

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT – MARCH 2021

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

On Sunday 17 January, the Mayor and Sheriff attended a Civic church service held at St. Peter & Pauls Roman Catholic Church. Strict social distancing guidelines were followed, and masks were worn during the whole service. A friendly welcome awaited the Mayor and Sheriff who were both pleased to be able to attend in person. Fr John Hancock led the service with Fr Anthony Dykes giving the sermon.



A virtual Civic Church service was held on Sunday 7 February 2021 at Wade Street Church. The Mayor, Cllr Mrs Deborah Baker pre-recorded a reading that was included in the service, this was made available via a YouTube link. Revd Ian Hayter led the service which radiated joy and hope which is very much needed during these difficult times.

Sadly, the traditional Pancake Races and Shrovetide Fair were unable to take place on Tuesday 16 February due to Lockdown 3.0 restrictions.

The Mayor has attended various virtual engagements during Lockdown 3.0, which has included Church services and meetings along with a virtual presentation to a local scout group on the role of Mayor. Ongoing virtual support by the Mayor and Sheriff has been well received by local community groups, churches, and charities.

Preparations for the Sheriff's Ride due to be held on Saturday 11 September 2021 have begun. It is not known at this stage if this event will be allowed to go ahead but there is a good possibility that restrictions may well have eased by September. The City Council will follow the government guidelines in place at the time of the event.

The latest government guidance will continue to be monitored and the impact on Civic Events assessed.

The Civic Officer has also been assisting on the Markets both in terms of day-to-day market activities and training.

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

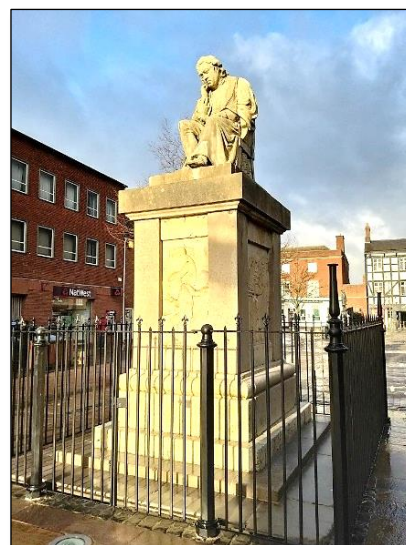
While the Museum remains closed to the public the team continue to reach online audiences. Social media engagement in January and early February totalled 1,858 and a reach of over 38,000. Popular content marked the 220th anniversary of the death of Francis

Barber in January including a video talk by former Attendant Sue Bray. 2,851 visits were also made to the Museum's website and blog.



Before Cleaning

On February 8th, the statue of Johnson on the Market Square was cleaned, its first clean since 2016. Arrangements were made by the MHO with approval from the District Conservation Officer. The work was kindly offered by Exterius Ltd using a low pressure 'Doff' cleaning system, and Darwin Electricals provided a cherry picker.



After Cleaning

The portrait of Elias Ashmole, part of the Birthplace collection, was re-installed in the Guildhall Ashmole Room following further conservation work.

The primary focus for the MHO over the last month was initiating the first phase of the Birthplace Development project, including meeting with architects; writing and circulating brief for quotations from Museum display designers; liaising with neighbouring property owner and tenants; contacting insurers, and other related project management and planning. Other continuing projects included the city plaques and charters, Keele University partnership, attending a SCC webinar about the new branding for Staffordshire, and collection enquiries from members of the public.

The MHO was also invited by West Midlands Museum Development to an online meeting with the regional leads of Arts Council England, as one of three Museums representing the area.

Museum Support Officer Penny Taylor is leading on the arrangements for forthcoming online events with the Lichfield Poets and Lichfield Storytellers. The MSO attended online training courses including Identifying Hazards in Museum Collections, and on volunteer management in the pandemic. Other work included creating social media content, such as activities to do at home for families in the Half Term holidays, and continuing updates to Museum policy documents. The MSO has also been trained to undertake PAT testing for the Birthplace site.

The Birthplace has appeared in a new illustrated literary map of Great Britain, which will be available for sale at Museum gift shops across the country when restrictions allow.

Museum Attendant work has included the creation of a display by Sarah Dale for the city-wide 'Window Wanderland' initiative. Analysis of historic visitor book data by Nigel Hunt has revealed the fascinating statistic that visitors have attended from 224 different countries since the Museum's opening.

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

A mature willow beside the Curborough brook had to be cut back to allow access for a Severn Trent Water lorry at Netherstowe. The lorry will carry equipment to clear the pipe which crosses the brook from the school so wastewater can flow more easily away from the area and not contaminate any of the water at the allotments.



A replacement oak purchased by Lichfield City Council has been planted by the Lichfield Transition Group on Seckham Road. It replaces the one felled in 2020 due to *Meripulas* fungi. Another Holm Oak is to be planted at the top of the open space at Netherstowe to accompany the bund which is slowly greening up with the meadow seed sown last year.

The ivy has been cleared from the North Wall of the Remembrance Garden by the LDC grounds maintenance team. The eco plugs will finally kill the ivy, and time will rot them down. Compliments were received during the work about the improvements to the appearance of the garden but the reason for the

clearance was primarily to extend the life of the wall.

Members may be interested to know that the Friary Clock Tower was the subject of an article in the December 2020 issue of the magazine '*Ringling World*' which highlighted how well the clock was maintained. The volunteers who keep the clock in such good condition are to be commended, thanks to them we are all able to hear the chiming of the bells at the correct time.

4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch- Burden, Twinning Officer

First contact has been made between the primary school “Ecole Chatelain” and Lichfield’s Chadsmead Primary School. Both Chadsmead’s headteacher and the French lead at the school were very excited by the opportunity to partner up with a primary school in Sainte Foy. They are now working on an outline project timetable which will start imminently. It will see each set of children writing letters to their international counterparts, describing and comparing their lives and feelings in the present times.



In contribution to Lichfield’s “Winter Wanderland” window display project, the Twinning Officer has dressed Donegal House windows with images from our twin town towns of Limburg and Sainte Foy.



5. Markets Report: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

Lichfield General Market has continued to operate during Lockdown 3.0. In line with Government legislation, the City Council identified only six traders who sell essential goods that are currently permitted to stand; this is a significant reduction from the twenty-one stalls that were able to stand on the market square prior to Lockdown 3.0.

All essential traders have received a 25% discount on their standard stall rent, given to those traders in attendance during the months of January and February. This winter incentive is well received by traders who appreciate the extra help during these cold winter months. Normal rent charges resumed from March 1 2021.

Officers continue to ensure the General Markets remain a COVID secure environment; the one-way barriers and hand sanitisers are part of the standard set-up for each market day. Officers continue to check that all traders have the correct PPE equipment (masks, hand sanitiser and gloves). Officers have informed traders that face masks are advised to be worn at all times following information received from the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA).

Lichfield General Market and The Producers Market continue to be promoted on social media via the City Council’s Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Following a recommendation from the Market Working Group, CJ Events Warwickshire were recently awarded a 5 Year contract to run the Producers' Market on the first Sunday of each month (except for January).

CJ's Events were successful in growing the Producers' Market in 2020 whilst maintaining COVID safe practice at all times.



The Markets Working Group is due to consider revised terms and conditions for Traders to replace the previous annual licence. This follows a recommendation from the City council's Internal Auditor and discussions with CJ Events as to best practice for such a document. The MWG meeting will take place on 10 March 2021.

6. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Officer

The Guildhall continues to have bookings from Mencap and the Dementia Support Group during Lockdown 3. Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions no other bookings have been able to go ahead.

As a result of the third lockdown some weddings have been cancelled and re-booked for 2022. The Guildhall Bookings Officer is liaising with several couples regarding their wedding bookings, for some this will be their third attempt to get married. Enquiries are still being received for the remainder of this year, 2022 and beyond. The Bookings Officer remains in contact with all regular hirers regarding their return to the Guildhall.

At Boley Park Community Hall currently the only booking is Pre-school. During this time, the opportunity has been taken to carry out some routine maintenance work on the outside of the building. Renovation work is almost complete on the car park at the Boley Park Co-op, there has been some disruption to the usual parking outside the community hall, but hirers have been able to make use of spaces elsewhere in the Co-op car park.

The Bookings Officer continues to lead on Planning matters.

7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk continues to monitor the latest Government legislation regarding Covid-19 and keep staff informed. In addition, following the recent publication of the road map to exit lockdown some tentative forward planning is now being discussed with Officers.

The City Council's Health & Safety consultants, Terrain also conducted the annual review with the Deputy via Zoom. This included reviewing all the Councils Risk Assessments which include operating procedures regarding Covid-19. They were also able to provide some useful information about working from home which has been circulated to all relevant employees.

Three members of City Council staff have now successfully completed a training course on Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and the relevant testing equipment has been purchased. Previously, PAT testing has been carried out by external companies which proven costly and intrusive, it is hoped that by bringing this 'in house' the testing can be carried out at a more conducive time which fits around the Council's operations and will be more cost effective. Appliances in Donegal House, Guildhall, Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum, and the Market square toilet block will all be tested annually.

The Deputy will be providing secretariat support at March Council and the MWG meeting and continues to support the Bookings secretary on Planning matters and Guildhall bookings as well as supporting the Market Officers.