

Lichfield City Council

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Annual Report 2023-24

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INTRODUCTION

At the close of this municipal year, I'm proud that your new City Council has been working hard to support people through the succession of crises that have marked not only this year but most of our recent history.

On the cost-of-living crisis, by working with Lichfield Back to School Bank to support families with the cost of school uniform, and by creating a scheme to fund free activities for young people across the school summer holidays, we have been able to support families across the city. With both initiatives continuing this summer we are maintaining our response to a crisis which has not gone away.

As the world grapples with the climate crisis and biodiversity loss your Council has introduced new areas of wildflower planting to not only improve our public spaces but also turbocharge the ecological value of these spaces and help them trap carbon in the soil. We have approved plans for solar panels to be installed at Curborough Community Centre, repainted cycle paths and our climate change and biodiversity committee continue to work on projects aimed at encouraging active transport.

We've continued to work on support for our local economy after the inflation and energy costs crises, by introducing new trading days for market traders around Christmas and continuing to develop the market as a regular event drawing people into the city, including the Producers' and Vegan markets.

Outside of crisis responses, the work of the Council goes on too. The Birthplace Museum secured a piece of history in purchasing the 'Thrale' letter, keeping it in the country and in public hands. The museum continues to be free to enter and has again seen a year on year increase in visitors. The small grants scheme has had a record-breaking year, investing a record amount in our community and voluntary sector. We have also invested a record amount of Community Infrastructure Levy in the community, more in this year than all previous years combined. We have established a long-term solution to pay for the 9-yearly twinning event and will soon be looking to partner with businesses to offer them sponsorship opportunities and help make the most of the event.

A busy year, and it would be totally inappropriate to close with anything other than the most heartfelt thanks to my fellow councillors for their support and challenge this year, but more importantly to every officer and employee of the Council without whom none of this would be possible.



*Councillor Dave Robertson
Council Leader*



*Councillor Sam Schafer
Mayor*

OPEN SPACES

No Mow/Wildflower Areas

During 2023/24, the City Council expanded its wildflower borders on the perimeter of Festival Gardens, doubling the width from the 2022 provision and introducing a new seed mix. The council also introduced 'no mow' areas at this site and at Nether Stowe. Both sites had paths mown through the unmown area to allow residents and visitors full access. Positive comments were received during the summer, but the main area that attracted praise was the small wildflower area created opposite St Chad's Church.

This area was in very poor condition, with unauthorised parking occurring regularly and churning the area significantly. To combat this, bollards were installed and, rather than creating an awkward area

to mow and maintain, the ground was prepared in readiness to turn the area into a small wildflower meadow. Photographs to the left and below show the area immediately after bollard installation and during the peak of the wildflower display later in the summer.



Similar wildflower seeds were planted at Festival Gardens to enhance the meadow planting undertaken in 2022. These too bloomed throughout the summer and attracted positive comments (pictured left). The bund at Nether Stowe also continued to produce a good display of flowers. The 'no mow' area at Nether Stowe is pictured overleaf.



For 2024, the 'no mow' and seeded areas remain, with further 'no mow' areas on Eastern Avenue and at Heather Gardens (adjacent to Festival Gardens), and new wildflower meadow sites at Broad Lane and Eastern Avenue. The City Council is actively looking for further opportunities to add to both 'no mow' and wildflower areas within its open spaces.

Bus Shelters

Five existing shelters in the Darwin Park area have been transferred to Lichfield City Council for maintenance. In conjunction with Leomansley Area Residents Association and SCC, two of these shelters have been relocated from redundant stops on Limburg Avenue. One shelter has been re-sited on Falkland Road (Agincourt Road), the second on Sainte Foye Avenue (The Whytmore). Both are on the X3 and 36 routes.



A further two bus shelter relocations were completed in late March; the shelters being relocated to Bridgeman Way to serve the X3 route.

Heather Gardens & Festival Gardens – Path resurfacing

Areas of damaged pathways have been retarmacked, one stretch on the path alongside Trunkfield Brook in Festival Gardens and a further two sections in Heather Gardens.



Cappers' Lane Roundabout – Site sponsorship

Jukes Funeral Services are now sponsoring the Cappers' Lane roundabout. This site is in addition to their existing sponsorship of the Birmingham Road/St Foye Avenue site.

The City Council would like to thank Jukes for their continued support, with their sponsorship allowing the council to create a significantly improved display on two of the city's most used roundabouts.



Hanging Baskets / Planters

The City Council has covered the cost of watering the hanging baskets in the City for many years and is pleased to continue this tradition. The hanging baskets always receive positive comments and help to make the city an attractive and pleasant place to be.

Footpath - Tamworth Road to Wentworth Drive

Following intense rain, further repairs were necessary to this path as it had become undermined with ground water resulting in ballast being washed down onto Tamworth Road. Surface repairs were completed and edges along the fence line created. Drainage holes have been incorporated to help relieve the water pressure from below.

Woodland Trust – Tree of the Year nomination

The Foxglove tree in Remembrance Gardens was nominated as one of the finalists in the 'Tree of the Year' competition organised by the Woodland Trust. The Paulownia tree is native to China and has colourful foxglove-shaped blooms in springtime. Unfortunately, the tree placed fourth overall, but remains an incredible spectacle in one of the city's most tranquil and peaceful retreats.





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

The City Council would like to thank Lichfield Litter Legends who have improved 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 for small wildflower areas in 2024.



Other matters progressed/completed in addition to routine inspections include:

- Footpath clearance at **The Windings, Woods Croft to Swallow Croft** (Footpath 27)
- Tree reduction at **Havefield Avenue / Cranleigh Way** (Site 49A).
- Replacement of aged festoon cabling and bulb holders along **Pool Walk**
- Tree works at St Chad's (completion of scheduled works following previous report and further investigations)
- Installation of removable bollards at entry/exit to Footpath 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 at Footpath 23, **Cathedral Rise to Beecroft Avenue** to discourage anti-social behaviour
- New litter bins installed at **Festival Gardens, The Parchments** and **Hillside**
- Memorial bench plaques added at the request of *Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide* (SOBS) at several sites including Friary, Festival & Heather Gardens, Market Square and Pool Walk

- Tree works at **St Michaels churchyard** - completion of scheduled works following previous specialist report and further investigations by the Open Spaces officer and LDC's Arboricultural officer
- Various tree works and hedges cut back at **Haymoor** (Site 53 open space and pathway)
- **Gazebo** (Site 22) – reoiling of wooden owl sculpture, cut back fallen ivy clad branch, monitoring of reported anti-social behaviour assisted by local community police
- **Beaconfields** (Site 15F) works at Seckham Road to reduce Hawthorns, Lime crown and remove ivy/dead wood from Sycamores.
- **Remembrance Gardens** – replacement of bench slats due to vandalism, Cleaning and tidying ahead of Remembrance Sunday. Crown lift of oak trees.
- **Wordsworth Close** (Site 26A) all trees crown lifted, deadwood removed and reduced back from carriageway.
- **Boley Close** (Site 23) tree works to reduce from road and clear phone wires
- Several footpaths required cutting back where overgrowth has been unusually high, where possible this was completed in time for new school year.
- Culvert clearance at **Nether Stowe**
- **Friary Remains** (Site 19A) - Fir Tree felled and dismantled as recommended following professional evaluation.
- **Netherbridge Avenue** (Site 44A) – crown lift row of lime trees and general site maintenance
- **Cappers Lane Embankment** (Site 50) – Remove dead wood from Ash trees
- **Leomansley View** (Site 18A) – Crown raise 3 x Chestnut trees, selected branch removal to Beech
- **Swinfen Broun Rd** (Site 15b/e) fell leaning Elm
- **Jordan Close** (Site 15F) remove dead wood from Beech tree
- **Heather Gardens** (Site 19b) - wall near rose beds has been repointed with lime stone mix. Fell dead cherry tree, crown lift over footpaths, reduce three lime trees and remove epicormic growth
- **Christchurch Churchyard Extension** (Site 61) - reduction of red oak encroaching over residents' gardens at Townfields
- **Christchurch Lane to Allotments** – removal of fallen Hawthorn that blocked the path following strong winds over the Christmas period.
- **Hazel Grove** (Site 20) – Tree works completed to various Larch, Ash and Cherry, plus reduction to fence height of ivy-covered holly leaning over neighbouring garden.
- **Ash Grove** (Site 17C) – General tree works completed including to reduce height of Sycamores next to flats at Mulberry Drive, reduce Hawthorn in line with existing hedge and to cut back and clear garden access points within wooded area.

GUILDHALL & COMMUNITY HALLS

The Council owns Darwin Hall, Cruck House, Curborough Community Centre and Boley Park Community Hall.

Darwin Hall, Curborough Community Centre and Cruck House are operated by management committees under licence from the Council. The Committees manage the buildings, paying the running costs and receiving income from lettings, but with the Council being responsible for maintaining the fabric of the buildings and larger projects as necessary. All three facilities are extremely popular and well run, and the City Council would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the management committees, staff and volunteers.

The City Council assumed control of Boley Park Community Hall in 2016 after key members of the management committee stepped down after many years' service. A new constitution was devised to allow Council officers to act as volunteers in the capacity of Treasurer and Secretary, with City Council appointed Trustees.

Significant work took place at [Darwin Hall](#) during 2023/24, with the zinc roof removed and an updated structure put in place to remedy the condensation issues that were causing significant damage to the hall's structural timbers. Investigations revealed several other concerns, leading to much more of the roof structure being replaced than originally envisaged. New rooflights and solar panels were installed, together with wider guttering and improved drainage. The opportunity was also taken to improve several other features of the hall, including new lighting.





At [Boley Park Community Hall](#), the play area utilised by the pre-school was renovated and greatly improved. This was organised and managed by pre-school representatives and benefited from a significant CIL funded contribution from the City Council. Further detail is provided in the 'CIL' section of this report. A fire alarm and new CCTV were also installed at the Hall during the year.

The roof and rainwater goods at [Curborough Community Centre](#) required urgent attention during the year; heavy rainfall in early Autumn 2023 caused a significant leak that damaged the internal finish of the building and led eventually to the collapse of a small area of the ceiling.

Together with LCC's architects, a schedule of work was prepared, quotations obtained and a contractor appointed. The work was completed in approximately three weeks, but as it involved the need for expensive scaffold arrangements, the opportunity was taken to carry out less urgent but

necessary repairs to the roof and to re-route some of the guttering and downpipes. The clerestory windows were also repaired and redecorated during this work. Some 300 roof tiles that were damaged or broken were replaced, together with replacement of all flashing, and dozens of hip and ridge tiles etc. The work was completed before the Christmas break, allowing the scaffold to be removed in time for the holiday period.



The Council also owns and manages the [Guildhall](#), which is let for private and commercial events and for use by local organisations. It serves as a venue for concerts organised by Lichfield Arts and is a popular venue for wedding receptions, civil wedding ceremonies and other life events.

The magnificent main hall is 87' (26 m) long and 25' (7.5 m) wide. It is oak panelled, with a beamed high roof, giving a fine medieval backdrop. At the north end is a large stone tracery-stained glass window that was originally placed in the north transept of Lichfield Cathedral in 1811 and depicts principal founders and patrons of the Cathedral. The Minstrels Gallery on the second floor overlooks the main hall and provides an excellent view of proceedings that is often used for photographs. Supported by a number of smaller meeting rooms, two kitchens (including a catering kitchen) and stair and lift access, the Guildhall is a jewel in the crown of the City of Lichfield.

The Guildhall has seen considerable improvement over the past few years, notably the renovation of the main hall to include new flooring, floor to ceiling redecoration, and improved lighting that was undertaken during 2020/21, and the redecoration of the main corridor together with replacement of ageing light fittings with LED's that was undertaken in 2022. During 2023/24 there has been a focus on ongoing maintenance with several minor repairs and redecoration completed.



SAMUEL JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

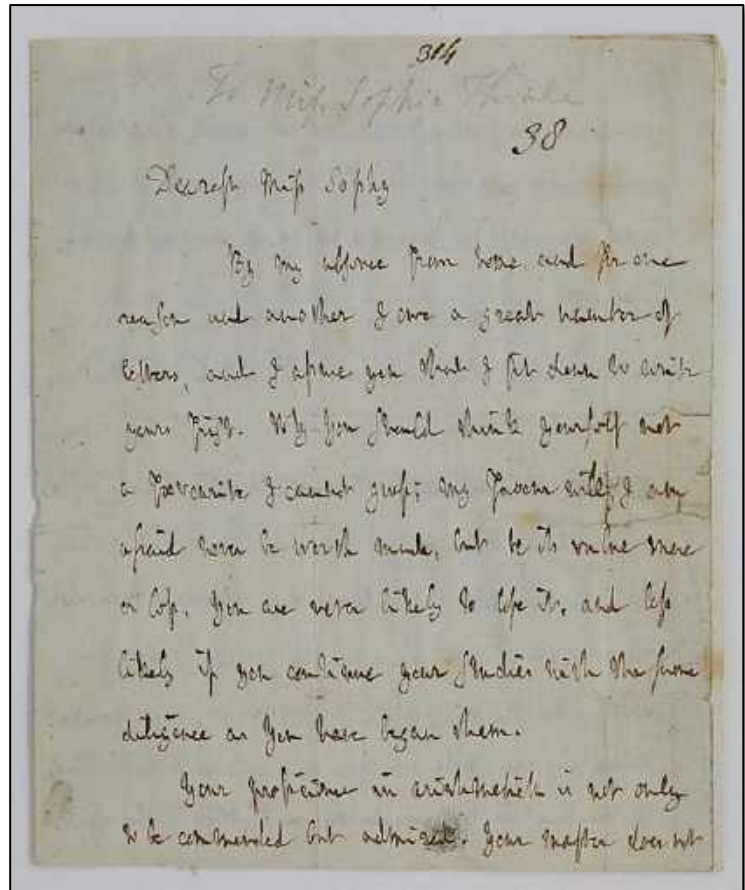
The [Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum](#) welcomed 17,563 visitors in 2023/24, a 19% increase from the previous year's figure of 14,807. Donations have risen 8%, and sales in the Bookshop are 32% above the equivalent period in 2022/23. Digital audiences continue to grow through the Birthplace's website, blog, e-newsletter, and social media platforms.

A letter written by Samuel Johnson was acquired by the Birthplace on 20 September 2023. The Birthplace found out about the letter in a BBC article published in August, and after acting swiftly the acquisition was made possible by funding and support from the Friends of the National Libraries (FNL), The Johnson Society, Lichfield City Council, and Phil Jones, a private donor. The letter is addressed to twelve-year-old Sophia Thrale, daughter of Hester Lynch Thrale, a British author, patron of the arts, and close friend of Johnson's. Johnson regularly corresponded with Hester and her children, yet this is the only known surviving letter between him and Sophia.

An article written by the Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) was accepted for publication in the FNL's annual report. The article reflects on the content of the letter and is freely accessible online via the FNL's website. The letter is on public display at the Birthplace.

Throughout the year the Birthplace team facilitated school trips, group visits, private functions, and research visits, alongside delivering a successful programme of events and exhibitions.

This year's events included Samuel Johnson's 314th birthday celebrations (pictured right) marked with the annual civic procession, and lively performances from St Michael's Church Choir, Lichfield Lighthouse Company, and the City of Lichfield Concert Band.



To commemorate the 250th anniversary of Johnson's tour of Scotland, the Birthplace displayed caricature etchings by celebrated satirist Thomas Rowlandson. The exhibition was entitled *The Picturesque Beauties of Rowlandson*. The full set of twenty prints were displayed from August to November 2023.

The Birthplace was once again host to the L2F Festival of Folk's art competition, with an exhibition of the finalists' work displayed from 7-15 October 2023. The theme was 'The Miracle of Life' and a presentation event took place in the Birth Room on 14 October with the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Sam Schafer, in attendance to congratulate the winners.



The Birthplace team successfully trialled a series of museum 'lates', which provided visitors with the opportunity to experience the Birthplace out-of-hours, with wine and storytelling events such as *Tales from Beyond the Grave* at Halloween, and *Tales of Romance* for Valentine's Day.

For younger audiences, the team expanded the popular programme of family events with activities in each of the school holidays, including weekly craft workshops throughout August, and *Super Spooky Crafts* at Halloween. Museum Attendant Kevin Lynch ran *Professor Custard's Toy Workshop* at Christmas, and *Spy School* in February half-term, where families worked together to crack codes and solve puzzles.

Festive events included a late-night opening in November for the *Christmas Lights Switch On*, and *Johnson's Family Christmas* which featured storytelling with Museum Attendant Christine Genders, musical performances, readings from the Lichfield Poets, and a Christmas bauble craft activity led by volunteers.

Black History Month was celebrated with a display exploring some of the fascinating Black men and women who helped shape Georgian Britain, and on International Women's Day, Museum Attendant Sarah Dale led a walking tour of the city focusing on women's history in Lichfield.

In February 2024 Listed Building Consent was granted for asbestos removal and remedial work at the Museum. The site temporarily closed to facilitate this essential work. Asbestos insulation board was removed from the kitchen, electrical intake cupboard, and storeroom. Thermoplastic floor tiles were removed and replaced with terracotta tiles, and a redundant flue pipe was taken out of the boiler room. New fire-resistant plasterboard ceilings were installed, and new lighting and fire sensors fitted.

The asbestos removal made it possible to complete other work at the property, including rewiring the basement and Bookshop, and installing lockable doors on the electrical intake cupboard.



Five new showcases were purchased to replace the outdated 1980s display cases. The new cases were chosen to provide a high level of security and environmental control, whilst the attack resistant all-glass vitrine enables full visibility of the exhibits. Interpretation labels have been updated for the displays in these cases, with the newly acquired Johnson letter being one of the highlighted objects.

The MHO has been developing the Workroom project with museum design company Vertigo, and expert bookbinding conservator, Arthur Green. This unique display will recreate an 18th century bookseller's workroom. The space will contain new interpretation, a hands-on activity for visitors, and a short film showing the highly skilled process of bookbinding.

In addition to manging the Birthplace and Guildhall Prison Cells, the MHO supports other Lichfield City Council heritage matters, including the ongoing restoration of historic city information plaques. As part of this work, a new plaque commemorating the life of Anna Seward was unveiled at the Guildhall on International Women's Day, during Women's History Month. The Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Ann Hughes, unveiled the plaque, and the Sheriff of Lichfield, Adam Burns-Mace, was in attendance (pictured right). The ceremony formed part of Lichfield City Council's International Women's Day celebrations in March 2024. The plaque was installed on Minster Pool Walk, near the area where Seward lived.



The MHO has continued to be involved in the Johnson bust reinstatement project. The bust, which is affectionately known as 'Johnson's Head', spent the year being restored in a stonemason's workshop. The final phase of restoration is almost complete, and plans are underway to install it in its original location on Bird Street.



The Birthplace Museum team also look after the Guildhall Prison Cells, which are open on Saturdays from April – September. The volunteer team welcomed 3,230 visitors in 2023/24 and look forward to another busy season in 2024/25.

The Birthplace staff would like to say a big thank you to the incredible volunteers who support the Birthplace and Guildhall Prison Cells by generously giving their time to welcome visitors, deliver family activities, run classes, and assist with collection documentation and conservation cleaning.

MARKETS AND MARKET SQUARE

Lichfield has held a Market Charter for nearly 1,000 years, and regular General Markets take place on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday of each week, together with specialist markets and other community events and festivals that utilise the Market Square and Pool Walk.

The General Markets on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday continue to be popular, attracting a variety of traders across the three market days. All three markets are either full or have very limited stall availability. The regularly updated [Markets Facebook page](#) includes general market information, historical information, and photographs of current stalls. Visitors to the page also have the option to immediately call or message the markets team. The [Markets also have a page on X](#) (formerly Twitter).

Products regularly offered at the market include greeting cards, fashion items, rugs, pickles and pies, fruit and vegetables, plants, printer ink and stationery, fresh fish, leather bags, belts and wallets, ready made curry, fresh meat, books and CD's, homemade cakes, picture frames and bespoke framing, knitted items, shoes, rugs, bespoke household items, flavoured spirits, antiques and collectibles.



In addition to general markets, there have been several events on the Market Square and Pool Walk across the year.

'Children with Cancer UK' held a charity event with several exercise bikes in their gazebo and willing volunteers pedalled away. If they completed a stint of 100 miles, they were awarded a medal. This event was organised by two sisters who are embarking on a 1000-mile bike ride challenge, riding from Lands End to John O Groats. On the day they raised £765 in their collection buckets, and a total of £1,900 with the online donations.



Lichfield Litter Legends also visited the Square, litter picking and spreading awareness of the group, as well as the importance of putting litter and cigarette butts in the bin or taking rubbish home. The Litter Legends were pleased to welcome Ukranian volunteers who assisted on the day.



Lichfield District City of Sanctuary provided a stall in honour of Ukraine Independence Day (pictured). The stall raised nearly £600 for humanitarian aid in Ukraine and, importantly, also raised awareness of the existence of refugees among us.

The Chamber of Trade and Commerce held their Festive Market on the Square on Sunday 19 November, also utilising the Guildhall and the Hub at St Mary's.

The Christmas Food Festival took place on 9 & 10 December despite the blustery weather conditions. Cockerhoop Creative hired Minster Pool Walk with a total of 16 traders on the Saturday but only 10 traders on the Sunday because of the high winds.



On 17 & 18 December 'The Red Book Bus' hired the Market Square to sell children's books at a reduced cost. On Sunday 11 February the 'Home Run Hounds' organisation hired part of the Square. 'Home Run Hounds' is a not-for-profit charity that rehomes retired Greyhounds, with some positive feedback received:

'We had a great time on Sunday, lots of people came to chat with us, with at least one couple very interested in adopting! I'm hoping to do another event perhaps in April.'

Christmas Market

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. Several positive comments were received, examples below:

'Just a couple of words to say "thank you" to you and your team, especially Jeremy, for making yesterday's event really memorable for me, despite the weather. I had such a good day with all your help. It seems that the whole population of Lichfield walked through Pool Walk in the afternoon. Amazing.'

'Everything ran smoothly and we really enjoyed the day. Our hot chocolates were a success, especially with Baileys! So lots of happy visitors.'

Producers' Market

The Producers' Market, which takes place on the first Sunday of every month (except January), is now an established and extremely popular local event amongst traders and residents alike. The Producers' Market is managed on behalf of the City Council by CJ's Events Warwickshire and usually consists of between 27 and 30 stalls on the Square.

Vegan Market

Following the 'pilot' events held in 2022, an expanded programme of six Vegan Markets were agreed for 2023. The Market has several stalls which showcase their independent, ethical, and sustainable producers, and offers a wide and varied range of products including baked goods, cosmetics, street food and jewellery. The Vegan Markets continue to attract a good footfall in 2024, with popularity increasing.

CIVIC EVENTS

The Annual Council Meeting took place in the Guildhall on Monday May 15 2023 where the new civic team were invested for the ensuing year. Councillor Ann Hughes was appointed Mayor, Councillor Sam Schafer was elected as Deputy Mayor. Joining them as Sheriff was Mr Adam Burns-Mace and the Sheriff's Consort was Anthea Mau.



During the meeting, the Mayor announced the appointment of RAF Cadet Sargeant Ben Carty and Mayor's Chaplain Revd Ian Hayter for her forthcoming year in office. The retiring Civic party were presented with replica badges of office.

The Mayor's Banquet was held on Monday 22 May at the Guildhall where 70 guests attended, including the outgoing Mayor & Sheriff. During the speeches, the Mayor and Sheriff announced the two charities that they will be supporting during their year in office: Lichfield City of Sanctuary & St Giles Hospice.

The Court of Array was held in the Guildhall on Monday 29 May. The 7th Lichfield Scout Group kindly helped once again providing eight Men at Arms who were 'inspected' by the Deputy Mayor & Sheriff. This year's High Constables, James O Hagan & Janice Greaves, called on the Dozeners to give their reports to the Lord of the Manor.

The Civic party then gathered on the Dias for the traditional Lichfield Bower procession which featured music, dancers, local community groups and floats including a past and present Lichfield Bower Queen display. The festivities later moved on to Beacon Park where several rides & stalls were set up for the fun to continue.



The Mayor led the Lichfield City Council team in the annual Swinfen Broun Challenge Trophy bowls match against the Lichfield Museum Bowling Club on Wednesday 28 June.

Regardless of the weather, an enjoyable evening was had by all and despite the best efforts of the City Council team, the Bowling Club took the trophy once again with a score of 107 to 54.

After the match, the Mayor presented the trophy to the Club President, Fred Perry, who thanked everyone for taking part and supporting the event. The Mayor then gave a brief explanation about the history of the challenge match, which has been played since 1924 (although it was not until 1926 that the trophy was donated by local benefactor, Colonel Swinfen Broun) and has been fought over ever since.

Players then retired to the Hub for a light supper prepared by members of the Bowling Club. The Mayor concluded the evening by drawing the raffle which raised a total of £134.00 for the Museum Bowling Club's charity fun day.

The Mayor's 'Back to School' event took place on Friday 25 August and was well attended, helping approximately 120 families in Lichfield with the cost of providing school uniforms. The afternoon was well supported with help from City Councillors and volunteers, with further support from businesses such as Tesco and Morrisons.

Generous donations were brought to the City Council offices by residents that included stationery and water bottles, plus some brand-new uniforms, purchased especially for this cause. The Mayor thanked everyone involved, from advertising in local shops, residents taking the time and effort to donate their pre-loved uniform and officers who helped organise the donations on the day.

On Saturday 9 September, the Sheriff of Lichfield, Adam Burns-Mace, took part in the annual tradition that is the Sheriff's Ride. Led by the Clerk of the Course, Nick Sedgwick, the Sheriff and Sheriff's Consort, Anthea Maou, were applauded as they left the Guildhall at 10:30am in a spectacular horse drawn carriage.



After alighting from the carriage at the Pinfold, the Sheriff and Sheriff's Consort continued their journey with the Clerk of the Course by car.

The remainder of the event was organised by an independent sub-committee of the Shrievalty Association and went on to complete a reduced ride starting at Freeford Manor, via Maple Hayes and back into the city, accompanied by several horse riders & cyclists.



The Ride was led by the Sword and Mace Bearers back into the city via The Close, where they were welcomed at the Cathedral by the Interim Dean, the Rt Revd Jan McFarlane, to toast the ride with a glass of sherry. The ride then continued via Dam Street to the Guildhall, where the Sheriff welcomed over 90 guests for the Sheriff's Banquet.



Samuel Johnson's 314th birthday celebrations took place on 23 September, it was a joyous occasion marked with the annual civic procession and ceremony, and performances from St Michael's Church Choir, Lichfield Lighthouse Company, and the City of Lichfield Concert Band. The Birthplace Museum was open throughout the day with craft activities, storytelling, poetry readings, and celebratory free cake for visitors.

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, 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.



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 – Felix Osbourne from Charnwood Primary Academy.



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

The Carols for Christmas Service was held in the Guildhall on Tuesday 5 December and at the request of the Mayor, the theme was 'Peace Around the World', particularly at Christmas time. The service was once again led by the Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend Ian Hayter.

The annual Pancake Races and opening of the Shrovetide Fair took place on Tuesday 13 February. The winner of the coveted ladies' trophy was Britney Lewis from John German Estate Agents, who won an afternoon tea donated by the Tudor of Lichfield. The winner of the Gents race was Will Pearce from EPO Solicitors, who won a £50 restaurant voucher. Winning the Under



10's race was Laiyla Robinson-Hudin, aged 10. Laiyla was presented with a certificate, medal, and a Garrick Theatre voucher, kindly sponsored by Howden Insurance. A big well done to Laiyla & all the children who took part, each received a special 'Mayor Bear' pin to remember the occasion.

Last of all, victorious in the Mascots Race was Jack Devlin from John German, who ran dressed as Batman's famous sidekick – Robin.

On Easter Sunday the Mayor and Sheriff together with civic representatives and a number of friends of Lichfield City Council, processed from the Guildhall to the Cathedral for the traditional service. The Mayor and Sheriff were pleased to welcome the new High Sheriff of Staffordshire, Julia Mitchell MA Oxon, to the Guildhall for the first time.

During their year in office, the Mayor and Sheriff hosted events to raise money for their charities, Lichfield City of Sanctuary & St Giles Hospice. The total raised is in excess of £9,000.

For 2024/25, the Mayor is Councillor Sam Schafer, Deputy Mayor is Councillor Claire Pinder-Smith, and Sheriff is Cathy Wood, known for her work locally with Lichfield District City of Sanctuary.

GRANTS AND OUTSIDE BODIES

The City Council's Grants Committee meets each February to consider applications from local groups in response to the Council's annual invitation to apply. At its meeting of February 2024, the Committee recommended grants totalling £31,363 to the organisations as indicated below.

Applications for grants from 2025/26 funds will open later in the year, but some funds are retained to allow in-year applications to be considered. Any group seeking further information can either visit the City Council's website or email enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk.

Application No.	Applicant	Recommended Award (£)
1	South East Staffordshire Citizens Advice Bureau	6,750
2	Lichfield District Arts Association	3,000
3	Lichfield Greenhill Bower	3,000
4	Lichfield District Council, Proms In The Park	2,000
5	Lichfield Community Sports Club CIC	2,000
6	Erasmus Darwin Foundation	1,000
7	Voluntary Transport for the Disabled	1,000
8	Lichfield Festival	800
9	The City of Lichfield Concert Band	500
10	Lichfield Re:Cycle	450
11	Men's Shed Lichfield	396
12	Dovehouse Community Gardens	300
13	Lichfield Hockey Club	595
14	Forest Harvest	100
15	Gamers' Wellbeing	491
16	Lichfield Talking News	500
17	The Hub at St Mary's	0
18	Lichfield Bowling Club	0
19	Lichfield Waterworks Trust	1,000
20	The Well	1,500
21	Friends of Lichfield City Station	1,000
22	Dereck Jones (Games/Coffee morning)	1,718
23	Transition Lichfield - Nurture Community CIC	1,000
24	The Lichfield Trishaw Project (Big Red Bike)	500
25	The City of Lichfield Shrievally Association	200
26	Drama Teens	500
27	1st Lichfield (St Chads) Scout Group	473
28	Lichfield Ladies' and Men's Probus Club	240
29	Lichfield Twinning Association	350
Total		£31,363

Additional Grants

The City Council awarded 'Summer Grants' to facilitate the expansion or introduction of events during the summer, and to assist with funding for places at such events for those who would otherwise be unlikely to be able to attend.

Lichfield Re:Cycle

£150.00 awarded to promote and hold a Back-To-School Bike Check event at Curborough Community Centre. This gave families and young people in Lichfield the chance to have their bikes assessed, adjusted and small repairs undertaken in time for the start of the new school term.

Lichfield Community Sports Club

£2,000 awarded to facilitate the provision of 100 places across the summer holidays at football or multi sports camps. Funded places being only available to families in receipt of benefits to provide an opportunity that is unlikely to have otherwise existed. The availability of these places was publicised by the council and the sports club, with high demand received

"The grant has been very useful for me as I am a single parent and it's sometimes impossible to give my daughter opportunities to do things like the sports camp as it is expensive and we live on our own. My daughter has had so much fun, and we are very grateful for her funded days."

A further £5,000 has been allocated for events in summer 2024.

Lichfield Litter Legends

In July, a £2,500 grant was awarded to Lichfield Litter Legends (LLL) to cover the cost of skip hire for the "Be Proud of Your Community" event. A LLL 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."

"So, when we were invited to lead a project which would give the area a 'deep clean', we jumped at the opportunity."

"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."



TWINNING

Having been cancelled three times due to the pandemic, the long awaited 'TwinFest', celebrating 30 years of the signing of the ring twinning agreement between Lichfield, Limburg and Ste. Foy was at last able to take place from the 9th to 12th June 2023. At the official invitation of the Limburg Mayor, the Mayor of Lichfield, Councillor Ann Hughes, Deputy Mayor, Councillor Sam Schafer and Sheriff, Mr. Adam Burns-Mace travelled to Limburg, together with around 50 Lichfeldians.

The official welcome by the Limburg Mayor took place on Saturday morning on the Europa Square. A local youth orchestra greeted the guests on their arrival with a lovely rendition of each country's national anthem and Dr. Marius Hahn was presented with a statue called "pity of war" by Lichfield's artist Peter Walker, remembering the civilian casualties of war (pictured opposite).

The Limburg Mayor emphasised in his welcome speech the importance of European friendships, like the ones of our 3 twin towns, especially in light of the war in Ukraine.



A work meeting took place for the official representatives of the 3 twinned cities, discussing future cooperation between, and aspirations of, the twin towns, especially the wish to connect the 3 youth councils. Many topics were covered, including post Brexit collaboration with potential focus on school and club exchanges. Pictured opposite are Officials from the 3 countries following the meeting.

For all other visitors there was a lovely river cruise along the river Lahn, which runs through Limburg. The Lichfield table tennis club took part in a tournament between the three cities.

On Saturday evening there was celebration meal, with all three city mayors giving speeches, recognising the twinning friendship between our cities over the last 30 years. There were exchanges of gifts and a fabulous show to round off a lovely evening.

In total, around 400 people from the three twin towns came together to renew old friendships and form new ones.



Sunday was a day of sightseeing with guided city tours of the historic town of Limburg and walk to a nearby basilica finishing off with an ecumenical service in Limburg's magnificent Cathedral, with the Limburg Cathedral Choir accompanied by singers from Lichfield and Ste. Foy. After the service, 30 white balloons were released from outside the Cathedral. A farewell gathering was then held in the Cathedral gardens, departing with many memories of a wonderful weekend.

The 3 Mayors with the Limburg Twinning Association's executive team



Guests returning from a river cruise along the Lahn river, welcomed by the Mayor of Limburg



The International Twinning Friendship Weekend is held every 3 years in alternate countries. In 2026 it is Lichfield's turn to host the celebrations. The date has been set for the 2 to 5 October 2026. It has been agreed to hold the main evening gala dinner for around 270 guests and hosts at the Cathedral. This will be a spectacular venue for our international friends.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The Christmas Lights Switch On took place on Sunday 26 November. As in previous years the City Council ran a competition with all local primary schools to select two children to help the Mayor turn the lights on. All entries were placed in a hat and two names selected at random. The lucky winners this year were Alex Gordon-Philip, age 6 from Christchurch school and Chloe Lam also aged 6 who attends St Chads primary school. Ahead of the big day Alex and Chloe met the Mayor for tea and cake in the parlour and to collect their prize of a family ticket to this year's Pantomime – Beauty and the Beast at the Garrick Theatre. On the day of the Switch On they were also presented with a chocolate hamper courtesy of Tesco Community Champion, Charlotte Aspley.

The Festive Market on Minster Pool Walk proved a popular attraction with traders reporting a good footfall. There was plenty to keep the younger visitors entertained ahead of the Switch On with a free tabletop football competition and children's rides on Bore Street as well as 'Mickey Mouse' who roved the City spreading Christmas cheer.

The rain held off as the crowds gathered to be entertained by community jazz band, Aspire, Stagecoach and Lichfield Rock Choir. The Town Crier, Adrian Holmes then led the crowds in a rendition of the (now expected) *Sweet Caroline* before the children of Christchurch Primary school sang traditional Christmas carols. The Mayor and competition winners then turned the lights on, and the evening concluded with a special appearance from Santa.

The City Council's security team estimated an attendance of approximately 3,800 people and thanks to them and a strong police presence there were no incidents, and everyone was able to enjoy the day safely.

A selection of pictures are included on the following pages providing a flavour of the day.







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 consists of all its Councillors, and for many years the Committee met at regular intervals to make recommendations to Lichfield District Council regarding Planning applications that had been recently submitted.

COVID-19 restrictions from March 2020 meant the Committee could no longer meet in person, so it was agreed that authority from Council would be sought to allow members of the relevant ward to discuss those applications between themselves and make recommendations to the Chair of the Committee. Those recommendations would then be submitted by officers under delegated authority.

This system worked extremely well and saw a streamlining of LCC's planning related processes that was perhaps unexpected. There were many favourable comments regarding those arrangements and while only intended to be temporary, the benefits were such that the Chair, Deputy Chair and Town Clerk jointly presented draft revised Planning Committee Terms of Reference for the consideration of the Council in 2021.

The revised terms of reference provide a good system of delegation with comments being endorsed at a subsequent Council meeting. The ability to hold a full meeting for any major plans that affect the whole city, where there is no agreement at Ward level, or upon request from the public, remains.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by government as part of the Localism agenda and is a way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work in conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan (as developed and adopted by Lichfield District Council).

Following development of a draft document by the City Council, the Lichfield City Neighbourhood Plan referendum was held in February 2018, with residents voting in favour of its adoption. The Lichfield City Neighbourhood Plan then become part of the Planning framework for the City.

Where a Parish Council has a Neighbourhood Plan in place, it receives 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions from a developer as opposed to 15% without a Neighbourhood Plan. The existence of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan ensures as much CIL money as possible is retained by the Parish in which the development is taking place, to be spent in consultation with residents and in accordance with the priorities laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

There are many competing demands for this funding, with the City Council's Grants Committee considering how this money is allocated.

Some projects where CIL has been allocated are ongoing, but details of projects that have been completed during 2023/24 are provided overleaf.

Lichfield Hockey Club - Provision of a tarmac pathway to provide improved access to the hockey pitch, notably to facilitate 'Flyerz Hockey' in Staffordshire which enables disabled and non-disabled players to play together.



Sports Club, Eastern Avenue – Footpath extended along the roadside and routed to the side of the entrance to the club, providing safer access and egress for pedestrians.



Boley Park Pre-School – CIL contribution to facilitate a much-improved play area for pre-school children at the site.



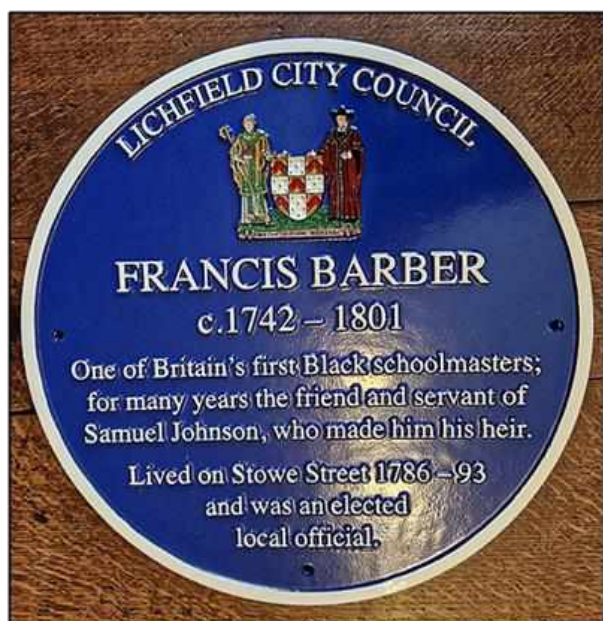
City Allotment sites – access and infrastructure improvements including resurfacing access roads and replacement gates.



Refurbishment/replacement of selected **City Centre** plaques



Plaques to Francis Barber (Cruck House, Stowe St) and **Anna Seward** (Minster Pool Walk)



Other completed CIL projects include:

- **Boley Park Community Hall** - New CCTV and monitored fire alarm installed.
- **Curborough Community Centre** - Aged wooden fencing to the car park perimeter replaced with a far more durable alternative of concrete and steel.
- **Hub at St Mary's** - Sound infrastructure improvements.

In total, approximately £108,000 of CIL has been invoiced during 2023/24, a significant increase on previous years, and a clear demonstration of the City Council's desire to see this money reinvested into the city.

Residents are encouraged to have their say on possible CIL funded projects and are invited to make written submissions to the Town Clerk at the City Council Offices, Donegal House, Bore St, Lichfield WS13 6LU or by email to enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk to assist in informing this process.

ELECTORAL MATTERS

Local elections were held on 4 May 2023, at which time all seats on the City Council were contested. The results saw control of the council shift from Conservative to Labour for the first time since the millennium. The overall composition of the Council is currently 16 Labour, 7 Liberal Democrat and 6 Conservative. There were no by-elections during 2023/24.

The full list of City councillors and their contact details is provided on the final page of this document.

FINANCE

The budget set by the Council in January for the 2024/25 financial year was for a council tax of £73.76 for a Band D property, a £5.00 increase from 2023/24 levels.

The comparison between 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets is detailed overleaf.

<u>Net Expenditure</u>	BUDGET	BUDGET
SERVICE AREAS	2023/24	2024/25
	£	£
<i>Parks and Footpaths</i>	272,029	279,533
<i>Guildhall</i>	142,609	153,425
<i>Community Centres</i>	14,105	14,335
<i>Markets</i>	10,167	2,948
<i>Civic</i>	94,353	101,327
<i>Grant Aid/Partnerships</i>	53,042	54,755
<i>Arts/Tourism/Twinning</i>	82,937	85,971
<i>Johnson Birthplace Museum</i>	136,847	159,544
<i>Democratic Services</i>	166,066	153,566
<i>Investment Interest</i>	-38,440	-55,110
<i>Loan Charges</i>	0	0
<i>Agency</i>	-18,045	-18,424
Total Service Cost	£915,670	£931,850
<i>Repairs and Renewals</i>	362,580	103,749
<i>Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</i>	17,305	-5,364
SUB TOTALS	£1,295,555	£1,030,235
PRECEPT	£860,670	£939,900
To/(From) Balances	(£434,885)	(£90,335)

<u>Balances and Reserves</u>	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2023/24	2024/25
	£	£
<i>Opening Balance (1 April)</i>	2,331,683	1,696,359
<i>To/(From) balances</i>	(434,885)	(90,335)
<i>Closing Balance</i>	£1,896,798	£1,606,024
<u>Closing balance held as:</u>		
<i>Capital Reserve - Repairs/Renewals</i>	1,014,362	771,286
<i>Grant Aid Reserve</i>	6,570	8,789
<i>Parish Election Reserve</i>	-	15,000
<i>Twinning Reserve</i>	-	17,000
<i>CIL Reserve</i>	171,154	121,597
<i>General Revenue Reserves</i>	704,712	672,352
<i>Closing Balance</i>	£1,896,798	£1,606,024

<u>Council Tax Analysis</u>	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2023/24	2024/25
<i>Precept</i>	£860,670	£939,900
<i>Apportioned Tax Base</i>	£12,515.9	£12,742.6
RESULTANT BAND D TAX	£68.76	£73.76

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, gender, culture, income, race or religion, and which seeks to develop their well-being, knowledge, understanding, and mutual co-operation.

Together with these broad objectives the City Council has several specific objectives for the forthcoming financial year, a number of which are detailed overleaf.

SPECIFIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 2024/25

AIM	RESPONSIBILITY	OBJECTIVES	TARGET DATE	ACTIONS
Resident Satisfaction/Facilities	Museums and Heritage Officer	Implement next phase of the redevelopment project at Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum	March 2025	Continuing work at the Birthplace to improve site access, removal of asbestos, development of new interactives.
Improve City Council owned Facilities	Museums and Heritage Officer/Town Clerk	Repairs to Birthplace Museum roof and access window following discussion with heritage professionals	November 2024	Scheme of Works, Listed Building Consent, appointment of contractors, completion of works.
Resident Satisfaction/Facilities	Museums and Heritage Officer	Improvements to Birthplace Museum online presence and educational offer	March 2025	Progress funded improvements to website with a focus on accessibility; overhaul school visits offer to ensure compliance with national curriculum and standardised provision
Resident Satisfaction/Increase Tourism	Markets Officer	Review Markets operation	Ongoing	Expand Market/event provision through utilising Pool Walk and/or Market Square. Further promotion of the Markets function.
Comply with Legislation/Guidelines (Health & Safety)	Deputy Town Clerk	Provide an updated employee Health & Safety handbook	Ongoing	Work in partnership with H&S consultants to update documentation as necessary; new policies to be put to Council for adoption in a timely manner.
Comply with Legislation/Guidelines (Transparency)	Town Clerk	Ensure transparency information is up to date, compliant and proportionate	Ongoing	Existing transparency information to be reviewed, newly available relevant information to be uploaded to the LCC website in a timely manner.

Open Spaces	Open Spaces Officer	Wilding areas at Nether Stowe, St Chad's, Festival Gardens, Broad Lane and Eastern Avenue; explore further opportunities for increased biodiversity across LCC open spaces	Summer 2024 and ongoing	Progress exiting/new sites and identify further sites for potential inclusion in 2025.
Resident Satisfaction/Increase Tourism	Museums and Heritage Officer	Plaque refurbishment project	Autumn 2024/Ongoing	Completion of refurbishment project and continuing discussions regarding new plaques following Barber and Seward plaque installations.
Resident Satisfaction/Facilities	Deputy Town Clerk	Completion of ongoing CIL funded projects/invitation for, and consideration of, further CIL bids	March 2025	Progressing CIL projects to completion.

Officer Contacts

Responsibility	Name	Tel:
Town Clerk	Tony Briggs	01543 250011
Deputy Town Clerk	Sarah Thomas	01543 309854
Finance	Alison James	01543 309853
Planning	Janet Taylor	01543 309857
Civic Matters	Harriet Chatwin	01543 309852
Open Spaces	Nigel Boden	01543 309851
Internal Audit	Graham Keatley	01543 250011

Responsibility	Name	Tel:
Twinning	Gabriele Lasch-Burden	01543 309858
Markets	Jeremy Williams	01543 309855
Johnson Birthplace	Kimberley Biddle Francesca Benson	01543 264972
Guildhall Room Hire	Helen Winter	01543 309850
Reception	Michelle Read	01543 250011

City Council Members

Councillor	Party	Ward	Email Address	Telephone
Jeyan Anketell *	Lab	St John's	Jeyan.anketell@lichfield.gov.uk	01543 268897
Hugh Ashton *	Lib Dem	Chadsmead	Hugh.ashton@lichfield.gov.uk	07864 950985
Deb Baker	Con	St John's	enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk	07785 246391
Colin Ball *	Lab	Curborough	Colin.ball@lichfield.gov.uk	07484 819301
James Blackman	Lab	Leomansley	James.blackman@lichfield.gov.uk	07852 288877
Russell Bragger *	Lab	Stowe	Russ.bragger@lichfield.gov.uk	
Jamie Christie	Lib Dem	Leomansley	Jamie.christie@lichfield.gov.uk	07855 249348
Janet Eagland *	Con	Boley Park	Janetmeagland@outlook.com	01543 257102
Katie Farrelly	Lab	St John's	Katie.farrelly@lichfield.gov.uk	
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Paula Knight	Lab	Curborough	Paula.knight@lichfield.gov.uk	
Angela Lax	Con	Stowe	Angela.lax@lichfield.gov.uk	07813 683049
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Ben Watkins	Lab	Leomansley	Ben.watkins@lichfield.gov.uk	01543 304282
Mark Warfield *	Con	Boley Park	enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk	01543 300934
Robert Yardley	Con	Boley Park	Robert.yardley@lichfield.gov.uk	01543 256083

* = also member of Lichfield District Council

✱ = also member of Staffordshire County Council