

## For Council: 2 MARCH 2020 **APPENDIX 3**

### OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

#### 1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer



On Sunday 12 January the Mayoral Service was held in the Guildhall. The Mayor's Chaplain, Revd Nest Bateman led the service which was attended by over 60 people. Duncan Moon kindly played piano and the Lichfield Singers gave fine voice in the choir. Donations totalled £72.00 for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.

On Sunday 19 January a Civic Sunday Service was held at St. Peter & St. Pauls Roman Catholic Church. Father Anthony Dykes led the service which was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended.

On Friday 24 January the Mayor and Sheriff held a Charity Beer & Skittles evening in the Guildhall. The event proved very successful and was thoroughly enjoyed by over 80 guests. Brewhouse & Kitchen kindly sponsored the event by providing supplies of "Tricky Spires" Ale. A raffle, Guess the Number game and Beer Quiz also took place during the evening raising a total of £1,230.65 for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.



On Sunday 9 February the Mayor's Sunday Service was held at Wade Street United Reformed Church. Revd Ian Hayter led the



service. The Mayor and Sheriff then hosted a Charity Sunday Lunch in the Guildhall. This event proved very successful with over 80 guests attending. Paul Smith from Lichfield General Market kindly provided the daffodils for the table decorations plus additional bunches were sold during the afternoon. A raffle was also held, the whole afternoon raised over a £1,000 for the Mayor and Sheriff's charities.

Preparations continue for the remainder of February & March events which include Pancake Races on Tuesday 25 February; Civic Sunday Church Service at The Methodist Church, Tamworth Street on Sunday 15

March; Sheriff's Show at the Friary School on Friday 22 March; Sheriff's Darwin Walk on Sunday 29 March and Entertainment & Tea for over 70's on Monday 30 March.

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

Visitor figures at Johnson's Birthplace continue to rise annually, with a record 21,555 visitors to the Museum in the 2019 calendar year.

January is the quietest month of the year, with 892 visitors to the house. The shorter opening hours and lower visitor numbers allow opportunity to work within the Museum displays, and our volunteer clean team returned to start their full bi-annual clean of the collection, from vacuuming out display cases to brushing books in the library and waxing Johnson's furniture.



Regular events started up again for the New Year including Latin classes, Book Club, Poetry Reading Group, Writing group and 'Words Alive' children's club. The 2020 events schedule was finalised, and arrangements made with partners including Lichfield Library, Lichfield Calligraphers, L2F folk festival, Lichfield Storytellers and local historian John Gallagher. A photoshoot was held with local collector, writer and guide Jonathan Oates for advance publicity of his pop-up exhibition event, taking place at the Museum in May. The March-September Events leaflet was published.



The painting of 'Johnson Visiting Lichfield Cathedral' by John Fulleylove returned, having been on loan to Lichfield Cathedral since September 2019.

Many enquiries have been received and bookings are being taken for school and group visits over the year ahead. An extensive mailshot was sent out to all Midlands-based local history groups, U3As and similar organisations to advertise guided tours and outreach talks, and a mailshot was also sent to all Primary and Secondary Schools within travelling distance to promote school visit opportunities

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

February was dominated by storms Ciara and Dennis. In anticipation of the high winds a mature Turkey Oak in Seckham Road had to be felled as residents had noticed the fungus following the roots. This indicated a Meripilus Giganteus infection which an air spade investigation confirmed, the extent of the root rot was found to be terminal. This was the first time an air spade test had been carried out in the District and although costly was necessary before losing a landmark tree. A Holm Oak will be planted in the Autumn near the original site as a replacement.





The storm also brought down several branches in the plantations north of Eastern Avenue and closed the footpaths at Christchurch and Manor Rise. As well as making these footpaths safe



again and clearing the debris, several other trees will require monitoring in the future for storm damage. There was considerable flooding at Curborough Brook, more detail on this and the actions taken will follow in the next Officers' report.

Staffordshire County Council Public Right of Way closure notices are in place on the Gazebo footpath where a mature black poplar will be felled during the school half term break.

The Open Spaces Officer's husbandry skills were put to the test recently when asked to return 8 wayward Swans to Minster Pool after they had wandered onto Pool Walk and were unable to regain access to the water. Ably assisted by several concerned citizens, the feathered family were soon once again gliding around the pool in the winter sunshine.

#### **4. Markets Report: Jordan Appleyard, Markets Officer**

Stall occupancy remains relatively consistent throughout January but with a slight drop in the Tuesday markets at 59% largely due to bad weather. Occupancy on Fridays is 55% and 78% on Saturdays. To try and address the low stall occupancy on Fridays the Markets Officer has been actively seeking new traders and contacting former traders to see if they wish to return. In addition, the Markets Social media platforms have been used to promote and generate interest.

The annual Shrovetide Fair took place on Fri 21 – Tues 25 February on the Market Square. Those permanent Traders affected were given the option to relocate to Market Street, however many decided not to as they would be subject to Street Trading charges.

Following a Council resolution on 27 January 2020 the final Farmers' Market took place on 6 February. A newly rebranded '*Producers Market*', operated by CJ Events will take its place on the first Sunday of the month. It is hoped that changing the day from Thursday to Sunday will increase the footfall to the market and encourage new traders; existing Farmers' Market traders have also been invited to be part of this new venture.

Repairs have been made to several blocks on the Market Square after they were damaged by plant equipment being used by contractors carrying out repairs to St Mary's roof, the cost of which will be reimbursed to the City Council.

Preparations continue for the next Community Day on Wednesday 18 March, several organisations have already expressed an interest following posts on Social Media. A full report and update will be provided to Council in April.

## **5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch-Burden, Twinning Officer**

The annual nursery nurse placement of students from Limburg in January was unfortunately cancelled due to the abolishment of Erasmus sponsorship to the UK by the German administration.

A student from Limburg will be taking part in an exchange with Lichfield's King Edward VI School at the beginning of March. King Edwards run yearly exchanges, along with Chase Terrace Technology College and a partner school near Frankfurt. Due to a German partner pupil being unable to take part in the visit to Lichfield, a Limburg pupil will take their place instead.

Preparation work is ongoing to facilitate the participation of a group from our twin town of Limburg to take part in this year's Lichfield Rotary Cars in the Park in July.

## **6. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Secretary**

Regular bookings in January and February have included Slimming World, Band Practice, Heyday Friendship, National Trust, Bridge, Chess, Italian Class, Ladies Cameo, RSPB, U3A and the Arts Society, Needwood Lichfield.

In addition there have been 19 meetings (including LCC meetings) in recent weeks, 2 craft fairs and 2 Cell Tours. Lichfield Arts have held 5 concerts as well as their Winter Beer Festival.

Future events include a Celebration of Life, Lichfield Gospel Choir and the Worshipful Company of Smiths Annual Feast; this will be the last booking before the first phase of the Main Hall renovation work commences.

The 2020 diary is already quite full and bookings for 2021 are now being taken. The Guildhall Bookings Secretary has held numerous meetings with potential hirers and those who have booked wedding receptions/ceremonies up to June.

The annual PAT testing was carried out during January and the Skywinder was serviced on 14 February.

Bookings at Boley Park Community Centre remain busy with a Stamp Fair, 6 children's parties, a Christening Party, 2 exercise show rehearsals and the Lichfield Cruising Club AGM. There have been several enquiries requesting dates within the next couple of months.

## **7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas**

The Deputy Town Clerk has been working closely with CJ Events to ensure an agreement is in place ahead of the first Producers Market on 1 March as well as collaborating on publicity and social media posts for this new event.

The City Council's Health & Safety Consultants, Terrain, were on site on 17 & 18 February to conduct a full review of the City Council's risk assessments, the outcome of which will be reported to April Council. Whilst on site they also conducted a manual handling course for City Council staff.

The Deputy has attended several site visits with contractors in preparation for the Guildhall renovations which will commence in March.

Preparations are ongoing for the annual staff performance and development reviews.