

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Wallace, Civic Officer

The annual Swinfen Broun Challenge Trophy bowls match against the Museum Bowling Club was held on Wednesday 29 June in Beacon Park. The rain finally relented and the sun shone on the City Council team, led by the Mayor. The City Council fielded a team of 24 players made up of Councillors, staff & friends. However, once again the Bowling Club took the trophy, winning by 187 - 108.



Town Criers from across the country descended on Lichfield for the third Lichfield City national Town Criers' competition held on Festival Market Day, Saturday, 2 July.

Ten Town Criers rang their bells and paraded in colourful costumes around the City Centre to the delight of all. The competition took place at Speakers' Corner where the Criers were challenged to give two performances, the first being a cry about their 'Home Town'; and the second on the theme of the 'the Full Moon' inspired by Erasmus Darwin and the Lunar Society. Under the rules of the competition our own award winning Town Crier, Ken Knowles was not allowed to take part but did perform the first cry of the day to set the benchmark for the judges.

After much deliberation the judges awarded the 2016 trophy to Paul Gough from Nuneaton & Bedworth with a total of 150 points. The Best dressed crier was awarded to Terry Ford from Otley and best dressed Consort was given to Maureen Taunton who accompanied her husband Peter, the Town Crier for Stafford. The winning cry was then performed in front of the west doors of the Cathedral as the Festival Market drew to a close. The competitors then paraded back to the Guildhall where the Mayor presented prizes to the winners.



The Mayor was delighted to welcome 96 guests to the Guildhall on Saturday 16 July for the 'Mayor at Home'. Nick Dewhurst played the piano while guests took afternoon Tea. The event concluded with a raffle in aid of the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.

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

1,345 visitors were welcomed to the Birthplace Museum in June, including a large group from the Friends of Leeds libraries. June was a busy month for school groups, with Whitehouse Common and Fulfen primary schools enjoying sessions, and Our Lady's Convent School, Loughborough, attending an A Level Dictionary workshop. The creative writing project begun with King Edward VI last month continued with the Mercia home education group visiting for a series of sessions with local writer Stewart Derry.

Excellent feedback was received from a previous school visit from St Chad's in Lichfield, with the teacher saying that the Birthplace primary session was: "one of the best, if not the best, school trip we have been on!" Positive feedback has also come in the form of a 'Certificate of Excellence' for 2016 from online review site TripAdvisor, based on the high proportion of excellent visitor reviews.

Family visitors enjoyed 'Half-term Fun!' in the school holidays, and the Birthplace partnered with Lichfield Festival to be part of the City-wide Ragdoll trail in early July with our very own Samuel Johnson created by Museum Attendant Sarah Dale. In other partnership projects, the Birthplace hosted members from the LitHouses Group at the Guildhall for their summer planning meeting with attendees from Robert Burns Birthplace, Abbotsford, Dr Johnson's House in London, Bronte Parsonage and the



Charles Dickens Museum. The MHO arranged a tour of the Cathedral, Birthplace and Darwin House as part of the day.

Staff from the Holst Birthplace Museum in Cheltenham also met with the MHO to find out more about our management and displays. June ended with the hanging of the summer exhibition of local calligraphy works 'Harmony & Grace', which has already received excellent feedback from visitors and was officially opened by the Mayor at an event on 8 July.



3. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

As well as our regular bookings, we have also accommodated a Wedding Reception, Birthday Party, Wedding Ceremony and an Anniversary Party. The prison cells remain open on Saturday's and continue to attract a good volume of visitors.

South Staffs College recently hired the Guildhall for their end of year Media Students to display their works to families. This went very well and they plan to hold future events at the Guildhall.

Support Staffordshire held a large event which attracted over 30 stands. This was an opportunity for lots of voluntary organisations and charities to display their organisations and advice was offered by the organisers. The Guildhall has also hosted a Fabric Sale, Corridor Gallery display, Bible Exhibition and a Pen Show.

As part of the Lichfield Festival celebrations, two performances have taken place at the Guildhall: Hamlet on Sunday 3 July, followed by The Rattler on 9 July. A Jazz and blues weekend was also held in June.

The Town Criers' Competition was held on Saturday 2 July and was greatly enjoyed by all who attended and held on the same day as the Florette Festival Market.

Many wedding bookings for 2017 have been received, with the Saturday diary already looking relatively full. The ongoing refurbishment work to the front of the Guildhall will help to make the building more attractive to hirers as well as improving the streetscene. The long-awaited toilet refurbishment begins on 15 August, further improving the facilities and appeal of the building.



4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

English Garden Party in Limburg

Limburg celebrated their annual English Garden Party on 10 July in style. The Mayor of Limburg Dr. Marius Hahn and the chairwoman of the Limburg/Lichfield Twinning association Frau Heide Bein both got into the spirit of the day, wearing their hats and welcoming the guests.

Both reiterated in their speeches that Brexit had no impact on the twinning relationship of the two cities.



Limburg Band at the Fuse Festival

Over the weekend of 8 to 10 July, a band from our twin town Limburg took part in the Fuse Festival at Beacon Park. They arrived early Friday morning, moving into their accommodation at Wade Street Church, kindly provided by Reverend Ian Hayter, were then warmly welcomed by the Mayor, Cllr Sheelagh James in the early afternoon, followed by a city tour with green badge tour guide Gill Cooper. Their



concert was on Sunday morning and was very well received by a good crowd of visitors.

They were overwhelmed by the friendly reception from the City of Lichfield and drove back on Monday morning with many fond memories of the weekend, talking already about coming back again next year. They sent a thank you message to Lichfield from the tunnel under the English Channel, whilst writing a new song about Fuse 2016.



Twining Feature

The Lichfield Mercury has kindly offered to do a 2 page feature on Twining in one of the September issues. Any ideas and photos are greatly received by emailing the Twining Officer. It will be under the positive headline of “Brexit does not mean the end of Twining”.

Future Events

The Lichfield Friary Judo Club has expressed interest in an exchange with the Limburg Judo Club in early 2017.

The artist Peter Walker is going back to Limburg in October to do a special light show to coincide with the Limburg Twining Association’s Lunar Moonlight Dinner to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of The Lunar Society.

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

Most of July’s work has been helping the Blooming Lichfield team improve their chances by focussing on City Council land that will be seen by the judges. However, the increased rainfall over the last two months has meant that not only has the grass grown quicker than usual but also it has been difficult to cut. It has brought a rise in the number of enquiries but the District Council Grounds Maintenance Team always responded quickly and complaints have been short lived. Unfortunately if grass is cut wet and long it does look unappealing for a couple of days.



A longer term issue is to balance what is wanted between nature and neatness in Lichfield’s open spaces, one person’s wildlife meadow is another’s unkempt wasteland.

The RHS have been asked for their advice on “sensible meadow management” for next year. This year the City received a grant of



£500 from the RHS towards their initiative of 'Greening up the Grey'. Part of this was spent in July on a garden design workshop for unemployed 18 to 24 year olds which proved both useful and fun.

A lot of work has been completed at the Curborough Community Centre. Acme Tree Surgeons provided a forest school financed by a Community Grant using wood cut from the City. Rockfords and Charnwood schools have both given it a try with plans to continue next year.

In the neighbouring open space a raised bed for the Bromford Housing gardening club has been built, financed by Green Doorsteps.

The Community Payback team who do a valuable job keeping Curborough tidy showed more skills by planting out a vegetable area, building fences and making a recycling area from wood provided by Tipplers.

The RHS judges will be meeting at Curborough on 20 July for lunch after being shown all the other brilliant community work and colour in the City.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Tony Briggs

The 'Payments' section of the City Council's new website was launched on 1 July. Integrating with the City Council's PayPal account, the new service allows the hire of the Guildhall, purchase of event tickets or payment of a City Council invoice to be made online via PayPal using a credit/debit card or the purchaser's PayPal account.

The 'fob entry' system in place at Donegal House has been extended to cover the two rooms on the second floor that are currently offered for let. The opportunity has also been taken to upgrade the access software in readiness for further extension of the fob entry system scheduled to take place later in 2016/17. This updated software includes increased fire safety provision, linking to the main Guildhall and Donegal House monitored alarm systems to ensure doors release in the event of fire.

The replacement of the Guildhall fire alarm is now complete. Together with the professional fire safety risk assessment that was undertaken at the same time, this work has ensured the Guildhall is compliant with prevailing fire safety legislation and guidance. The new system should have a life span of at least 10 years.

Preliminary meetings were held with the two companies who successfully tendered for the renovation of the Guildhall toilets and the cleaning of the Guildhall front elevation stonework and stained glass window.



The renovation of the toilets is due to begin on 15 August and is expected to take around four weeks. In preparation for this, the City Council's electricians are in the process of replacing the light fittings in the toilets with modern LED alternatives.

The cleaning and repointing of the Guildhall frontage began on 12 July. Utilising a mobile boom rather than scaffolding, the inconvenience caused to hirers has been reduced dramatically and ensures equipment can be quickly moved to allow for the several wedding ceremonies and receptions that are booked over the coming weeks. The cleaning phase was completed on Friday 15 July.

On 13 July the stained glass windows were assessed by specialists. Only one window gave cause for concern, the largest of the three windows above the main panels is badly bowed and is in danger of falling out if repair work is not undertaken. Specialists advise that repair can be completed with the window in situ, though it will be case of stopping the window from bowing further rather than being able to push it back into its original place. The work can be completed in a day or so – dates are currently being arranged.

Included in the tender is the overhaul/replacement of the noticeboards and the fixed 'doors' that front the Guildroom. The cleaning of the Johnson and Boswell statues in the Market Square has also been completed as part of the same contract. The contractors estimate they will be on site for around eight weeks.

Discussions are ongoing with the City Council's architects in relation to the next phase of the R&R schedule for 2016/17, including repairs to the Guildhall stairwell roof and basement conversion at Donegal House.

