

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Lichfield City Council held in Guildhall, Lichfield on Monday 22 January 2024 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors A Hughes (Mayor), J Anketell, H Ashton, D Baker, C Ball, J Blackman, R Bragger, J Christie, J Eagland, K Farrelly, M Field, A Fox, C Greatorex, R Harvey-Coggins, S Hollingsworth, P Knight, A Lax, J Marshall, P Mc Dermott, C Pinder- Smith, P Ray, D Robertson, A Rushton, S Schafer, J Smith, E Strain, M Warfield, B Watkins, and R Yardley.

APOLOGIES: None

89 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor detailed the events and functions that she had attended, including attendance at the High Sheriff's opening of the law term at Stafford Court, the busy and very rewarding Christmas period, and after Christmas, the Friends to Friends pantomime and a very interesting session at the Garrick with a drama group for neurodiverse young people, who are developing a performance to help businesses and public bodies learn about neurodiversity.

90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllrs R Yardley and J Smith declared an interest under Appendix B of the City Council's Code of Conduct in regard to agenda item 16 (minute 102); Cllr Yardley being the Chair of the Lichfield Shrievalty Association, and Cllr Smith being the Treasurer.

91 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 December 2023 (Nos 68-88) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.*

92 MATTERS ARISING

None

93 PLANNING COMMITTEE (DELEGATED AUTHORITY)

RESOLVED: *That comments submitted to Lichfield District Council for the period 7 December 2023 to 3 January 2024 and made in the name of LCC via delegated authority, be received.*

94 CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Members considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee which took place on 17 January 2024.

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee held on 17 January 2024 be adopted.*

95 FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25 - MARKETS

Members considered the charges for the market pitch hire as detailed at agenda appendix 1. Members noted the increase in electricity charges had been introduced on 1 January 2024 following recommendation by the Markets Working Group and subsequent adoption by council.

RESOLVED: *2024/25 charges relating to the markets function be as set out at agenda appendix 1.*

96 FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25 - GUILDHALL

Members considered the proposed Guildhall hire charges for 2024/25, noting the introduction of a new event package and a tiered increase to hire charges as detailed at agenda appendix 3. Cllr C Greatorex urged caution in regard to the headline 'wedding and special event' package, stating that demand could be such that other groups cannot be hosted. Cllr Greatorex advised a continued review of the pricing structure to ensure the Guildhall remained accessible to all.

RESOLVED: *That the 2024/25 hire costs and event package prices for the Guildhall be as set out at agenda appendix 3.*

97 FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT – 1 APRIL to 30 NOVEMBER 2023

Members noted the financial progress report for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 November 2023.

RESOLVED: *That the report be noted*

98 BUDGET ESTINMATES 2024/25

The Council considered the Town Clerk's budget estimates and report, prepared to retain existing services and service levels and to maintain the Council's public buildings; the draft budget was based on a Council Tax increase of £5.00 per year for a band D property (£68.76 to £73.76).

Cllr C Greatorex stated that the Conservatives would likely have increased the precept if they had remained in control, but that the amount would perhaps have been lower than proposed.

Cllr J Smith queried the Sheriff's Ride budget, stating that it had increased despite the proposal to remove the Banquet from the calendar. Cllr D Robertson responded that it would have been improper to remove the Banquet provision from the draft budget as the future of the event had not yet been decided by Council. No member voted against the proposed budget, though the Conservative members abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED: *Council approve the budget estimates and report for the 2024/25 financial year totalling £1,030,235; and that the precept for 2024/25 be set at £939,900.*

99 REPAIR, RENOVATION AND SPECIFIC PROJECT PROGRAMME 2024/25

Members considered the Repair and Renewal proposals to be funded from the Capital Reserve during 2024/25; the next stage of the Birthplace redevelopment project and continuing works at Darwin Hall, together with retention payments falling due. Cllr J Eagland highlighted the recent completion of the Boley Park Community hall paly area which the council had part funded via CIL.

RESOLVED: *That the report be noted.*

100 OFFICERS' REPORT

Councillor C Ball commended the work of the Open Spaces officer, notably in progressing the CIL funded work to replace the aged birds mouth fencing to the perimeter of the Curborough Community Centre car park. Cllr D Robertson also thanked the Open Spaces officer and Town Clerk for their prompt action during the Christmas break to ensure a fallen tree was cleared from the path adjacent to the allotments at Christchurch. The Mayor thanked the Civic Officer and Reverend Ian Hayter for their assistance in organising and hosting the Mayor's Carols event and highlighted the continued co-operation between Keele University and the Birthplace Museum.

RESOLVED: That the Report be noted.

101 SUBSIDY REVIEW – LICHFIELD ARTS AND LICHFIELD FESTIVAL

Further to Minute 99 of the City Council's meeting on 28 January 2019, the arrangements between the Council, Lichfield Arts and Lichfield Festival are to be reviewed annually by the City Council. Members considered the current position and proposals for 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

1. **The City Council confirms its view that:**
 - a) **The current charges associated with the separate licences to occupy remain appropriate given the stability in market rent valuations, the charitable nature of both bodies and their positive impact on the City.**
 - b) **arrangements in regard to the hire of the Ashmole Room are appropriate.**
2. **The City Council wishes an inflationary increase of 3.9% to be applied to the prevailing charges for 2024/25.**
3. **The City Council reconsiders this matter at its January 2025 meeting.**

102 2024 CIVIC CALENDAR

Members considered the Town Clerk's agenda report which requested council guidance on amendments to the 2024 Civic Calendar as detailed below:

1. *Mayor/ess at home event to be replaced with a 'back to school' uniform event in August*
2. *Mayor and Sheriff's Dinner Dance to be renamed 'Mayor and Sheriff's Charity Event', with detailed discussion as to the content of the event to take place later in the year*
3. *Sheriff's Ride Banquet to be withdrawn from the calendar; LCC to still organise the morning gathering on the day of the Ride.*

Cllr D Baker stated that the Sheriff's Banquet was introduced due to the expense of hosting the lunch at Freeford, with the implication both that the Town Clerk's agenda report was not accurate, and that the Banquet should not be removed from the calendar as a result of the re-establishment of the 'full' Sheriff's Ride by an external body.

The Town Clerk read from the minutes of the Sheriff's Ride Working Party (SRWP) which, following adoption by council, set out the establishment of the Banquet:

SRWP meeting 19 May 2021:

For 2021, the Sheriff's Ride to not include horses/riders. The event to commence in the afternoon and the Sheriff to return to the City via The Close as is traditional. The event to also include a dinner at the Guildhall on that evening.

SRWP meeting 8 September 2022:

That the City Council adopts the 'reduced' Sheriffs Ride (as has taken place in 2021 and was scheduled for 2022) as the basis for future Sheriff's Rides, with the focus shifting to creating additionality for that event in the City Centre and increasing the visibility of the event through amendments to timings etc.

The Town Clerk stated that he believed his interpretation as set out in the report was correct. Cllr J Smith restated Cllr Baker's view. Cllr C Ball stated that he believed the Town Clerk's report and recollections to be accurate.

It was requested that each of the matters under discussion be put to a separate vote. On the matter of the Sheriff's Ride Banquet no member voted against the proposal, though Liberal Democrat members abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED:

- ***Mayor/ess at Home event replaced with a 'Back to School' uniform event in August***
- ***Mayor and Sheriff's Dinner Dance to be renamed 'Mayor and Sheriff's Charity Event, detail to be discussed with the 2024/25 Civics when in office***
- ***Sheriff's Ride Banquet to be withdrawn from the calendar; LCC to still organise the morning gathering on the day of the Ride as occurred in 2023.***

103 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Cllr C Greatorex queried whether PRS payments that relate to LCC owned Community Halls were a matter for the respective Committees of those halls; the Town Clerk confirmed this to be the case. Cllr Greatorex then enquired as to payments to individuals due to the proceeds of book sales. The Town Clerk confirmed that this arrangement with authors had been in place for some years and allowed the Birthplace Museum and book authors to share in sales income. Cllr Greatorex then enquired as to payments to an individual he believed to be deceased. The Town Clerk stated that he understood arrangements were being made in regard to future payments, but that the existing account remained active.

RESOLVED: That payment of accounts be approved and confirmed for the periods:

- ***1 October 2023 to 31 October 2023 in the sum of £233,726.68 General Account, and £1180.19 Imprest Account.***
- ***1 November 2023 to 30 November 2023 in the sum of £152,470.24 General Account, and £815.14 Imprest Account.***

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.15PM

MAYOR