

For Council: 17 April 2023 APPENDIX 2

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

On Friday 3 March, the Arthur Price and Michael Fabricant 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 Michael Fabricant's constituency, is aimed 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.

This year we were lucky enough to welcome five schools to take part to debate the question: *That this House believes British Monarchy should continue to reign*. 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 Paul Jones – President of Lichfield Rotary Club of St Chad. Four of the schools argued for the motion, with The Friary School putting up a spirited and well-presented argument against.

The judges did not base their decision on whether teams were for or against the motion, but on the strength of the argument, clarity, time keeping, and overall presentation among other factors.

They agreed that all the pupils who took part were a credit to their schools with the scoring being very close, however, after much deliberating, Erasmus Darwin Academy were declared the worthy winner. There was more success for the school as Holly Davies was named joint winner of the Best Speaker title with Luke Rorie Matheson from Chase Terrace Academy.



On Monday 13 March, the Mayor and Sheriff held their Entertainment & Tea event for the over 70's at Curborough Community Centre, after an absence of three years. More than 70 guests sat down to high tea served by members of Lichfield City Council. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all. This year's guests 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 business. The afternoon closed with thanks from the Mayor to the helpers and a special mention to Travel Wood Ltd for providing transport enabling many to attend.



The Mayor & Sheriff enjoyed a memorable Royal occasion on March 16 where they were invited to Lichfield Cathedral to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester who were visiting the City. On arrival, the Duke and Duchess were greeted by the Dean of Lichfield, The Very Revd Adrian Dorber, along with the Chair of Lichfield District Council, the Mayor & Sheriff and the Bishop of Lichfield.



On Friday 24 March, the Mayor and Sheriff held their final fundraiser - a Charity Barn Dance in the Guildhall with 70 guests attending. The band '3D' & caller Mike Gentles were very well received and encouraged everyone to participate. All guests tucked into half time jacket potatoes from CL Catering before enjoying more dancing. The night finished with the raffle raising £275.00 for their chosen charities and the Mayor gave a final vote of thanks to all guests for their support over the Civic year.



At the time of compiling this report, preparations are on-going for several events in April including the Sheriff's Darwin Walk on Sunday 2 April, Easter Sunday Service on April 9 and St Georges Court on Saturday 22 April.

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

The Museum welcomed 2893 visitors in February and March, representing a 38% increase in the same months in 2022. The total visitors to the Museum for the 2022-2023 reporting period numbered 14,750. Annual Visitor Surveys from 2022 have been collated and show that 36% of visitors came from within 15 miles, 51% from elsewhere in the UK and 13% were international visitors. The age range of visitors was very broad, with 32% being children under 16, 10% between 16-24, 35% adults aged 25-64 and 22% 65 and over. 96% of visitors rated their overall experience at the Museum as good or excellent.

Chadsmead Primary Academy and Howard Primary School Elford attended for guided school visits, and numerous future bookings have been organised by the Museum Support Officer. Family craft activities were provided by volunteers for the school half-term holiday on Thursday 23 February, the theme 'Dragons and Daffodils' linking to St David's Day and Johnson's time in Wales. On Thursday 2 March, the Birthplace hosted the Johnson Society's traditional 'Chair Ceremony' ahead of their Annual Lecture. The MHO travelled to Keele University on Monday 6 March to deliver a workshop to undergraduate English Students about writing text for museums, using the Birthplace as an example and introducing them to the Museum's collections and library research spaces. Recent use of the library has included local history research about Andrew Newton, the founder of Newton College.

A successful evening of drama took place on Saturday 11 March, written and performed by Museum Attendant Christine Genders. 'Tea with Mrs Thrale?' was a monologue based on the writings of Hester Thrale Piozzi, and was performed to a full house at the museum, following by an opportunity to see Museum collections behind the scenes, and a Q&A session with the writer. To make the event accessible, a pre-recorded version was also available via Zoom, and tickets were purchased for online viewing from around the world. The event formed part of celebrations around International Women's Day, including a Women's History Walk led by Sarah Dale on Wednesday 8 March, and a blog post compiled by Laura Bell.



Museum staff organised an event to unveil the plaque to Francis Barber on Wednesday 29 March. The event held at Cruck House was a gathering to thank all those involved in the project, particularly representatives of the Johnson Society, Lichfield City of Sanctuary and one Lichfield, organisations with which the MHO has liaised over the course of several months to bring the plaque to fruition. Cedric Barber (pictured), a direct descendant of Francis, unveiled the plaque and gave a moving speech. The plaque is due to be installed on the exterior of Cruck House in mid-April, the site chosen as one of the only remaining historic buildings on Stowe Street, the street in which Barber lived from 1786 to 1793.





The Quinquennial architects inspection of the Birthplace was undertaken, and arrangements for the building of the yard toilet in 2023-24 in progress. Other behind-the-scenes work included staff training, with all staff undertaking Safeguarding training organised by the Deputy Town Clerk, and newer staff members attending 'Exceeding Visitor Expectations' customer service training, free-of-charge training provided by West Midlands Museums Development.

In addition to projects relating to the Johnson Birthplace, Officers have been supporting the opening of the Guildhall Prison Cells for their summer visitor season, with three new volunteers recruited to join the welcoming team, and work on the City Plaques project continues.

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

Friary Remains – Ukrainian Planting

With the help of local Ukrainian families, Lichfield City Council and LDC Grounds Team have collaborated on a new shrub/flower bed at Friary Remains with plants chosen to reflect Ukraine's country colours. Planting and launch took place on Tuesday 14th March with a dedication plaque installed as a thank you to the City of Lichfield.



Bus Shelter 12 – Ryknild Street

Reinstatement of a bus shelter outside Boley Park Community Hall has recently been completed. Funded via CIL, the shelter was reinstated following requests from local residents, and has attracted positive comments.

The previous shelter, which was in a poor state of repair, was removed some years ago following a rerouting of bus services away from this stop that has since been reversed.



Land Opposite St Chad's Church

Bollards have been installed to prevent further unauthorised parking on this small area of LCC land, and the ground prepared in readiness to turn the area into a further small wildflower meadow.



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

- Additional wildflower seed has been sown in Festival Gardens and appropriate signage erected for both wildflower and wilding areas
- Repairs to the tarmac pathways in Heather Gardens ongoing
- Negotiation with Staffordshire County Council regarding costs for 'permit to dig' for re-siting of bus shelters that do not currently serve an active route
- Tree works at St Michaels and St Chad's (completion of scheduled works following previous report and further investigations)
- Signage in preparation for Jukes Funeral Services sponsorship of Cappers' Lane roundabout
- Installation of removal bollards at entry/exit to FP 22, the cycleway alongside Stowe Pool from end of Reeve Lane to St Chad's Road to prevent vehicular access. This follows reports of cars driving the length of the cycleway.
- Additional cutting back of FP 23, Cathedral Rise to Beecroft Avenue to discourage anti-social behaviour

4. Guildhall/Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Officer

Regular hirers have continued to meet in the Guildhall, plus Staffordshire County Council held a public information event at the end of February. Lichfield District Council also held another information event on the new City Centre Pedestrianisation rules on 1 March. (The LDC pedestrianisation event booked at Boley Park was cancelled due to the snow).

A Funeral Wake was held at the beginning of March in the main hall (the second one this year). Other private bookings included a 30th Birthday Party, 40th Birthday Party and a Child's Birthday/Adoption Party. A private society luncheon was also held in the Guildroom.

The Worshipful Company of Smiths held their Annual Feast in the main hall, and three market research bookings have taken place in the Guildroom.

Lichfield Arts have held 2 concerts – David Ford, and Aaron Catlow & Brooks Williams.

Other bookings include 21 meetings, 1 Cell Tour plus another 2 charity tours, 2 bookings for school lunches in the Guildroom and a first aid course in the Ashmole Room. Civic bookings included a speaking Competition and the Mayor and Sheriffs Charity Barn Dance.

Boley Park Community Hall

Following a Management Committee meeting, prices have been increased from 1 April to cover increased bills. The new hire charges will be displayed outside the front of the community centre.

A phone line has been installed ready for the work being carried out over the Easter Holidays which includes a new fire alarm and updated CCTV.

As well as regular weekday hirers, since the last report, there has been a Christening Party, 4 Children's birthday parties and a Stamp Fair.

5. Markets: Clive Read, Markets Officer

The Markets Officer has continued to work closely with the Market Traders. There is good communication and cooperation between traders and LCC with the understanding that if any issues arise, they will be dealt with swiftly and fairly.

The pitches on the Market that are currently vacant are being worked on and all interested parties are being communicated with in order to get the gaps filled as soon as we can. Some of the delay has been that potential traders do not have everything in place so that they can trade so we are offering as much support as we can to help them get ready.

Preparation for rent increases and Licences will be ready shortly with no further negative feedback received.

Social Media

We have a strong link to the customer base of the Market. We are also promoting other events aiming to showcase Lichfield City and increase footfall through the use of Facebook and Twitter. Recent Events include the Producers Market and the Vegan Market.

The Producers Market returned on 5 March 2023 and was very popular with customers. 30 Market Traders attended with a wide variety of items available.



We also had the first of six Vegan Markets of 2023, held on 19 March. We had 26 Traders and was rumoured to have Channel 4 crew filming.



Tuesday Market Update

We currently only have one pitch remaining which is due to be filled very shortly. Since the last Officer report we have welcomed Athens Street Food onto the Tuesday Market, selling a wide selection of freshly cooked Greek food.



We also welcomed Funky Food Company to the Market on 21 March, selling a variety of pre-packed cheeses, chutney, pickles, nuts and scratchings.



Friday Market Update

All pitches are now filled on the Friday Market, with one of the previously vacant pitches allowing an existing trader to expand their stall. Another vacant pitch has been filled by Athens Street Food, so they now have two trading days at the Market. Finally, Poppies Vintage Shabby Chic is another new trader who started on 17 March.



Saturday Market Update

Saturday market remains full. We have however, been able to offer a pitch to a new trader who started with us on 18 March, Gingers Spice Hut. They offer ready-made Spice kits for home cooking.

As more traders make contact, it is allowing us to take details and create a bank of traders that will cover at short notice due to absence and holidays, keeping the Market full and enhancing the footfall into the City.



Non-market days see Ian Newey, the ice cream man, return to the Square and trade by Speakers Corner on markets days.

John Madden continues this year with the Fish and Chip Van on the Square on non-market days and then by Boots on Market days.

We have had a couple of snowy days early in March. This affected one of the Markets held on Friday 10 March. Due to the weather and road conditions, we had a restricted Market in place with only three traders being able to attend safely and trade.

It is with regret that the current Market Officer has given his notice to leave the position. The vacancy is being advertised at the time of preparing this report.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk continues to work closely with the Town Clerk on various staffing matters including the appointment of a new Markets Officer and Mace Bearer.

In addition, the Deputy is progressing various projects on behalf of the NPIWP and will be providing secretariat support at the Markets Working Group and full Council.

The Deputy continues to work with Officers on updating and streamlining internal procedures and the planning of large scale forthcoming events such as Annual Council and Remembrance Sunday.