

# *Lichfield City Council*

*Donegal House, Bore Street, Lichfield, WS13 6LU*

---



## Annual Report 2015-16

To Annual Town Meeting  
26 May 2016

## ANNUAL REPORT – OVERVIEW

The budget set by the Council in January for the 2016/17 financial year was based on a council tax increase of 4% to £54.86 for a Band D property. The amount of precept plus council tax support grant for 2016/17 was set at £674,763 [based upon a precept of £640,693 plus £34,070 local council tax support grant].

2015/16 has been a year of significant changes at the City Council, headed by the appointment of former Deputy Town Clerk, Christopher Moulton to the position of Town Clerk following the retirement of Peter Young.

With the introduction of a new website, the ability to now take payment by card and a greater social media presence than ever before, the City Council is looking to the future while still preserving the traditions and heritage of the City through such events as the Sheriff's Ride, St George's Court, Shrovetide Pancake races and Dr. Johnson's Birthday celebrations.

A draft Neighbourhood Plan for the City, concentrating on employment and economic development themes, is now in the final stages of preparation, with formal consultation due to begin imminently.

With 28 councillors and just 14 full-time equivalent staff, the City Council is by far the smallest of the three local authorities serving the City area, and there are limitations in what we can achieve to meet the needs of over 32,500 residents. So as well as the services we provide ourselves, we work in close co-operation with the District and County Councils, and also support many local voluntary and charitable groups which play a key part in the life and well-being of the residents of Lichfield.

Residents are welcome to attend the Council meetings. Dates of meetings, contact details for City councillors and much more information about the Council and the City are available on our website at [www.lichfield.gov.uk](http://www.lichfield.gov.uk)



*Cllr David Smedley  
Council Leader*



*Cllr Mrs Sheelagh James  
Mayor*



*Christopher Moulton  
Town Clerk*

*Our thanks to Robert Yardley for permission to use some of the photographs in this report*

# Annual Report 2015-16

## OPEN SPACES

The Council looks after 76 acres of public open space, 4 miles of footpaths, 12 acres of allotments, 17 bus shelters and 120 footway lights.



Most of the routine grounds maintenance work is undertaken by Lichfield District Services under a Service Agreement. The City Council's part-time Open Spaces Officer, Heather Francis, began her maternity leave at the end of 2015 and was ably replaced by Nick Burton, who will continue in the position into 2016/17.

Unfortunately, one of the mature lime trees along Pool Walk showed an increase in decay and professional advice was that it should be taken down. While this was unfortunate, it did provide an opportunity to dedicate a replacement lime tree in an identical location on the occasion of the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

ITV filmed in the Memorial Garden as part of the Woodland Trusts Verdun Oak research project. Lichfield has one of only 8 known Verdun Oaks in the Country. These are trees known to have been grown from acorns brought back from Flanders after the battle which began 100 years ago on 21 February 1916. The Woodland trust thought it quite possible that the other oak in the Memorial Garden known to have been planted in 1920 is also a Verdun Oak.

The City Council once again achieved a silver gilt award at the Heart of England in bloom ceremony, where the City Council was represented by Councillor Mrs Norma Bacon.



Other activities in addition to routine maintenance included:

- scrub clearance around the Borrowcop Gazebo to help maintain the impressive vista from the site
- lighting along Pool Walk replaced with coloured LED's that are now controlled by a light sensor to illuminate at dusk and by timer to go out at 11pm. Uplighters along Pool Walk have also been repaired as necessary
- removal of illegal campers from City Council land along Eastern Avenue
- Blooming Fun projects and several Forest Schools
- a successful 'Clean for the Queen' litter pick along Eastern Avenue

- a group of enthusiastic volunteers who together form the Countryside and Parks Conservation Group (CPCG) kindly carried out watercourse management work in Festival Gardens
- a section of footpath off the Tamworth Road had a solar powered street light installed which has received several compliments from the public.

## **GUILDHALL & COMMUNITY HALLS**

The Council owns the Darwin Hall, Cruck House, Curborough Community Centre, and Boley Park Community Hall, all of which are usually operated by local Management Committees. The Committees manage the buildings, paying the running costs and receiving income from lettings, but with the Council being responsible for maintaining the external fabric of the buildings.

The Management Committee at Boley Park Community Hall resigned in January 2016. The City Council has temporarily taken over the day to day running of the building and is in the process of advertising for volunteers to form a new Management Committee. It is hoped that a new Committee will be in place later in 2016.

The Council also runs the Guildhall which is let out for private and commercial events and for use by local organisations. It also serves as the main venue for concerts run by Lichfield Arts and is a popular venue for wedding receptions and civil wedding ceremonies.



The opportunity was taken during August to carry out some much needed refurbishment and maintenance works to the Guildhall.

Many regular hirers take a summer break so this proved to be an ideal time in which to carry them out. Those bookings which were in the building were rescheduled or allocated to a different room to ensure the minimum amount of disruption.

The work took a full week to complete and the area was left clear for a further two days to allow the seal to completely dry. The results are quite dramatic and many hirers have commented how much lighter and brighter the rooms now feel.

The old prison cells, which are open free of charge on summer Saturdays and staffed by a dedicated team of volunteers, continue to be a very popular visitor attraction.



## WEBSITE, ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The City Council's new website was launched in February 2016. The aim of the website was to simplify access to the wealth of information available, and to allow for future developments including the receipt of online payments to the Council.

When making payments until 2014, Parish Councils were required under section 150 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, to do so by cheque. The Legislative Reform (Payments by Parish Councils, Community Councils and Charter Trustees) Order 2014 removed this requirement for both England and Wales, allowing Parish Councils to make and receive electronic payments.

At the City Council meeting of 9 November 2015 it was resolved that three card machines would be purchased to allow electronic payments to be made to the Council. The machines have now been in use for several months and in all three settings where a machine is utilised (Birthplace Museum, Guildhall Bookings and Markets) there has been a good level of usage.

The City Council has also launched its own Twitter page to help publicise its activities, events and successes. While this page is relatively new, it has already proven to be a worthwhile addition to the City Council's established publicity platforms.

## DONEGAL HOUSE

Programmed essential repairs to the front and rear elevations of Donegal House have been completed, with the refurbished frontage attracting many compliments from the public and other local organisations, both in person and across social media.

On close inspection, the Donegal House clock, donated by Mrs M A Swinfen Broun in November 1928 was found to be badly corroded. The world renowned Smith of Derby restored the clock to its former glory, and it was installed in its rightful place on Monday 2 November, just three days short of the 87<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its original unveiling.



## SAMUEL JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

Spring was a busy time for events for all ages, with an 'Easter Explorers' Trail and 'Half Term Fun' activities for the school holidays, as well as a 'Delving into the Dictionary' history workshop to commemorate the 260th anniversary of the publication of Johnson's famous work. A new series of Guided Tours on Saturday afternoons was also launched.

The summer display 'A Splash of Inspiration', was opened in July. It is a display of work created by members of the Museum's monthly Art Workshops, led by Attendant Carole Collier. It received good publicity and excellent feedback from visitors. A small display opened with a lot of interest from J.R.R. Tolkien fans and scholars, as the Birthplace discovered an entry in the Museum visitor book from 1915 which sheds new light on the author.



In the collections, three new pictures were collected from former curator of the Birthplace, Kai Kin Yung and his wife Judie, and work began on cataloguing their generous donation of books. The Birthplace has also acquired an engraving of Francis Barber, and an unusual early 20th century photograph postcard of the Birthplace has been donated. Work has also continued on cataloguing the Friary tiles found earlier in 2015.



In November, a portrait of Lucy Porter, Johnson's stepdaughter, arrived at the Museum on loan. The striking oval, showing Lucy as a child, is a partner to the portrait of her mother Elizabeth, of which the Birthplace already owns a modern copy after the original which is now in America. Lucy was very close to Johnson and is a significant figure for Lichfield: she worked in the Johnson's bookshop, lived in the city all her adult life and built the now lost Redcourt House on Tamworth Street. The painting has been kindly loaned by the descendants of Lucy's heir.

The Birthplace Book Group is thriving, with so many new members that a waiting list is in use for the first time. A new volunteer pool has been recruited for the children's 'Bookworms' club, which will allow that to develop in size over the coming year. A new monthly Birthplace Writing Group has also been established.

Visitor numbers continued to increase, with total annual visitor numbers for 2015 exceeding 18,000. The Old Guildhall Prison Cells continue to attract 250 visitors on average every Saturday during their summer opening season.

The Birthplace also received the excellent news from 'Visit England' that the site ranked within the top 20 of free attractions across the whole West Midlands area for visitor numbers in 2014. General reviews and feedback for the Museum also continue to be very positive - recognised with the award of TripAdvisor's 'Certificate of Excellence' for 2015.

## MARKETS AND MARKET SQUARE

The repaving of the Market Square began in 2015 and is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2016. The new paving has been well received by Traders and the City Council has been assured of its longevity.

There were several incidences of youths swinging on and skateboarding around pre erected stalls on the Market Square. The co-operation and assistance of local PCSO's in monitoring the area following these complaints is greatly appreciated.



A Traders' Liaison meeting was held on 15 February 2016 and discussions were both positive and constructive. A further meeting will be arranged for later in 2016.

The Staffordshire County Council repaving scheme to Conduit Street, part of Market Street (adjacent to the Square), and Breadmarket Street which began in February 2016 was completed ahead of schedule and with minimal disruption to the Market, with only a few relocations into Market Street to ease unloading/loading and access issues. Market Traders were very understanding of the situation.

Improvements to the Market Square toilet and kitchen block have included internal and external redecoration and the installation of 'push button' hot and cold water taps.

The Markets continue to be fully occupied, but when stalls do become available for various reasons (trader's holidays or absence or the odd vacant stall) they are quite regularly occupied by a number of casual traders with the majority pre-booking the stalls.

We are grateful to the Visit Lichfield team for helping to publicise the Farmer's Market on Twitter. Social media is a great way to increase public awareness of regular events held in Lichfield. Our aim is to promote the general market in the same way to increase footfall and the profile of the Market amongst the general public.





## CIVIC EVENTS

The Mayor, Councillor Andrew Smith and Sheriff, Michael Sheldon, completed a very successful year of civic engagements.

On 5 September, in accordance with the 1553 Charter, the Sheriff, accompanied by more than 80 riders including undertook the annual Sheriff's Ride round the city boundary.

Dr Johnson's 306<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations were held on 20 September with a service and wreath-laying on the Market Square, and the Freedom of the City was conveyed upon the former Town Clerk, Peter Young on 15 January.



Other civic events have included:

- 18 May, Mayor's Banquet
  - 24 May, Bower Sunday
  - 25 May, Court of Arraye and Bower Procession
  - 31 May, Mayor's Sunday
  - 1 July, Swinfen Broun Bowls Tournament
  - 3 July, Elephant Parade
  - 11 July, Mayoress at Home
  - 23 September, MacMillan Coffee Morning
  - 8 November, Remembrance Service
  - 13 November, Charity Dinner
  - 15 December, Mayor's Carols
- 
- 9 February, Shrovetide
  - 15 March, Fashion Show
  - 18 March, Sheriff's Show at the Friary School
  - 5 April Entertainment & Tea
  - 23 April, St George's Court



The Mayor and Sheriff are delighted to have raised over £7,000 from their fundraising events which will be distributed to their chosen charities.

The Mayor for 2016/17 is Councillor Mrs Sheelagh James, supported by Councillor Mrs Janice Greaves as Deputy Mayor and Councillor Robert Yardley as Sheriff.





## OUTSIDE BODIES

The Council provided over £27,000 in general grants to outside bodies and partner groups during 2015/16.

The Council provides the secretariat for the Lichfield City Forum which brings together representatives from the local councils, residents' associations, businesses and voluntary groups.

## TWINNING

On 29 March 2016, the internationally renowned Limburg Cathedral Boys Choir was officially welcomed to Lichfield by the Mayor at the Guildhall. After refreshments, the choir boys had a tour of the Guildhall and the prison cells, which they found very impressive.

The Choir then performed a concert at Lichfield Cathedral which was very well received by the large audience. The Choir Director, Mr. Andreas Bollendorf, thanked the City of Lichfield for their huge support for the concert.

To the great appreciation of the choir, the cathedral spire was floodlit during the evening in memory of Mr. Klaus Knubben, the former director of the Limburg choir, who had died suddenly two weeks previously. He had directed the choir for 28 years.



### Erasmus+ Project

Just before Easter two visitors from organisations in Limburg came to Lichfield on a fact-finding project funded by the EU's Erasmus+ project. The aim was to establish the provision of housing, schooling and help for people with learning disabilities in Lichfield. Their visit included organisations like Friends2Friends, Changes, Cherry Orchard Gardening Services, Sheratts Wood, Liberty, Bromford Housing, Saxon Hill School and Craft Barn, Chasewater.

They were most impressed by the passion and dedication of the staff of the aforementioned organisations, to make life enjoyable and manageable for people with learning disabilities, in spite of ever reduced government funding. Wayne Mortiboys from Staffordshire County Council kindly explained the plans for a new development of homes

in Lichfield and Terry Finn, Staffordshire County Councillor, kindly helped with the organisation of the visit and spent some time with the visitors one day.

#### Peter Walker - Sculptor

The sculptor Peter Walker, who created the sculpture of Erasmus Darwin in Beacon Park and presented the Christmas projections onto Lichfield Cathedral, held a large scale exhibition of his work in Limburg from 11 March to 17 April 2016.

### **ELECTORAL MATTERS**

The May 2015 elections saw elections in all 9 wards. There are 28 councillors, of which 8 were new to the City Council. The political composition of the council is now 26 Conservative, 1 Liberal Democrat, and 1 Labour.

A Bye Election was called in January 2016 following the resignation of Liberal Democrat Councillor Mrs Marion Bland from both the City and District Councils. Councillor Paul Ray won the bye election, also representing the Liberal Democrats; the overall balance of the City Council therefore remains unchanged.

### **PLANNING**

The District Council is the Planning Authority, but the City Council is consulted on all planning applications submitted for the city area. The City Council's Planning Committee met on 16 occasions, and examined and commented on 228 planning applications; only 10 of which were decided differently from the comments of the City Council.

The Council continues to progress a Neighbourhood Plan for the City, with formal consultation due to begin imminently following several months of research, informal consultation and public engagement events. A 12-member Committee continues to oversee production of the Plan.

### **STAFFING**

2015/16 has been a year of considerable staffing changes, the most significant of which being the retirement of Peter Young, who had served as the City Council's Town Clerk for some 28 years. Christopher Moulton, the former Deputy Town Clerk, was appointed as Mr Young's successor from August 2015 following a formal interview process. Other new appointments in the latter months of 2015 include:

Tony Briggs – Deputy Town Clerk  
Sarah Wallace – Civic Officer  
Helen Winter – Guildhall Bookings Officer  
Gabriele Lasch-Burden – Twinning Officer  
Nick Burton – Open Spaces Officer (maternity cover)  
Jane Varley – Clerical Assistant

Additional Premises Attendants have been appointed for the Guildhall on a casual basis to help ensure cover is available at all times.

## FINANCE

The budget set by the Council in January for the 2016/17 financial year was for a council tax of £54.86 for a Band D property, which was a 4% increase on 2015/16. The comparison between 2015/16 and 2016/17 budget is detailed below:

<b><u>Net Expenditure</u></b>	<b>BUDGET 2015/16</b>	<b>BUDGET 2016/17</b>
<b>SERVICE AREAS</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<i>Parks and Footpaths</i>	170,785	175,000
<i>Guildhall</i>	49,110	50,000
<i>Community Centres</i>	30,064	15,000
<i>Markets</i>	-45,545	-50,000
<i>Civic</i>	67,862	70,000
<i>Grant Aid/Partnerships</i>	51,058	50,000
<i>Arts/Tourism/Twinning</i>	64,338	65,000
<i>Johnson Birthplace Museum</i>	75,415	75,000
<i>Democratic Services</i>	120,616	85,000
<i>Investment Interest</i>	-2600	-1400
<i>Loan Charges</i>	0	0
<i>Agency</i>	-12,410	-12,000
<i>Repairs and Renewals</i>	190,109	130,000
<i>Capital Projects</i>	91,000	0
<b>SUB TOTALS</b>	<b>849,802</b>	<b>651,600</b>
<b>PRECEPT + LTCSG</b>	<b>648,350</b>	<b>674,763</b>
<b>TOTAL (To)/From balances</b>	<b>179,100</b>	<b>(23,163)</b>

<b><u>Balances and Reserves</u></b>	<b>BUDGET 2015/16</b>	<b>BUDGET 2016/17</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<i>Opening Balance (1 April)</i>	813,908	790,068
<i>To/(From) balances</i>	(179,100)	23,163
<i>Closing Balance</i>	634,808	813,231
<b><u>Closing balance held as:</u></b>		
<i>Repairs/Renewals (Revenue)</i>	330,000	353,000
<i>General Revenue Reserves</i>	304,808	460,231
<i>Capital Funds</i>	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>634,808</b>	<b>813,231</b>



## **CITY COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT:**

**‘To improve the quality of life of residents of Lichfield City’**

### **TO BE ACHIEVED BY:**

- Making best use of the resources and powers available to us to provide high-quality cost-effective services to help meet the needs and wishes of the residents
- assisting and encouraging other bodies to provide such services

### **KEY OBJECTIVES:**

- 1 To help residents enjoy high-quality social, recreational, and cultural facilities, and to maintain or improve the standard of these facilities
- 2 To encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the city
- 3 To protect and improve the high-quality environment of the city and promote sustainable development to meet the needs of present and future generations
- 4 To preserve the ancient traditions and unique identity of the city
- 5 To represent the views and wishes of the citizens of Lichfield and to promote the interests of the city for the betterment of the local community
- 6 To help to create a socially inclusive and caring community which embraces all its residents, irrespective of age, culture, income, race or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding, and mutual co-operation.

\* \*

# Lichfield City Council, Donegal House, Bore Street, Lichfield, WS13 6LU

Tel: 01543 250011

Email: [enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk)

website [www.lichfield.gov.uk](http://www.lichfield.gov.uk)

## Officer Contacts

Responsibility	Name	Tel:
Town Clerk	Christopher Moulton	01543 250011
Deputy Town Clerk	Tony Briggs	01543 309852
Finance	Alison James	01543 309855
Admin/Planning	Celia Freeman	01543 309858
Civic Matters	Sarah Wallace	01543 309854
Open Spaces	Nick Burton	01543 309851
Internal Audit	Graham Keatley	01543 309850

Responsibility	Name	Tel:
Twinning	Gabriele Lasch-Burden	01543 309857
Markets	Rachel Clive/ Lucy Clarke	01543 309853
Johnson Birthplace	Joanne Wilson	01543 264972
Guildhall Room Hire	Helen Winter	01543 309850
Reception	Jane Varley	01543 250011

## City Council Members

★ = also member of Lichfield District Council

✠ = also member of Staffordshire County Council

Councillor		Party	Ward	Address	Telephone
Jeanette Allsopp	★	Con	Curborough	House A, St John's Hospital, St John St, WS13	01543 256114
Bob Awty	★	Con	Leomansley	5 Seckham Road, WS13 7AN	07587 068000
Brian Bacon		Con	Leomansley	102 High Street, Chasetown, WS7 3XG	01543 670374
Norma Bacon	★	Con	Leomansley	102 High Street, Chasetown, WS7 3XG	01543 670374
Deb Baker	★	Con	St John's	30 Longbridge Road, WS14 9EN	07785 246 391
Gwyneth Boyle	★	Con	Chadsmead	Berry Hill House, 8 London Rd, WS14 9EJ	01543 251684
John Brooks		Lab	Curborough	37 Leyfields, WS13 7NJ	01543 252662
Bernard Cocksey		Con	St John's	28 Balmoral Close, WS14 9SP	01543 255228
David Dundas		Con	Chadsmead	45 Gaia Lane, WS13 7LW	01543 417497
Iain Eadie	★	Con	Leomansley	177 Walsall Road, WS13 8AE	01543 268157
Janet Eagland	✠★	Con	Boley Park	3 Alder Close, WS14 9UT	01543 257102
Colin Greateorex	★	Con	Burton Old Rd	49 Borrowcop Lane, WS14 9DG	01543 416677
Janice Greaves		Con	St John's	9 Chapel Lane, WS14 9BA	01543 256025
Peter Hitchman		Con	Stowe	22 Swallow Croft, WS13 7HF	01543 327222
Sheelagh James		Con	St John's	4 Gorse Lane, WS14 9HQ	01543 251450
David Leytham	★	Con	Curborough	45 Francis Road, WS13 7JX	01543 252122
Jayne Marks		Con	Pentire Road	64 Cornfield Drive, WS14 9UG	01543 256083
Tim Matthews	★	Con	St John's	8 Wentworth Drive, WS14 9HN	01543 255729
Brian McMullan		Con	Garrick Road	2 Smithfield Rise, WS13 6SG	01543 325084
Paul Ray	★	Lib Dem	Chadsmead	163 Birmingham Road, WS14 9BJ	01543 250395
David Smedley	★	Con	Stowe	64 Ryknild Street, WS14 9XP	01543 410389
Andrew Smith	★	Con	Leomansley	4 Friary Road, WS13 6QL	07795 661123
Christopher Spruce	★	Con	St John's	22 Lombard Street, WS13 6DR	01543 258120
Antony Thompson		Con	Stowe	2 Hayworth Road, WS13 6AL	01543 253822
Mike Thompson		Con	Stowe	20 Stowe Street, WS13 6AQ	07505 952790
Lesley Warfield		Con	Chadsmead	30 Fecknam Way, WS13 6BY	01543 300934
Mark Warfield	★	Con	Boley Park	30 Fecknam Way, WS13 6BY	01543 300934
Robert Yardley		Con	Boley Park	64 Cornfield Drive, WS14 9UG	01543 256083

