

For Council: 14 April 2025 APPENDIX 3

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

Lichfield celebrated Shrove Tuesday on March 4 with the hotly contested pancake races in the city centre. Keen entrants gathered in Bore Street for the time-honoured event at noon, determined to put in a “pan-tastic” performance. The sunshine drew in the crowds, led by our exuberant town crier, Adrian Holmes. The Mayor of Lichfield, Cllr Sam Schafer, Deputy Mayor, Cllr Claire Pinder-Smith, Sheriff of Lichfield, Cathy Wood and Sheriff’s Consort Nigel Gann, oversaw the competition to ensure everyone followed the rules!



There were plenty of willing entrants with over 30 contestants. Each race saw entrants run along Bore Street towards the Guildhall, flipping their pancake once at the start and again shortly before the finish line, with crowds gathered along the racetrack. Sadly, the Under-10s races were missed this year, with Shrovetide Tuesday falling during term time.

The winner of the Ladies’ final was Britney Lewis from John German Estate Agents. Britney now has her name etched upon the special Golden Pancake Day trophy. She also won a mini bottle of champagne donated by Tesco Express and a £20 gift card.

The winner of the Gents’ race was Will Preece from EPO Solicitors, again receiving a mini bottle of champagne and a £20 gift card.

Last of all, victorious in the Mascots Race was Jack Devlin from John German Estate Agents, who ran dressed as a house! Jack took home a £50 cash prize which was generously donated by Wynniatt-Husey Chartered Accountants, located on Bore St.



Following the races, the Civic party made its way to the Market Square where the Mayor opened the Shrovetide fair, courtesy of Anthony Harris of Pat Collins Funfair, where the children present were able to enjoy a free ride.

The pancake races were organised by Lichfield City Council who would like to thank the following businesses for sponsoring this year's races; Wynniatt-Husey Ltd and Tesco Express, who also kindly donated the pancakes for us to flip!

The City Council would also like to thank the following businesses for taking part: Keelys Solicitors, Chattings Lettings agent, Davisons Law, Sheriff's Ride Committee, Espace Europe, Ansons Solicitors, John German, Garrick Theatre, EPO Solicitors, Lichfield Golf & Country Club, Moseleys Solicitors, Paddy and Scott, Lichfield Greenhill Bower, St Giles Hospice.

The Guildhall became a hub of celebration and empowerment for International Women's Day on Saturday 8 March, beginning at 3pm. The event, a collaboration with Lichfield Arts, was orchestrated by Lichfield City Council officers and led by the Deputy Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Claire Pinder-Smith, and Lichfield City Council leader, Councillor Rosie Harvey-Coggins.

The festivities included an array of activities throughout the afternoon. Live performances by Ellie Gavin & The Tuneless Choir set an uplifting tone with stunning artwork displays by local artist Ilkay King. Visitors had the chance to experience the symbolic empowerment of Henriella Ellis' Helmet of Empowerment, a unique feature of the event. Poetic expressions by local storytellers enriched the gathering, and the open mic session emerged as a real highlight, providing a welcome platform for voices to be heard. This section of the afternoon encouraged networking, new connections and promoted community engagement.



Deputy Mayor, Cllr Claire Pinder-Smith wearing the Helmet of Empowerment

Adding to the spirit of the day, local women-led businesses and charitable organisations also took part, including the Listening Centre, Pathway Project and Period Power setting up stalls in the Hall promoting their work. With art, music, poetry and a sense of community, the gathering created a lasting impression.

On Friday 14 March, the Arthur Price School Speaking Competition was held in the Guildhall, marking the 31st year since its foundation and the first year led by Dave Robertson MP. The team competition between pupils aged 15-19 years from senior schools in the MP's constituency aims to give young people the experience of speaking on a public platform, in an environment like the House of Commons Chamber with an incentive to formulate ideas on a significant subject. The motion this year was "Should the voting age be lowered to 16?" and saw an equal split with four schools supporting the motion and four against.

Under the watchful eye of the timekeeper David Cooke, the pupils stood up to rigorous questioning from the Chair Dave Robertson with a panel of judging consisting of the Mayor, Cllr Sam Schafer, Simon Price of Arthur Price of England, Sir Michael Fabricant, Vice Chair of Burntwood Town Council Laura Ennis and Andrew Sims – President of Lichfield Rotary Club of St Chad.

The judges based their decision on the strength of the argument, clarity, timekeeping, 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 Matthew, Joshua & Madeleine from the Friary High School should take home the winning trophy and Charlie from King Edward VI School won the best overall speaker award. Thank you to all the schools that took part; Chase Terrace Academy, Erasmus Darwin Academy, The Friary, John Taylor Free School, John Taylor High School, King Edwards VI, Lichfield Cathedral School & Nether Stowe School.



From L-R: Simon Price, Winning Team from The Friary & Dave Robertson MP

The Mayor & Sheriff once again held their Entertainment & Tea event for the over 70's on Friday 21 March in the Guildroom at the Guildhall, where guests sat down to high tea served by members of Lichfield City Council & Councillors. 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 residents to attend.

At the time of compiling this report, preparations are ongoing for April events including the Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Sunday Lunch & Quiz on Sunday 6 April, the Sheriff's Friary Show on Thursday 10 April, Easter Sunday on 20 April & St George's Court on Wednesday 23 April.



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

Masefield Close to Ivanhoe Road (FP9)

Following reports of erosion at several points along this footway, resurfacing and vegetation removal has recently been completed. Before and after shots below.



Heather Gardens (Site 19B)

Works ongoing to clear ivy from wall bordering Friary Road, tidying of rose beds and replanting central beds with variety of heathers.

Friary Remains (Site 19A)

Preparatory vegetation clearance ahead of restoration of archway and surrounding stonework.



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

- **Pool Walk (Site 29)** – Replacement pump installed at cycle repair station and disused gateway resecured following damage to boarding.
- **Wildflower areas** – Summer 2025 planting at established sites
- **Northern Plantation (Site 1)** – Woodland pathway restored where pits had been dug out
- **Dovehouse Fields Community Gardens** – Removal of bulky garden waste
- **Pathway near Stowe Pool** – CIL funded lantern light now installed (pictured)



3. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums & Heritage Officer

At the time of writing this report, visitor figures are 9% higher than those recorded in 2023/24. Both combined sales and admissions have also seen a 9% increase, while donations have experienced a remarkable 22% growth. This increase in donations can be attributed to the introduction of a new donations box, enhanced signage promoting donations, and the proactive efforts of our Museum Attendants. These positive outcomes have been achieved despite a brief closure at the beginning of the financial year for asbestos removal.

Out-of-hours events continue to be popular; the Birthplace marked St. Patrick's Day with A Celebration of Irish Tales, an evening featuring multi-award-winning storyteller Maria Buckley Whatton. Attendees of the sold-out event enjoyed a taste of Irish whiskey and the unique opportunity to experience the Birth Room by night.

Upcoming events at the Birthplace include family craft activities and Spy School, set to take place during the April and May school holidays.

Birthplace Volunteer Terry began a project to review minutes of committee meetings dating back to 1900 to compile a comprehensive database of building work. The goal is to create a detailed record that tracks all alterations and redecorations carried out at the Birthplace over the years.

The new website was launched at the end of March. The site significantly enhances both user experience and functionality. Its intuitive design and responsive layout ensure accessibility across all devices. This update makes it easier for users to engage with and explore what the museum offers.

The Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) and Museum Support Officer (MSO) have approached a print and design company to update the Birthplace's leaflet. The redesigned leaflet will strengthen the museum's identity by aligning with its new branding, ensuring a cohesive look across all promotional materials.

Museum Attendant Sarah Dale conducted a trial of her new walking tour, Samuel Johnson's Lichfield. The meticulously researched tour begins at the Birthplace and concludes at St. Michael's Church. It will soon be available for groups to book as part of our tours and talks packages.

As part of Lichfield City Council's celebrations for International Women's Day and Women's History Month, the MHO organised the installation and unveiling of a new plaque honouring Daisy Stuart Shaw (1861-1955). The plaque, installed at 8 Bore Street – the former residence of Shaw – was revealed during a special ceremony on Friday 7 March by the Deputy Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Claire Pinder-Smith, and Town Crier and Sword Bearer, Adrian Holmes.



The event was attended by distinguished guests, including the Sheriff of the City, Cathy Wood, and the Chair of Lichfield District Council, Councillor Ann Hughes. It was photographed by Cllr Robert Yardley. Shaw's commemoration was spearheaded by Councillor Ann Hughes in recognition of Shaw's remarkable contributions to Lichfield.



A pioneer in local governance, Shaw became Lichfield's first woman City Councillor in 1919, served as Mayor in 1927, and was named Alderman in 1938. Her advocacy for women's suffrage and encouragement of women to take active roles in politics were integral in paving the way for future generations of women in leadership.

Beyond her political achievements, Shaw served as the superintendent of nursing at the Red Cross auxiliary at Freeford Manor during the outbreak of World War I. Shaw was a true trailblazer and advocate for change, dedicated to improving education and healthcare in Lichfield. Her enduring legacy continues to have a profound impact on the city.



The MHO also manages the Guildhall Prison Cells which reopened on 5 April. The Cells are open on Saturdays throughout summer until October. As one of Lichfield's most popular attractions, we eagerly anticipate another bustling open season.

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

A full market is being maintained on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday. The 25% winter discount for January & February has now ended and all traders have been informed of the new pitch fees effective from 1 April 2025.

All food stalls are still being monitored for standards of food hygiene and temperature of stock sold and stored on the market; these are recorded and held for future reference. LDC Environmental Health Officers are kept informed of any issues and any new food traders joining the market.

In readiness for Traders licences being updated and issued, all traders have been asked to provide a detailed list of items they will be selling. Previous licences have used generic terms such as '*baked goods*'. In making the distinction the Markets Officer will be able to identify opportunities for new traders without creating duplication.

The market team is currently updating the documentation and processes for the markets in readiness for discussion at the next Market Working Group.

The Fruit and Vegetable stall continues to stand on Wednesdays and there have been additional enquiries from other traders to stand on weekdays, including a donut seller who is interested in trading on a Wednesday and Thursday.

The market team is also working with the Deputy Town Clerk on VE Day celebrations on Thursday 8 May, which will be on the Market Square and include a craft fayre along Minster Pool Walk.

Tuesday Market Update

All pitches on the Tuesday market have been filled by casual traders. The turnover of traders on Tuesday can be quite high however, the waiting list maintained by Officers has proved effective in rapidly filling any spaces.



There are now only three casual pitches available on Tuesdays, one of which has been filled by '*BS Bahia Fashions*' who will be asked to become a permanent trader at the end of March.

As part of the Shrovetide celebrations on Tuesday 4 March a children's fairground ride was on the Square. A few of the permanent Tuesday traders were relocated to accommodate the ride.

In addition on Tuesdays, a home improvement company will now stand biweekly on the opposite weeks to Atterbury's.

Friday Market Update

The two pitches which have recently been vacated are currently being covered by casual traders. These traders will be asked to become permanent in the coming month. New trader applications received are being incorporated onto the market's standby list and used to replace anyone that leaves, as well as covering absences or holidays.

Due to high winds on 21 February the market was restricted, with only three traders choosing to stand and trade from vehicles.



Saturday Market Update

The Saturday market also remains full. The Markets Officer maintains a list of casual traders from all the markets that are invited to stand when permanent traders are absent or take holidays which helps to maintain a full market.

Vegan Market

The Vegan market was held on Sunday 16 March and usually occurs on the third Sunday of the month; however the next market will take place on Sunday 18 May. The market is becoming increasingly popular with an average of 26 traders helping to bring something different to the market square with a range of diverse stalls.



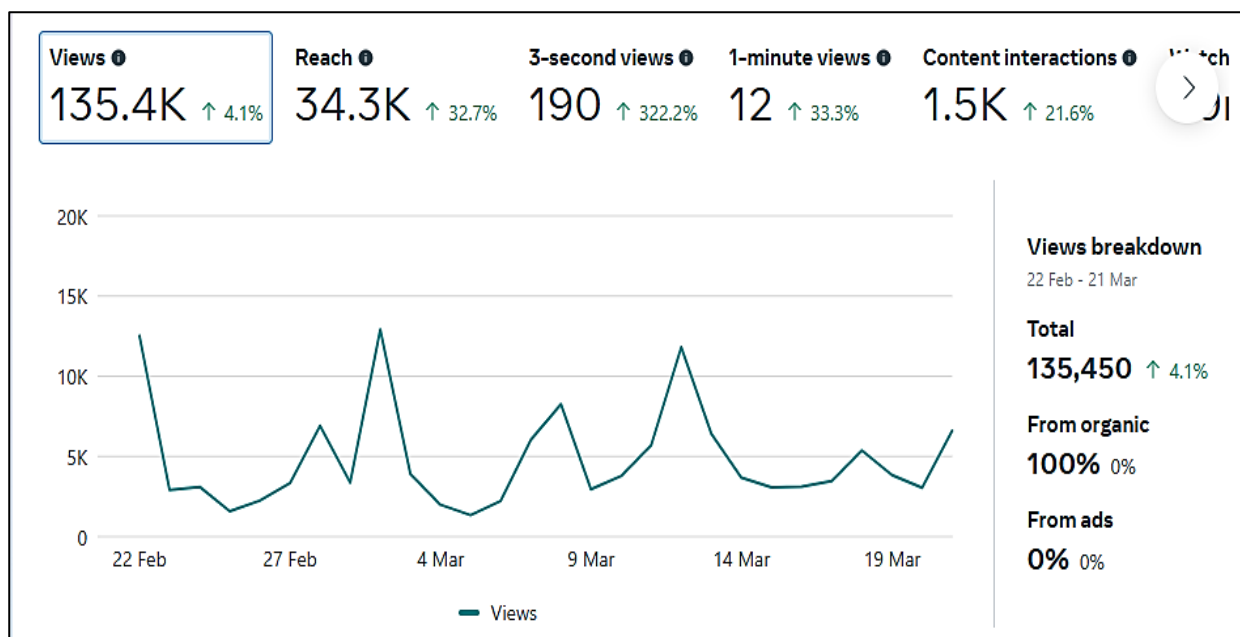
Producers' Market

The Producers' Market, operated by CJ Events, was held on Sunday 2 March and continues to operate on the first Sunday of the month. This market is well supported by 30 traders standing and is immensely popular with customers, many revisiting every month with different traders each month selling a variety of goods.



Social Media

All social media platforms maintain a good following, the statistics below show the number of followers on Facebook. Officers are returning to posts focusing on specific traders and the new traders that are coming onto the market, giving customers a deeper insight into these traders that should help to increase following and reach.



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

Since the last report, there have been 33 meetings in various rooms in the Guildhall. A charity quiz was held at the end of February, which was very successful and sold to capacity. U3A also held a quiz at the end of March.

Lichfield District Council and the Department for Work and Pensions held a joint Jobs Fair in the Main Hall and Guildroom. This was well attended, and we look forward to the next one.

A local school held their annual Careers Day in the whole building. This had a variety of stalls offering advice to students.

During February, the Worshipful Company of Smiths held their Annual Feast and have booked again for next year.

Lichfield Arts have held a Volunteers Night and 4 concerts, which were very popular and part of their Spring Programme.



The spring craft fair (pictured) was held in March and included new stalls.

Party Bingo returned on 28 March for their last booking at the Guildhall, and we wish them every success in the future and are grateful for their previous bookings over the last couple of years. 130 people are estimated to attend their event.

The City of Lichfield Concert Band also had their Spring Concert at the end of March with an audience of 130.

Other Civic events held in the Guildhall included the International Women's Day and the School Speaking Competition. The Mayor and Sheriffs Over 70's Entertainment and Tea was held in the Guildroom this year and went very well.

The next few bookings include the Mayor and Sheriff's Sunday Lunch/Quiz, St Georges Court and the Court of Arroye.



The Old Prison Cells re-open to the public on 5 April from 10.00am - 4.00pm. A volunteer will be on hand to meet visitors and monitor the Cells.

On 1 March, the Guildhall held its first Open Day which was attended by over 350 visitors. Further information is provided in the Deputy town Clerk's report which follows.

Future bookings include 2 birthday parties, and a Wedding Ceremony/Reception.

Routine maintenance tasks include polishing the ground floor corridor floor (and Moulton Room floor). Unfortunately, we had a lift breakdown at the end of March which took the lift out of action for a week. Extra Premises Attendants were scheduled on duty to assist hirers. A window frame in the Moulton room was scheduled for repair, but closer inspection revealed the rotted area was more widespread than first thought, and a large section of the frame was replaced. The uplighter in the main hall has been replaced as the previous lighting had reached the end of its service life.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The first Open Day at the Guildhall was held on Saturday 1 March and proved to be a great success, attracting over 300 people. All rooms were open to the public and set up to highlight the facilities on offer and as always the old prison cells proved to be a great attraction. The Main Hall was elegantly dressed for a Wedding ceremony and reception.





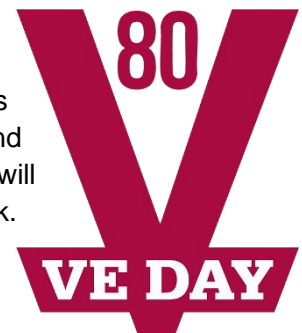
Special thanks to two local companies who provided their services free of charge; *Design Elegance* dressed the main hall with chair covers and place settings and local chef, *Steve Stack* from *Gourmet Chef to Go* who donated delicious canpés for visitors to enjoy. Historian Johnatan Oates gave an interesting talk to around 40 people on the history of the Guildhall.



The Sword and Mace Bearer were on hand to answer questions about the City's Civic traditions and promote the event. The Town Crier gave several cries throughout the day which unusually included a special 'shout' for two newlyweds. This was at the request of the Bridegroom following a chance meeting on the morning of the wedding when he was buying a new shirt from a local retailer.

The feedback from all those who attended was overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting how versatile the facilities at the Guildhall are. It is hoped that further Open Days can take place later in the year.

Further community engagement is planned on **Thursday 8 May** from 1.00pm – 4.00pm to mark the 80 Anniversary of V.E Day. The market square will be festooned with bunting and flags whilst music from the era is played. Members of the public are welcome to join this free celebration and bring along their own food to eat at picnic tables. The Hub at St Mary's will provide a pop up café and there will be a craft fayre on Minster Pool Walk. The afternoon will end on a reflective note with the sounding of the last post as Standard Bearers from the Royal British Legion lower the Standard.





In addition the Deputy Town Clerk will be providing secretariat support at full Council and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee. A meeting is also due to be scheduled with the Markets Working Group to discuss terms of reference for their new remit regarding the Guildhall. In the meantime, promotion of the Guildhall continues including content for a new brochure and additions to the 3D walkthrough tour on the City Council's website.