

Lichfield City Council

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Town Clerk: Anthony Briggs B.A (Hons), CiLCA

18 April 2024

To: Members of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

Councillors A Hughes (Chair) and J Anketell, J Christie, J Eagland, S Hollingsworth, P Knight, B Watkins and R Yardley

Representative of Johnson Society

P Jones and J Winterton

Honorary Members

Robert Awty and Antony Thompson

Also to:

Museums and Heritage Officer (Kimberley Biddle)

Museum Support Officer (Francesca Benson)

Dear Committee Member

Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee (JBAC)

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee to be held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at **10.30am on Thursday 25 April 2024** at which the following business will be transacted. Any member unable to attend should forward their apologies to the Town Clerk.

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 October 2023 (**copy attached**). [*Minutes adopted by the City Council on 11 December 2023*] and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

4 PERSONNEL UPDATE

Lisa Hand, Museum Support Officer (MSO), left in February 2024 to focus on her newly opened restaurant, and freelance illustration work. Recruitment for the vacant position took place in March, and Francesca Benson joined the team as the new MSO on 9 April 2024. Francesca has previously worked at Lichfield Cathedral and is currently working towards a Masters in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester.

RECOMMENDED: That the update be noted.

5 SAMUEL JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM – ANNUAL REPORT

To consider the Museum and Heritage Officer's report at **APPENDIX 1**, attached.

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

6 FORWARD PLAN UPDATE ON CURRENT PRIORITIES/FUTURE STRATEGIC AIMS

To consider the Museum and Heritage Officer's report which contains an update on the current status of the aims and objectives of the Forward Plan, together with proposed key strategic aims and objectives that will form part of the new Forward Plan to be presented to JBAC at its next meeting (**APPENDIX 2** attached).

RECOMMENDED: That the updated Forward Plan Aims and Objectives be adopted.

7 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

To consider the Museum and Heritage Officer's Report at **APPENDIX 3** (attached). This report also incorporates updates on the improvements to the bookshop, new website, and enhanced educational offer for schools following council adoption of JBAC's recommendation for funding in these areas. Benchmarking information for the proposed school fees is also provided.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That the report be noted

2. JBAC to approve a charge to Schools of £140 + VAT per session, per class, with freelance costs at £135 per session, per class.

8 'JOHNSON HEAD' INSATLLATION – BIRD STREET

To consider the Museum and Heritage Officer's update at **APPENDIX 4** (attached).

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

9 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Tuesday 5 November 2024. Following adoption of the Minutes of the JBAC meeting of 6 November 2018, additional meetings may be called in the meantime if appropriate.

ANY OTHER URGENT OR NECESSARY BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.

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Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at 10:30 am on Tuesday 31st October 2023

PRESENT:

Representing Lichfield City Council: Councillor A Hughes (Chair) and Councillors J Anketell, J Christie, J Eagland, P Knight, B Watkins and R Yardley.

In Attendance:

Tony Briggs (Town Clerk)
Kimberley Biddle (Museums & Heritage Officer)
Lisa Hand (Museum Support Officer)
Tony Thompson (Honorary Member)
J Winterton (Johnson Society representative)

Apologies:

R Awty, P Jones and Cllr S Hollingsworth.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr R Yardley declared an interest as he has been asked to quote for the professional photography of the Johnson letter. The Town Clerk confirmed that no decision was to be made at this meeting regarding an appointment of a photographer. Cllr J Eagland declared an interest in all matters relating to discussions regarding disabled access with SCC as a serving SCC Councillor.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th April 2023 confirmed as a correct record.* [Minutes adopted by Council on 12 June 2023].

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM JBAC MINUTES

The Committee sought an update on the feasibility study regarding acquisition of a neighbouring property discussed at the previous meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed costs for the study were approximately £10,000 to £20,000, which was significantly more expensive than hoped, and had resulted in the proposal not being progressed.

4. UPDATE ON PERSONNEL

The Committee formally welcomed Kimberley Biddle to the role of Museums and Heritage Officer.

RESOLVED: *That the report be noted.*

5. VISITOR NUMBERS 2022-2023 (ANNUAL REPORT)

The Committee noted that in-line with what's happening in the museums and heritage sector, the Birthplace is seeing a healthy growth in visitor figures, however it still has some way to go to reach pre-pandemic numbers. The 2023/24 financial year has had a strong start, this is partly due to this year's Johnson Birthday celebrations which had been cancelled last year due to the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022.

The acquisition of the Johnson/Thrale letter will likely see an increase in visitor numbers. Proposals to expand and update the events programme and work in collaboration with other venues in Lichfield are being developed. Cllr R Yardley asked for the comparison of local visitors to national and international visitors, the MHO agreed to forward these.

RESOLVED: *That the report be noted.*

6. 'JOHNSON'S HEAD' INSTALLATION – BIRD STREET

The Committee considered the MHO's agenda report. The restoration work is being completed voluntarily by carver Paul Jones who is fitting it in amongst paid projects, he is keeping the MHO updated but there is currently no set completion date. The bust is in poor repair, and it currently leans forward. This will involve more work for the carver, and it is suggested that it would be a gesture of good will to cover the cost of extra materials. It was confirmed by the Town Clerk that the money raised for the Lomax Bust was raised by J Oates and he is, therefore, accountable for that money and how it is spent. J Eagland mentioned that if need be there are many charities in Lichfield that would step in to help cover costs to get the bust reinstalled. It was confirmed however that the monies raised to date would be sufficient and that an ongoing dialogue with Jono was taking place.

Within the report the MHO recommended that there be an annual inspection of the bust to avoid it becoming misplaced and falling.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and £750 is added to the annual budget for this purpose.

7. JOHNSON LETTER TO SOPHIA THRALE

The Committee praised the work of the MHO in obtaining support and funding required for the acquisition of the Johnson/Thrale letter at auction. The letter has been successfully kept in the UK and in Lichfield thanks to swift work from the MHO and the financial support of the Johnson Society, Phil Jones, LCC and The Friends of the National Libraries. The MHO confirmed an intention to have the letter professionally photographed for display purposes.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE – 2023/24 PRIORITIES

The Committee considered the MHO's agenda report which provided an update on the various previously identified priorities for 2023/24.

1. **Disabled access** is not going to be possible due to Staffordshire County Council Highways not giving permission for a permanent structure to be on a highway. Further to this, the MHO measured the doorways inside the building on the ground floor and they are narrower than current regulation width; therefore, even if wheelchair users could gain access to the ground floor of the building they would not be able to go further than the bookshop. T Thompson stated that he was very disappointed that matters had reached this stage and that the Museum could not be made accessible due to the stance of SCC.
2. **Asbestos removal** - a priority for the MHO, the removal of asbestos at once is preferable to partial removal over time. It is currently envisaged that the removal will take place within the 2023/24 and to the previously agreed budget.
3. **Review ground floor display plan** - Vertigo have supplied quotes of £29,050 to design and fit the bookshop, and £13,975 for the parlour. The MHO feels that a remodel of the shop could be achieved at significantly reduced cost.
4. **Workroom display**. This has been delayed due to the delay in installing the toilet pod. The MHO will work with Vertigo on the design of the workroom to ensure historical accuracy. Arthur Green (an expert bookbinder) has been commissioned to deliver training to the Birthplace staff once the workroom has been completed.
5. **Toilet pod**. The initial quote of £20,000 in 2022 increased significantly in the interim year, with quotes and is now £36,066 + VAT and professional fees (craned-in option), or £59,295 +VAT and professional fees for a bespoke timber option that would be built on site. The Committee agreed that the significant increase in costs made the project non-viable, choosing instead to focus on improving existing facilities to provide ad-hoc/emergency use, notably for out of hours hires.

6. Minor making good and repairs. A Budget of £5,000 has been set aside for this purpose but has not yet been utilised, as it is not seen as a significant priority by the new MHO.

RESOLVED: That the reports be noted.

9. EMERGING PRIORITIES – 2023/24 REPROFILING AND 2024/25 PROPOSALS

The Committee considered the MHO and Town Clerk's joint report, which suggested reprofiling of some 2023/24 costs and recommendations for 2024/25.

2023/24 Reprofiling

The Committee agreed that with the increased costs of the toilet pod and the poor condition and questionable safety of the existing display cases, that the £20,000 budget for the toilet pod and £5,000 budget for ad hoc repairs should be reprofiled to cover the purchase costs of five new display cases to that comply with current regulations and will house the most valued elements of the collection, including the Johnson/Thrale letter.

Proposals for 2024/25

The MHO detailed the proposals for 2024/25 and sought a recommendation from JBAC to endorse these priorities and make a corresponding recommendation to Council.

A. Toilet Facilities

Improvements to the existing Birthplace staff toilet (budget £5,000, though may be achievable for significantly less) for usage for out-of-hours activities when public toilets are closed. The Committee agreed that this was a reasonable alternative given the cost implications of the toilet pod.

B. Website Redesign (budget £4,000 based on quotation October 2023)

Improving Disability Discrimination Act (1995) compliance and website optimization. Additional consideration to strengthening the use of the website as a digital archive and source of promotion for the museum's collections.

C. Improvements to the Bookshop (budget £15,000)

Instead of progressing with Vertigo's 2020 design with the proposed budget of £29,050, the MHO would work with a reduced budget of £15,000 to improve lighting, furnishings, reception desk, and install 'instagramable' shop displays.

D. Improving the education offer (budget £6,500)

Working with museum education specialists to develop an education programme offering inspiring and memorable experiences for schools. This would create curriculum focused education sessions which directly relate to key stages, and the development of a loan box that can be hired by local schools. T Thompson stated that the priority must be for all schools in Lichfield to be able to access the Birthplace Museum as part of a school visit for at least one day during primary education and one day during secondary education. The MHO stated that she would wish all City schools to have that opportunity but also to ensure the offer is broad enough to appeal to schools outside of the area.

E. Recommendations Arising from Roof Survey

The Architects Quinquennial Report recommended inspection of the hidden valley gutter adjacent to 36 Breadmarket St (see minute 14 of the JBAC meeting held on 25 April 2023). Discussions will take place with the council's professional advisors on these matters in due course, with the urgency of any remedial work dictating whether it is brought forward for consideration in 2024/25 or presented for consideration at a later date.

F. Developing Proposals and Funding Opportunities for 2025/26

An alternate plan should not be rushed and over the next year priority will be given to the careful planning of the development/reinterpretation project, with a robust project and funding plan produced for consideration in 2024/25 to action in 2025/26.

Cllr J Eagland stated that the funding requested was significant and that with pressure on the Council's reserves, all the funding may not be available and the projects should be listed in

priority order. It was agreed however that JBAC’s role is to consider the appropriateness of the priorities and make a recommendation to Council, and for Council to then decide whether the requested funding should be allocated when considering both the minutes of the meeting and the budget for 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

1. ***JBAC endorses the MHO’s reprofiling of the 2023/24 budget, removing the previously agreed £20,000 budget for the toilet pod and £5,000 budget for the minor making good repairs. These two budgets to be combined to allow the purchase of new display cases as set out in the MHO’s report.***
2. ***Having considered the MHO’s priorities for 2024/25, JBAC supports the proposals.***

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:

1. ***That the agreed 2023/24 budget be reprofiled to allow the purchase of new display cases as set out above***
2. ***That the 2024/25 priorities as set out in these minutes [summarised in the table below, together with funding source] be included in the draft budget to be considered by Council at its January 2023 meeting, and that favourable consideration be given to these items when discussed.***

Proposed 2024/25 Project	Budget (£)	Funding Source
Enhancements to existing toilet facility <i>(in lieu of planned toilet pod)</i>	5,000	Capital Reserve
Website Redesign	4,000	Revenue (precept)
Improvements to Bookshop	15,000	Capital Reserve
Improving Education Offer	6,500	Revenue (precept)
Recommendations/discussions arising from roof survey	-	-
Devising proposals for 25/26	-	-
Total	£30,500	

10. OUT OF HOURS GROUP VISIT RATES

The Committee considered the MHO’s agenda report which provided some benchmarked costs. Currently, the £5 charged per person (subject to a minimum of 10 people) is only £1 per person above the charge during office hours. The MHO recommended this be increased to £10 per person to cover the increased costs of such tours, notably the need to have two members of staff on site for personal safety and security reasons. The Committee was supportive of the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:

That the cost of an out-of-hours tour of the Museum be increased to £10 per person with other terms and conditions remaining unchanged.

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings of 10:30am on Tuesday 25th April 2024. Following the adoption of the Minutes of the JBAC meeting of 31st October 2023, additional meetings may be called in the meantime if appropriate.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 11:40am

Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum 2023/24 Annual Report

Visitor Numbers: Present

2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
17,563	14,807	10,607	1,929	20,994

Visitor numbers in 2023/24 are **19% above** the previous financial year. This increase is despite a period of closure during March 2024 to facilitate essential building work. The uplift in visitor numbers this financial year is demonstrative of the growth experienced across the museums and heritage sector as a whole¹.

The quarterly breakdown of visitors in the last reporting period was as follows:

Apr-Jun 2022 3,662 Apr-Jun 2023 4,802 Quarterly Difference: +31%	Jul-Sep 2022 3,103 Jul-Sep 2023 5,304 Quarterly Difference: +71%
Oct-Dec 2022 4,182 Oct-Dec 2023 4,262 Quarterly Difference: +2%	Jan-Mar 2023 4,403 Jan-Mar 2024 3,195 Quarterly Difference: -27%

Heightened numbers for the July to September period in 2023 are envisaged to be attributable to increased publicity around the procurement of the Johnson letter to Sophia Thrale, and footfall within the city following several localised events, inclusive of Samuel Johnson's birthday celebrations and the Sheriff's Ride.

To promote growth for 2024/25 we are expanding our events programme and current involvement with localised events with a view to increase both the breadth and depth of our engagement.

Visitor Numbers: Post-Pandemic Recovery

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, visitor numbers had increased annually from 2015, hitting a peak of 21,472 in 2018/19. The Birthplace still has some way to go before visits recover to pre-pandemic levels. The quarterly breakdown of Birthplace visitors in 2023/24 in comparison with the equivalent period pre-pandemic in 2019/20 is as follows:

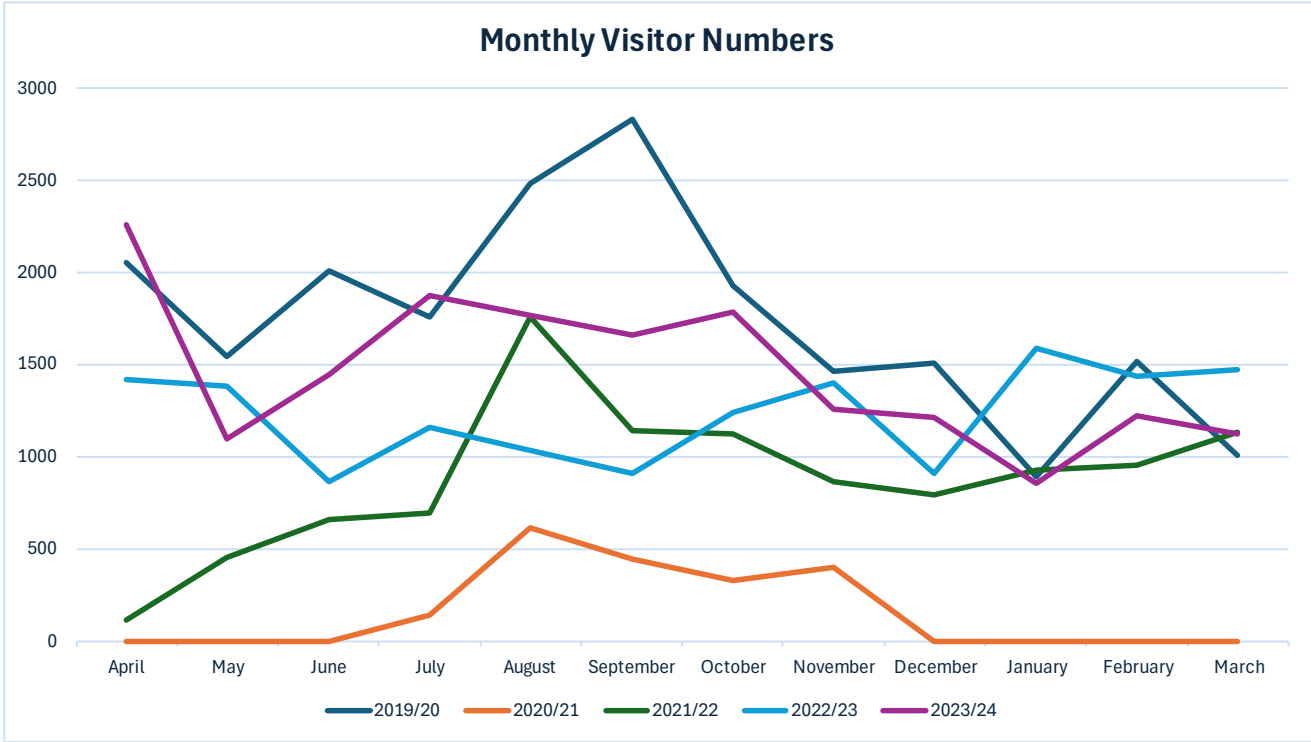
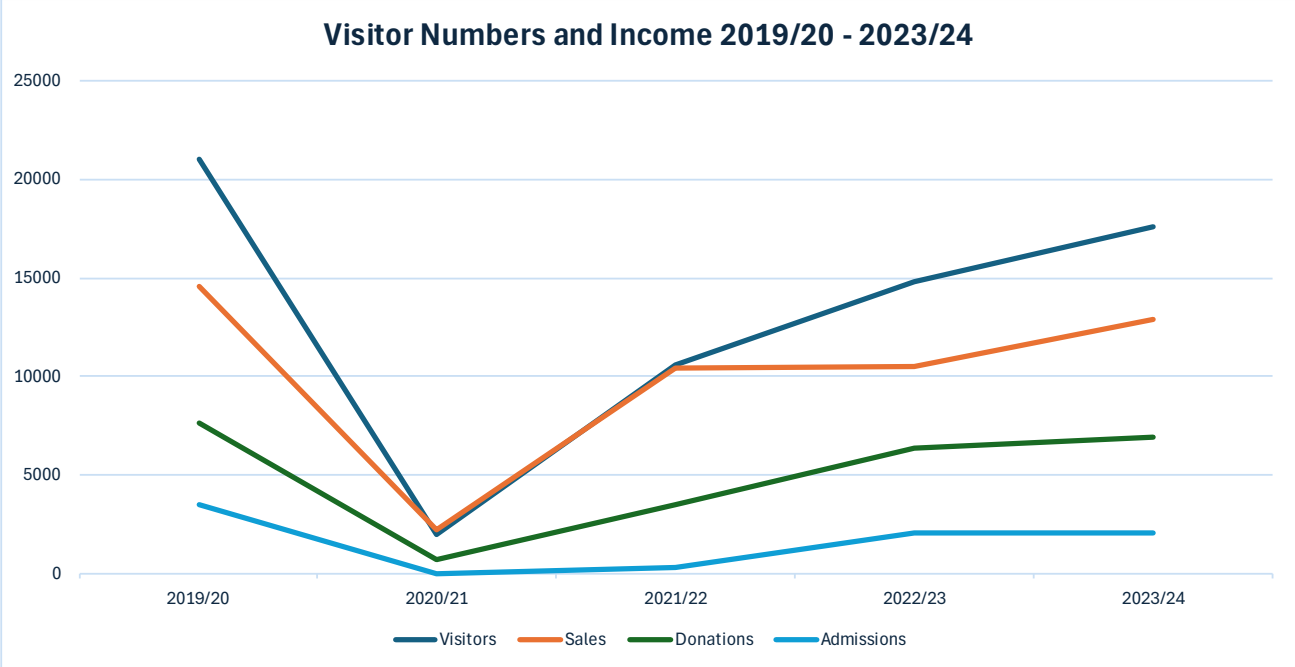
Apr-Jun 2019 5,424 Apr-Jun 2023 4,802 Quarterly Difference: -11%	Jul-Sep 2019 6,868 Jul-Sep 2023 5,304 Quarterly Difference: -23%
Oct-Dec 2019 4,769 Oct-Dec 2023 4,262 Quarterly Difference: -11%	Jan-Mar 2020 3,330 Jan-Mar 2024 3,195 Quarterly Difference: -4%

To put the quarterly data into context; the museums and galleries statistics released by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) show that the sector is experiencing an increase in visits when compared to the same period in 2022/23. The DCMS reports average sector wide growth of 18% across the 2021/22 and 2022/23 years, the Birthplace has exceeded this in achieving a 26% growth in its visitor numbers across the same period. Further, whilst the

¹ [Museums and galleries monthly visits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Birthplace still trails the 2019/20 figures by some 12% across the year, the DCMS identifies the sector trails pre-pandemic numbers by 15%. The Birthplace figures are therefore highly promising in their identification of a faster post-pandemic recovery than the museums and heritage sector at large.

Overview of annual visitor numbers and income over the past five years:



Donations

2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
£6,892.55	£6,375.19	£3,499.53	£706.66	£7,661.02
39p per head	43p per head	33p per head	37p per head	36p per head

Average donations from visitors have dropped from 43p per head in 2022/23 to 39p per head in 2023/24. This is likely to be attributed to the period of closure in March 2024. To increase donations in 2024/25 plans are underway to introduce a cash/card hybrid donations box which enables contactless donations. The new donations box forms part of the improvements to the Bookshop and will follow advice from the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) *Donations Boxes in Museums* guide.

Bookshop Sales

2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
£13,902.60	£10,513.75	£10,432.78	£2,188.79	£14,581.20

Sales are 32% above last year's figures. This growth is attributed to reviewing retail prices to ensure a more profitable mark-up, as well as improving the standards of visual merchandising.

Improvements to the Bookshop along with the introduction of new products and a range of Lichfield souvenirs, will promote growth in 2024/25.

JBAC: 25 APRIL 2024 APPENDIX 2

Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum Current Key Strategic Aims and Objectives 2023-2026

The full SJBM Forward Plan is updated every three years and details the current situation, reviews the previous plan, and states the aims and objectives over the coming period. The next full update is due this year and will be presented to the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee in November 2024.

The table below outlines the current position against the 2023-2026 key strategic aims and current objectives which were presented to JBAC in April 2023:

Aim 1: Operate to a high professional standard, making the best use of available resources		
Objectives:	To maintain Accredited status To maximise available income streams To maximise staff and volunteer development To maximise volunteer input	
How this will be achieved:		Has this been achieved:
Ongoing	1. Maintain and update all policy and procedures	1. Partially complete - in progress
	2. Regular programme of a least six special events per year planned	2. Partially achieved - in progress
	3. Annual training event (e.g. expert speaker, outing to relevant sites and collections) for staff, volunteers and JBAC members.	3. Partially achieved - in progress
	4. Review individual training needs of staff members in annual personal reviews	4. Partially achieved - in progress
	5. Creating short-term volunteer roles and projects aimed at engaging college students and young people	5. Partially achieved - in progress
Short term (2023-2024)	1. Target of 50p average donation per head by March 2024	1. Not achieved – carry forward
	2. Increase group and education bookings income by 10%	2. Not achieved – carry forward
	3. Launch online shop and specialist second-hand book online sales	3. Cancelled – focus shifted to improving the Bookshop. To be reviewed in the future.
	4. Improved facilities for Private Hire (toilet)	4. Cancelled – carry forward. Improvements to the existing toilet will be made in 2024/25.
	5. Establish a regular joint meeting of staff and volunteers for updates and feedback	5. In progress – ongoing
Medium and Long term (2024-2026)	1. Prepare and submit return Arts Council England Accreditation application (invitation date in 2024, TBA)	1. Application was due in 2021 not 2024. This is being investigated.
	2. Improved facilities for Private Hire (meeting space)	2. Not achieved – carry forward
	3. Increased audience for Bookshop with provision of disabled access and related adaptations	3. Cancelled – external lift not possible however Bookshop improvements will be made with the potential for future access in mind.
	4. Accessible volunteering opportunities in ground-floor displays introduced	4. Cancelled - external lift access not possible. Alternative opportunities will be explored.

Aim 2: Build and diversify our audiences, responding to user consultation		
Objectives:	To increase the number of visitors from our local community To monitor users and consult non-users To increase the number of education visits and partnerships To increase the number of group visit bookings	
How this will be achieved:		Has this been achieved:
Ongoing	1. Special events organised to appeal to range of visitors and encourage return visits, including free of charge events/activities.	1. Completed - ongoing
	2. Promote the use of bookshop as a local resource through offers, sales and street presence	2. Not achieved – carry forward
	3. Regular presence on Lichfield Market Square to promote the Museum (stall twice annually)	3. Completed – ongoing
	4. Engage with local partnerships, events and groups	4. Completed - ongoing
	5. Annual update to database of schools and groups and periodic promotion by email and post	5. Not achieved - in progress
Short term (2023-2024)	1. Introduce additional options for completion of the SJBm visitor exit survey (e.g. online, easy access QR codes)	1. Not achieved – carry forward
	2. Conduct street surveys with local people to gather data from non-users	2. Not achieved – carry forward
	3. Train additional staff members and volunteers in delivery of education programme	3. Partially achieved – improvements to education offer planned for 2024/25
	4. Update Primary school visit to reflect changes to Bookbinding workroom	4. Not achieved – Workroom project was not completed, due for completion in April 2024.
	5. Train additional Museum Attendant staff members and volunteers in delivery of tours and talks	6. Partially achieved – carry forward
Medium and Long term (2024-2026)	1. Redevelopment of the Museum and displays to include diverse stories and elements of local history	1. Not achieved – carry forward
	2. Review schools offering and devise a planned programme for extending to Key Stages 3 & 4.	2. Not achieved – carry forward

Aim 3: Increase access to the Museum and collections		
Objectives:	To seek alternative solutions to the physical limitations of our Grade I listed building To improve awareness of, and access to, all parts of the collection To update interpretation and displays To improve facilities for researchers and publicise provision widely	
How this will be achieved:		Has this been achieved:
Ongoing	1. Seek expert advice and consultation with users at all stages of development	1. Partially achieved – ongoing
	2. Work with the Johnson Society to support exploration of fundraising for expansion into an adjacent building (subject to LCC approval with no proactive work being undertaken currently).	2. Ongoing – carried forward
	3. Regular programme of small displays highlighting stored collection	3. Completed

	4. Maintain SJBM blog with monthly collection-based posts	4. Partially achieved – in progress
	5. Raise academic profile of Museum, through links with higher education partners, including continued support of Keele Collaborative Doctoral Award	5. Completed – in progress
Short term (2023-2024)	1. Digital access to collections relating to Michael Johnson within Workroom development	1. Not achieved – in progress
	2. Redisplay of workroom to become a hands-on accessible space covering history of family business, book trade and binding	2. Not achieved – in progress
	3. Re-organisation of current displays to incorporate items removed from workroom and Parlour	3. Not achieved – in progress
	4. Establish regular volunteer-led open library sessions and publicise with local interest groups	4. Not achieved – to be reviewed in line with plans for the libraries and study area
	5. In-house update to Kitchen display to introduce low-tech interactives for trial and monitoring	5. Cancelled - partially achieved, however future redisplay plans change the use of this space
Medium and Long term (2024-2026)	1. Refurbish Wood Library, incorporating the Blum Study area	1. Not achieved – carry forward
	2. Relocation of Introductory AV area to Parlour and associated re-display	2. Not achieved – new plans for AV outlined in key aims 2024-2027
	3. Create wheelchair access into Bookshop by street level lift, throughout ground floor and to accessible toilet, subject to planning approval	3. Cancelled
	4. Establish digital access to upper floors at ground level	4. Partially achieved - in progress
	5. Implement actionable items from Neurodiverse Visitors audit and update SJBM Access Plan	6. Partially achieved – in progress

Aim 4: Care for the Museum building and collections		
Objectives:	To improve the storage and care of the collection To improve the documentation of the collection To ensure the ongoing protection of the collection against disaster and damage To ensure the continual maintenance and sustainability of the Birthplace building	
How this will be achieved:		Has this been achieved:
Ongoing	1. Undertake planned programme identified in the updated SJBM Collection Care and Documentation Plans	1. Partially achieved – ongoing
	2. Bi-annual Collection Clean	2. Completed – ongoing
	3. Ensure that all staff are trained in the Museum Emergency plan procedure	3. Partially achieved – refresher training required when Emergency Plan is updated
	4. Conduct regular building checks and resolve or report issues promptly	4. Partially achieved – ongoing
	5. All supplies sourced with consideration to sustainability and carbon reduction	5. Completed – ongoing
	6. Programme of photography and scanning of collection, with eventual target to have a photograph to accompany every non-library record.	6. Partially achieved – ongoing
Short term (2023-2024)	1. Re-organisation of book storage to facilitate Blum Library move	1. Not achieved – carry forward
	2. Update SJBM Emergency Plan	

	3. Schedule recommended works from the Quinquennial inspection, including hidden valley gutter exploration	2. Partially achieved – in progress
	4. Removal of asbestos insulation board in basement as part of 2023-24 development works	3. In progress
Medium and Long term (2024-2026)	1. Update SJBM Collection Care and Documentation Plans as part of Accreditation renewal process to guide future activities.	1. Not achieved – carry forward

Next steps and Recommendations

JBAC is asked to consider the table below which outlines the proposed key strategic aims and current objectives for 2024-2027 which will form part of the Forward Plan:

Aim 1: Operate to a high professional standard, making the best use of available resources	
Objectives:	To maintain Accredited status To maximise available income streams To maximise staff and volunteer development To maximise volunteer input
How this will be achieved:	
Ongoing	Maintain and update all policy and procedures. Regular programme of at least six special events per year planned. Annual training event (e.g. expert speaker, outing to relevant sites and collections) for staff, volunteers and JBAC members. Review individual training needs of staff members in annual personal reviews. Creating volunteer roles and projects aimed at engaging college students and young people.
Short term (2024-2025)	Improve the Bookshop – raise profile, increase revenue, and increase book donations by March 2025. Increase donations and purchase of a hybrid contactless donations box. Establish a regular joint meeting of staff and volunteers for updates and feedback. Promote group visits and education programme.
Medium and Long term (2024-2027)	Increase group and education bookings income by 10% by March 2026. Target of 50p average donation per head by March 2026. Prepare and submit return Arts Council England Accreditation application. Improved facilities for private hire and out-of-hours events. Develop new volunteer roles including accessible volunteering opportunities. Commission a marketing and audience development consultant to create marketing strategy.

Aim 2: Build and diversify our audiences, responding to user consultation	
Objectives:	To improve the visitor experience, creating a world class experience for all To create a welcoming and inclusive environment To increase the number of visitors To monitor users and consult non-users To increase the number of group and education visits
How this will be achieved:	
Ongoing	Special events organised to appeal to range of visitors and encourage return visits, including free of charge events/activities. Regular presence on Lichfield Market Square to promote the Museum (stall twice annually). Engage with local partnerships, events, and groups. Annual update to database of schools and groups and periodic promotion by email and post.
Short term (2024-2025)	New website to promote Museum activities. New education programme to increase bookings and capacity. Produce development plan for the Museum and displays - to include diverse stories and elements of local history.

	<p>Introduce additional options for completion of the SJBM visitor exit survey (e.g. online, easy access QR codes).</p> <p>Train additional Museum Attendant staff members and volunteers in delivery of tours and talks.</p> <p>Increase hands-on family activities and interactives.</p>
Medium and Long term (2024-2027)	<p>Full redisplay - seek funding opportunities and implement development plan.</p> <p>Create a digital archive – providing online access to the collections.</p> <p>Reach new audiences by rebranding and reviewing the imagery representing the museum.</p> <p>Commission an audience insight consultant to conduct street surveys with local people to gather data from non-users.</p>

Aim 3: Increase access to the Museum and collections	
Objectives:	<p>To seek alternative solutions to the physical limitations of our Grade I listed building</p> <p>To improve awareness of, and access to, all parts of the collection</p> <p>To update interpretation and displays</p> <p>To improve facilities for researchers and publicise provision widely</p>
How this will be achieved:	
Ongoing	<p>Seek expert advice and consultation with users at all stages of development.</p> <p>Work with the Johnson Society to support exploration of fundraising for expansion into an adjacent building (subject to LCC approval with no proactive work being undertaken currently).</p> <p>Maintain SJBM blog with collection-based posts.</p> <p>Raise academic profile of Museum, through links with higher education partners, including partnership with Keele University.</p>
Short term (2024-2025)	<p>Digital access to collections relating to Michael Johnson within Workroom development.</p> <p>Redisplay of Workroom to become a hands-on space covering history of family business, book trade and binding.</p> <p>Create display guidelines.</p> <p>Introduce handling items for visually impaired visitors.</p>
Medium and Long term (2024-2027)	<p>Update object labels and interpretation panels.</p> <p>Combine libraries and improve the research facilities and study area.</p> <p>Re-display of the Parlour – an introduction to Johnson; setting the narrative for the Museum, conveying the key messages of who Johnson was and what his impact was.</p> <p>Re-display of the Kitchen – an introduction to Johnson through motion activated 'talking portraits' and associated re-display/re-purpose of the AV Room.</p> <p>Improve access - establish digital access to upper floors and collections in the Parlour.</p> <p>Implement actionable items from Neurodiverse Visitors audit and update SJBM Access Plan.</p> <p>Online exhibitions on the SJBM website; providing digital access to collections.</p> <p>Commission British Sign Language digital visitor guide.</p>

Aim 4: Care for the Museum building and collections	
Objectives:	<p>To improve the storage and care of the collection</p> <p>To improve the documentation of the collection</p> <p>To ensure the ongoing protection of the collection against disaster and damage</p> <p>To ensure the continual maintenance and sustainability of the Birthplace building</p>
How this will be achieved:	
Ongoing	<p>Undertake planned programme identified in the updated SJBM Collection Care and Documentation Plans.</p> <p>Bi-annual Collection Clean.</p> <p>Ensure that all staff are trained in the Museum Emergency plan procedure.</p> <p>Conduct regular building checks and resolve or report issues promptly.</p> <p>All supplies sourced with consideration to sustainability and carbon reduction.</p> <p>Programme of photography and scanning of collection, with eventual target to have a photograph to accompany every non-library record.</p> <p>Collection audit.</p>
Short term (2024-2025)	<p>Re-organisation of book storage to facilitate Blum Library move.</p> <p>Update SJBM Emergency Plan.</p> <p>Schedule recommended works from the Quinquennial inspection, including hidden valley gutter exploration.</p> <p>Improve staff kitchen area and bathroom facilities.</p>

<p>Medium and Long term (2024-2027)</p>	<p>Update SJBM Collection Care and Documentation Plans as part of Accreditation renewal process to guide future activities.</p> <p>Commission building report for floor/weight bearing.</p> <p>Purchase collections care equipment for conservation cleaning.</p> <p>Purchase museum disaster preparedness kit.</p> <p>Staff and volunteers to receive integrated pest management and preventative conservation training led by an expert.</p> <p>Update CCTV system and implement yearly planned preventative maintenance.</p> <p>Repair damaged plasterwork caused by the removal of old electrical fittings and decorate rooms throughout the property (as referenced in the quinquennial inspection report).</p> <p>Fill large gaps in floorboards (as referenced in the quinquennial inspection report).</p> <p>Replace security glass on upper floor windows.</p> <p>Purchase new display cases.</p> <p>Glaze paintings to protect artwork from touching, physical accidents, and environmental and UV damage.</p> <p>Reduce light and UV damage by fitting UV film and installing conservation blinds.</p>
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JBAC: 25 APRIL 2024 APPENDIX 3

REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT – UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

1. Asbestos Removal

In February 2024 Listed Building Consent was granted for asbestos removal and remedial work. The site has temporarily closed to facilitate this essential work, with the Bookshop remaining open where possible. Asbestos insulation board was removed from the kitchen, electrical intake cupboard, and storeroom. Thermoplastic floor tiles were removed, and a redundant flue pipe was taken out of the boiler room. New fire-resistant plasterboard ceilings were installed, and new lighting fitted. The kitchen and storeroom have been painted, and the asbestos removal made it possible to complete other work at the property, including rewiring the basement and Bookshop, and installing lockable doors on the electrical intake cupboard.

During the closure period the opportunity was taken to address additional security and health & safety concerns including removing screens from the attic. The screens had unintentionally provided a hiding area due to gaps either side and underneath. Once the screens were removed, a plinth with a solid back was fitted to fill the gap which dropped down to the staircase below.

Next steps

The remedial work is ongoing and is due to be completed by 29 April 2024.

During the remedial work, faults with the boiler room fire door were discovered, this included warping, splintering, and non-compliant vents. The door will be replaced; however, this has delayed laying the terracotta floor tiles which replace the thermoplastic tiles.

2. Display Cases

Five new display cases have been purchased and were delivered to the Birthplace in March 2024. These cases replace a large portion of the 1980s showcases, which had broken locks, and were not compliant by modern museum standards. The new cases were chosen to provide a high level of security and environmental control, whilst the attack resistant all-glass vitrine enables full visibility of the exhibits. Interpretation labels have been updated for the displays in these cases, with the newly acquired Johnson letter being one of the highlighted objects.

Next steps and Recommendations

The most valuable collections have been prioritised for display in the new cases, with remaining collections being put into safe storage or left in the old cases. Consideration should be given to prioritising the purchase of more showcases as part of the proposed key strategic aims and current objectives.

3. Workroom Display – update and current position

The original design for the Workroom display was submitted by museum designers Vertigo in August 2020. Progress was slow, with the bulk of the work being delayed for the toilet pod installation.

Following the decision to remove the toilet pod from the development project, the Workroom project has gained momentum. This unique display will recreate an 18th century bookseller's workspace. The room will contain new interpretation, a hands-on activity for visitors, and a short film showing the highly skilled process of bookbinding. The room has been decorated and will open to the public on 29 April 2024.

Next steps

Bookbinding equipment and tools are being installed week commencing 22 April 2024, along with the delivery of the interpretation panel and screen.

4. Improving the Bookshop

With a budget of £15,000 the MHO will make significant improvements to the Bookshop to increase retail sales and elevate the Bookshop's presence as a prime retail destination and tourist attraction. Plans include improving lighting, furnishings, commissioning a bespoke reception desk, and installing Instagram worthy displays.

To minimize disruption to the public, the Bookshop will be decorated during the Birthplace's temporary period of closure in April 2024.

Sculpt Design Ltd, who have worked with the National Trust, Ikon Gallery, Coffin Works, and Compton Verney, are advising on colour schemes, designing the reception desk and lighting scheme. They will provide a list of recommendations for improving the Bookshop's exterior signage and visual presence.

Product development also forms part of the improvements; new designs for Birthplace tea towels and bookmarks, and a Lichfield colour palette range are in the works.

Next steps

Improvements to the Bookshop will be completed during the 2024/25 financial year.

Recommendations from Sculpt Design Ltd will inform future key strategic aims and objectives.

5. New Website

Vision ICT have been commissioned to redesign the Birthplace website. The current website is outdated, and improvements need to be made for Disability Discrimination Act (1995) compliance, and website optimization to boost our position within search engines and increase interest in Johnson and the Birthplace.

The new website will be completed during the 2024/25 financial year.

Next steps

The MHO is meeting Vision ICT in May 2024.

Additional considerations will be given to how the new website can be built on; to be used as a digital archive and source of promotion for the museum's collections over the forthcoming years, forming part of the proposed key strategic aims and objectives.

6. Improving the Education Offer

The MHO has been working with museum education specialists Up An' At 'Em! History <https://upanatemhistory.co.uk/> to develop an education programme offering inspiring and memorable experiences for schools. These curriculum focused education sessions will directly relate to key stages. Free trial sessions will be offered to local schools from June 2024 to gain feedback and promote the programme. The school visits will be led by the Up An' At 'Em! team, this will enable the Birthplace to take more bookings and offer a consistently high standard of delivery. Marketing the new sessions will be included within the 2024/25 period.

Currently the Birthplace has limited capacity for school visits. The education sessions require three members of Birthplace staff per session, which is costly and challenging for such a small team. The Birthplace charges £3.50 + VAT per child, with the average class paying £94.50 + VAT per session. In terms of staffing costs alone (including on-costs), education visits cost Lichfield City Council £163.44 to run, with every session operating at a loss.

The new education programme has been developed to increase capacity, offering schools the option to bring one, two, or three classes per trip. Working with professional freelance instructors also enables us to take more bookings. The intention is not to make money from school visits but to facilitate more visits and avoid operating at a loss. JBAC is therefore asked to approve a charge to Schools of £140 + VAT per session, per class, with freelance costs at £135 per session, per class.

Benchmarking school visits:

The average charge for education sessions at museums in the Midlands area is £7.90 + VAT per child, £213 + VAT per session, per class.

Site	Cost per child	Cost per education visit based on one class of 27 pupils
Aston Hall	£7 + VAT	£189 + VAT
Back to Backs	£5	£135
Blakesley Hall	£7 + VAT	£189 + VAT
Erasmus Darwin House	£5	£135
Derby Museums	£6.50 + VAT	£175.50 + VAT
Museum of the Jewellery Quarter	£7 + VAT	£189 + VAT
Sarehole Mill	£7 + VAT	£189 + VAT
Soho House	£7 + VAT	£189 + VAT
Tamworth Castle	£8.50	£229.50
Think Tank	£10.50 + VAT	£283.50 + VAT
Weoley Castle	£10 + VAT	£270 + VAT
Weston Park	£5 self-guided visit	£400 flat rate charge

Next steps

Four free trial sessions will be offered to local schools in June 2024 to gain feedback and promote the new education programme.

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted and JBAC to approve a charge to schools of £140 + VAT per session, per class, with freelance costs at £135 per session, per class.

7. Improving the toilet facilities

With a budget of £5,000 the MHO will work with contractors, Messenger BCR, to make improvements to the Birthplace staff toilet for usage for out-of-hours activities when public toilets are closed. When the MHO met with Lichfield District Council's Conservation and Design Officer (CDO) in October 2023, they were happy with the initial proposal.

These improvements will be completed within the 2024/25 financial year.

Next steps

In May 2024, the MHO will meet with Messenger BCR, and the CDO to ascertain whether an application for Listed Building Consent (LBC) is required for the work. If an application must be submitted, advice will be taken from the CDO, and work will commence if/when LBC is granted. If an application is not required, work will commence as soon as possible.

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‘JOHNSON HEAD’ INSATLLATION – BIRD STREET

In late November 2022 Jonathon Oates stated that he wished to crowdfund the costs of the installation of the bust on Bird Street. This was supported by the Council in December, and the Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) was designated as the point of contact for Jonathon. The campaign was subsequently launched and quickly gained traction.

Costs of the installation were significantly reduced when Messenger BCR, the building contractor offered their services free of charge as part of their community engagement agenda, as did specialist carver Paul Jones of Jones Carving who is undertaking the restoration, and the MEWP company who will assist with access for the installation. Further, Lichfield City Council (LCC) met the application cost for Listed Building Consent. Consequently, the crowdfunding campaign ended with a total of £3,735 raised.

In June, under a loan agreement with the owner, the MHO arranged delivery of the bust to Jones Carving for condition checking, to ascertain what work was required. By September the carver’s investigation had revealed that the bust was in a poor state of repair with far more damage than had originally been identified. This damage is likely to have been caused by the removal from its original location, and previous poor attempts at restoration that had been carried out many years ago using incorrect materials. These previous repairs resulted in weak points and caused the bust to lean forwards. Paul’s findings also revealed that the bust was originally lime washed. The restoration work began when the transfer of title from the owner to LCC was received on 19 September 2023.

The bust is currently undergoing the final phase of restoration; the careful application of handmade limewash. The colour of the limewash has been selected to match traces of the original finish. This was sourced from a company whose limewashes have been used on the Queen’s Chapel, and Kew Palace.

The MHO has visited the George Hotel and Viking E-Cigs with Messenger BCR for an internal and external inspection of the Bird Street building. The wall’s thickness was measured to ascertain the best method of fixing the bust in place.

The costs to Jones Carving were significantly higher than originally anticipated due to the costs of materials and the poor condition of the bust. Following a meeting with the MHO, Jonathon Oates has given a contribution from the crowdfunder to help cover cost of the materials.

Next steps

A completion date for the restoration has not yet been provided due to Jones Carving balancing paid work with this voluntary project. Both Messenger BCR and Jones Carving are in regular contact with the MHO to provide updates.

When a completion date is in sight the MHO will liaise with all parties to ensure there is a celebration event and press release to mark the return of the Johnson Head bust.