

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Sarah Thomas, Deputy Town Clerk

The Mayor and Sheriff's first charity event of 2022 took place on Sunday 23 January. Following a service at Wade Street Church a total of 54 guests joined the Civic party for a traditional Sunday lunch in the Guildhall where they were entertained by Michael James. During the afternoon the Mayor bid a fond farewell to his chaplain, the Revd Ian Hayter who officially retired at the end of January. To mark the



occasion the Mayor presented Revd Hayter with an engraved silver salver on behalf of the City Council. Ian has been a long-standing friend to the Council and held the honorary title of Mayor's Chaplain five times and Dozener for Beacon Street at St George's Court every year since 1997. He will be sorely missed, and we wish him a happy retirement. The event raised a total of £477 for the Mayor and Sheriff's Charities, Friends2Friends and We Love Lichfield.



A fun night was had by the 64 guests who attended the Mayor and Sheriff's charity race night on Friday 11 February. Bets were placed in denominations of a pound on pre-recorded races. A hot supper of jacket potatoes was served before the raffle was drawn.



The Mayor and Sheriff would like to thank Cllr David Salter who kept proceedings on track by acting as MC for the night and also Cllr Colin Greateorex and Mrs Donna Greateorex who were 'Bookmakers' for the night. The evening raised over a £1,000 for the charities.

At the time of writing this report preparations are under way for the traditional pancake races which was the last event to be held before the lockdown of 2020. The event has been well publicised, and it is hoped

that local residents will turn out in force to support this traditional event. Preparations continue for the Speaking Competition on 11 March. We are fortunate in that five schools wish to take part this year. The competition has not been held since 2018. In addition, planning continues for the Mayor and Sheriff's final Charity event on the 12 March, a charity Vintage Musical evening and auction

Event planning continues for Easter Sunday, St Georges Court and Annual Council and banquet.

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

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum has had a positive start to the year with 924 visitors in January, a slightly higher number than the pre-pandemic average for the month.

Overall visitor figures for the nine months of the calendar year in which either the shop or Museum was able to open in 2021 were 7,596. Average visitor figures for open months in 2021 were -55% of pre-pandemic visitor figures in 2019, but +33% on 2020 open months, indicating increasing visitor confidence. Statistics taken from the Museum's visitor book recorded that 30% of visitors came from the local area (within 15 miles), 64% from elsewhere in the UK, and 6% from overseas.

The first school visit since the pandemic took place on February 15 with a group from Rocklands school. Numerous bookings for forthcoming school visits were received and have been coordinated by the Museum Support Officer (MSO), as well as guided tours for history groups which are being rearranged from cancelled 2020 dates. The Museum's Latin group resumed meetings in January.

In January the team of four collection care volunteers returned to start their bi-annual conservation clean of the Museum displays on Thursday mornings. A researcher from the University of Texas spent a week at the Birthplace consulting the Anna Seward letter

collections. The Johnson Society kindly agreed to fund the purchase of copies of the Yale edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson to complete the set in the Birthplace library.

The MSO is working on recruitment and training of volunteers to relaunch the Birthplace Children's Club and reopen the Guildhall cells. On Tuesday 18 January the Birthplace attended the Volunteer's Fair in Lichfield Cathedral. The stall attracted a good number of volunteers to the opportunities on offer.

The Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) attended training on creating content for a new touch screen to provide access to the upper floors of the house, due to be installed before the full visiting season begins in March. The MHO and MSO attended Emergency First Aid at Work training, and members of the Attendant team attended on February 28.

Development project work by the MHO included completion of the text for the workroom touch screen information, liaison with the structural engineer ahead of work in the museum yard and regular contact with the Architects. A maintenance clean out of the Museum's drains was undertaken in February and the MSO completed PAT testing for the building. The MHO has worked on changing over the Museum's alarm maintenance company to a new supplier.

Partnership continues to be an important part of the Museum's work. The Birthplace was invited to support 'Visit Lichfield' with the development of a new augmented reality trail, meeting with the trail's designers and supplying contacts and information on Johnson, Barber and Seward and images of items from the Museum collection. The MHO met with the Garrick Theatre about plans for a possible summer school performance event, and a representative from the Nottingham City of Literature to identify potential marketing and partnership opportunities. Shortlisting for places at the 'Understanding Archives' event with Keele University taking place at the Guildhall on 25 March was completed.

A display in the Museum bookshop windows celebrated the birth of David Garrick in February, and a Spring window theme took place during Half Term holiday week. This was part of the city-wide 'Window Wanderland' weekend and to compliment the 'Signs of Spring' family craft activity session on Thursday 24th February, which was fully booked.

3. Open Spaces and Tree Management: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer

Following the City Council's resolution to allocate CIL to the replacement of the 'butterfly' style cycle stands at Curborough Community Centre and Darwin Hall, the preferred 'Sheffield' style stands have now been installed. The installation at Curborough CC is pictured.



The extensive work on open space 10, Netherstowe, has now been completed. The hedge on the boundary between LCC's open space and the school was cut back on 10 and 11 February, with overgrowth, brambles and tree suckers removed from the Curborough Brook. On Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 February the Brook was desilted to greatly improve the flow. All work was carried out in compliance with professional recommendations.



A number of obstructions were discovered beneath the overgrowth and within the watercourse, these included discarded car tyres, sun loungers and supermarket trolleys. These items were set to one side and collected shortly thereafter by LDC's Operational Services team.



Replacement litter bins are due to be installed adjacent to Curborough Community Centre at the time of preparing this report. The wooden slats on the existing bins have been vandalised numerous times. It is hoped that new bins will resolve this problem.

Work has taken place over three days to remove overgrown and unsightly bushes and trees that were obscuring the Clock Tower, notably when entering the City from the Bowling Green Island. Before and after photographs are provided below. Positive comments have been received from the public as a result of this work which was undertaken in close cooperation with LDC's Arboricultural officer.

Following a successful test of new LED floodlights at the Clock Tower which was attended by the Town Clerk and several volunteer clock winders, the new lights have now been installed to replace the previous 250w SON lights. This marks the first time in 25 years that all four lights have been operational; one light was stolen shortly after original installation and never replaced. The opportunity was also taken to replace ageing lamp holders and lamps within the Clock Tower itself.



Following Council's approval of the 2022/23 Repairs and Renewals programme, Croft Building and Conservation have been awarded the contract to carry out the minor work recommended to the Clock Tower following the architect's quinquennial inspection carried out in 2021. This includes internal repointing, repair to rainwater goods, monitoring of cracks and other minor matters that will ensure the tower is well maintained. The start on site date is 14 March. On that date, Smith of Derby are also due to attend to protect the clock mechanism in readiness for work to begin, and this will include some dismantling. Smith of Derby are due to attend on 4 April to recommission the clock following completion of the contracted works. Unfortunately this means the clock will not be operational for the intervening period. Ward members and the volunteer clock winders have been informed.

Significant tree work has been undertaken along Open Space 26a and b, which stretches from the London Road Bridge, along Tamworth Road, across the Cricket Lane junction and to the rear of Canal Cottage. The extensive work is a result of site visits with representatives from the Canal Trust, tree surgeons, ward members and the recommendations of LDC's Arboricultural Officer. Trees have been reduced to statutory minimal highway clearance, removed due to health and safety concerns, or removed to allow the next stage of the canal restoration to take place, which includes the planting of native trees and the creation of new hedgerows. This work was slightly delayed by storm Franklin but was nevertheless completed

on schedule. The Town Clerk takes this opportunity to thank Gareth Hare at LDC for his input and expert advice during the planning of this work.

Three storms within one week represented a significant test of the work undertaken to ensure the safety of the City Council's open spaces during the past nine months or so. Despite wind speeds exceeding 50mph, only four incidents have been identified on City Council land:

- A tree fell from the closed churchyard of St Chads onto the cycleway at Netherstowe (pictured). This was reported late on the afternoon of February 16 and was cleared before 8am on February 17
- A fallen tree at St Michaels – this fell into the road and caused an obstruction; it was cleared by Highways though LCC's tree surgeon was also on route at the time
- A fallen tree along open space 26 at Tamworth Road. The tree was removed the morning after the incident was reported. This particular tree was scheduled to be removed as part of the wider tree work on that open space that took place during the week of 22 February and is mentioned earlier in this report.
- A mature and very large ash tree fell on the pathway to the Gazebo, causing damage to neighbouring fences. The site is extremely difficult for vehicles to access, but mechanical assistance of a tractor and trailer was required due to the size of the tree. The City Council's tree surgeons were on site almost immediately after the tree had been reported, the path was closed and removal of the tree took six hours and a team of seven with all timber and the root ball removed. Work to repair the fences is being progressed at the time of preparing this report.



The Town Clerk wishes to put on record his thanks to the Open Spaces Officer and to tree surgeons ACW Arb and Tonks for their swift responses to the matters detailed above.

4. Markets: Hayley Howen, Markets Officer

The Market in recent weeks has been subjected to regular high winds, affecting several markets before the impact of the recent storms were felt. The maximum wind speed for a normal market to take place is 35mph, speeds above this are felt to be dangerous due to the temporary nature of market stalls, the light weight of some goods being offered for sale, and the general nature of winds in that part of the City, tending to blow quite strongly around the Square.

Where wind speeds are between 35mph and 45mph, traders are usually offered the opportunity to trade from their vehicles. This removes the danger associated with the stalls and does provide the traders with an opportunity to stand and for a market in some form to take place. The forecast for storm Eunice was for winds well in excess of 45mph and the market was cancelled as a result. The forecast wind speeds provided by the Met Office are

used as the basis for decisions as to whether a reduced market takes place or if it is cancelled in its entirety. Whilst every effort is made to keep the Market going, we do have to take forecasts from the Met Office seriously as the safety of the public and traders is paramount. Unfortunately, regular reduced markets due to high winds or traders being reluctant to stand at this time of year can give the impression that the market is in decline, but it is the nature of outdoor markets that they are at the mercy of the weather.

When weather conditions allow, Friday and Saturday Markets are well attended with a new trader taking up a permanent place on a Saturday. The Tuesday market does have some space and the Market Officer receives enquiries for potential stall holders to attend on a regular basis. Some casual traders have taken a space some weeks which will continue to grow into the spring and summer.

Social Media

Regular updates on social media and twitter continue with features on different traders and their stalls. The updates are also reaching the wider community pages in Lichfield keeping the public up to date. The reduced markets and cancelled markets have also featured this last month.

Tuesday Market

This still has capacity for more traders, and anyone interested to get in touch with the Market Officer for more information.

Friday Market

The Friday market currently has two pitches available. However, there is gathering interest and it is hoped it will be up to capacity in the next few months.

Saturday Market

The Saturday market continues to operate at full capacity.

Applications and enquiries continue to be received each week with trader's applications/details kept on file for future use. Many applications are received from traders wanting to sell goods that are already sold on our markets, duplication of items on such a small market is not encouraged. Saturday continues to be the most requested day for market applications.

The Producers' Market

The Producers' Market continues to prove very popular and is well attended by the public and traders alike. The produce ranges from Dog Treats to silver items which make it very different from the regular Lichfield Market and helping it to develop its own profile and identity.

Market Square Bookings - Community Use - Non-Market Days

As we move into the spring, John Madden and his Chip van will be joined by Ian Newey and his ice cream van. The covid unit will be here until the end of March when as the restrictions phase out the unit will no longer attend. Charities continue to stand on the square and moving into the spring will become more regular,

Market Layout - Covid Restrictions – Update

The market continues to operate with the large middle aisle walkway for customers to shop and one-metre gap between each stall. The one-way system has been removed.

5. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch- Burden, Twinning Officer

Due to increasing COVID cases and ongoing restrictions on gatherings in Germany, Limburg City Council had to cancel this year's international twinning celebrations in April for a third time. The Limburg Mayor very much regretted this decision but was unable to proceed with the extensive preparations for the festivities under these circumstances. A new date has not yet been set and Limburg City Council will re-evaluate the situation once there is a foreseeable end to the pandemic.

For the same reason, the planned yearly week-long internship of 2 Limburg Council public office apprentices in Lichfield during the Easter holidays was also cancelled. The possibility of having to quarantine in Lichfield host families and the lack of close contact work placements made it difficult to put together a meaningful work experience.

Limburg City Council held a remembrance service for their 88 covid victims in its district as part of their council meeting on 14th February. They also included the twin towns in this service and remembered the 371 people (source: Staffordshire County Council), who lost their lives to covid since the start of the pandemic in the Lichfield District.



The Limburg Twinning Association has offered a “fun sports week” to youngsters from Lichfield in the summer holidays. Five young people between the ages of 12 and 15 years old, plus one supervisor, are invited to Limburg from 29 August to 2nd September 2022. Fun activities include water skiing, climbing, skating and graffiti, to name but a few. Accommodation in their lovely youth hostel and the week-long programme will be paid for by the Limburg Twinning Association, leaving only the travel costs and travel insurance to be borne by the individual participant. The registration deadline is 30 April 2022.

This September will see the 30th anniversary of the ring twinning agreement between Lichfield, Limburg and Sainte Foy-les-Lyon. For this reason, there is a photo competition with cash prizes to be won. Photos of Lichfield can be entered for free, please contact the Twinning Officer for more details. The competition is open until 1st September 2022.

6. Guildhall/Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Officer

Since Christmas, we have had the following regular hirers in the Guildhall: City of Lichfield Concert Band - weekly band practice, Mencap, Slimming World, Chess, Dementia Café, Bridge, U3A, RSPB, and the National Trust. All the groups were working under the conditions of their COVID19 Risk Assessments, some with reduced membership.

January is usually quiet, and unfortunately, due to COVID19, there have also been some cancellations. Bookings are picking up during March and April onwards and things should get closer to normal with the removal of remaining COVID regulations.

Although some concerts and their Beer Festival was cancelled due to COVID19, Lichfield Arts did manage to hold three successful concerts. The Worshipful Company of Smiths Feast was due to be held in February, and unfortunately had to be postponed until 26 April 2022.

Civic events have included the Mayor & Sheriff's Charity Sunday Lunch and the Mayor & Sheriff's Race Night.

The floor covering in the ground floor Guildhall toilets has been replaced, and an additional fridge has also been installed in the first floor catering kitchen.

Enquiries are coming in for 2022 and 2023 and there have been several meetings with hirers since Christmas. So far there are four wedding ceremonies booked this year. There are also three Wedding Receptions coming up in the next few weeks. There are other private bookings, and charity dinners also booked in.

The Old Prison Cells are due to re-open on Saturdays from the beginning of April.

Please support the following craft fairs in the Guildhall (Saturday's 10.00am - 3.00pm): 19 March, 9 April.

We are currently recruiting Casual Premises Attendants. Anyone who is interested, please contact the Bookings Officer.

Boley Park Community Hall

Regular hirers are still using the hall and there have been an increased number of Children's parties (to make up for lost parties in the last couple of years). In the first three months of the year, there have been 21 children's parties booked, together with an AGM, Stamp Fair, presentation/talk and Race Night. The replacement of the front and rear doors and surrounding screens is due to be carried out during the Easter holidays following the adoption by council of the NPIWP recommendation for this work to be completed with CIL funding. All bookings have been cancelled during these 2 weeks.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The absence of a Civic officer means that much of the Deputy's time is still occupied with facilitating Civic and charity events as documented earlier in this report. The Deputy Town Clerk will continue to support the Civic function until a new civic officer is appointed and will be supporting the Town Clerk in the interview process.

The Deputy is working with appointed consultants, Townhouse before they make their presentation to Council regarding the Sheriff's Ride. Secretariat support will be given at full Council, Markets Working Group and the Sheriff's Ride Working Party.