

For Council: 8 December 2025 APPENDIX 6

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

Samuel Johnson's 316th birthday celebrations took place on Saturday 20 September. It was a joyous occasion marked with the annual civic procession & ceremony which included placing the laurel chaplet on the statue of Dr Johnson on Market Square and performances from Lichfield Lighthouse Company. The Birthplace Museum was open throughout the day with activities, storytelling, poetry readings, and a spectacular cake. The free slices were greatly enjoyed by visitors!



*L – Deputy Mayor, Cllr Rosie Harvey-Coggins, placing the laurel chaplet on Dr Johnson's Statue
R – Deputy Mayor & Sheriff, Revd Ian Hayter, cutting the Birthday cake*

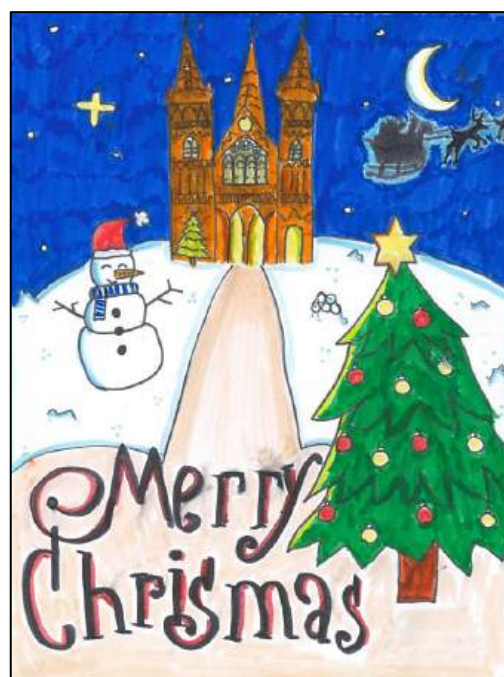
The annual Remembrance Service was held in the Cathedral on Sunday 9 November. Following the Cathedral service, the Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr Ian Geaves, accompanied by the Mayor, Councillor Claire Pinder-Smith, led the civic party into the Remembrance Gardens to observe the national two-minute silence and then perform the wreath laying ceremony.

Following this, The Rt Revd Jan McFarlane, Dean of Lichfield, gave the blessing. A professional public address system was used once again to ensure the large crowds could hear the ceremony and in addition, FASS Solutions were employed to enforce the road closure and maintain public safety.

After the wreath laying ceremony in the Remembrance Gardens, around 100 guests returned to the Guildhall for light refreshments. The Mayor then gave thanks on behalf of Lichfield City Council to all those involved on the day and Phil Tootill said a few words on behalf of the Royal Naval Association.



For the City Council's official Christmas card this year, the Mayor and Sheriff ran a competition inviting local primary & secondary school children to draw 'A Lichfield Christmas'. After much deliberation, two winners were selected, one each from Christ Church Primary School & King Edward VI High School. Both have been invited to meet with the Mayor & Sheriff in the Mayor's Parlour to receive their prize & see their drawings in print. The Civic Christmas Card will be sent to over 300 Civic dignitaries, councillors and friends of Lichfield City Council, including our twin towns in Limburg & Sainte-Foy-les-Lyon



At the time of preparing the report, the Civic Officer is organising the joint Mayor & Chair of Lichfield District Council's Carols for Christmas Service on Tuesday 2 December. This year, we are once again joined by local Choir, 'Tuneless', & Liberty Jamboree's Choir 'Shine & Sign' to support the service. Further details will be included in the January officers' report.

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

Friary Remains (Site 19A)

Borders cleared of overgrowth and bushes/trees cut back along back wall and side perimeter



St Michael's Churchyard (Site 60)

Crown lift, dead wood and cut back trees either side of main footpath, investigate required repairs to driveway.



Gorse Lane (Site 56)

Cut back self-setting trees and shrubs from road back to curb along Gorse Lane



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

- **Netherstowe (11B)** – Reduce and reshape large beech tree, cut back and deadwood trees along fence line, crown lift 3 x oak trees.
- **Heather Gardens (19B)** – Replanting of heather beds due for completion shortly after the deadline for this report.
- **Remembrance Gardens (28)** – Overgrowth over Memorial cut back, dead wood removed from Foxglove tree, part replacement of box hedging, benches prepared and painted, repair to entrance step, general cleaning and tidying in preparation for Remembrance Sunday.
- **E.ON Footpath Lighting** – Repairs at several locations have been identified including lantern replacements, realignment and foliage clearance. Replacement of damaged column required at Fecknam Way - Johnson Close footpath.
- **Furnival Crescent – Eastern Avenue (FP34)** – Wall rebuilt at Eastern Ave access point.
- **Eastern Avenue (4B)** – Reduction of Sorbus tree at Garrick Road.
- **Beech Gardens – Manor Rise (FP6)** – Hawthorn reduction at Manor Rise end.
- **Gazebo (22)** - New supporting legs fitted to bench and revarnished.

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

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum has continued to welcome strong visitor numbers, with **3,500 visitors in September and October**. This demonstrates the ongoing appeal of the Museum and the team's dedication to providing engaging events and high-quality experiences for all audiences.

As the festive season approaches the **Bookshop is fully prepared**, offering Christmas cards, decorations, a wide selection of books on the 18th century, and a variety of stocking fillers to delight visitors of all ages.

The staff are pleased to welcome a new Collections Volunteer to the team. They will assist with tasks such as updating collection records, undertaking research into objects, and checking the Museum's environment, including light levels and pest monitoring, to help protect the collection from damage.

In addition, a **student placement from Keele University** has joined the Museum to work on a project focused on **18th-century letters**, further supporting research and interpretation initiatives. The addition of both the Collections Volunteer and student placement strengthens the Museum's capacity to care for and explore its collection, while supporting learning and engagement for visitors.

Recent Events at the Birthplace

The Museum has hosted a busy and varied programme of events in recent weeks. The 316th Samuel Johnson Birthday Celebrations featured family craft sessions, live music, and a living history experience in the Birthplace kitchen, where visitors met a historical interpreter who recreated recipes from *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747), offering insights into 18th-century food and domestic life. Members of the Civic Team joined the celebrations for the ceremonial cake-cutting and signing of Johnson's birthday card. The event coincided with The Hub at St Mary's *Space Invasion Weekend*, bringing costumed "Doctors" (of the Who variety) and intergalactic characters into the Museum, attracting new audiences and creating memorable photo opportunities.





Other highlights included:

- *Meet the Barber Surgeon* (25 October, pictured) – Discovering historical medicine, herbs, leeches, and gruesome tools, including bloodletting and amputation.
- *Super Spooky Craft Activity* (29 October) – Halloween-themed crafts led by Birthplace volunteers.
- *Tales from Beyond the Grave* (30 October) – Spooky storytelling by Museum Attendant and local storyteller Christine Genders.
- ***Christmases Past: Discover the Surprising History of Christmas in Britain*** (12 November) – A festive evening with guest speaker Sheelagh James, who explored the varied ways Christmas has been celebrated, and sometimes skipped, throughout British history.



Improving Interpretation: The Introduction Room

The Introduction Room now features a refreshed, temporary interpretation scheme designed to give visitors a clearer sense of Johnson's early life and the Lichfield he grew up in. This improvement was completed on a very small budget, replacing the dated 1980s interpretation

panels, which offered limited context and no longer reflected current approaches to storytelling or display.

A key feature of the space is the redisplay of Paul Braddon's 1890s watercolours, which imagine how Lichfield might have looked during Johnson's lifetime. These evocative scenes help illustrate Johnson's formative years, while also revealing how he was remembered a century after his death and reflecting the late-19th-century rise of literary tourism.

New Interpretation in the London Life Room and the Workroom

New interpretation panels have now been installed in both the London Life Room and the Workroom, strengthening the stories presented in each space and addressing themes highlighted in a previous Officer report.



In the London Life Room, the new panels introduce Francis Barber, a key figure in Johnson's life whose story had until now been only briefly acknowledged on site. Visitors had repeatedly expressed an interest in learning more about him, and the new panels respond directly to that feedback. They have been very well received and represent an important first step towards telling Barber's story more fully. Further development will be needed to explore his life and legacy in greater depth in future interpretation.



In the Workroom, the new panels help visitors understand what the house was like for Johnson and his younger brother as they grew up in a home that also served as the family business. The interpretation highlights the practical realities of living and working in such a space and introduces the wider household, including those employed by the family.

The panels also explore the building's later tenants, reflecting its long and varied history. In 1826, the house became home to the *Lichfield Mercury and Midland Chronicle*, owned by George Walker Hinde, and in 1896 the dentist Mr J. Gray established his practice here before later moving to Market Street.

Audience Consultation Project

Work on the *Opening Chapters* audience consultation project is now underway. The project aims to help staff better understand the needs, expectations, and barriers experienced by both existing and potential audiences. A key focus is exploring what visitors would like to know more about and how they can better connect with Johnson's story and the story of Lichfield in his era. The insights gained will help shape future exhibitions, displays, and programming, ensuring that the Museum continues to provide engaging, meaningful experiences for all visitors.

A new visitor survey has been created and is now available both on site and digitally via the museum's website, providing an accessible way for audiences to share their views. In addition, two Stakeholder Sessions have been scheduled, complemented by other events and activities that will facilitate conversations with local partners, community groups, and individuals with a particular interest in the Museum's work.

To encourage ongoing, informal participation, bespoke voting stations have also been installed at the Museum. Visitors receive wooden tokens on arrival and are invited to vote on questions about what interests them most. These questions will be updated throughout the project, allowing the consultation to reflect a wide range of visitor priorities and interests.

This project is supported using public funding from Museum Development Midlands (MDM) and Arts Council England.



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

A full market is still being maintained on Fridays and Saturdays with only three pitches available on the Tuesday Market, these are currently being covered by casual Traders until they have completed 12 weeks, when they will be asked to become permanent.

Traders have been offered extra trading days over the Christmas period. On Sunday 21 December there will be a full market of 19 traders, on Monday 22 December there will be 17 traders and 11 traders on Wednesday 24 December.

The Fruit and Vegetable stall continues to stand on Wednesdays and is proving to be popular.

All traders who use electricity on the market square have been asked to provide PAT tests for their electrical items to meet the licence agreement. The City Council has also offered to carry out PAT testing for a fee of £1.50 per item.

Following the last Commercial Services Committee meeting, Officers have contacted *Seasonal Markets* and *MS Designs*. A meeting was held on 18 November with Seasonal Markets who are putting a proposal together Antique Market events on both the Market Square and inside the Guildhall. Once received the proposal will be put to the Commercial Services Committee.

Tuesday Market Update

Three casual traders on the Tuesday market have ensured that the market remains full.

Two of these casuals are *Los Dos Gringos* (pictured below) who sell fair trade Columbia coffee & *Harington Creamery* with a range of fresh cheese. The bi-weekly gap is being filled by *Bloom & Bliss* all of whom will be asked to go permanent once they have completed 12 weeks on the market.



Friday Market Update

The Friday market remains full.

Unfortunately due to the predicted high winds on 14 November the market was cancelled.



Saturday Market Update

The Saturday market also remains full. On 20 September there was a reduced market to accommodate the Samuel Johnson Birthday celebrations. Despite the inclement weather there was a lot of interest around the market, helped by The Hub's space invader weekend.

On Saturday 4 October due to the predicted high winds (55mph) the Saturday market was cancelled and again on Saturday 25 October a reduced market operated due to high winds with only 9 traders standing.

On Saturday 11 October the Mercian Regiment exercised their Freedom of the City by marching through the town past the market square, before laying up the Old Colours in a service at the Cathedral. This was a proud moment for the City and the traders showed their support by putting bunting up around their stalls.

The Markets Officer continues to maintain 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 and has resulted in positive feedback from existing Traders and new Traders alike.



Vegan Market

The Vegan market continues to run on the third Sunday of the month. Unfortunately, the market has started to show a decline with attendance dropping from 26 traders to only 11 over the past two months. The market team are forwarding any enquiries from suitable traders to the organiser of the Vegan market to try and reverse this trend.



Producers Market

The Producers market, operated by CJ Events on the first Sunday of the month continues to be well supported with an average of 30 traders standing. It is immensely popular with customers, many revisiting every month as there is such a variety of Traders.



Community Day

The rescheduled Community Day was held on Thursday 30 October. Further information is provided on the Deputy Town Clerk's report.

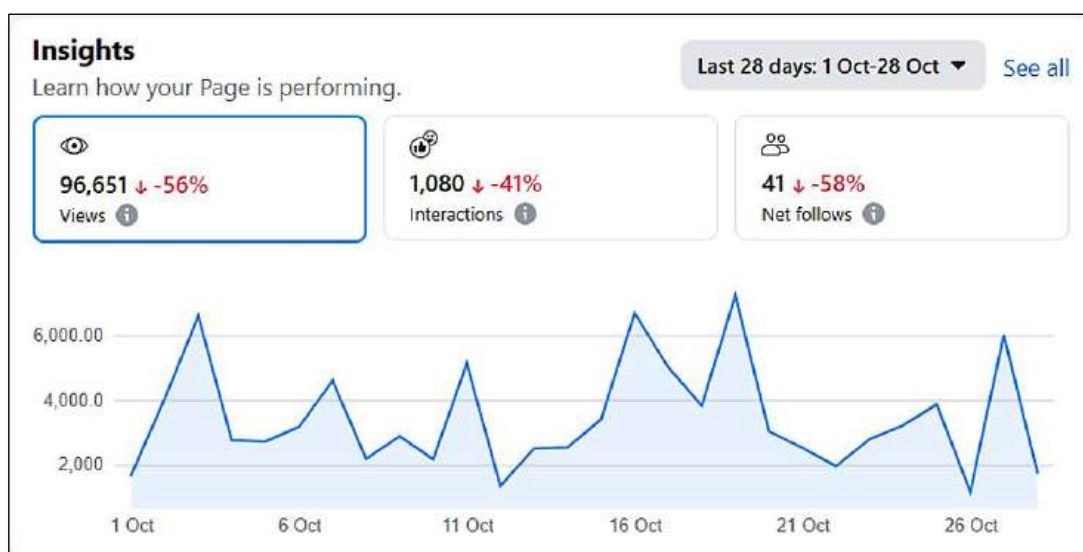
Christmas Lights Switch On - Festive Market

The Festive Market being held on Sunday 23 November on Minster Pool Walk as part of the. A total of 36 stalls were present. Further information is provided in the Deputy Town Clerk's report.

Social Media

All social media platforms maintain a good following however Instagram requires more focus. The statistics below show the number of followers and interaction for a 28-day comparison from August against October on Facebook. Officers are focusing on existing traders by giving them a spotlight and promoting their stall on a regular basis.

Any new traders that come onto the market are given an in-depth showcase on social media to help promote their arrival on the Market and to help increase footfall and their sales.



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

In September, the National Association of Sheriffs of England and Wales met in Lichfield and enjoyed a banquet in the Guildhall.

As part of the LCC Community Day on Market Square, Clive Read put together an interesting display in the Guildroom.



Charity/Voluntary Rate

Bookings in this category include our regular hirers – Lichfield Friendship Centre, Bridge, South-East Staffs National Trust, Chess, COLCB Band Practice, U3A, and the RSPB. In October, approximately 180 people attended the U3A Showcase Day. Refreshments were served and guests enjoyed a variety of music styles during the day.



The Johnson Society celebrated their Annual Supper in the Guildhall in September. A Book Extravaganza in aid of charity, returned for a whole building event at the beginning of November.

Lichfield Festival of Friends held a Regency Dancing and Jane Austen 250 event which was very well attended.

Lichfield Chamber of Trade and Commerce also hired the Main Hall and Guildroom as part of their annual Christmas Fair. Unfortunately, Lichfield Friendship Centre are closing and will be meeting for the last time at their December Christmas Party. They have been meeting at the Guildhall for many years, and we will miss them.

A Bible Exhibition also returned to the Guildroom. Other bookings included 4 meetings. Lichfield Arts have also held their Festival of Folk, as part of their packed winter concert series with 8 concerts so far.

Private Bookings

Private bookings included 2 meetings, a writer's group, a 40th Birthday Party, 3-day education booking and an Annual School Awards Evening. Lichfield District Council and the DWP returned with a Jobs Fair.

Lichfield Society of Artists held a popular 5-day Art Exhibition in the Guildroom.



Commercial Bookings

Slimming World use the Main Hall each Thursday. Market Research have also been very busy with 6 bookings recently.

There have been 2 craft fairs, with more booked towards Christmas. A Wellbeing Festival was held in September. There have also been 2 meetings, a Corporate Away Day, HS2 drop in and a choir rehearsal.

2 Weddings have been held – a Ceremony/Reception on 31 October and a Reception on 8 November. Up to Christmas we have another Wedding Reception on 29 November and on 29 December a Ceremony/Reception.

Lesley Smith Historians returned with a performance of The Witchfinder General to a full audience (pictured: Dr Gareth Williams)

In the run up to Christmas, Concerts are booked in by Sinfonia and Lichfield Musical Youth Theatre. There are also more Craft Fairs, Lichfield Arts concerts and another Art Exhibition.



Boley Park Community Hall

A play scheme is booked in for the Christmas holidays again. Up to the end of November, we have had a Stamp Fair, church fund raiser night, and 6 parties. We have another Stamp Fair in December and a Christmas Fair in the coming weeks. A Thursday evening slot has been allocated to a Children's Drama Group.

The 2024/25 accounts have been approved by the external auditors. The Town Clerk will arrange a Management Committee meeting and AGM for January 2026.

6. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

A group of Lichfield residents visited Limburg at the end of September at the invitation of the Limburg Twinning Association. They spent a long weekend in Limburg and were treated to many excursions, including a trip to the nearby Rhine river. The Mayor of Limburg welcomed them all at the friendship dinner on Saturday evening (pictured below).



The next big international Twinning meeting will be held in Lichfield from 2nd to 5th October 2026. We are now starting to look for host families for the weekend and are asking as many people as possible to spread the word and ask their families and friends to host either a German or French guest.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

Community Engagement

A further Community Day was held on the Market Square on Thursday 30 October. As the date fell in the half term school holidays a more relaxed event was planned. The '*Big Lunch*' invited passersby to stop and engage with Councillors, Lichfield Fair Trade, the Samuel Johnson Birthplace or to just sit on a bench and enjoy some lunch.

For the children there was free face painting, a colouring station, tabletop football, and penalty shoot outs, plus the chance to have a go at being a Town Crier, something which also proved popular with many adults. Once again an exhibition of photographs was kindly prepared in the Guildroom by Clive Read. In spite of the cooler temperature the event proved popular .



Bug Hotel Competition

During the summer months the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee held a competition to build a bug hotel. Local organisations and schools were invited to get creative with prizes for the most innovative and well populated 'hotel'. Members of the Committee had the difficult task of picking first ,second and third place based on photographs of the entries. After deliberation, the following winners were decided upon.

FIRST Anna Seward Nursery School



SECOND Chadsmead Primary School



THIRD: Woodland Warriors Club, Thomas Russell Junior School



Each winner received a visit from the Mayor and Sheriff, who presented them with certificates and prizes generously donated by Central England Co-Op in Lichfield.

Committee members personally thanked all the runners-up and gave them poppy seeds to grow, courtesy of the City Council's seed supplier. One committee member even joined the children for a bug hunt!



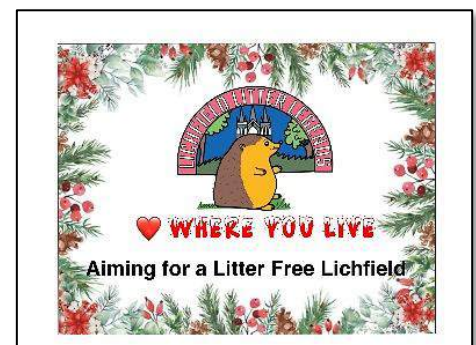
Christmas Lights Switch On

This year's Christmas Lights Switch On event took place on Sunday 23 November.

As in previous years the City Council ran a competition for two Lichfield primary school children to help the Mayor turn the Christmas Lights on. This year's lucky winners of this unique prize were Lily Davison (age 6) and Luna Evans-Parton (age 4). Prior to the event Lily and Luna met the Mayor and Sheriff in the Mayor's Parlour where they were presented with the other element of their prize – a family ticket to see the pantomime *Cinderella*, kindly donated by Lichfield Garrick theatre.



Once again a professional sound stage and 46sqm screen were hired for the event with everything taking place on the stage filmed by a professional camera crew and projected onto the screen. Several local businesses chose to advertise on the large screen and organisations within the City were also able to promote their forthcoming events and activities, including the City Council



On the day extra event stewards, medics and Police were in attendance and a number of additional crowd safety measures were put in place along with a robust communication system. The Samuel Johnson Birthplace was closed and utilised as Event Control due to its excellent elevated views of both the Market Square and Market Street. All professional stakeholders involved are confident



that the safety plan put in place was followed without placing the public at risk.

The Festive Market on Minster Pool Walk proved very popular with a total of 36 stalls selling a variety of Christmas gifts, food, and drinks. For the younger visitors there was free face painting, a tabletop football tournament with prizes and a chance to get up close to Owls and Birds of Prey.



Our very own Cinderella (Civic Officer, Harriet Chatwin) and Prince Charming (Adrian Basford, Rugeley Town Crier) helped the Mayor and Sheriff welcome the two competition winners and then engaged with children around the City throughout the day, as did the Bower Queen and Boswell Bear.



The entertainment on stage began at 1.00pm with local community band *Aspire*, followed by two of Lichfield Arts Emerging Talent bands – *Step Out* and *Robot Garden Party*. The musical entertainment continued with *GSG Vocal Trio*, *Lichfield Rock Choir* and the children of Christchurch primary school singing traditional Christmas carols. Our Master of Ceremonies for the day was our own Town Crier and Sword Bearer, Adrian Holmes who also entertained the crowd with a song or two.

The Sheriff, and Mayor's Chaplain, Revd Ian Hayter gave a brief Christmas blessing before the Mayor, along with the two competition winners, started the countdown to the official switch on at 5.00pm. Once the lights were on, and much to the delight of the children gathered, Father Christmas took time out of his busy schedule to come on stage and wish everyone a Happy Christmas. The event culminated with Amington Brass band playing more Christmas carols as the crowd dispersed followed by a full peal of the newly refurbished bells of St Mary's, leaving everyone feeling festive and ready for Christmas .

A further selection of pictures appears on the following pages providing a flavour of the day.

In addition the Deputy Town Clerk continues to research information and provide secretariat support for the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee and Commercial Services Committee.

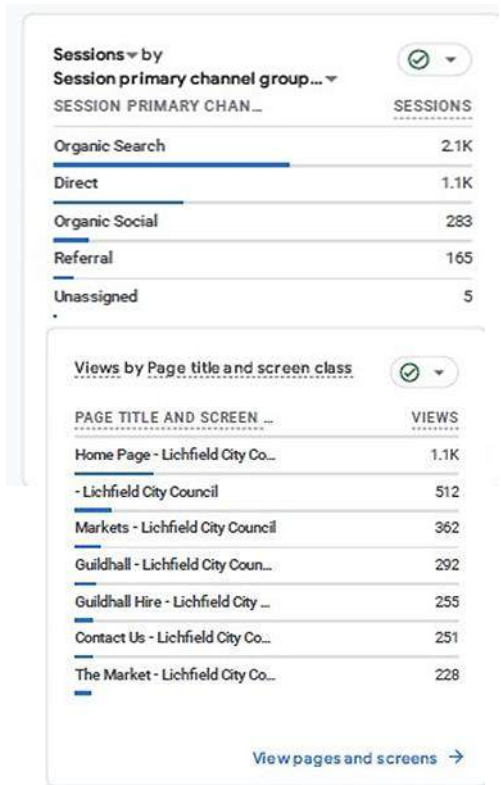






LCC Website Statistics

Previous reporting period (reported to members September 2025)



Current reporting period

