

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT – January 2020

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer



On Saturday 24 November the Mayor and Sheriff held their annual Charity Dinner Dance in the Guildhall which this year had a '*Splash of Colour*' theme. 89 guests attended the evening and enjoyed a splendid three-course meal followed by live musical entertainment. Our very own Sword Bearer and Town Crier Mr Ken Knowles took charge of the light-hearted auction, assisted by our Mace Bearer, Mr Richard Hunt. All auction and raffle prizes were kindly donated by local shops and businesses. The evening raised an

amazing £2,340.81 for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charities; St. Giles Hospice, Lichfield Voluntary Transport for the disabled and Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust.

The Mayor's Carols for Christmas was held on Tuesday 3 December in the Guildhall. The service was led by Mayor's Chaplain, Revd Nest Bateman and Tony White played the piano and accompanied 22 choristers from St. Chad's Choir. Scotch Orchard Primary School gave a splendid performance of '*Christmas Anthems*' with 15 students taking part. Everyone then enjoyed a glass of mulled wine and a warm mince pie. The mulled wine was prepared by former Lichfield City councillor Mr Tony Thompson, using his secret recipe! Donations received on the evening for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charities totalled £101.39.



The Mayor & Sheriff recently held a competition for local primary school children to design the City Council's Civic Christmas Card for 2019. The winner, with a beautiful festive coloured drawing of Donegal House, was Ava Sumpter aged 7 from Christ Church Primary School.



The Mayor and Sheriff both commented on how difficult it was to choose from the very high standard of designs but were delighted that Ava's card would send Lichfield greetings to Civic heads across the country and Europe. Ava was then invited to the Mayor's Parlour, where she was presented with her prize; a toy shop gift voucher, winning certificate, and her original drawing which had been specially framed.

Preparations continue for the Mayoral Sunday Service on Sunday 12 January; Mayor and Sheriff's Charity Beer & Skittles on Friday 24 January; Mayor and Sheriff's Charity Sunday Lunch on Sunday 9 February; School Speaking Competition on Friday 14 February and Shrovetide Pancake Races on Tuesday 25 February.

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

The festive season saw 3,136 visitors to the Birthplace Museum in November and December, with over 600 attending special events.

Christmas events in 2019 included late-night opening for the Christmas Lights Switch On with refreshments and activities. 'A Johnson Family Christmas' weekend was held over November 30 – December 1 with performances from Lichfield Singers and Lichfield Poets, a display of automata, craft activities and stalls from local authors and craftspeople. On Sunday 8 December a fairy craft session and storytelling day, inspired by Johnson's fairy tale 'the Fountains', attracted a full house of families. A Christmas Mouse trail for young visitors ran throughout the Christmas holidays.



The Museum team delivered school visits for St Joseph's Primary School (Lichfield) and sixth form groups from De Ferrers (Burton) and the Pingle School (Swadlincote). Library users included local researchers working on the musician Clementi, and an academic from Reading University looking at Johnson's personal possessions. The Birthplace welcomed a returning volunteer to the team, Megan Price, who had previously transcribed a huge amount of the manuscript collection. Volunteer Nicola Young created a display on Johnson and Joshua Reynolds to complement the painting on display at Lichfield Cathedral.

Becki Morris, Director of the Disability Collaborative Network, visited the Museum to carry out an access audit focussing on welcoming neurodivergent visitors, funded by West Midlands Museums Development. Other development events attended included the final part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion scheme, and a useful workshop on evaluation for funders.

In Partnership work, the Birthplace took part in the Visit Lichfield Christmas stocking tours and the MHO attended a meeting of the Friends of Lichfield Library. The excellent news came that Keele University has received an award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a PhD studentship in partnership with the Birthplace from October 2020. The collaborative doctoral research project entitled 'Samuel Johnson, Lichfield Literary Culture and Life Writing, 1775 – 1835' will use the Museum archive as a starting point for original research and the student will create displays and events as part of their project, which will be jointly supervised by Dr Nick Seager at Keele, Dr Mark Towsey at Liverpool, and the MHO. Interviews will be taking place in February.

The Guildhall Cells opened for two Saturdays prior to Christmas and welcomed 773 visitors, as well as an organised group visit of students from the University of Birmingham.

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



December and January have proved incredibly mild, so much so that the grass has been growing at a faster rate than usual resulting in early mowing in several areas.

During the Winter months while most trees are dormant it is a good time to cut back branches away from lights, raise canopies for pedestrians, and remove epicormic growth away from paths as pictured here at Samuel Close. It is also a good time to maintain mature trees by formative pruning.

With the excessive rainfall this Autumn some water has overflowed the banks of Curborough Brook onto the path and cycle track between Netherstowe School and the allotments. Lichfield District Council keeps the culverts clear weekly but in December they also removed the undergrowth to improve the flow. Further work will be required to reduce some of the silt build-up.



Staffordshire County Council has repaired a substantial hole in the pavement at the top of the Windings footpath which completes the programmed improvements to the City Council's footpaths for 2019/20.

4. Markets Report: Jordan Appleyard, Markets Officer

Stall occupancy remains consistent with 66% occupancy on Tuesdays, 54% on Fridays and 72% on Saturdays throughout December 2019. There are encouraging signs of growth on the Friday market as more casual traders have expressed an interest to stand. Fortunately, only one market was cancelled during December as a result of high wind speeds.

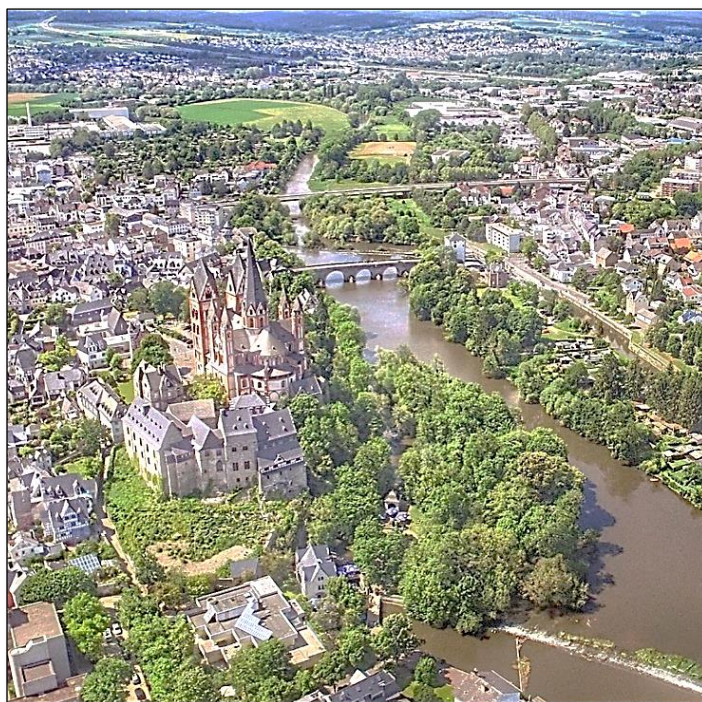
At its meeting of 21 October the Council resolved to set up a Markets Working Group to look at the decline of the Market and report back to Council. The second meeting of the Working Group took place on 17 December 2019, the minutes and recommendations form part of this Agenda and include an exciting option for a Sunday 'Producer's Market' to replace the ailing Farmers' Market.

As reported to December Council, a survey of Traders was undertaken to determine those who wished to stand extra days on the run up to Christmas. Unfortunately, only four traders chose to attend on the 22 & 23 December, nevertheless the feedback from both Traders and members of the public was positive and it is hoped this will encourage more Traders to stand in December 2020.

Following the success of the inaugural 'Community Day' held on the Square on 13 October, a second event has been scheduled for Wednesday 18 March. The event is already generating considerable interest on social media.

5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer

The main focus in the Twinning calendar this year will be the official Twinning celebrations to be hosted by Limburg (Germany) from 25 - 28 September 2020. These celebrations are held every 3 years in alternate countries. In 2017, 80 guests from Lichfield travelled to Sainte Foy-les-Lyon, our French twin town to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the twinning agreement. This year it is Limburg's turn to host and 100 guests from Lichfield have been invited to attend this wonderful occasion.



A packed programme has been arranged which will include cultural performances, sightseeing tours and a celebratory evening meal with all guests from England, France, Belgium (Limburg is also twinned with Oudenburg in Belgium) and Germany. There will also be a photo competition and exhibition during the weekend.

The Lichfield table tennis club and dance group, Team Catalyst have already confirmed their attendance. All are welcome to join in and experience the best of the beautiful town of Limburg and meet new people. There is no requirement to be part of the Twinning Association.

6. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary

Bookings have been very busy over the Festive period, as well as the regular hirers there has been a total of 23 meetings.

Private bookings have included a Wedding Reception, Jerome K Jerome's Annual Dinner with both U3A and Heyday Friendship holding their Christmas Parties.

The Bible Exhibition and Bramshall Art's Exhibition's proved very successful in the Guildroom and an art exhibition/sale was also held in the Corridor Gallery. There have been 4 Cell tours, 5 Craft Fairs, a Cats Protection tabletop sale, Angels in Mind Fair and Lichfield Leather held their usual Christmas Sale.

Concerts have been held by Lichfield Arts (4), Lichfield Sinfonia, City of Lichfield Concert Band and Lichfield Musical Youth Theatre (2). There was also a U3A Band concert and a Harry Potter film Night.

Repairs have been carried out to remedy the leak along the first-floor corridor; the extensive proposals for the Main Hall in 2020/21 form a part of the Repairs and Renewals programme that forms a separate item on the agenda.

The 2020 diary already has lots of bookings with very few Friday and Saturdays left for this year. The 2021 diary is now open and we have received a number of enquiries.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas



The Switch-on of the Christmas lights took place on Sunday 24 November 2019 in near perfect weather conditions. Sound and staging contractors were on the Market Square from 6.00am to ensure everything was ready for the entertainment to begin at 2.00pm. This year the Switch On stage was home to local bands; The Hustle, Punch the Air and for the first time, Lichfield Rock Choir. In addition, links with the Three Spires Precinct were re-established so shoppers were also entertained with performances from Liberty Staffordshire 'Shine & Sign' Choir and children from Stagecoach.



The Deputy worked with the Markets Officers to provide a festive themed market to run alongside this event. A total of 19 Traders attended selling a variety of items from Festive jumpers, sweet treats and snacks. Great care was taken to liaise with business owners and residents ahead of the event in the positioning of stalls in Market Street and the Three Spires in order to minimise the amount of disruption.



A crowd of approximately 4,500 then gathered in the Market Square in anticipation.

The cast of the Garrick Pantomime, Cinderella, performed songs from the show and the children of Christ Church School sang traditional Christmas Carols.

The lights were then officially Switched on by competition winners Chloe Maslen, Age 6 and Jacob Aston, Age 9 - ably assisted by the Mayor, Cllr Deb Baker.



Independent Lichfield, a small independent film company were on hand throughout the day to capture all the activities. The result is a short film which really captures the mood of the day and can be viewed at

<https://youtu.be/pHLYLJe-Xjs>



The Deputy is also working on the City Council Newsletter for the February issue of City Life magazine and has provided secretariat support at the Local Plan Task and Finishing group and Sheriff's Ride Working Party.