

For Council: 26 JULY 2021 APPENDIX 1

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

Councillor Deborah Baker, former Mayor of Lichfield, accompanied by Dr Steve Baker and Dr Daryl Brown, former Sheriff of Lichfield have recently presented cheques to representatives of their three nominated charities: St. Giles Hospice, Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust and Lichfield Voluntary Transport for the Disabled.

Despite the impacts of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions, the former Mayor and Sheriff raised £9,095.12 for their chosen charities collectively during their two-year term in office. All three charities were delighted to receive a cheque for £3,031.70 each.



Lichfield Voluntary Transport for the Disabled



St Giles Hospice



Lichfield & Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust

The former Mayor and Sheriff hosted a variety of successful charity events throughout their time in office, including an Indoor Street Party, Barn Dance, Sheriff at Home, Charity Dinner Dance, Beer & Skittles Evening and Charity Sunday Lunch.

Councillor Deborah Baker and Dr Daryl Brown would like to offer their sincere thanks to all the local businesses, groups and individuals who supported their fundraising activities and for their wonderful generosity towards three very worthy local charities.

The Mayor of Lichfield, Cllr Robert Yardley led the Lichfield City Council team in the annual Swinfen Broun Challenge Trophy bowls match against the Lichfield Museum Bowling Club on Wednesday 23 June 2021.

Despite the best efforts of the City Council team, the Museum Bowling Club took the trophy once again with a score of 127 to 51.

After the match the Mayor handed the trophy to the Club Captain, Mr Andy Hayes and thanked everyone for taking part and supporting this traditional event.



Next year's match has been scheduled to take place on **Wednesday 22 June 2022.**

Due to continuing uncertainties the City Council has made some changes to the Sheriff's Ride taking place on Saturday 11 September 2021. In order to maintain this historic tradition, there will be a small gathering outside the Guildhall starting at a later time in the day where the Sheriff, Mr Peter Hitchman will give a speech before commencing the ride out of the city in a horse drawn carriage accompanied by the Sheriff's Lady, Mrs Pat Peters. The Sheriff will then continue the ride in a vehicle with the Clerk of the Course, Mr Nick Sedgwick calling in on all landowners along the route. Unfortunately, due to the event being scaled down, there will be no other horses taking part in this year's ride. At the end of the day the Sheriff will enter the city in his carriage via The Close before alighting outside the Guildhall. In the absence of a luncheon at Freeford Manor, a celebratory dinner will be held at the Guildhall on the evening of the ride.

Preparations continue for upcoming civic and charity events for 2021-22. Anyone who wishes to join the civic list in order to be sent updates of all civic and charity events can do so by emailing their request to enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk

The Civic Officer continues to assist the Markets Officer with day-to-day market activities, social media posts and training.

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

The Birthplace Museum reopened fully on Monday 17 May and has received 880 visitors in the first six weeks. Although much lower numbers than pre-pandemic, the figures show a 47% increase on the visitor numbers recorded following re-opening after the first lockdown in July 2020. Online engagement has seen an anticipated reduction after opening, but digital visits still numbered over 2600 people who had either visited the website or engaged via social media. There has been an increase in visitor and collections enquiries since reopening, including providing research material for a forthcoming podcast about Johnson and Disability.



On Monday 31 May the Museum held 'Ballad Tales: stories from Samuel Johnson's Time' with the Lichfield Storytellers. An online ticketed event broadcast live from the Birthplace, this was a technically ambitious project managed by the Museum Support Officer (MSO) in collaboration with the Storytellers and received excellent feedback from attendees.

During the May Half-term an activity trail was provided for families, based on uplifting words and phrases from the Dictionary and with covid-secure arrangements in place.

Volunteers started to return to their roles in June, with behind-the-scenes work including collection documentation and condition checking work, preparing future temporary displays, and preparations for future family events.

A willow-themed window display was created by Attendant Sarah Dale, promoting the Johnson Society's current competition to find a new original poem inspired by Johnson's favourite tree.

Covid-secure Family Craft Activities have been organised for the school summer holidays with a local history 'Lichfield Legends' theme. Planning was undertaken for a sale of donated children's books in the Bookshop. Work is also underway on arrangements for Johnson's Birthday in September, and listings submitted to LDC for their 'Heritage Weekend' leaflet. A market stall to promote the Museum has been planned for July.



In addition to events planning work, MSO projects also included arrangements for reopening of the Guildhall Cells to visitors in late July (pending announcements regarding restrictions), continuing work relating to the 'Benchmarks in Collection Care' project, and a strategic refreshing of stock in the Museum shop.

Other MHO work in the last period included arrangements for reopening the Museum basement display after social distancing ends, providing humidity readings for the Guildhall, the ongoing historic city plaques project, and exploring possibilities for a display of reproductions of the City Charters.

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



The Bund at Netherstowe is now settling well into its surroundings with the wildflower mix that was planted in 2020 providing an impressive display in its first season. As a result, there have been a lot of positive comments from local residents.

After receiving a complaint regarding a resident who had parked their caravan on Lichfield City Council land at Furnivall Crescent, swift action was taken. The owner of the caravan was identified and duly informed to remove the caravan as soon as possible. An additional site inspection was carried out two days later whereupon the caravan had been removed.

Members will recall that the Windings footpath was closed for several weeks recently by Staffordshire County Council whilst building work was carried out on a property in close proximity to the path. Unfortunately, during this time, the bench that had been in place for many years was stolen. The bench was a regular resting place for members of the public after negotiating the steepest part of the path. The Open Spaces Officer is pleased to report that a replacement bench has now been installed in the same area as the original bench for everyone to enjoy and make use of once again. The bench was previously situated in festival gardens where, due to its location, it was used as a shortcut from the slightly higher ground behind to the path below. This resulting in regular and significant damage to the bench slats.



A recent inspection of the public footpath that runs through St Michael's Churchyard revealed the path was very uneven with a lot of potholes.

Resurfacing work has now been carried out to ensure the safety of those who utilise this regularly used path.

A considerable amount of work has recently been carried on the Public Open Space at Ash Grove. Trees that were previously encroaching on nearby properties have all been given a crown lift and thinned, resulting in a lighter and safer environment for local residents. The work also enables LDC operatives to more easily cut the grassed areas. 'Before and after' photos are below.



In addition, and in order to discourage unauthorised vehicular access to the site, new bollards have been installed across the head of the cul-de-sac and along the adjacent path.

The Open Spaces Officer has received letters of thanks from local residents as they had been concerned about the vulnerability of this large grassed area for some time.

4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch- Burden, Twinning Officer

Each year, Lichfield Camera Club competes against its twin town counterpart in Limburg. Both clubs take it in turns to choose a subject and this year Limburg selected "River Landscapes". The Lichfield club won overall on points, with the best single image being awarded to a Limburg participant. Photos and the results of the competition can be found on the Lichfield Camera Club website. [Limburg \(lichfieldcameraclub.org\)](http://limburg.lichfieldcameraclub.org)

The possibility of the annual week-long internship of Limburg's council apprentices in Lichfield, scheduled for this October, is being investigated in principle. New immigration laws for European citizens working or studying in the UK and possible covid restrictions will make it more difficult to plan this event in advance.

However there has been encouraging news from Limburg, who recorded no new cases of Covid during the last week of June, whilst in Ste. Foy figures increased to 19 new cases compared to only 3 the week before.

5. Markets Report: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

The Markets Officer continues to report a noticeable increase in general market enquiries and trader applications each week. Saturday markets continue to operate at full capacity with Tuesdays and Fridays with limited availability.

The market skip contract is due for renewal shortly, quotations from alternative local companies are currently being sought.

Garry Snape, Friday, and Saturday general market trader has kindly donated and planted some beautiful flowers in the large containers at the front of the Guildhall, providing a much-needed splash of colour at the entrance to the building.

In line with Government legislation, the one-way barrier system currently in use on all market days along with the one metre gap between each market stall will be removed from 19 July 2021 when lockdown restrictions are due to cease.



The monthly Producers' Market organised and run by CJ's Events Warwickshire continues to thrive with 30 stalls in attendance for both June and July. As covid restrictions are due to cease on 19 July, it is anticipated that the number of stalls will increase up to 40 in August.

CJ's Events Warwickshire will also be organising this year's Christmas Lights Switch-On Street Market on Sunday 28 November 2021.

Market Square bookings on non-market days have been proving popular during June and July. The COVID testing tent has become a regular on both Mondays and Thursdays due to popular demand within the local community.

The Hub at St. Mary's has booked the Market Square for five Sundays during July and August 2021 for their 'Summer Sundae' events featuring live entertainment, outside bar and seating on Market Square.

Lichfield General Market continues to be promoted on Facebook and Twitter. Posts are shared on various local Facebook groups to increase awareness and ultimately boost footfall on market days.

6. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Officer

Hirers are slowly returning to the Guildhall as government updates allow. Unfortunately, social parties and concerts etc are not able to return until after 19 July so some bookings have had to be re-arranged.

Regular hirers are in contact with a view to returning when regulations allow and there has been an increase in general enquiries over the last few weeks. As a result, there is very little availability in the Guildhall diary for Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from September to Christmas.

The Premises Attendants have taken the opportunity to carry out routine maintenance jobs in the Guildhall whilst the building is quiet. The 5 yearly electrical inspection identified some work which needs to be completed and which will be scheduled in the diary soon. Unfortunately, further work which is required on the main hall new floor cannot happen until the end of October now because the contractor does not have any availability.

Most of the regular hirers have returned to Boley Hall following recent government updates. Translucent film was applied to the windows recently to replace the previous net and curtain arrangement. General enquiries have increased for 19 July onwards. Unfortunately, some bookings before that date have had to be cancelled or re-scheduled.



7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk will be meeting with the Council's Health & Safety consultants, Terrain in July to review the general Risk assessments for all Council buildings. The meeting will also

provide a good opportunity to discuss many of the Covid safeguards which have been put in place over the last year and a half. A full report will be given to Council in due course.

During the pandemic, the Deputy has constantly monitored Government legislation to ensure the Council is fully compliant and identified any extra activities or procedures which need to be undertaken. To this end, three members of frontline staff have recently successfully completed online courses in Legionella and Legionnaires' Disease Awareness, COVID-19 Essentials: Infection Prevention and COSHH Training for Cleaning

A review of the Council's CCTV policy is currently being undertaken and the Deputy will be deputising for the Town Clerk at the July Council meeting. Preparations continue for the Christmas Lights Switch On event in November.

Curborough Community Centre

As part of the 2021/22 Repairs and Renewals programme, a sum was set aside for replacement of priority windows at Curborough Community Centre. The original windows were timber framed and in various states of decay, with some damaged panes. The windows to the side were covered in aged polycarbonate sheeting which badly impacted the light within the building.

The proposal was to replace all ground floor windows if the budget allowed, while at the same time holding discussions as to the most appropriate arrangements for the clerestory windows, notably in regard to ventilation, in readiness for a separate project to replace those in the future.

The City Council's architects prepared a specification for aluminium replacement windows with toughened solar control glazing; the replacement windows far outstripping their predecessors in terms of insulating properties, longevity, and strength. Following receipt of quotations, it was clear that all ground floor windows (18), plus three external doors not replaced during a wider CIL funded project in 2019, could be replaced within the original budget. A quotation for the replacement of the clerestory windows was also obtained to help inform future budget discussions.



The new windows and door were installed during the first week of July, making a significant difference to both the external appearance of the hall and the internal ambience; the example before and after photographs provided give a clear indication as to the improvement made.

This work represents a significant contribution to improvements undertaken to the hall and its grounds by the City Council and Curborough Community Association, both independently and in partnership.