

For Council: 15 April 2024 APPENDIX 3

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

On Friday 1 March, the Arthur Price and Sir Michael Fabricant MP School's Speaking Competition was held in the Guildhall, marking the 30th year since its foundation. The team competition between pupils aged 15-19 years from senior schools in Sir Michael Fabricant's constituency aims to give young people the experience of speaking on a public platform, in an environment similar to the House of Commons Chamber, and an incentive to formulate ideas on a significant subject.

The motion this year was 'that this House believes the UK should aim for a cashless society' and saw students from The Friary School, King Edward VI School and Lichfield Cathedral arguing against, while Erasmus Darwin Academy opted to support it.

Under the watchful eye of the timekeeper David Cooke, the pupils stood up to rigorous questioning from the judging panel which consisted of the Mayor, Sheriff, Simon Price of Arthur Price of England and Sue Power – President of Lichfield Rotary Club of St Chad. The judges based their decision on the strength of the argument, clarity, time-keeping, and overall presentation, amongst other factors.

The judges agreed that all pupils who took part were a credit to their schools with the scoring being very close.



However, after much deliberating, it was decided that Lichfield Cathedral School should win the overall best team prize and Charlie Elwell from King Edward VI School won the best overall speaker award.

The Mayor & Sheriff once again held their Entertainment & Tea event for the over 70's on Monday 11 March at Curborough Community Centre, where guests sat down to high tea served by members of Lichfield City Council. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Jake Lane from Lichfield General Market kindly provided bunches of daffodils for the table decorations which were later handed out to all attendees to take home.

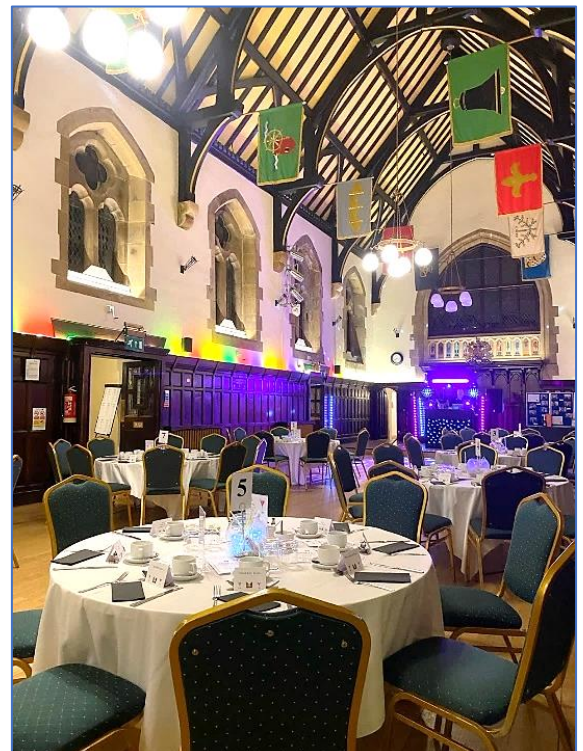
This year, we were entertained by band 'The Commodores' who sang a variety of songs from all genres and decades resulting in lots of audience participation. A free raffle was held with prizes kindly donated by various Lichfield businesses. The afternoon closed with thanks from the Mayor to the helpers and a special mention to TravelWood Ltd for providing the transport, enabling many to attend.



Continuing a busy month, the Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Cocktail Dinner Party took place on Saturday 16 March in the Guildhall with over 65 people attending. Guests were greeted with a glass of prosecco upon arrival before enjoying a splendid two-course meal which was followed by a set from Rainbow Sounds DJ for musical entertainment.

The evening also included a live Mixologist from Tipples & Tonics, which was a great success. The raffle also proved popular, raising £530.00 for the Mayor & Sheriff's Charities. All prizes were kindly donated by local shops and businesses with the occasion raising just under £1,200.00.

At the time of compiling this report, preparations are ongoing for April events including the Sheriff's Darwin Walk on Sunday 7 April & St George's Court.



2. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums and Heritage Officer

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum has welcomed 17,278 people this financial year (April 2023-24 March 2024), which is 17% above last year's figures. The Bookshop continues to grow in popularity with sales 30% above 2022/23 figures, and the introduction of new events has seen a 36% increase in admissions income.

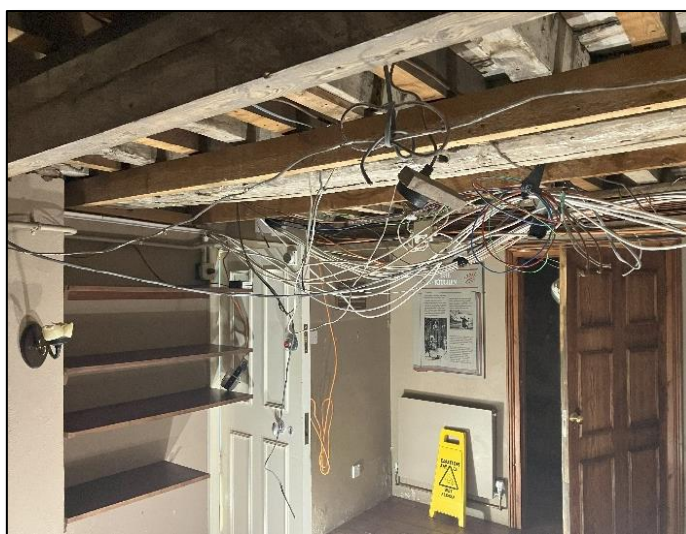
The Museum temporarily closed on the 4 March for essential building work. The Bookshop has remained open, except for a small period of closure from the 11-17 March to facilitate asbestos removal. The Museum is due to reopen mid-April, subject to completion of the building work.

Asbestos has been safely removed from the property, and the associated remedial work is underway. The areas containing asbestos were the ceilings and floor tiles in the basement, and a redundant flue pipe in the boiler room.



The removal of asbestos has enabled us to complete work on the property which had previously been unresolved, including rewiring the basement and Bookshop. New emergency lighting and fire sensors will be fitted in the basement, and we are installing lockable doors as a health and safety measure to prevent unauthorised access to fuseboards.

A new pump for the boiler has been installed to resolve issues with the heating system. The old pump was not powerful enough to sufficiently heat



the building, and it had been pulling heat from the upper floors into the basement, leaving many public rooms without warmth.

The Workroom redisplay project is progressing; the decorators started work on 2 April, and from week commencing 15 April, the designer, Vertigo, and bookbinding consultant, Arthur Green, will work alongside the Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) to begin installing objects and dressing the room. This unique display will authentically recreate Michael Johnson's workroom and will include new interpretation and a new hands-on activity for visitors. There will also be a short film showing the highly skilled process of bookbinding.



On International Women's Day, Birthplace Museum Attendant, Sarah Dale, led a carefully researched walking tour focusing on women's history in Lichfield. The walk was extremely popular and enabled us to run an event during the Museum's temporary period of closure.

Although we have not been able to host group visits and guided tours during this closed period, Museum Attendant Christine Genders has been out and about giving talks on Samuel Johnson and the history of the Birthplace, including a visit to a Sutton Coldfield U3A group.

As part of the MHO's work on the City Plaques Project, a new plaque commemorating the life of Anna Seward was unveiled at the Guildhall on International Women's Day, during Women's History Month. The Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Ann Hughes, unveiled the plaque, and the Sheriff of Lichfield, Adam Burns-Mace, was in attendance. Birthplace Museum Attendant Christine Genders and students from Lichfield Cathedral School brought Seward's words to life by reading a selection of her sonnets at the event. The ceremony formed part of Lichfield City Council's International Women's Day celebrations. The plaque will be installed on Minster Pool Walk, near the area where Seward lived. Photographs of the event taken by Robert Yardley follow overleaf.

The MHO also manages the Guildhall Prison Cells which reopened for the Spring/Summer season on 6 April. This is one of Lichfield's most popular attractions, and we look forward to another busy open season.



3. Open Spaces: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer and Jane Varley, Clerical Officer

Bus Shelters – Deanslade Estate (BS22 & 23)

Following a request by local residents' group (LARA) a further two bus shelters have been relocated. Previously sited in Limburg Avenue on a discontinued route, the two shelters have been moved to serve Deanslade Estate and are now sited by Anna Seward School on opposite sides of Bridgeman Way. The X3 bus service is newly diverted onto this route.



Remembrance Gardens (Site 28)

Crown lift of oak trees overhanging pavement/road took place in March.



St Michael's (Site 60)

Resurfacing work has been completed on part of the boundary pathway between Church Street and Southern Cross as the surface had deteriorated over winter. Additional tree safety work has also been completed with removal of Lime (T708) bordering Burton Old Road West.



Other matters progressed/completed since the last report and in addition to routine inspections include:

- Stowe Pool - Mill Croft to St Chad's Road Cycleway (FP22) – New ground markings and installation of improved signage to be carried out w/c 8th April.
- Eastern Avenue Verge – Following LCC CIL funded works last year to provide a pedestrian pathway to the entrance of Lichfield Sports Club, plans are in progress to create several wildflower beds within this verge which, together with being visually attractive, would hopefully also serve to deter parking on the grass.
- Hazel Grove (20) – Tree works completed to various Larch, Ash and Cherry, plus reduction to fence height of ivy-covered holly leaning over neighbouring garden.
- Greenwood Drive (21) – Work to fell and dismantle Robinia overhanging drive and in decline completed in March.
- Festival Gardens (19C) – Further pest control measures implemented around Central Garage and bins resecured into ground.
- Christchurch Lane to A51 Allotments (FP16) – Extended clearance of this path and general cut back has been carried out.
- Broad Lane (51A) – Wildflower seeds sown on newly created beds.
- Ash Grove (17C) – General treeworks completed including to reduce height of Sycamores next to flats of Mulberry Drive, reduce Hawthorn in line with existing hedge and to cut back and clear garden accesses within wooded area.
- Manor Rise to Hillside (FP7) – Footpath cleared of overgrowth, plus removal of dead and self-set trees from around memorial bench.
- Kean Close to Terry Close (5) – Work completed to Cherry tree to side of Ferndale Rd, reduction of low limb over footpath

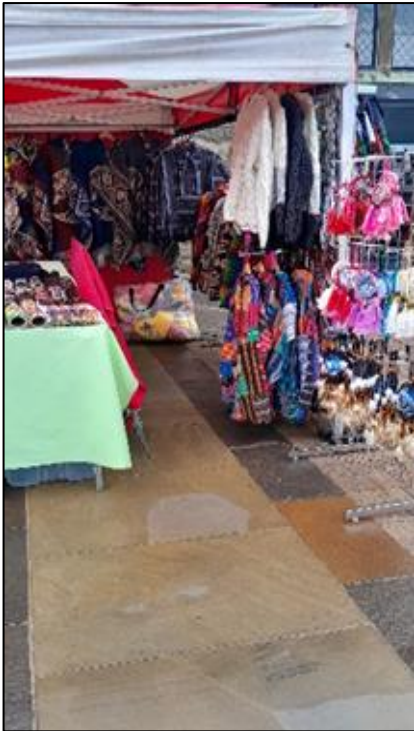
4. Markets: Jeremy Williams, Markets Officer/Michelle Read, Office Administrator

Five new traders have joined us on the Tuesday market:

- Sumac Native - native crafts
- Jemima Joans - craft jewellery
- All kinds of everything - pet products & toys
- Olivesz2 - olives & nuts etc
- Exclusive by Design - furniture upholstery

The Friday Market has also welcomed a new trader - 'Silver Elegance' selling jewellery.

'The Potting Shed' has now become permanent on the Friday market and Ryan James Butcher has become permanent on Tuesdays and Fridays and is currently working towards becoming permanent on the Saturday market, too.



Sumac Native



All Kinds of Everything



Jemima Joans



Olivesz2



Exclusive by Design

Despite some cold, wet and windy days we have not had to restrict or cancel any markets, though measures were taken to help traders on Friday 1st March as gusts of wind not predicted by the met office meant they had issues setting up stalls. All the traders have been informed that the 25% winter discount has finished the end of February.

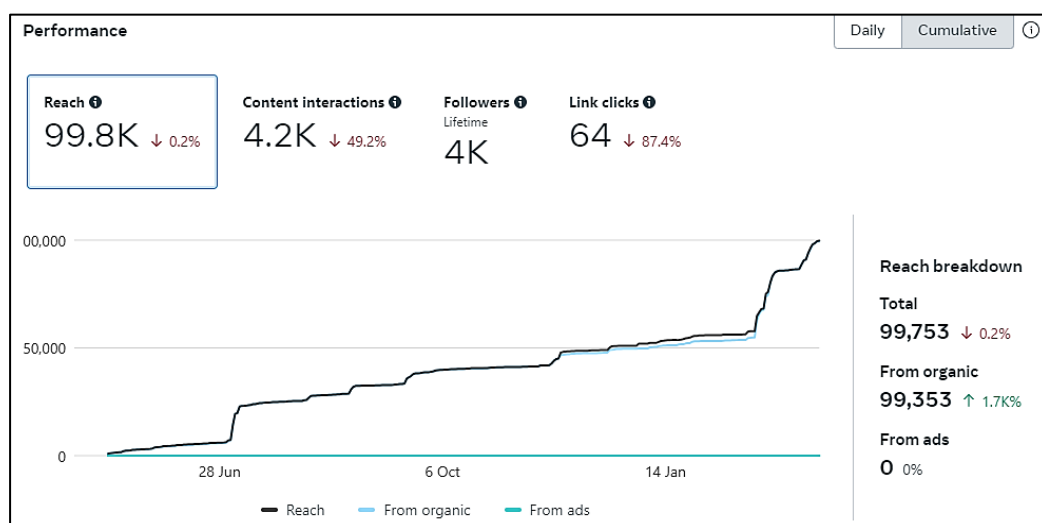
The Market Square has now been deep cleaned with excellent results; pitch location marks are to be reinstalled in the next month.



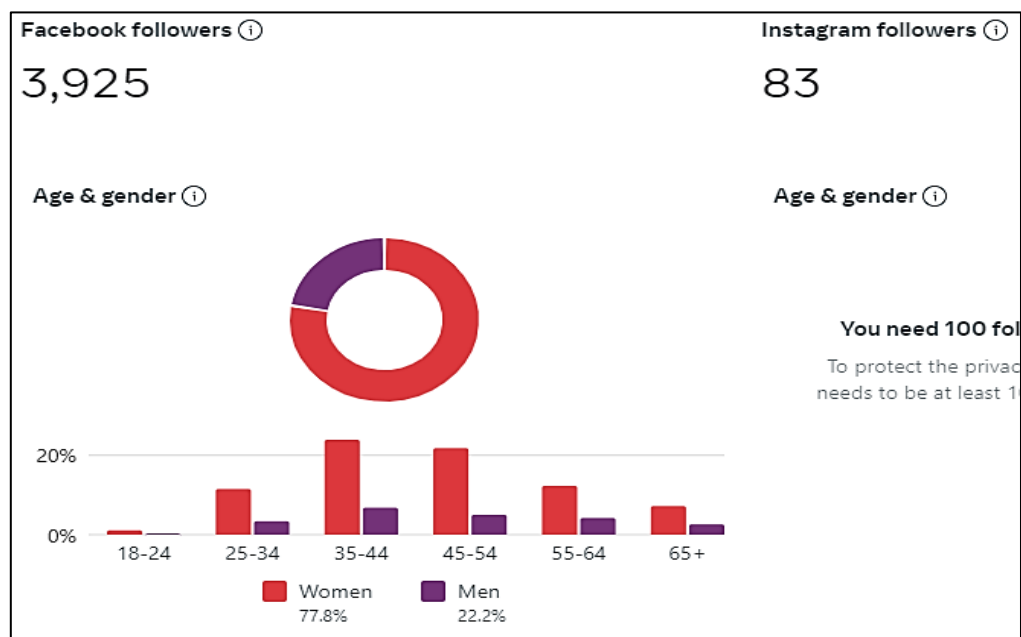
All food stalls are being monitored for standards of food hygiene with the Environmental Health Officer kept informed of any new food trader coming on to the market. All Licences have been signed and PLI checks have been completed to ensure these are current and up to date.

Social Media

All social media platforms maintain a good following with reach climbing due to links with other City Council Facebook pages following internal discussions and the establishment of a dedicated social media resource. The platform is also used to advertise for traders to join the market on Tuesday, Fridays, and Saturdays.



The statistics below show the number of followers on Facebook and Instagram. Officers are tracking engagements and it is clear that those posts which focus on a specific trader are the most effective, along with posts focusing on new traders coming to the market.



Tuesday Market Update

There is currently only 1 weekly pitch available. Officers continue to receive several enquiries and hope to fill the vacant pitch as soon as possible.

Friday Market Update

The Friday market is now full, with one casual trader standing at this time, they will be asked to go permanent when they have completed their 12 'casual' trading occasions.

Saturday Market Update

Saturday market remains full. Ryan James Butchers are taking the two recently vacated spaces and will go permanent shortly.

We are continuing to update our contact list of Traders that can cover at short notice. This helps us to keep the market full and eliminate large spaces that can convey a feeling of decline, even when the absence is due to pre-planned holiday or illness.

A full and varied market can only enhance footfall into the city, together with having a positive effect on the reputation of the market and supporting other local business, too.

Vegan Market

The Vegan Market runs on the third Sunday of the month. A total of 22 stalls attended the most recent Market, and it is clear that it is getting more popular over time. 2024 dates are confirmed, with promotional posters awaited from the organiser.



Producers' Market

The Producers' Market is organised by CJ Events and operates on the first Sunday of the month.

This market is well supported by traders and is very popular with significant repeat visitors. The Producers' market on March 3rd was attended by 22 stallholders on what was a very cold day.



5. Guildhall & Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Bookings Officer

Although it's only a short while since the previous report, several events have been held in the Guildhall. Highlights include The Worshipful Company of Smiths holding their Annual Feast, and Lichfield District Council hosting 3 events in recent weeks, including a Jobs Fair which was organised by LDC and the DWP (pictured). A similar event was held last year, and both were successful.

Other private bookings have included 2 events organised by a local school which included their own jobs fair, in which representatives from the military and universities also attended. This event had hundreds of students attend throughout the day from various schools in the local area.

7 meetings have been held, which included the Twinning AGM and the Johnson AGM. Two choirs have also rehearsed in various rooms in the building.

A Latin Group is also meeting in the Whytmore Room whilst repairs are being carried out at the Birthplace Museum. There were also 2 events held on National Women's Day, which included the unveiling of a plaque to Anna Seward and a musical event later in the afternoon.

Lichfield Arts have held 3 concerts, and Bootleg Blondie is due to perform a few days after the deadline for this report..

Spring Craft Fairs continue, with the most recent being held on 30 March as part of a programme of several such fairs running until December.



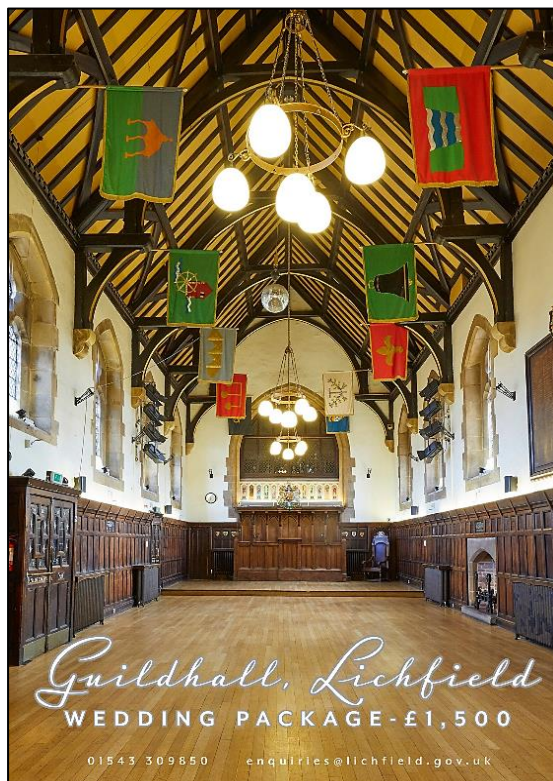
Party-Bingo are also back in the Guildhall in April. Other bookings have included a Wedding Reception and 3 market research bookings – surveys on coffee and crisps.

A local primary school visited the Old Prison Cells during March, and the cells reopen to the public on Saturdays from 10:00am – 4:00pm on 6 April, until the end of September. The Cells will be open all weekends, except for days with whole building bookings.

Lichfield Society of Artists held a 3-day exhibition in the Guildroom (pictured) which attracted considerable interest and displayed the talent of local artists.



The new Guildhall Brochure is being progressed and a more streamlined booking system has been introduced via the LCC website. A wedding booking has been taken for our new £1500 special event package. The new Guildhall Facebook page also continues to attract interest and new followers.



Guildhall, Lichfield

£1,500 Wedding package includes*:

Main Hall, Guildroom, Ashmole Room, Whytmore Room and two kitchens

- Cloakroom
- Cutlery and crockery
- Access to the Old Prison Cells
- Premises Attendant to set up/change layouts during your hire
- 6 hour bar plus door security (subject to availability)
- Microphones for speeches

With that taken care of, you can focus on the other elements of your special day, by choosing your own external suppliers to provide services such as:

- Entertainment/DJ
- Catering and Wedding Cake
- Chair covers, tablecloths etc
- Flowers
- Photography

Additional charges payable:

- Ceremony fees
- Breakages deposits

*No fee reduction applied if hire is not used on any of the rooms or services listed above
Terms and conditions of hire apply

The Guildhall is owned and operated by
Lichfield City Council, Donegal House, Bore St, Lichfield WS13 6LU

Boley Park Community Hall

The hall continues to be busy with regular bookings and children's parties, together with a playscheme that returned to the hall during the Easter holidays. A recent craft fair created a lot of interest; it is the first such event held in the hall in recent years and hopes to return. Another craft fair organiser is also interested in holding events.

