

For Council: 16 December 2024 APPENDIX 10

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

Samuel Johnson's 315th birthday celebrations took place on Saturday 21 September, it was a joyous occasion marked with the annual civic procession & ceremony which included placing the laurel chaplet on the statue of Dr Johnson on Market Square 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 activities, storytelling, poetry readings, and a spectacular cake prepared by Oggy's Cakes of Lichfield. The free slices were greatly enjoyed by visitors!



*L – Mayor, Cllr Sam Schafer, placing the laurel Chaplet on Dr Johnson Statue
R – Sheriff, Cathy Wood, Deputy Mayor, Cllr Claire Pinder-Smith & Mayor, Cllr Sam Schafer
cutting the Birthday cake*

The annual Remembrance Service was held in the Cathedral on Sunday 10 November. Following the Cathedral service, the Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr Johnny Leavesley DL, accompanied by the Mayor, Councillor Sam Schafer, led the civic party to the Remembrance Gardens to observe the national two-minute silence and perform the wreath laying ceremony.

Following this, The Rt Revd Jan McFarlane, 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 100 guests returned to the Guildhall for light refreshments. The Mayor then gave thanks to all those involved on the day and James O'Hagan said a few words on behalf of the Royal British Legion.



The Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr Johnny Leavesley & Mayor of Lichfield, Cllr Sam Schafer pictured in the Garden of Remembrance

On Saturday 16 November, the Mayor welcomed guests to the Guildhall for the Mayor & Sheriff's 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 afternoon tea at Tudor of Lichfield and a Gift Voucher for City Jewellers. Many other wonderful prizes were provided, which were greatly appreciated. The evening was enjoyed by all, and profits will be equally shared between the Mayor and Sheriff's chosen Charities, Staffordshire Blood Bikes & Lichfield Foodbank. The Mayor and Sheriff's next Charity Event at the Guildhall will take place on Saturday 8 February 2025; a Ceilidh Dance. More details will follow in the New Year.

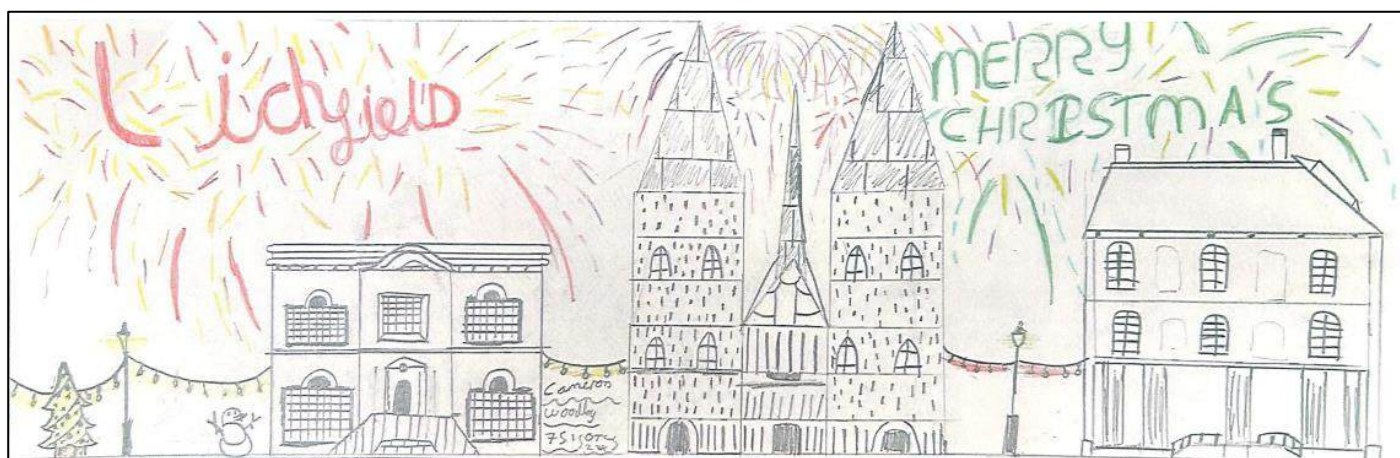
For the City Council's official Christmas card this year, the Mayor and Sheriff ran a competition inviting local primary & secondary school children to draw 'A Festive Picture'. After much deliberation, two winners were selected: Emma from Christ Church Primary School & Cameron from Friary High School. Both have been invited to meet with the Mayor & Sheriff in the Mayor's Parlour to receive their prize & see their drawings in print.

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.

Joint Winner's drawing; Emma Ballantyne from Christ Church C of E Primary School



Joint Winner's drawing; Cameron Woodley from Friary High School



At the time of preparing the report, the Civic Officer is organising the joint Mayor & Chair of Lichfield District Council's Carols for Christmas Service. This year, we are once again joined by local Choir, 'Tuneless', joining our resident Choir, St Michael's, Lichfield & St's John's, Wall, 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 Birthplace has had a successful autumn welcoming 3,061 people in October and November. Visitor numbers are up 11% for this period in comparison with 2023.

The Birthplace was host to Lichfield Arts' annual Festival of Folk Art Competition, with an exhibition of the finalists' work on display from 29 September – 5 October. This year's theme was "Cakes and Ale, Celebrating the Good Life". A presentation event took place on 5 October in the Birth Room with the Mayor, Councillor Sam Schafer, in attendance to congratulate the winners and award prizes. The Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) was part of the judging panel for the competition, which is sponsored by Dame Oliver's. As part of the Festival of Folk Art celebrations, the Birthplace featured in the Arts & Heritage Procession which began at the Cathedral and paraded through the Square and Market Street.

The autumn programme of events started with Meet the Barber Surgeon (pictured). This was a free event where visitors could meet an 18th-century Barber Surgeon to learn about medicines and cures from the past. Visitors of all ages learnt how herbs, leeches, and bloodletting were used to cure the sick, and were treated to seeing his gruesome tools of the trade.



Our Halloween offering included the sold-out Tales from Beyond the Grave, an evening of spooky storytelling with local performer and Museum Attendant, Christine Genders. Half-term activities included a horror literature themed trail, and a Super Spooky Family Craft Activity run by Birthplace volunteers.

Our popular guest speaker, Sheelagh James, gave a sold-out talk in November called The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly, focusing on medicine and surgery in the 1700s. Our festive events offering included Professor Custard's Toy Workshop, a fun craft activity for families led by Museum Attendant, Kevin Lynch, and Christmas at the Birthplace which included storytelling, live music, and seasonal treats for sale.

The Bookshop development project continues with the arrival of a new central display unit (pictured). This unit was designed by Sculpt Design specifically for the Birthplace, and not only provides essential and much needed storage, but also a larger and more impactful display area for stock.

Due to the rescheduling of the Christmas lights switch-on, the accompanying Birthplace Light



Night event took place on 1 December. The event included a festive family craft activity and mulled wine and mince pies for sale.

The MHO attended the LitHouses conference at Newstead Abbey in November. The conference provides an opportunity for heritage professionals to network and share their knowledge and experience. Many topics were covered at this year's conference including industry trends, academic partnerships, commercial activities, and engaging new audiences through exploring diverse and hidden stories.

Festive products have been added to the shop, including baubles, stocking fillers, and a brand-new Birthplace Christmas card designed by Lisa Hand Illustration (pictured). New product lines have been introduced including a Birthplace tea towel and matching fridge magnet, also designed by Lisa Hand Illustration.



The Birthplace continues to work towards engaging new audiences, and one of the ways we are approaching this is through academic partnerships, and student volunteering opportunities. Tess, our most recent student volunteer placement, has written a blog post about the experience she gained here over the summer holidays. Tess's November post can be found on the [Birthplace's Blog](#).

Arthur Green, book binder, conservator, and consultant for the recent Workroom redisplay, delivered a training session for Birthplace staff and volunteers. The training gave the team an understanding of how this room would have been used by Michael Johnson and his apprentices in the 1700s. This new knowledge will be used to develop and improve our guided tours.

The winter season is set to be busy with school visits. The final trial session for our new education offer was delivered on 27 November by 'Up An' At 'Em History' (pictured), and we have already taken bookings for the new sessions in December and January. Guided Tour bookings are also increasing in popularity, including a very festive booking for a choir on 29 November, who ended their visit with a rousing Christmas carol.



Recent essential building work at the Birthplace has included repairs to the lead work, back gutter, and chimney. This work will prevent further water ingress in the attics, which was originally

thought to have been caused by issues with the valley gutter.

In addition to work at the Birthplace, the MHO has returned a long-term loan of two silver equestrian statuettes and two silver trumpets to the lender, Staffordshire Yeomanry Museum. These objects had been in storage for St Mary's since 2015. The items will go back on display at the Staffordshire Yeomanry Museum in the near future.

Listed Building Consent has been granted to install a blue plaque on a property in Bore Street to commemorate Daisy Shaw. Shaw was Lichfield's first woman Councillor and first woman Mayor. She had been a suffragist and a Voluntary Aid Detachment Red Cross Nurse at a hospital for wounded soldiers during the First World War.

The Guildhall Prison Cells have closed for winter and a get together for the Cell's volunteer team was held at the Birthplace to thank them for their dedication this year. The team thoroughly enjoyed their experience volunteering and are looking forward to welcoming visitors in 2025.

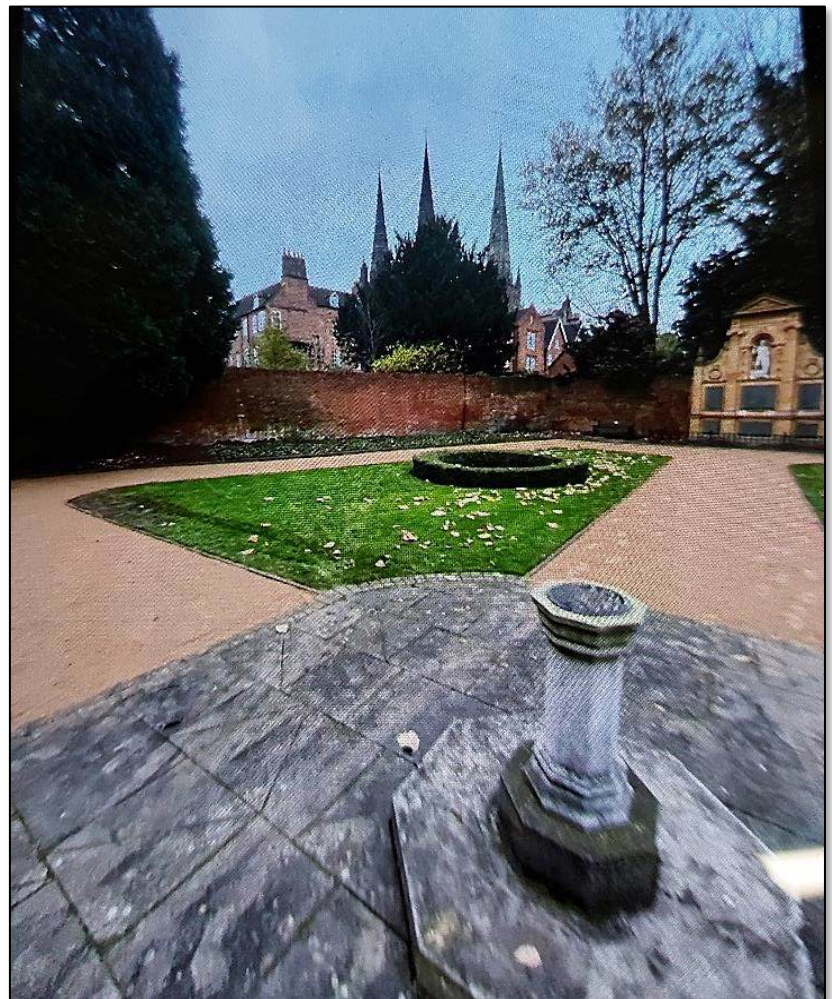
3. Open Spaces: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer and Jane Varley, Clerical Officer

Remembrance Gardens (Site 28)

Following the successful completion of sewer repairs by South Staffs Water, various garden improvements were undertaken and completed in time for Remembrance Sunday.

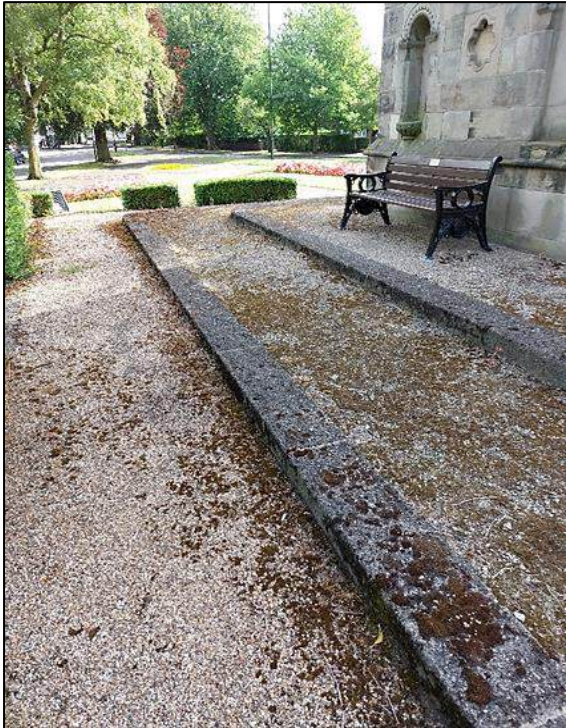
These included replanting of flowerbeds along the northern wall, the renovation and repainting of benches and railings, and the much larger project of renewing the pathways that run around and through the Gardens.

The need to renew the pathways had been acknowledged for some time but was not completed previously due to the knowledge of the issues with the pipework running under the Gardens that were the subject of Severn Trent's recent repair work; such work involving the digging of significant areas of the Gardens, and the final scope of which was unclear until investigations were made by Severn Trent while on site. With that work now complete



Clock Tower (Site 19D)

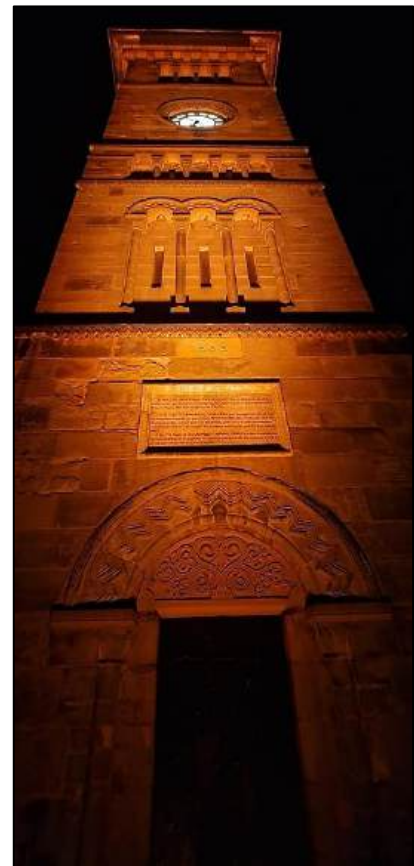
Refurbishment work has been completed to the step areas surrounding the Tower which included removal of moss and weed growth, application of preventative treatment and replacement of gravel; 'before and after' photographs are provided below:



The Clock Tower was lit in orange on 25 November to support the international campaign against gender-based violence against women. The lighting was requested by [Soroptomist Lichfield and District](#) as part of a week-long awareness campaign.

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

- **Frenchman's walk (FP12)** – Foliage overgrowth has been cut back, particularly around lighting columns. Faulty lantern to be replaced by E.ON
- **Pool Walk (Site 29)** – Repair posts and fixings to fallen access door and frame. Action taken to improve flooding on path by clearing drains
- **Middle Lane, Leomansley (Site 18C)** – Hedging reduced following reports of lighting being restricted by overgrowth
- **Curborough Community Centre (Site 9)** – Hedge cutting plus further repair of fixings to bench and bin



- **Broad Lane (Site 51B)** – Removal of silver birch due to proximity to driveway and associated root problems
- **Hazel Grove (Site 20)** – Removal of large broken tree limb
- **Netherbridge Avenue (Site 44A)** – Reduction of trees overhanging garden
- **Friars Alley (FP 13)** - Overgrown laurel, holly and maples have been cleared along the footpath to the rear of Friary remains
- **Balmoral Close (Site 55)** - Re-pollarding of Black Poplar tree and pruning of smaller trees at this site.

The scheduled repairs to the wall on the Friary remains site have had to be postponed until 2025 due to delays in sourcing the correct stone and the likely impact of the cold weather on the planned repairs. The contractor has confirmed a start date of 31 March 2025 for this work, which is being progressed in consultation with LCC's architects and Heritage England.

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

A full market is being maintained on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday and any traders that have given notice have been swiftly replaced from those on the waiting list.

All food stalls are still being monitored for standards of food hygiene and temperature of stock sold and stored on the market, these are recorded on a due diligence record and held for future reference. Officers are working closely with Environmental Health Officers at the District Council to ensure standards are maintained.

Most of the regular market traders have expressed an interest in standing on extra market days on the run up to Christmas, notably Sunday 22 and Monday 23 December; to facilitate this, a request for additional markets to be created by utilising the Council's powers under the Food Act Part III can be found elsewhere on the council agenda.



The Fruit and Vegetable stall is now standing on Wednesday's which has proved popular with shoppers. In addition, for the festive season, a new trader selling wreaths and Christmas decorations is standing on Wednesdays and Mondays.

TUESDAY MARKET UPDATE



Currently all pitches on the Tuesday market have been filled. The turnover of traders on the Tuesday market is quite high, however the waiting list maintained by Officers has proved effective in rapidly filling any spaces.

Some of the casual traders have now signed permanent licences which is reducing the casual traders standing and will stabilise the Tuesday market. The Traders that have completed their 12 weeks as casual traders and become permanent are "*Bubbles in Bloom*", "*Exclusive by Design*", "*The Gift Fairy*" & "*Tillibakes*".

As a result, there are only three casual pitches remaining on the market, two of which have been filled by "*BS Bahia Fashions*" who sell nightwear, socks, and gloves.

A restricted market was held on Tuesday 10 September due to high winds and on 9 December only two traders stood due to the forecast of heavy snow.

FRIDAY MARKET UPDATE

The Friday market is now full, and all traders are permanent. The Markets Officer maintains a list of casual traders from all three markets that are invited to stand when permanent traders are absent or take holidays, this maintains a full market.



SATURDAY MARKET UPDATE

The Saturday market also remains full. Again, The Markets Officer maintains a list of casual traders from all three markets that are invited to stand when permanent traders are absent or take holidays this maintains a full market.

On Saturday 16 November, Martyn Shaw of "Framed" invited the Aston Villa legend, Dennis Mortimer, to come to the market with a replica of the European Cup to promote his book and memorabilia. These items were also available to buy on the stall. Dennis kindly signed autographs and posed for photographs with customers in front of the cup.

Due to the high winds predicted the market on Saturday 23 November was cancelled.



FESTIVE MARKET

Due to high winds on 24 November the Christmas Light Switch On event was postponed by one week until 1 December. Sadly, the Festive Market had to be cancelled due to the time constraints of rescheduling, however pitch fees will be refunded to all traders affected by the cancellation.

VEGAN MARKET

The Vegan market runs on the third Sunday of the month. This is becoming increasingly popular with an average of 26 traders helping to bring something different on to the market square with a range of diverse stalls. The last Vegan market before Christmas will take place on Sunday 15 December, and dates for 2025 have already been confirmed.

PRODUCERS' MARKET

The Producers' Market, operated by CJ Events, is held on the first Sunday of the month. This market is well supported by 30 standing traders and is immensely popular with customers, many revisiting every month.

The Market due to be held on 1 December was relocated to Minster Pool Walk to accommodate the Christmas Light Switch on Event. Dates for 2025 have already been confirmed.



SOCIAL MEDIA

All social media platforms maintain a good following with reach climbing. This is due to cross posting to LCC Facebook groups and help from other Facebook pages. Officers are continuing to track numbers and posts that are most popular and focus on new traders and specific traders on a rotating basis. This has proven to be the most effective way to promote new traders joining the market and helps the new traders get established.

LICHFIELD CHAMBER OF TRADE CHRISTMAS FAIR, 17 NOVEMBER 2024

The President of the Lichfield Chamber of Trade and Commerce reported that the footfall for the event was 26,120, a 73% increase on the footfall from the previous Sunday.

The President of the Chamber reported that this was down by just over 19% compared to 2023 but suggests that this was due to the rain and cold conditions on the day.



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



Since my last report, the Guildhall has been busy and many of our regular groups are now getting ready to hold parties in the run up to Christmas.

Regular hirers who meet at the Guildhall include RSPB, U3A, Slimming World, Chess, Bridge, Lichfield Friendship Centre, National Trust, Staffs Archaeological and Historical Society and City of Lichfield Concert Band.

The Old Prison Cells have now closed for the winter and will re-open again on Saturdays in April (except dates where there are whole building bookings).

Commercial bookings have included four market research bookings and four craft fayres, one of which is pictured to the left.

Other returning events at the Guildhall include a school awards ceremony, a Jobs Fair in the Main Hall and Guildroom and the Johnson Society Celebrations and Annual Supper.

There have been several concerts, including the U3A Band, Oberon Concert (helped by Lichfield Arts) and a Fleetwood Mad Concert. Lichfield Arts also held their own Folk Festival, upcoming talent night and two other concerts, including a tribute to Duran Duran.

Bramshall Artists held their annual exhibition in the Guildroom, and Lichfield Society of Artists also held a very successful 5-day exhibition as part of their birthday celebrations.

Party Bingo was sold out at their last booking and are returning with our last booking before Christmas on 22 December.



Lichfield Chamber of Trade and Commerce recently held a very successful Christmas Fayre in the Main Hall and Guildroom.

Other events included a private Christmas Party, the Mayor and Sheriffs Charity Ball and Remembrance Sunday. The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum also hosted a school visit that utilised the Guild Room, with a further visit scheduled for shortly after the deadline for this report. There have also been two training sessions, forty-one other meetings and ten rehearsals. An educational training group is also meeting at the Hall and have met fifty-four times in the last couple of months.

Other bookings and events for December included a Sinfonia Concert, the joint Mayor and Chair of Lichfield District Council Carols for Christmas event, a Lichfield Leather 2-day sale, two craft fayres, more market research bookings, a 2-day concert from Lichfield Musical Youth Theatre, two Lichfield Arts Concerts and a celebration dinner.

The diary for 2025 is filling up with concerts, weddings and other events, and enquiries are also being received now for the following year. The current diary is so busy running up to Christmas, that there is little availability for me to meet with potential hirers during office hours, and my meetings are also being held (around existing bookings) at weekends.

Guildhall events are now listed weekly on the Guildhall Facebook page.

Boley Park

The Playscheme returned in December, and we have attracted several craft fayres, an NCT fayre and an Animal Rescue Christmas Fayre is scheduled. This is in addition to lots of children's parties and other events. Enquiries for 2025 include stamp fairs, craft fairs, more children's parties and even a wedding reception next spring.

The boilers have had their annual service, and a small area of floor damage has been repaired. A new leaflet rack is due to be installed to replace the current provision which is at the end of its service life.

6. Deputy Town Clerk – Sarah Thomas

This year's Christmas Lights Switch On event took place on Sunday 1 December, one week later than scheduled due to the forecast of high winds as a result of storm Bert. Fortunately, all the contractors, suppliers, staff, and entertainers required were still available so the event could proceed as originally planned.

As in previous years the City Council ran a competition for two Lichfield school children to help the Mayor turn the Christmas Lights on. The two lucky winners of this unique prize were Trina Clare (age 10) and Kurtis Poon (age 4). Prior to the event Trina and Kurtis met the Mayor and Sheriff in the Mayor's Parlour where they were presented with the other element of their prize – a family ticket to see *Jack & the Beanstalk*, kindly donated by Lichfield Garrick theatre.



For several years, the event has been held with a small stage, located in front of St Mary's on the Market square. This greatly reduced the footprint for the event and in 2023 an attendance of approx. 4,000 (close to the maximum capacity of the market square) presented a Health & Safety risk. This arrangement also generated complaints from the public about not being able to hear or see what was happening on the stage.

In order for this event to continue safely, and upon the advice of the City Council's security team, an alternative solution was sought. A large TV screen and stage was hired for 2024 and the orientation of the event changed. The location of the stage was moved to the far end of the square, thus creating a much larger and safer footprint. Everything taking place on the stage was filmed by a professional camera crew and projected onto the screen, providing a much more inclusive experience for the audience. The introduction of the large screen also provided local businesses and organisations with an opportunity to promote their forthcoming events, the advertising revenue received covering approximately half of the hire cost.

The adjustments to the event took many months of preparation with crowd safety being the paramount consideration. The Deputy Town Clerk had several planning meetings with the professional security and events team (who have worked on the event for several years) as well as with the Police and Civil Contingencies, to ensure the Council delivered as safe an event as possible. As usual the event plan was circulated and approved by the District Council's Safety Advisory Group.

On the day and mindful of Martyn's Law, extra event stewards, medics and Police were in attendance and a number of additional crowd safety measures were put in place along with a robust communication system. All professional stakeholders involved are confident that the safety plan put in place was followed without placing the public at risk, this was borne out by the fact that there were no incidents or injuries. Early estimations are that the event was attended by approximately 5,000-5,500 people, however a review of footage taken on the day will provide a more accurate figure in due course. It appears that the good weather and the appeal of a Big TV screen certainly increased the number of people in the City. The changes made to this year's event will be carefully reviewed with all stakeholders in preparation for 2025.

As the day progressed and after a wet start, the sun came out as members of the public started to gather around the City centre. The Producers' Market, scheduled to be on the Market Square was relocated to Minster Pool Walk with many stall holders reporting 'a



great day's trading' and two having to leave earlier than planned as they sold out of stock. For the younger generation on Pool Walk there was free face painting and balloon art, a tabletop football tournament with prizes and a chance to get up close to Owls and Birds of Prey.



The entertainment on stage began at 12.30 with the Liberty Sign and Shine Choir - a group of young people with special educational needs who sign along to popular music. The entertainment continued with local community band Aspire, Stagecoach, local singer Cliff Antony and Lichfield Rock Choir. Our Master of Ceremonies for the day was our own Town Crier and Sword Bearer, Adrian Holmes who also entertained the crowd with a song or two. The introduction of the big screen was popular with all those who performed with the Principal of Stagecoach, Katie Howcroft commenting '*What a fantastic day and event overall. The new stage and screen were amazing, and I thought the atmosphere was great.*'

The children of Christchurch Primary school led the traditional Carol singing. Members of the public were able to join in this year as the lyrics appeared on the big screen. The Mayor's Chaplain, Rev Ian Hayter then gave a brief Christmas blessing. The Mayor, along with the two competition winners then started the countdown to the official switch on at 5.00pm. Finally, much to the delight of the children gathered, Father Christmas took time out of his busy schedule to come on stage and wish everyone a Happy Christmas.

Police Chief Inspector Paul Finlayson, Commander of Lichfield Policing Team with whom we worked closely on the event, stated: '*The event was very popular and seems to have gone down really well with the community. Well done on all the hard work I know a lot went in to it*

and it was great to see a really clear plan with a good Event Team to manage the whole thing. I wish all events were so well planned for. The officers enjoyed supporting the event.'

A further selection of pictures appears on the following pages providing a flavour of the day.

In addition to the Christmas Light Switch On Event the Deputy Town Clerk continues to research information for the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee as well as providing secretariat support to the Markets Working Group and full Council.

As mentioned in the above report the Deputy Town Clerk will be facilitating a review meeting regarding the Christmas Lights Switch on Event with all professional stakeholders before the end of the year.

The Deputy Town Clerk has also been invited to welcome Support Staffordshire to the Guildhall on 10 December as they will be holding their quarterly networking meeting here. Councillor Colin Ball has also been asked to attend to promote the City Council's Grant Award scheme.

Preparations for 2025 continue with the annual Health & Safety review scheduled and planning for a further Community Day on the Market Square.





