

## **OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT**

### **1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer**

On Saturday 8 September the Sheriff, Mr Michael Mullarkey led the first and final parts of the ride in a spectacular horse drawn carriage. The Sheriff chose not to ride and was driven in a support vehicle over the remainder of the day. This year we had a total of 54 riders taking part in the traditional historic 20+ mile perambulation of the city boundaries.

At Freeford Manor an additional 119 guests joined the Sheriff for a buffet luncheon where they were entertained by 'Jazz Tones'.



At the end of the day the Ride was escorted back into the City by the Sword Bearer and both Mace Bearers. The Sheriff was welcomed into the Close by The Dean and representatives of the Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral before continuing onto the Guildhall where the Ride culminated with three cheers for the Sheriff.

The Sheriff's Ride is the largest event the City Council undertakes and would not be possible without the support of many volunteers, local businesses and farmers. This year the Council was once again supported by Jaguar Land Rover, we were fortunate enough to receive two lead vehicles displaying the City Council Crest. Acorn Ford from Burntwood once again helped us with providing a vehicle. New sponsorship was gained this year from a local company called A1 Vehicle Hire who provided us with a van for refreshments around the route and Roxanne Ltd, a local water company from Fradley kindly supplied us with bottled water for everyone on the day. We hope these good relationships will continue next year.

The Johnson Birthday Celebrations were held on the Market Square on Saturday 22 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 Johnsons last prayer to music by Peter Hawsworth, their musical direct. As part of the Heritage weekend the celebrations and activities continued throughout the day including Meet the Mace with Alison Read



and Richard Hunt in the Guildroom and 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 judged the competition and the worthy winner was announced, Joe Wilkes aged 10. The Entertainer toy shop kindly gifted a £15 voucher to the winner.

Preparations continue for the following civic events;

- Charity Barn Dance, 31 October.
- Remembrance Day, 11 November.
- Dinner Dance, 24 November.
- Christmas Wreath Making, 27 November.

## **2. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Jo Wilson, Museums and Heritage Officer**

5005 visitors came to Johnson's Birthplace in August and September. The Museum was also ranked in the top 20 free attractions in the West Midlands published by Visit England in August, based on our 2017 visitor numbers. This year the summer months have been the busiest on record, and visitors enjoyed the last weeks of calligraphy exhibition 'Blazing Words, Glitt'ring Gold', and families took part in weekly 'Summer Fun at Sam's House' craft sessions with activities based on Captain Cook's voyages.

In September the Museum celebrated Johnson's 309<sup>th</sup> Birthday, working with partners at Visit Lichfield and other city sites as part of Lichfield's Heritage Weekend. The theme this year was '100 years of...' and the Birthplace explored its own history with a look at how the Museum would have appeared in 1918 in an exhibition created by volunteer Joanna Pembleton. 532 visitors attended over the weekend to enjoy the Birthday display, cake and activities, as well as the Civic Ceremony and a programme of entertainment on the Market Square on Saturday.

The final part of the year-long collaboration with Fired Up Theatre, Dr Johnson's Wikiwords, took place on 29 September with sitcom 'Birthday'. The project will continue with a tour of the plays at surprising locations around the area, some drama workshops at the Museum and a proposed project with secondary schools in 2019.



The Birthplace had a stall outside the house at the Lichfield Food Festival in August and on the Farmer's Market in September to promote the Museum and Birthday celebrations, directly engaging with over 450 people outside of the house.

A WI group from Monkspath, Solihull, enjoyed a guided tour of the Museum.

New partnership opportunities have included an experimental project run by the county Museum Development Officer to place a geocache at the Birthplace site, which Penny



Taylor is working on in consultation with colleagues at Cannock Chase Museum. The Birthplace has also been approached by Lichfield Garrick to collaborate on a Johnson-themed community project and exhibition.

The Museum Volunteer team was treated to an evening at Birmingham Hippodrome as finalists in the West Midlands Volunteer Awards. Although they did not win their category of 'Museum Champions', being shortlisted for this prodigious industry award was a fantastic achievement and their certificate is on display in the Birth Room.



Conservator Ruth Bubb came to Lichfield to appraise the condition of the paintings from the Museum collection which are on display in the Ashmole Room. Her report is pending.

Everyday maintenance on the Museum building has included a replacement CCTV camera, routine clearing and checking of the drain system, and clearing of the boiler room area.

Work on the Birthplace Development Project continues to prepare the project enquiry submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, including an initial meeting with representatives of the Staffordshire County Council Highways department to discuss access options.

### 3. Open Spaces and Tree Management: Nick Burton, Open Spaces Officer

The open space along Minster Pool Walk is well used now with stalls during the Festivals, and at other times. New bins with the LCC logo have replaced the old ones to give the area a lift.

A ROSPA report was completed in August for the play areas at Curborough, Lincoln Close and Stowe. None were reported as high risk but the recommendations for the medium risk have been actioned.

A set of two goal posts have been installed at Hillside. This has been requested by a number of residents in the area to help promote healthy activities, especially for youngsters.



Help was given again this year to provide signage for the Sheriff's ride. In future the Police accompanying the riders may not all be local and know the area so clearer signage on the roadside will be of great benefit.

The CPCG Group organised by LDC did some necessary work keeping the stream flowing in the Festival Gardens. Also, the culvert at Franciscan View was cleared which will help prevent the footpath from flooding this winter.

There have been a series of high winds that caused some tree damage such as this sycamore in the Northern Plantations, or this ash across a path at Kean Close.





To achieve Gold in the Heart of England in Bloom competition in 2018 is very rewarding for all the groups and individuals who worked so hard over the year to attain it. Anyone wishing to help in 2019 is encouraged to contact the City Council.



#### **4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer**

On 29 September, two apprentices from Limburg City Council arrived in Lichfield for their one week work experience. The Mayor, Councillor David Leytham, welcomed them to Lichfield and wished them an interesting and enjoyable week. The two students had a varied placement programme, spending time at Lichfield City and District Council Offices, the library, Juniper training centre, Samuel Johnson Birthplace, Erasmus Darwin House, Friends2Friends and at Lichfield Cathedral.

They joined the Twinning Officer in a meeting with the Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services in finding ways of arranging youth exchanges between the twin towns and the Open Spaces Officer in next year's Lichfield in Bloom preparations. They gained experiences at the welcome desk of the District Council and helped with a school poppy project at the library, then joined the Mayor and Sheriff on their annual visit to local businesses collecting raffle prizes for their charity events during their time in office.

Thank you to everyone who gave their time to explain their places of work, giving them an insight into the differences between German and English local government structures. Accommodation was offered by a host family from the Lichfield Twinning Association.



A Limburg school has confirmed their participation in next year's Lichfield Mysteries. The drama class from the Adolf-Reichweinschule has been sent their script of "Exodus from Egypt" and the 24 students have already started with their rehearsals. The event will be on Saturday 9 February 2019 at the Friary School theatre from 14.00 to 18.00. Each participating school will perform one play from the full cycle. The Twinning Officer is looking for host families for the 24 students and 2 teachers.

### **5. Markets: John Beard, Markets Officer**

The Tuesday & Saturday markets continue to be relatively well attended, whilst there have been a few new traders on Fridays as well.

The 'Buddy Scheme' has produced 2 new traders on the Farmers' Market so far, and the offer may be extended to include the Friday market. It is hoped that this scheme will help to generate new traders and also reward those permanent Traders who introduce colleagues to the Market. The scheme allows for half rent to be payable for both the new trader and existing permanent Trader on three consecutive occasions. This scheme was suggested by the NABMA representative who visited to carry out a 'Market health check' a few weeks ago.

Bollards have now been installed at the Johnson end of the Square to try and protect pedestrians using the main entrance to St Mary's when it reopens later in the year. Some



bollards are fixed and some are removable, allowing access for Traders, the market stall erection company etc to be unhindered.

It was clear that autumn was in the air when strong winds forced the cancellation of three markets over a short period, but we continue to hope for better conditions over the next few months than those experienced last year; several markets were cancelled due to poor weather over the autumn/winter of 2017/18, in fact by Christmas 2017 we had surpassed the number of cancelled markets during the whole of the winter 2016/17 period.

We have now sent out application forms for the Christmas Lights Switch on market and have had several replies; we are looking forward to a good attendance again this year in what will be the last Christmas Lights market prior to the introduction of the District Council's revised street trading regulations in 2019.

The Square continues to be used each Sunday by various organisations and bookings have already been taken for several weekends next year.



#### **6. Guildhall: Jane Varley, acting Guildhall Bookings Secretary**

September has been a busy month in the Guildhall. Sheriff's Ride weekend coincided with a large all day wedding ceremony & reception whole building booking. The LDA Beer Festival took place in mid-September, followed by another packed weekend for Heritage Weekend including Johnson Celebrations and Annual Supper.



During the first weekend of October there was a Craft Fair, Lichfield Society of Artists and also Tamworth Society of Artists exhibiting on Saturday, followed by NSPCC Charity Concert on Sunday, featuring a performance by Fradley Community Choir. Enquiries for future bookings continue to be strong; we have new bookings for SCC School Appeals and an HS2 Public Information Event confirmed. Several date requests have been made for Craft Fairs in the run up to Christmas.



Lichfield Leather have extended their December Sale booking to include both Saturday and Sunday.

Unfortunately the WRVS Darby & Joan Club have decided not to continue their weekly Guildroom bookings from end of October 2018 due to dwindling numbers.

Repairs to the Guildhall central heating system took place in early October, with a number of faulty radiator valves replaced; the vast majority of valves in the building have now been replaced over the past three years, together with a new pump and repairs to the complex panel that controls the heating. It is hoped that the system will now give good service with only general maintenance being required.

Hirers have been notified of refurbishment plans for the Guildroom Kitchen which are due to commence 5th November and will be re-accommodated where possible. The renovation of the Guildroom kitchen will create extra storage plus a more modern and convenient second kitchen facility in the building.

Helen returned to work on 3 October, and following a brief handover period she has now fully recommenced her normal duties.

## **7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas**

The Deputy Town Clerk worked closely with the Civic Officer in the preparation and execution of the Sheriff's Ride in September. Once again City Council staff worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that this large and logistically challenging event was a success. The Deputy Town Clerk would like to commend all those involved for their dedication, carrying out any task that was asked of them including clearing the field at Freeford Manor before the erection of the Marquee.





The City Council's Health and Safety consultants 'Terrain' also attended the Sheriff's Ride to carry out a full Risk Assessment. They identified some minor changes and improvements that could be made but overall were impressed commenting;

*"The event was incredibly well run, with the key stakeholders having a wealth of experience and very in depth local knowledge. The involvement of the Police cannot be overestimated"*

The Deputy Town Clerk attended the Festival and Events Committee on 17 September at Lichfield District Council. The Committee is attended by Officers of the Council and representatives of local organisations which hold large scale events in the City, such as the Bower, Cars in the Park and the Food Festival. The meetings provide a forum for organisations and Local authorities to discuss issues they have encountered at their events, pool resources and share information.

On 19 September front line Guildhall and Samuel Johnson Birthplace Staff attended the first Health & Safety Training course conducted by Terrain. Staff received instruction on Manual Handling, Working at Heights and Fire Safety Awareness. Further training courses for all staff are planned in 2019.

The Deputy Town Clerk is also assisting with the Armistice 100 commemorations which will be an addition to the usual Remembrance Sunday event.

Preparations continue for the Christmas Lights Switch On taking place on 25 November; including attendance at the Safety Advisory Group at Lichfield District Council. The Safety Advisory Group is attended by many outside agencies such as the fire service and police, the aim of which is to share information and identify any potential issues.