

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

On Sunday 20 January the Mayor's Sunday Service was held at St. Peter & St. Pauls Roman Catholic Church. Bishop McGough led the service and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended.

On Friday 1 February the Mayor and Sheriff held a Charity Beer & Skittles evening in the Guildhall. This event proved very successful and was enjoyed by over 60 people who attended. Brewhouse & Kitchen kindly sponsored this event by providing a Cask of "Tricky Spires" Ale. The evening raised a total of £964.33 for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.



On Sunday 10 February the Mayor's Sunday Service was held at Wade Street United Reformed Church. Revd Ian Hayter led the service. In addition, the service also included a performance from a group of German students from our Twin Town of Limburg performing "Exodus", one of the Lichfield Mystery plays as part of Lichfield Mysteries Festival.

Following the Church Service, the Mayor and Sheriff held a Charity Sunday Lunch in the Guildhall, over 60 people attended. Paul Smith from Lichfield General Market kindly provided daffodils for the table decorations plus additional bunches which were sold during the lunch. The afternoon raised a total of £967.47 for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.

Preparations continue for the Michael Fabricant & Arthur Price of England School Speaking Competition to be held on Friday 1 March, Pancake Races on Tuesday 5 March, Mayor's Sunday Church Service to be held on Sunday 17 March at the Methodist Church, Tamworth Street at 10:30am and the Sheriff's Show at the Friary School on Friday 22 March.

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

1400 visitors have attended the Birthplace Museum in the first six weeks of the year, including an organised group tour for the Burton 'Ladies Alternative Cultural Experience'; library researchers including an academic from South Korea, and a school visit from Lichfield Cathedral school Year 2. Fired-up theatre have held evening drama workshops, and are currently using the Birthplace to rehearse for a performance of 'Dr Johnson's Wikiwords'

which is taking place as part of the Tamworth Literary Festival in March. The Birthplace was also the venue of the second meeting of the newly formed Local Cultural Educational Partnership (LCEP) which brings teachers and arts providers together.

Birthplace Attendants Nigel Hunt and Christine Genders attended 'Welcome to Excellence' training provided by the West Midlands Museum Development service.

At this quieter time of year for events and activities, a lot has been going on behind the scenes with the Museum collections. Birthplace Volunteers and a work experience student



from Stoke-on-Trent college assisted with the move into a new store room in Donegal House. The store enables all Birthplace reserve collections to be together in one place, allowing for better care and access, more working space and will also give a secure space for moving collections to during future redevelopment work. The shelving is from Shugborough and provided for minimal cost with the support of the Staffordshire Museums Network.

Following discussion at the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee (JBAC), Cllr Robert Yardley photographed the 'A Prospect View of the City of Lichfield from the West'.



The c.1680 painting is on display in the Ashmole room but is part of the Birthplace collection, and was photographed in order to explore the details which may be obscured by the dark appearance of the picture, with a view to possible restoration. Staff from All Aspect Art and Print were on hand to remove the painting from the frame.



Another collection project this month was the removal of a 19th century tavern chair. Approved for de-accession by the JBAC last year as it has no connection to Johnson, the chair has been taken by the Aldridge Shed Project, an Age UK initiative, who will restore the chair and work with the Museum to find a new home for it.

In January, Keele University Post-graduate student Amy Blaney began a placement at the Birthplace, ending in April. As part of her project Amy has created a new Blog for the Museum. The Blog features articles written by Birthplace volunteers, staff and students and more contributions are coming in from a variety of partners and academics. Amy is also reviewing and improving the information available to people who come to use the Museum archives for their research.

Other partnership work so far this year has included: meeting with Art UK, who are cataloguing the nation's sculptures in public collections and will soon be photographing the Birthplace collections; meeting the work placement officer from the University of Birmingham about continuing student placements; collaborating on plans for the 2020 Lichfield Literature

festival, and hosting a visit for Henry Flynn from the British Museum as part of the Money and Medals network, who advised on various aspects of the care and display for the Museum's small collections of coins, medallion and tokens.

3. Open Spaces and Tree Management: Nick Burton, Open Spaces Officer

The Company that maintains the City Council footpath lamps is Eon and they now have a purchase order to start the first year of a three year programme to replace a total of 132 lamps with LED. There are 44 to be modified in the first year (2019/20) and after the project has been completed there will be only 6 stylised lamps which are not suitable for conversion.

This earlier start of the three year programme means that the City Council will be able to benefit sooner from the energy cost savings.

The brighter LED lights can generate comments from nearby residents about being over bright but the new lamps do have fittings so shields can be fitted to reduce the glare.

The long hot summer of 2018 has increased the bumps caused by tree roots across footpaths and cracks in the surface of the tarmac.

Before these become an issue work to improve the footpath surfaces has been started with an increase in spending next year to finish the work.

Where the renovation work is major enough the footpath will be closed to the public with path closure notices and alternative routes posted up before-hand. In the event of the footpath being a Public Right of Way as with this section of the "Windings", permission is obtained from Staffordshire County Council.



4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer



On 15 February, 3 nursery nurse students from the vocational college ARS in Limburg completed their 5 week internship at Springfields Pre-School & Day Nursery in Beacon Street and returned to Germany to continue their college course. They had a wonderful time in Lichfield and thanked Manageress Helen Marquise for this great opportunity. Helen was very appreciative of their help and dedication to their work and reiterated that this programme was mutually beneficial for both parties involved. This was the second year that

Springfields Nursery had made this European Erasmus+ funded exchange project possible and Helen expressed her hope that it will continue next year.

A drama class of 21 students and 4 teachers from the Limburg vocational college ARS took part in this year's Lichfield Mysteries, performing "Exodus from Egypt", at the Friary School Theatre. They made their long journey to Lichfield by coach and ferry for this short weekend and for most of the participants this was the first trip to Lichfield and for many their first visit to the UK. They performed the play in English and were encouraged by the warm welcome they received. They started their 17 hour return coach journey shortly after their last performance at the Wade Street Church but not before paying a brief visit to the old prison cells in the Guildhall.



The Lichfield Twinning Association will be hosting guests from our French twin town of Sainte Foy from 12 - 15 April. In addition, 18 college students from Limburg will be visiting Lichfield for one week from 11 – 18 May. They will be taking part in lessons at the South Staffordshire College's Lichfield campus in the morning and excursions in the afternoon. Also in June a student from Ste Foy will be visiting Lichfield for 2 weeks to improve their English and attend a local school. The Twinning Officer is seeking hosts for all of the aforementioned visitors.

5. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

Since the last report to Council in January, regular bookings have included Slimming World, Band Practice, Heyday Friendship, National Trust, Bridge, Chess, Italian Class, Ladies Cameo, RSPB, U3A and Needwood DFAS.

The Citizens Advice Bureau are currently using the Guildroom on Tuesday mornings whilst maintenance work is carried out at their current premises.

The use of rooms in the Guildhall for meetings continues to be popular with a total of eight in recent weeks. In addition there has been a birthday party and a charity concert recently to raise money for the NSPCC as well as a craft fairs and a Cells Tour. Licheld Arts have held five concerts as well as their Winter Beer Festival.

Bookings in February included two Johnson Birthplace Museum study days, a circus skills evening, the Worshipful Company of Smiths Annual Feast, and the Manor Park Sailing Club Dinner. The 2019 diary already has several confirmed bookings and the 2020 diary is now available. Enquiries regarding Wedding Receptions has increased since Christmas and the Bookings Secretary has held meetings with potential hirers to discuss their requirements.

On 19 February the Bookings Secretary attended the second EXPO at St Mary's, organised by Lichfield BID, event organisers are asked to attend to showcase and promote their services to other local businesses.

Boley Park Community Hall - During January and February, there has been a Collectors Fair (following its success, two more are booked this year), a 40th Birthday Party, eight children's parties, one meeting and a Yoga workshop. Enquiries continue for available dates over the coming months.

6. Markets Officer: Harriett Hastie & Chris Wilkes

Following our invitation, the Fire Officer attended the Market Square on 1 February to inspect the fire exit route from the rear of St Mary's by the Corn Exchange. Following his advice the Markets Officers have been reinforcing a one metre gap around the stalls to ensure the fire escape is accessible. Traders have been compliant and the Markets Officers will continue to monitor this going forward to ensure safety requirements are met.

Stall occupancy on the Market Square is beginning to increase. The Tuesday Market only has two empty stalls available and Saturday Market has four empty stalls available. The biggest current improvement is the Friday Market, at the start of 2019 stall occupancy was running at 55-60% however after a concerted effort by the Market Officers to seek out new and lapsed traders, this has increased to 80-85% in recent weeks. The monthly Farmers Market currently only has a 35% stall occupancy rate, however efforts are being made to improve this.

Parking on the Market Square has been an issue recently, especially following the opening of St Mary's library. "No Parking" signs have been put up on the Market Square and Market Officers are continuing to reinforce this and continue to work closely with St Mary's to resolve any issues. On non-Market days the Square is coned off and bollards reinstated in an effort to ensure the safety of members of the public accessing the library via the Market Square.

All Traders have been notified of fees/charges increase as of April 1 2019 and also offered the incentive for £1 per stall discount if paid 4 weeks in advance. Whilst there have been some reservations regarding the increase in cost, the incentive for payment in advance has been generally well received.

The Markets Officers are also looking into the maintenance and storage of the market stall frames, boards and lighting with the current contractor to ensure all equipment erected on the Market Square is safe and fit for purpose.

From 17-31 May Lichfield Markets will once again be joining the national 'Love Your Local Market' campaign. This year's theme is "Close To Your Heart" and the Markets Officers are working on various event ideas and activities to engage the Traders and attract the public on to the Market over this period. The aim is to incorporate the history of the Lichfield Market and Samuel Johnson Birthplace museum, as they are 'close to the heart' of our Markets.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk has been working closely with the two newly appointed Markets Officers to resolve ongoing issues and update internal market operational procedures. The City Council's Health and Safety Consultants will conduct a review in March of all the Council's policies and risk assessments; the Deputy Town Clerk is preparing all the relevant documentation for this. In addition the Deputy Town Clerk is also working on the Christmas Lights Tender which is due for renewal in 2019 as well as conducting some of the Staff performance reviews with the Town Clerk.