

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

Following the investiture of the new Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff for Lichfield City Council, the Mayor's Banquet was held on Monday 22 May. The celebration took place at the Guildhall where 70 guests attended, including the outgoing Mayor & Sheriff. During the speeches, the Mayor, Cllr Ann Hughes, and Sheriff Adam Burns-Mace announced the two charities that they will be supporting during their year in office: Lichfield City of Sanctuary & St Giles Hospice.

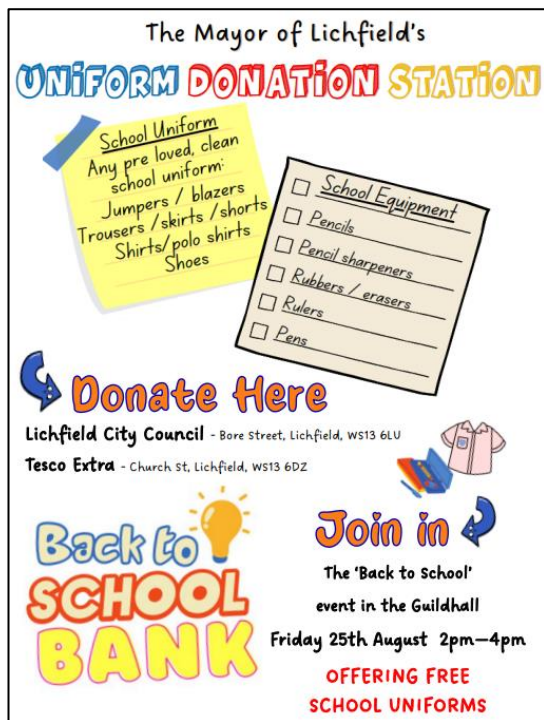
The Court of Arraye was held in the Guildhall on Monday 29 May. The 7th Lichfield Scout Group kindly helped once again providing eight Men at Arms who were 'inspected' by the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Sam Schafer & Sheriff, Adam Burns-Mace. This year's High Constables, James O Hagan & Janice Greaves, called on the Dozeners to give their reports to the Lord of the Manor. The Civic party then gathered on the Dias for the traditional Lichfield Bower procession which featured music, dancers, local community groups and floats including a past and present Lichfield Bower Queen display. The festivities later moved on to Beacon Park where several rides & stalls were set up for the fun to continue. This was the first official Civic engagement for the newly appointed Left



Hand Mace Bearer, David Bourne who completes the civic team.

The Mayor led the Lichfield City Council team in the annual Swinfen Broun Challenge Trophy bowls match against the Lichfield Museum Bowling Club on Wednesday 28 June.

Regardless of the weather, an enjoyable evening was had by all and despite the best efforts of the City Council team, the Bowling Club took the trophy once again with a score of 107 to 54.



After the match, the Mayor presented the trophy to the Club President, Fred Perry, who thanked everyone for taking part and supporting the event. The Mayor then gave a brief explanation about the history of the challenge match, which has been played since 1924 (although it was not until 1926 that the trophy was donated by local benefactor, Colonel Swinfen Broun) and has been fought over ever since!

Players then retired to the Hub for a light supper prepared by members of the Bowling Club. The Mayor concluded the evening by drawing the raffle which raised a total of £134.00 for the Museum Bowling club's charity fun day. We look forward to joining them again on Wednesday 19 June 2024 for the 100th anniversary of this wonderful tradition.

At the time of compiling this report, preparations are on-going for the following quarter including the Mayor's Back to School Donation Event on Friday 25 August, & Sheriff's Ride Banquet on Saturday 9 September.

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

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum welcomed 4464 in the first 12 weeks of the 23/24 period, a 27% increase on visitor numbers in the same period in 22/23.

Education visits included year four pupils from Hayes Meadow Primary School in Handsacre, year one and two from Chadsmead Primary, and an A-level language group from Lichfield Cathedral School. Families enjoyed creative activities for the school half term holidays on Thursday 1 June with a 'Bugs and Butterflies' theme. This was to link in with the national 'Wild Escape' campaign exploring animals and wildlife in Museum collections, as was inspired by the decorations on Johnson's drinking chocolate set.

Digital engagement with the Museum through social media, newsletters and the website and blog remains consistently strong, with over 10,270 digital users in May and June. Museum supporter and Johnson fan Ellie Groff, a high school student from San Diego, California, contributed June's blog post.

Build maintenance in June included replacement of three windowpanes on the ground floor which were broken by a member of the public, and reported to the police. The Introductory Room on the first floor received a replacement rug (pictured), and some maintenance was undertaken on the pigeon net in the yard.

Work continued on the ground floor developments, with meetings to establish the final arrangements for the placement by crane of the toilet block before costs can be presented. The order for the final phase of the Workroom installation was placed and the tables for the display delivered.

A window to celebrate Lichfield Pride in July was installed, and family activities planned to take place during the event on 23 July.

On other heritage-related work, the City plaques project continued, with three plaques currently being restored by contractors Sign Technology. Discussion with Lichfield Cathedral concluded that a plaque to Anna Seward would not be able to be placed in the Cathedral Close, and research was undertaken into an alternative location of Pool Walk.

The Birthplace Museum supported the work to reinstall the head of Johnson at the old Lomax shop on Bird Street, which has been transported for restoration work.

The Guildhall Cells continue to be a popular site for visitors, with 1900 people attending on Saturdays since the April opening.



3. Open Spaces and Tree Management: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer



Cappers' Lane Roundabout – Site sponsorship

Jukes Funeral Services have agreed to sponsor the Cappers' Lane Roundabout and new signage has recently been installed.

This site is in addition to their existing sponsorship of the Birmingham Road/St Foye Avenue site.

Hanging Baskets / Planters

In conjunction with Lichfield Chamber of Trade, hanging baskets are in place at Guildhall and Birthplace Museum.

The City Council has covered the cost of watering the hanging baskets in the City for many years and continues to do so in 2023.

Planters outside Guildhall have been replanted courtesy of Lichfield Market Trader Garry Snape.



Land Opposite St Chad's Church (Site 12B)

Following the installation of bollards to prevent unauthorised parking, the area was sown earlier this year with wildflower seeds. The resulting display has attracted many positive comments and turned a once plain area into a talking point.



Photo Credit: Lichfield Litter Legends

Similar wildflower seeds were planted at Festival Gardens to enhance the meadow planting undertaken in 2022; These too are now in bloom and attracting positive comments (pictured opposite). The 'no mow' areas at Festival Gardens and Netherstowe are also proving popular, especially with pathways mown to allow residents and visitors to walk through.

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

- Assess options for supplementary hedge replanting alongside new noise barrier at Wordsworth Close (Site 26A).
- Footpath clearance at The Windings, Woods Croft to Swallow Croft (Footpath 27)
- Replacement of several tactile slabs on Market Square which had been recently damaged.
- Tree reduction at Havefield Avenue / Cranleigh Way (Site 49A).
- Cutting back of overhanging foliage on section of cycle path on Eastern Avenue (Verge 2)
- Repair to 'bird mouth' fencing at Curborough Community Centre
- Replacement of aged festoon cabling and bulb holders along Pool Walk



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

The Markets Officer has continued to work closely with the Market Traders, to build a good rapport with ongoing communication and cooperation.

We have had several enquiries regarding pitches which are being followed up with new traders including, *Nick Nak Shack* selling recycled wood items and *Fab Foods* who sell homemade large scones and bread pudding which is proving to be very popular.



Lichfield District Council held an event on Saturday 24 June where they erected a Velodrome on Bird Street car park. In conjunction with this they also had a second Velodrome suitable for disabled riders, this was located at Minster Pool Walk. This was a successful event and reinforced the working relationship we have with LDC and other facilitators involved in this activity. Fortunately, the weather held up and proved to be an interesting and new experience for the participants.

Tuesday Market Update

There are currently two pitches available on the Tuesday market as a result of changes in circumstances for two casual traders. The traders are aware that should their circumstances change, they are welcome to return. Several enquiries from new traders have been received and it is hoped these pitches will be filled again soon.

Friday Market Update

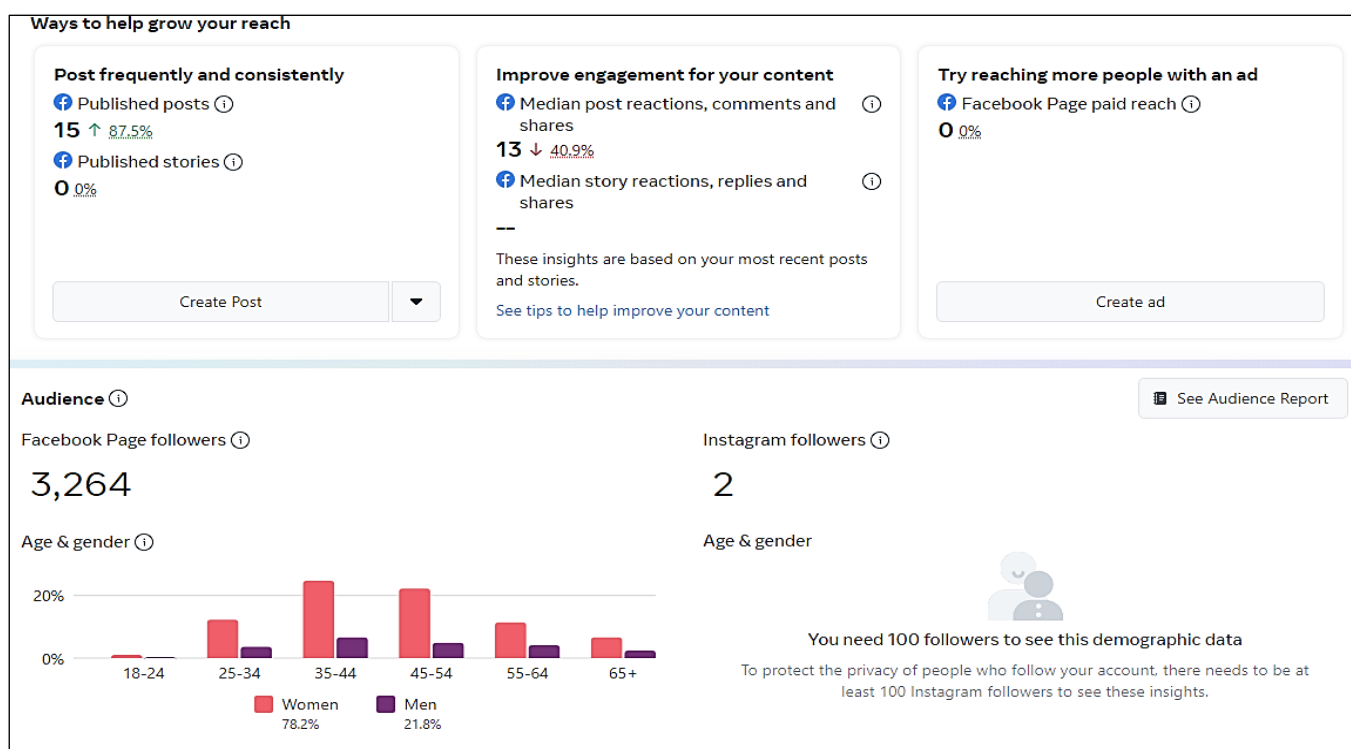
There is currently one pitch available on the Friday Market, as Athens Street Food has left the market, it is hoped they will return in early autumn. Officers are looking at the possibility of another new trader taking up the pitch on Fridays as well as Tuesdays.

Saturday Market Update

The Saturday market remains full. Officers are continuing to compile a 'hot' list of traders who are prepared to attend at short notice due to absence and holidays. This system is working well and helping the Market to remain full, enhancing the footfall into the City and improving opinions of the Market.

Publicity & Social Media

As can be seen from the number of Facebook followers the markets social media platforms continue to grow, focusing on the General Markets and promotion of other events taking place on the Market Square.



By tracking numbers and posts, Officers can see which posts are most effective and how best to make improvements which will in turn help to showcase Lichfield and increase footfall to the market.

An Instagram account has now been created to enhance the social media coverage of the markets. Officers are familiarising themselves with the application and will post updates on a regular basis.

5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden – Twinning Officer

After having been cancelled three times due to the pandemic, the long awaited TwinFest, celebrating 30 years of the signing of the ring twinning agreement between Lichfield, Limburg and Ste. Foy was at last able to take place from the 9th to 12th June 2023. At the official invitation of the Limburg Mayor, the newly elected Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Ann Hughes, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Sam Schafer and Sheriff, Mr. Adam Burns-Mace travelled to Limburg, together with around 50 Lichfeldians.

Limburg excelled themselves in putting on a fabulous programme for everyone to enjoy, even down to the sunny weather.

After the arrival in Limburg on Friday evening, the Limburg Mayor, Dr. Marius Hahn, welcomed everyone at the Limburg Fire Station with refreshments and local delicacies and all visitors were given a Limburg bag, containing some useful information for the weekend, including the official

programme, art exhibitions, music festivals and a city map. Guests were then introduced to their host families and spent the evening in their company.

The official welcome by the Limburg Mayor took place on Saturday morning on the Europa Square. A local youth orchestra greeted the guests on their arrival with a lovely rendition of each country's national anthem and Dr. Marius Hahn was presented with a statue called "pity of war" by Lichfield's artist Peter Walker, remembering the civilian casualties of war (pictured opposite).

The Limburg Mayor emphasised in his welcome speech the importance of European friendships, like the ones of our 3 twin towns, especially in the light of the Ukrainian ongoing war.



A work meeting took place for the official representatives of the 3 twinned cities, discussing future cooperation between and aspirations of the twin towns, especially the wish to connect the 3 youth councils. Many topics were covered, including post Brexit collaboration with potential focus on school and club exchanges. Pictured below are Officials from the 3 countries following the meeting.



For all other visitors there was a lovely river cruise along the river Lahn, which runs through Limburg. The Lichfield table tennis club took part in a tournament between the three cities.

On Saturday evening there was celebration meal, with all three city mayors giving speeches, recognising the twinning friendship between our cities over the last 30 years. There were exchanges of gifts and a fabulous show to round off a lovely evening.

In total around 400 people from the three twin towns came together to renew old friendships and form new ones.

Sunday was a day of sightseeing with guided city tours of the historic town of Limburg (pictured opposite), a walk to a nearby basilica finishing off with an ecumenical service in Limburg's magnificent Cathedral, perched high above the city.



The Limburg cathedral choir, accompanied by singers from Lichfield and Ste. Foy, enhanced the service. After the service 30 white balloons were released from outside the cathedral, for peace in Europe and a last farewell gathering was held in the cathedral gardens afterwards. On Monday everyone departed with many memories of a wonderful weekend, seeing old friends and creating new friendships.

A selection of further photographs follows.



The 3 Mayors with the Limburg Twinning Association's executive team



Table tennis tournament between Lichfield, Limburg and Ste. Foy



Celebration evening with entertainment in the Limburg City Hall with 400 guests



Guests returning from a river cruise along the Lahn river, welcomed by the Mayor of Limburg

6. Helen Winter, Guildhall & Boley Hall Bookings Officer.

The Guildhall has been fairly quiet since the last Council meeting in June as some of the regular hirers begin to break up for the summer holidays. Several meetings have however been held in the building and market research have used the Guildroom again (for a chocolate survey).

Lichfield Society of Artists held a successful Art Exhibition in the Guildroom over 4 days in June. Private bookings have included a Wedding Reception and 50th Birthday Party.

The Old Prison Cells are open on Saturdays from 10.00am – 4.00pm until October (excluding whole building booking dates).

The blinds in the main hall have had their annual service, and the first-floor ovens are due their annual deep clean in August. Repairs to the Recorders Bench will be completed in mid-July.

Private hires continue in July with two Birthday parties and a Wedding Reception. Lichfield Festival also booked the hall for an event on 9 July as part of their 2023 Festival.

Boley Park Community Hall continues to be popular for weekend bookings, especially children's birthday parties. Extra bookings have been made for the end of July/August whilst repairs are being carried out on Darwin Hall's roof. A waiting list is in operation for regular hire slots during the weekdays.

The central heating system has recently been repaired following a leak and the opportunity was taken to install a Hive thermostat. On 30 June the Breast Screening Unit arrived on site, providing a valuable resource to local residents and the wider community.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk and Mayor's Sergeant recently attended a desktop exercise in Counter Terrorism at Lichfield Cathedral. The exercise proved very useful and involved other major stakeholders from across the City. As a result, the City Council is working on instigating Critical Incident procedures for all its events and buildings. The Mayor's Sergeant will be liaising with our partners to ensure the City Council plays an active part in the City-wide strategy as well as training Officers as and when required. It is sincerely hoped that these procedures are never needed.

The Deputy is working with Officers on promotional material and publicity for the Guildhall in order to raise the profile and highlight the excellent facilities on offer. It is hoped this will attract further bookings.

In addition, the Deputy Town Clerk will be providing secretariat support at the Markets Working Group and the newly combined Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Working Party and Grants Committee.

Preparations are continuing for the Christmas Lights Switch On Event with particular emphasis on implementing Counter Terrorism Policies.

Darwin Hall

Following the various reports to Council over the past 12 months or so, work to replace the failing roof at Darwin Hall began on 19 June. Significant and detailed liaison with the Hall's Management Committee, Jack and Jill's Pre-School, Marstons and Waitrose among others has culminated in mutually acceptable arrangements for licences, parking and access/egress arrangements. Local residents were advised of the work both through direct mailing and publicity.

This is a significant project, easily the largest repairs and renewals project undertaken by the council in many years, especially given the need to install scaffolding around and over the Hall during term-time, thereby allowing the roof to be stripped and reboarded during the summer closure.

The first site meeting took place on 3 July, in attendance were representatives from the main contractor (Messenger BCR), the City Council's Architects (Brownhill Hayward Brown), roofing and scaffold contractors and the Town Clerk. Progress on site was slightly ahead of schedule, with no issues reported. A further site meeting is scheduled to take place on 17 July, by which time the scaffold sheeting will be complete. This will allow the build-up of the existing roof to be examined and recorded in greater detail across the building without the danger of further water ingress. The construction is to be analysed by an industry expert and will assist in informing the council's next steps in regard to possible legal recourse.

The Town Clerk wishes to publicly extend his thanks to all who have been involved in this process for their constructive contributions and willingness to work towards the shared goal of a safe and appropriate community facility, despite the short-term inconvenience and compromise that has been necessary.

The photographs overleaf were taken at the site meeting on 3 July.

