race or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding, and mutual co-operation.

Together with these broad objectives the City Council has several specific objectives for the 2020/21 financial year, a number of which are detailed below.

SPECIFIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 2020/21

AIM	RESPONSIBILITY	OBJECTIVES	TARGET DATE	ACTIONS
Resident Satisfaction/Climate Change	Clerk/Open Spaces Officer	Replacement of LCC owned footpath lighting with LED alternatives securing significant reduction in power usage	March 2021 (phases 2&3 of 3)	Phases 2 and 3 to be initiated in 2020/21 following additional CIL allocation to facilitate early completion of this project
Resident Satisfaction/Increase Tourism	Deputy Town Clerk/Markets Officers	Review Markets operation	March 2021 and ongoing	Liaise with NABMA, identify strengths and weaknesses, co-operative working with outside bodies particularly in relation to the Farmers' Market. Repairs to stalls and trailers
Improvements to Heritage Assets/Increase Tourism	Clerk	Renovation of Guildhall Main Hall	December 2020	Wholesale repair and redecoration to include improved lighting, new flooring and restoration of oak panelling; the culmination of several years work to improve the Guildhall facilities following its acquisition by the City Council
Improvements to Heritage Assets/Increase Tourism	Museums and Heritage Officer/Clerk	Progress NHLF funding bid for redevelopment of Birthplace Museum	March 2021	Continuing preparatory work and submission of a large funding bid, to include improvements to interpretation of museum libraries, assessment of museum access, available public space and allocation of rooms within the building, large scale redisplay of collection
Tourism/Resident Satisfaction	All members and officers	Assist with the response to the COVID-19 outbreak and City arrangements for the relaxing and/or withdrawal of restrictions	Ongoing	Play an active and collaborative role in the LDC led Lichfield Place Board, contributing ideas and resources as appropriate to assist other agencies; to progress City Council led initiatives in consultation with other bodies; to work proactively within wards in response to central or local restrictions and initiatives

Resident Satisfaction/Increase Tourism	Open Spaces Officer/Clerk	Support for Lichfield in Bloom 2021 (2020 competition cancelled)	March 2021 and ongoing	Open Spaces Officer support and participation in 'Bloom' activities; secretarial support for 'Bloom' meetings via the City Council
Resident Satisfaction	Open Spaces Officer/Clerk	Assessment of options for verge cutting 2021 and beyond	March 2021	In response to possible withdrawal of funding by SCC, the City Council to work with LDC in identifying most appropriate next steps in regard to the provision of verge cutting
Improve Community Centre Facilities	Clerk	Renovations to Cruck House	Spring 2021	Repairs and renovations as recommended in recent architect report, includes roof repair, disabled access and renovation to annexe accommodation. To be progressed in co-operation with the Curborough CC Management Committee
Comply with Legislation/Guidelines (Health & Safety)	Deputy Town Clerk	Provide an updated employee Health & Safety handbook	Ongoing	Work in partnership with H&S consultants to update documentation as necessary; new policies to be put to Council for adoption in a timely manner
Comply with Legislation/Guidelines (Transparency)	Clerk	Ensure transparency information is up to date, compliant and proportionate	Ongoing	Existing transparency information to be reviewed, newly available relevant information to be uploaded to the LCC website in a timely manner.

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:
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Deputy Town Clerk	Sarah Thomas	01543 309854
Finance	Alison James	01543 309855
Admin/Planning	Celia Freeman	01543 309858
Civic Matters	Lucy Clarke	01543 309852
Open Spaces	Nick Burton	01543 309851
Internal Audit	Graham Keatley	01543 250011

Responsibility	Name	Tel:
Twinning	Gabriele Lasch-Burden	01543 309857
Markets	Jordan Appleyard	01543 309853
Johnson Birthplace	Joanne Wilson Penny Taylor	01543 264972
Guildhall Room Hire	Helen Winter	01543 309850
Reception	Jane Varley	01543 250011

City Council Members

Councillor	Party	Ward	Email Address	Telephone
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Mark Warfield *	Con	Boley Park	Mark.warfield@lichfield.gov.uk	01543 300934
Robert Yardley	Con	Boley Park	Robert.yardley@lichfield.gov.uk	01543 256083

* = also member of Lichfield District Council

** = also member of Staffordshire County Council