

## For Council: 11 December 2023 APPENDIX 7

### OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

#### 1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

The annual Remembrance Service was held in The Cathedral on Sunday 12 November. Following the Cathedral service, the Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr James Leavesley, accompanied by the Mayor, Cllr Ann Hughes, 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, Interim 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, New Growth Training & Event Security Ltd were employed to enforce the road closure and maintain public safety. After the wreath laying ceremony in the Remembrance Gardens, around 80 guests returned to the Guildhall for light refreshments. The Mayor gave thanks on behalf of Lichfield City Council to all those involved on the day and James O'Hagan said a few words on behalf of the Royal British Legion.



On Friday 17 November, the Mayor and Sheriff welcomed a total of 84 guests to the Guildhall for their annual Charity Ball, which this year had a 'Masquerade' theme. After being officially received, the invitees enjoyed a welcome drink before dining on a splendid three-course meal followed by live entertainment provided by Vocalist Cliff Antony, which was a resounding success.

Our very own Mace Bearer Richard Hunt acted as Master of Ceremonies, his light-hearted approach guiding the evening. All raffle prizes were kindly donated by local shops and businesses including a meal at Ego and a bread making course at Hindleys Bakery. Many other wonderful prizes were provided, which were greatly appreciated.

The evening was enjoyed by all and made a profit of just over £2,330 which will be equally split between the Mayor and Sheriff's chosen Charities, Lichfield City of Sanctuary & St Giles Hospice. The Mayor and Sheriff's next Charity Event at the Guildhall will take place on Saturday 16 March 2024 – A Cocktail Dinner, including a DJ & Mixologist. More details to follow in the New Year.



For the City Council's official Christmas card this year, the Mayor and Sheriff ran a competition inviting local primary school children to draw 'A Lichfield Christmas.' After much deliberation, the winner was selected from Charnwood Primary Academy. Felix Osbourne has been invited to attend the Mayor's Parlour to meet the Mayor & Sheriff and receive his prize. 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.



*The Winning 'Lichfield Christmas' Drawing, by Felix Osbourne from Charnwood Primary Academy*

At the time of preparing the report, the Civic Officer is currently organising the Mayor's Carols for Christmas Service which will be held on Tuesday 5 December. This year, the Mayor has invited local Choir, 'Tuneless' to join our resident Choir, St Michael's, along with Wade St Musicians to support the service. Further details will be included in the January officers' report.

## **2. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums and Heritage Officer**

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum has welcomed 11,894 people so far in this financial year (April-October), a 49% increase on 2022/23 visitor numbers.

The Birthplace was once again host to the L2F Festival of Folk's art competition, with an exhibition of the finalists' work on display from 7-15 October. This year's theme was 'The Miracle of Life', and a presentation event took place in the Birth Room on 14 October with the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Sam Schafer in attendance to congratulate the winners. As part of L2F's celebrations the Birthplace featured in the arts and heritage procession which began at the Cathedral and paraded through the city.



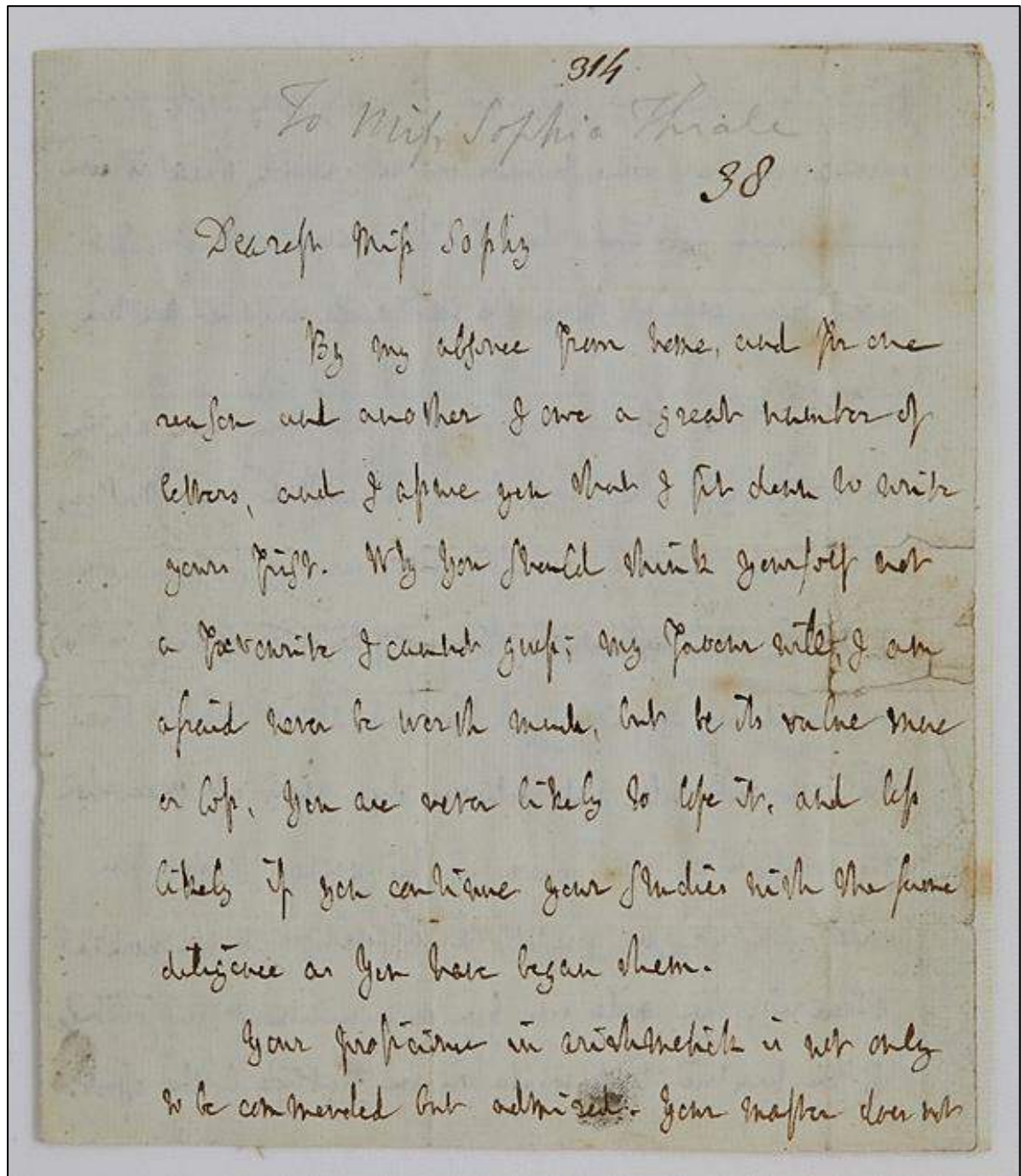
Throughout October the Birthplace celebrated Black History Month with a display shining a light on some of the fascinating Black men and women who helped shape Georgian Britain, including Francis Barber.

The autumn programme of events began with Tales from Beyond the Grave, an evening of spooky storytelling with local performer Christine Genders. Half-term activities included trails and an Autumnal Animals Family Craft Activity.

The Birthplace moved from summer to winter opening hours on 1 November, and the festive events programme kicked off with a late opening for Light Night on 26 November, which included a hand-crafted trail, lantern making activity, and seasonal refreshments. Professor Custard's Toy Workshop and Automata Display (pictured) took place on 2 December, followed by Johnson's Family Christmas on 3 December which featured performances by Lichfield Lighthouse Company, storytelling, poetry reading, and a Christmas bauble craft activity.



The recently acquired letter written by Dr Samuel Johnson has been received by the Birthplace and has been professionally photographed by Robert Yardley in preparation for public display in 2024. The letter was purchased with the help of the Friends of the National Libraries, The Johnson Society, Lichfield City Council, and Phil Jones, a private donor.



Routine building care and maintenance included the annual boiler and fire alarm service. An end of defects period inspection took place in November, twelve months on from the external structural and decorative repairs, and contractors are booked in to address outstanding items on the snagging list. The Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) is currently applying for Listed Building

Consent for essential asbestos removal and associated remedial work which forms part of the 23/24 capital programme.

Work on the Birthplace Development project has been ongoing, and following a comprehensive review the decision was made at the recent JBAC meeting not to build a toilet in the yard. This was due to several factors including a significant increase in costs, the risks of using a crane to lift in the pod which included the potential to damage the building and surrounding properties, and the possibility of incurring additional costs if the crane lift had to be rescheduled due to inclement weather. This decision enabled the redisplay of Michael Johnson's Workroom to progress, this had previously been paused due to the room's proximity to the yard. The expected completion date for the Workroom is March 2024.

In addition to managing the Birthplace, the MHO has continued to work on the City Plaques Project. The Carriage-Drive plaque was the most recent to have been restored, it was refitted in November following a clean, wax, and replacement of the backboard.

The wording for a plaque commemorating Anna Seward has been finalised, and it is currently being made with plans for it to be unveiled on International Women's Day, 8 March 2024.

The MHO has continued to be involved in the Johnson bust reinstatement project, leading on the restoration of the bust, which upon completion will see 'Johnson's Head' return to its original location on Bird Street in 2024. Photographs below show some of the damage to be repaired.



The Guildhall Prison Cells have closed for winter and a get together for the Cells volunteer team was held at the Birthplace to thank them for their dedication this year. The whole team thoroughly enjoyed their experience volunteering and wish to return to welcome visitors in 2024.

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

#### **Pedestrian Pathway – Eastern Avenue / Lichfield Sports Club Entrance**

The new CIL funded path which provides a pedestrian link from the existing path alongside Eastern Avenue to the entrance of Lichfield Sports Club has now been completed. The soil removed during creation of the path has been used to infill a fire pit area dug by persons unknown within the adjacent border plantation.



### Wordsworth Close (Site 26A)

Following consultation with residents, the planting of laurel hedging along the bypass noise barrier was completed in early November. Additional tree planting is also being considered for this area.



### Welcome to Lichfield Signage

Thanks are given to Lichfield Litter Legends who, after talks with LCC, have recently given a spruce up to eight city welcome markers.

Bulbs and plants (supported by Garry Snape of Bluestone Plants) have been added to these gateways to the City at Walsall Road, Lichfield Road, Western Bypass, London Road, Birmingham Road, Cappers Lane, Tamworth Road and Burton Road. Poppies made by group members added a special touch ahead of Remembrance Sunday and there are plans to scatter wild flower seeds in the spring.



*Photos Courtesy of Lichfield Litter Legends*

## Lichfield Litter Legends Community Event

At the Grants Committee meeting of 13 July 2023, members considered a grant request from Lichfield Litter Legends in the sum of £2,500 to cover the cost of skip hire for the “Be Proud of Your Community” event. The recommendation of the Committee was adopted by Council and the event took place in early October, with City Councillors Hugh Ashton and Paul Ray among those taking part.



A Lichfield litter Legends spokesperson said:

*“This area in the north of Lichfield is a regular target for the volunteers from Lichfield Litter Legends and, no matter how many times we clear it, we can always fill many bags of litter each time we visit...”*

*...We managed to secure funding via a grant from Lichfield City Council, and, with the help of Bromford and Lichfield District Council, we were able to create a project aimed at instilling a sense of pride into the area.*

*“The six skips were manned by some of the 23 Lichfield Litter Legend volunteers accompanied by the local Bromford housing coaches, and these skips were filled to the brim within a couple of hours... It was a very tiring but extremely satisfying day which, hopefully will leave a legacy in this part of our wonderful city.”*

## Pool Walk (Site 29)

All lime trees recently crown lifted and cleared of epicormic growth at base.

A broken drain cover was also reported to officers and quickly replaced.



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

- **Remembrance Gardens (28)** - Cleaning and tidying ahead of Remembrance Sunday. Crown lift of oak trees scheduled for January 2024.
- **Friary Remains (19A)** - Fir Tree has been felled and dismantled as recommended following professional evaluation.
- **Broad Lane (51A)** - Daffodil bulbs have been planted under oak on embankment ready for spring, and wildflower seeds will be sown to edges in Spring 2024.
- **Johnson Close to Brownsfield Road (FP33)** – metal hoops have been removed in response to accessibility concerns.
- **Cornfield Drive (44B)** - crown lift cherry tree over car park, hedge cut back from driveway
- **Netherbridge Avenue (44A)** – crown lift row of lime trees and general site maintenance
- **Cappers Lane Embankment (50)** – Remove dead wood from Ash trees
- **Fecknam Way (11C)** – Remove epicormic growth from limes & fell self-set Elder
- **Leomansley View (18A)** – Crown raise 3 x Chestnut trees, selected branch removal to Beech
- **Swinfen Broun Rd (15b/e)** fell leaning Elm
- **Jordan Close (15F)** remove dead wood from Beech tree
- **Heather Gardens (19b)** - wall near rose beds has been repointed with lime stone mix
- **Maple Grove (46A)** - Partial 'wilding' area to be established for 2024
- **Christchurch Churchyard Extension (61)** - reduction of red oak encroaching over residents' gardens at Townfields - scheduled for December 2023
- **St Michael's Churchyard (60)** – Tree safety work following annual report
- **The Oval (FP41)** - cleared fallen branches
- **Stowe Pool – Mill Croft to St Chad's Road Cycleway (FP22)**. Following reports of increased numbers of pedestrians using this cycleway, further measures are being devised to direct pedestrians to the adjacent dedicated walkway along the edge of Stowe Pool. This comprises 'repeater' cycle symbols along the route and specific markings for the start/end of the cycleway and where pedestrian pathways cross/terminate on to it. The contractor recommendation is for this work to be scheduled for the Spring/Summer, with a date in April currently pencilled in. The additional signage and path markings will dovetail with LDC's additional 'no cycling' signage on the adjacent pedestrian pathway around Stowe Pool.

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

Improved energy efficient lighting has been installed on the Market Square toilet block, making the area much safer, particularly during the winter months.

Garry Snape, proprietor of Blue Stone Plants who stands on both the Friday and Saturday markets, has kindly provided plants to Lichfield Litter Legends to enhance the City Council's "Welcome to Lichfield" signs at each of the entrances to the City.



The Chamber of Trade and Commerce will held their Festive Market on Sunday 19 November utilising the Guildhall and the Hub in addition to the Square.

The Festive Market on Minster Pool Walk which runs alongside the Christmas Lights Switch On took place on 26 November.

A total of 24 traders confirmed their attendance. LCC Officers worked closely with Officers from Lichfield District Council to ensure all licences and consents to trade are verified and valid.

The event was widely publicised with live entertainment on the Market Square, a free tabletop football competition and children's rides ahead of the official Switch on by the Mayor at 5.00pm. the request of the Police, enhanced security measures were put in place for this event, particularly on the Market Square.





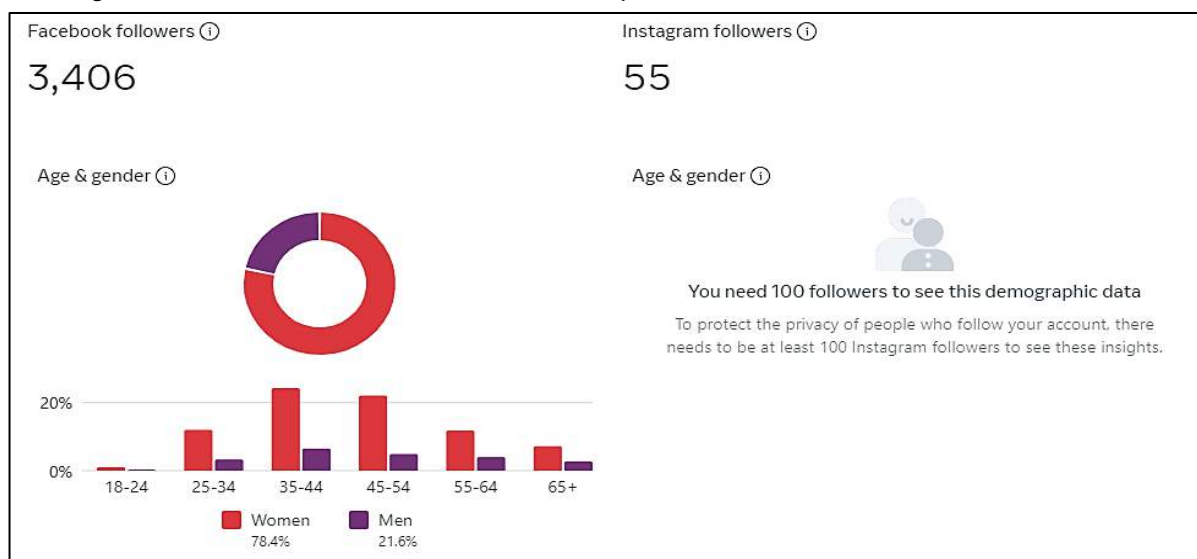
Photographs of the Pool Walk market follow overleaf, with further information available in the Deputy Town Clerk's report at item 6 of this appendix.

The Christmas Food Festival is scheduled to take place on 9 & 10 December, after the deadline for this report. There are no bookings on the Market Square associated with this event as it clashes with both the General and Vegan markets. However, Minster Pool Walk has been booked for both days, with the stall plan for the event approved by the Market Working Group.

Several traders have made representations to trade on non-market days in December, with further information and a recommendation to council contained within the minutes of the most recent Markets Working group meeting.

## Social Media

The statistics below show the number of followers on Facebook and Instagram. Officers are tracking numbers to determine the most effective posts.



All social media platforms maintain a good following. Officers will be focusing on the General Market and promotion of other events taking place on the Market Square & Minster Pool Walk over the Christmas period. This platform is also used to advertise for traders to join the market.

The City Council has now joined the Rural Services Network to promote Lichfield and share good practice with other rural markets, towns & cities. The membership is free for twelve months, during which time officers will be able to assess the benefits. If Members would like to be copied into the bulletins, please inform the Markets Officer.

### **Tuesday Market Update**

There are currently 4 weekly pitches available. There has been one new casual trader selling bedding - 'Del's Deals' - who traded on the Tuesday market, but unfortunately this was only short term. 'Fab Cakes' has also been absent from the market due to transport issues. Officers continue to receive several enquiries and hope to fill the vacant pitches as soon as possible.

### **Friday Market Update**

There had been two pitches available on the Friday Market, 'Just In Time Coffee' having given notice following a house move and standing for the last time on 24 November, but The Potting Shed has joined the market as a casual trader selling antiques and collectables, reducing availability to one stall.

### **Saturday Market Update**

The Saturday market remains full with only one casual trader, Ginger Spice Hut, who will become permanent on 8 December 2023.

The 'hot list' of traders who can attend at short notice is continually being updated and is proving successful in covering absences and holidays.

### **Vegan Market**

The Vegan market continues on the third Sunday of the month with an average of 22 stalls.

The operator reports that it is increasing in popularity and has already confirmed dates for 2024.



### **Producers' Market**

The Producers market, operated by CJ Events, is held on the first Sunday of the month.

This market is always well supported by traders and customers alike and is now established in the local events calendar, with many traders reporting repeat custom.



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

The Guildhall is busy until the end of the year. Next year's diary is also available for enquiries.

There have been lots of market research commercial bookings – 10 since the last report. We also have another 3 booked in the next few weeks.

Three craft fairs have been held (pictured), with another 2 booked before Christmas.

Two local secondary schools have held their awards night celebrations in the main hall.

LDC held another Pedestrianisation drop-in session and have another drop-in session soon for Leisure Centres.

Hundreds of people attended a Jobs Fair which saw 450 vacancies available across different sectors.

The Chamber of Trade and Commerce also held Christmas Fairs in the Main Hall and Guildroom at the end of November as part of their Christmas weekend in the city centre. This was very well attended with people queuing around the building to get into the rooms.

The Guildroom has been used for a 3-day exhibition from Lichfield Artists (pictured).

Another exhibition also took place from The Bramshall Art Group recently.

U3A held an information day for the public to see what kind of activities are available. It also included one of their orchestras playing in the Guildroom. The building was very busy all day (banner pictured).

Other private bookings have included 2 wedding receptions, a ballroom dance, 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party. The Upfront 80's Disco also returned in November to a sellout event.

We continue to attract meetings, with 20 held since my last report, and another 6 booked so far up to the end of the year.



Other commercial bookings include a drop-in session from Balfour Beatty Vinci, and a product launce from a local company

The Cathedral and Church Shops Association hired the Guildhall (whole building) for 2 days to host their annual exhibition, workshops and meeting. The association visits different locations around the country each year, and this year chose Lichfield. It also generated other income in the city centre through accommodation and dining.



Lichfield Arts have held 7 concerts, a L2F event and their Winter Beer Festival. We also have a private booking for a 80's music event booked for 23 December.

Regular hirers will be holding their end of year Christmas parties soon.

We also have several Christmas Concerts booked by the City of Lichfield Concert Band, Sinfonia, Kaleidoscope, and another provisional 3 day booking for Christmas Concerts by a local group.

### **Boley Park Community Hall**

The hall continues to be very popular for children's parties. As well as regular hirers and childrens parties, the hall has been used for events such as Stamp Fairs, Christmas Fairs, meetings etc. The NHS Breast Screening Trailer is remains outside the building, utlising electricity from the Hall's external 'Lucy box'. The costs of the electricity are invoiced to the NHS.

Boley Park Pre-school recently opened their new outdoor play area. This was well attended, with County and City Councillor Janet Eagland cutting the ribbon and officially declaring the play area open. Funding came from many sources including SCC Councillor funds and CIL from LCC, as well as funds raised by the pre-school over several years.



### **6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas**