

For Council: 10 March 2025 APPENDIX 7

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

On Sunday 19 January, the Deputy Mayor and Sheriff attended their first civic church service, held at St. Peter & Paul's Roman Catholic Church. A friendly welcome awaited as Fr. Anthony Dykes led the service and both the Deputy Mayor and Sheriff were pleased to attend. The Mayor & Sheriff now look forward to the Civic Church visit to Wade Street Church on Sunday 9 March.



On Saturday 8 February, the Mayor and Sheriff held their third fundraiser - a Charity Ceilidh Dance in the Guildhall with 70 guests attending. The band 'Mucky Duck' & caller Mike Gentles were very well received and encouraged everyone to participate. All guests tucked into half time fish & chips from Sefton's chip shop before enjoying more dancing. The night finished with the raffle raising an impressive £290.00 for their chosen charities, Staffordshire Blood Bikes & Lichfield Foodbank. The Mayor gave a final vote of thanks to all guests before the evening drew to a close.

At the time of compiling this report, preparations are ongoing for Lichfield's Pancake Races on Tuesday 4 March. The event will feature a variety of races, including Men's, Women's, Mascots, and the under 10's. The festivities will begin at 12 noon, with participants eagerly lining up on Bore Street, vying for the top spot in their respective categories.



Following the races, the celebrations will continue with the traditional opening of the Shrovetide Fair on the Market Square. The Civic party will be present & the Town Crier will officially inaugurate the event. The event has been well publicised, and it is hoped that the community will turn out in force to support this tradition.

Planning also continues for International Women's Day at the Guildhall on Saturday 8 March, and the School Speaking Competition on Friday 14 March; eight schools wish to take part this year. In addition, planning continues for the Mayor and Sheriff's 'Swinging 60's' Entertainment & Tea event for Lichfield residents over the age of 70, to be held in the Guildroom on Friday 21 March.

2. Open Spaces: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer and Jane Varley, Clerical Officer

Festival Gardens & Heather Gardens (Site 19)

Works to install four additional column lights to pathways on approach to the subway under Western Bypass which separates these two gardens was undertaken in January. The columns are due to be painted in the City's 'conservation green' by E-on in March/April. Leaf clearance has also been undertaken.



Fecknam Way (Site 11D)

Overgrown vegetation and shrubs have been cut back to improve visibility, together with crown lifts for trees and reduction/pollarding of an Ash tree overhanging a neighbouring garden.

North & South Oakhurst to Hillside (FP7)

Fallen elm tree (pictured) cleared from over pathway following recent winter storms.

Other matters progressed/completed since the last report and in addition to routine inspections include:

- **Wildflower areas:** Preparations for Summer 2025 planting underway
- **Ash Grove (Site 17C):** Sycamore reduction completed to rear of Mulberry Drive
- **Kings Hill to Hillside via Gazebo (FP5):** Clearance of fallen tree across path.
- **Jordan Close to Shaw Lane (FP19):** Removal of fallen sycamore.
- **Pool Walk (Site 29):** Repair to cycle station located at Speakers' Corner; new pump required following vandalism.
- **Mill Croft, Reeve Lane to St Chads Rd (FP 22):** Cycle path swept to clear slippery leaf debris.



3. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums & Heritage Officer

February and March have been bustling with events at the Birthplace. Recent events have included *The Darker Side of Love*, a Valentine's themed evening with Museum Attendant and local storyteller, Christine Genders. Visitors were treated to out-of-hours access to the museum, a glass of wine, and a set of traditional anti-valentine's stories that didn't end in a 'happily ever after'. The evening was extremely popular with tickets selling out well in advance.

The Birthplace's programme of talks included *18th-Century Fashion and Revolution*, a fascinating one-hour talk led by British fashion designer, Gemma Thompson. Gemma delved into the history of women's clothing in the 1700's and demonstrated how to wear a robe à l'anglaise, an iconic dress style from the period.

Half-term fun included *Craft a Daffodil* family activity, spring themed puzzles, and a trail, all of which were organised and run by Birthplace volunteers.

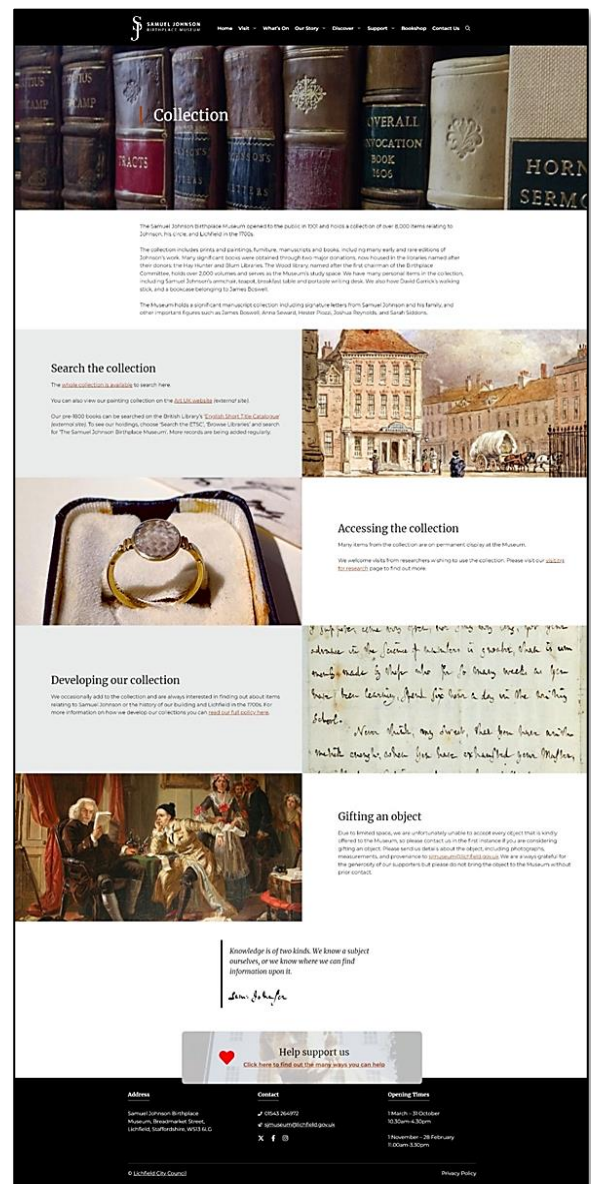
February was busy with group bookings including a visit from Spice West Midlands who booked a Birthplace tour led by Sarah Dale, and Maghull and Lydiate U3A who had two guided tours led by Christine Genders.

The Johnson Society were welcomed on 2 March for the annual Chair Ceremony tradition preceding their Annual Lecture. The oak chair which inspired the event is on display in the Birth Room. The chair is believed to have been used by Samuel Johnson at his school at Edial.

A brand-new website for the Birthplace has been trialled and is set to launch on 1 April. The modern, user-friendly design ensures visitors can easily navigate the site, find information, and plan their visit. The fresh look aligns with the museum's branding and identity, strengthening its image and appeal to new and returning visitors. A screen captures from the new website is shown opposite.

The updated content and optimised design will improve search engine rankings, making the Birthplace more discoverable to potential visitors and tourists to the city. The integrated donation options, along with descriptions of how individuals can support the Birthplace, simplifies the process for visitors to contribute.

The Birthplace can more effectively showcase its collections and educational resources online, enabling users to explore the collections and information remotely. Overall, the website will significantly enhance the Birthplace's digital presence and improve visitor engagement and accessibility.



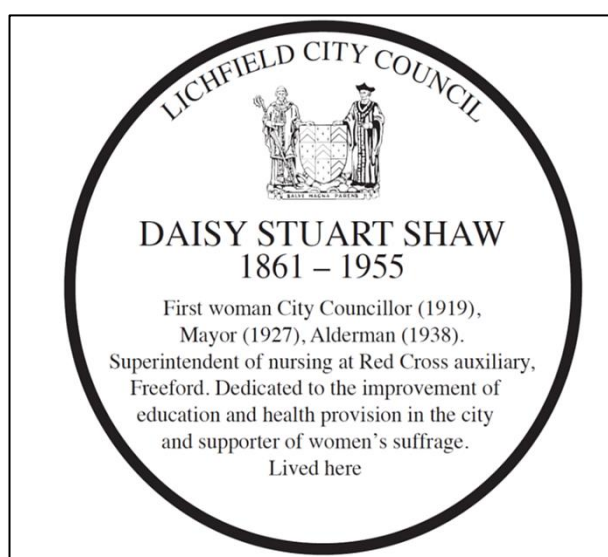
The Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) has been busy preparing for the museum's Accreditation Return which is due on 1 October. As part of this process, several key policies have been reviewed and updated, including Access, Care and Conservation, Collections Development, and Collections Documentation policies. Additionally, the Forward Plan, detailing the site's strategic objectives for the upcoming three-year period has also been updated. This suite of documents has been presented to the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee (JBAC); the minutes of that meeting feature elsewhere on the Council agenda.

Exciting news from the Birthplace's partnership with Keele University! A heartfelt congratulations to Emma Stanbridge for successfully passing her viva and completing her PhD studentship. This remarkable achievement highlights her dedication and hard work, and the team is incredibly proud of her success.

As part of the ongoing improvements to the Bookshop, new door signage has been installed. This signage addresses the issue with the front door, which, when shut in cold weather, previously gave the misleading impression that the site was closed. Much work has been done this year to improve exterior signage, which is essential for enhancing visibility and attracting a wider audience. By providing clear, informative, and visually appealing signage, the team hope to increase brand awareness, draw in more visitors, and ultimately drive higher footfall to the Birthplace.



Alongside the MHO's efforts at the Birthplace, work is underway for the unveiling of a new blue plaque in honour of Daisy Stuart Shaw (1861-1955). The plaque will be unveiled in Lichfield during Women's History Month and forms part of Lichfield City Council's International Women's Day celebrations. Shaw was nominated for commemoration by Councillor Ann Hughes. Shaw was Lichfield's first woman City Councillor, Mayor and Alderman. She was also superintendent of nursing at Red Cross auxiliary, Freeford. Shaw was a fascinating woman who was dedicated to improving education and health provision in the city and was a supporter of women's suffrage.



Museum Attendant, Sarah Dale, will lead a *Women's History Walk* to celebrate International Women's Day. The walking tour will explore the lives of women with links to Lichfield across the centuries, showing how they demonstrated agency and achievement.

Upcoming events at the Birthplace include *St. Patrick's Day – A Celebration of Irish Tales*, an evening with multi-award-winning storyteller, Maria Buckley Whatton. On 17 March, Maria will be telling tales of bold warrior women and riotous ribaldry.

The Museum Support Officer (MSO) is overseeing preparations for the reopening of the Old Guildhall Cells for the upcoming summer season. This includes coordinating a thorough deep clean and organising the volunteer rota. The Cells are set to reopen on 5 April and will remain open on Saturdays throughout summer until October. Additionally, the MSO is actively preparing and promoting events for the forthcoming Easter holiday period at the Birthplace.

4. Markets: Jeremy Williams, Markets Officer/Michelle Read, Office Administrator

A full market is being maintained on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Any traders that have left have been swiftly replaced from those on the waiting list.

The 25% discount for January & February, implemented to help traders through the difficult winter trading period, has now come to an end.

There are new casual traders on Tuesdays & Fridays including '*Joyful Concept*' who sell Asian food. All food stalls continue to be monitored for standards of food hygiene and temperature control. LDC Environmental Health Officers are kept informed of any issues and any new food traders joining the market.

On 9 February, Chinese New Year was celebrated on the Market Square with local community groups performing Tai Chi and other Martial Arts. There was also the opportunity to discover Chinese Calligraphy and enjoy dance, opera, a new year story, and a traditional lion dance. This year is the year of the Wood Snake, the sixth animal of the Chinese zodiac associated with wisdom, intuition, and strategic growth.



The Markets Officer and Administration Officer are currently updating market operations documentation in readiness for the next meeting of the Markets Working Group. The Town Clerk has updated the hire forms for the Market Square and Pool Walk, both for Market days and for 'ad hoc' non-market day hire, together with the Terms and Conditions document and the 'Markets' page of the LCC website, which now provides more information and in a more straightforward manner.

The Fruit and Veg stall continues to stand on Wednesdays and there have been a number of other enquiries regarding Wednesday trading, further updates will be provided in due course.

Tuesday Market Update

All pitches on the Tuesday market have been filled by casual traders. The turnover of traders on Tuesday market can be quite high, but the waiting list maintained by Officers has proven to be effective in rapidly filling any spaces.

Currently, two of the three available casual pitches on Tuesdays have been filled by '*BS Bahia Fashions*' and '*Shaun the fish monger*'. It is hoped both traders will soon become permanent.



Friday Market Update

The two pitches which have recently been vacated have been occupied by new casual traders including '*Ellesmere Honey.*'



The start of 2025 has seen several new applications from those wishing to trade on Lichfield market. These applications are being placed on the list to replace traders that have left and to cover absence or holidays.

Unfortunately, the market on Friday 24 January was cancelled due to high winds.

Saturday Market Update

The Saturday market also remains full. The Markets Officer maintains a list of casual traders, and they are invited to stand when permanent traders are absent or take holidays.

Vegan Market

The first Vegan Market of 2025 was held on Sunday 19 January with an array of diverse stalls. The Vegan Market will continue to be held on the third Sunday of the month, with an average of 26 traders attending each time.

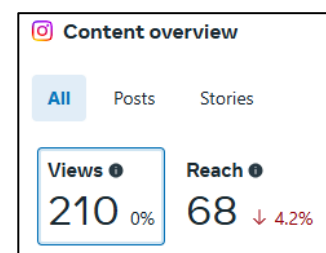
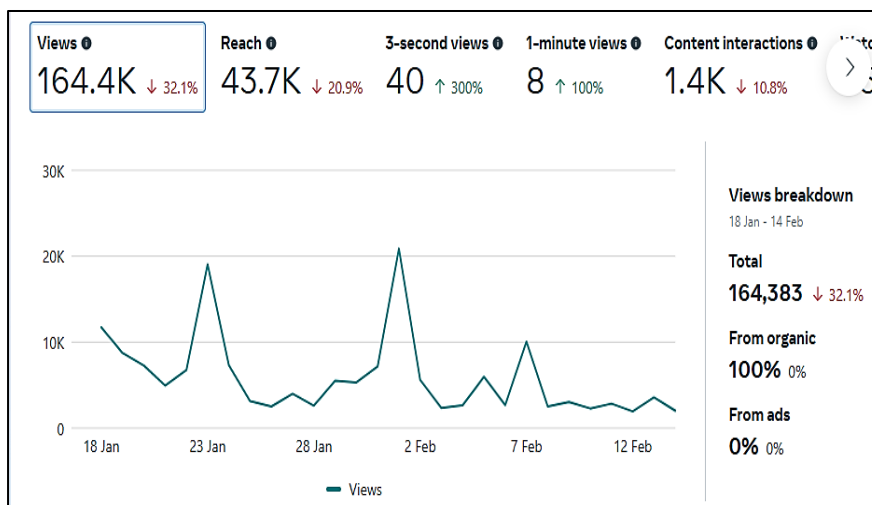
Producers' Market

The Producers' Market, operated by CJ's Events, was held on Sunday 19 January and will continue to operate on the first Sunday of the month. This market is well supported by 30 traders and is immensely popular with customers, many revisiting every month.



Social Media

All social media platforms maintain a good following. The statistics below show the number of followers on Facebook and Instagram. Officers are continuing to track numbers and posts that are most popular, focusing on specific traders. This has proven to be the most effective way to promote new traders joining the market and helps the new traders get established.



5. Guildhall & Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Bookings Officer

Although it is only a month since the last report, there has been a lot going on at the Guildhall. Regular hirers have returned after the Christmas holidays – including RSPB, Lichfield Friendship Centre, Bridge, National Trust, Slimming World, Chess, Band Practice and U3A.

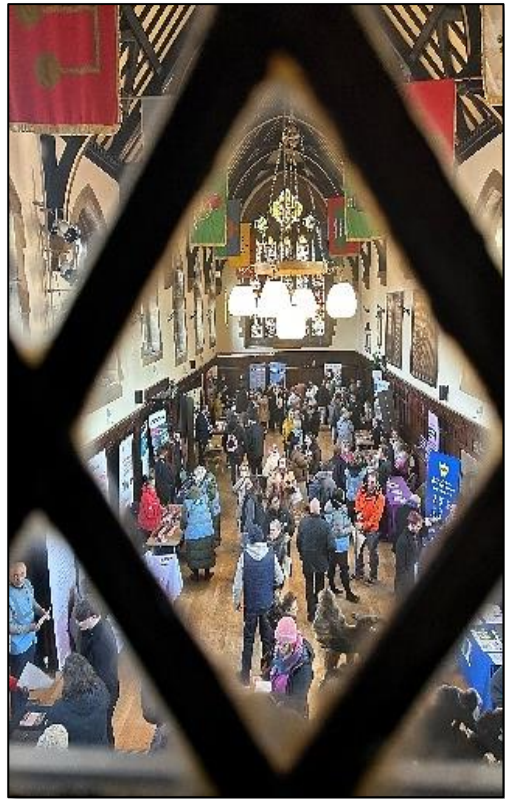
We have been busy with 36 meetings in various rooms and 12 training sessions/days.

Other bookings have included a choir rehearsal, auditions, a strategy/conference day, and the Guildroom being used for the LCC by-election. Market Research have had 2 commercial bookings so far this year. Other bookings included a local Awards Night, Lunar New Year Event and a local Charity Anniversary Quiz (which had almost 130 attending).

The Mayor and Sheriff held a charity Celidh Dance 8 February (included in the Civic Officers report).

A Jobs Fair (pictured), organised by LDC & DWP, was held on 18 February and very well attended. Stalls were located in both the Guildroom and Main Hall.

Other events include The Worshipful Company of Smith's Annual Feast on 25 February, the Guildhall Open Day on Saturday 1 March, and six Lichfield Arts concerts.



When time allows, our Premises Attendants have been carrying out general building maintenance and repainting where required.

The Town Clerk has updated the Guildhall booking forms, terms and conditions and several associated documents, as well as the 'Guildhall' page of the LCC website, to provide additional information in a clearer and more accessible manner to hirers. The Deputy Town Clerk has arranged a 3D tour of the Guildhall which is also now available to view on the LCC website and is further mentioned in the Deputy Town Clerk's section of this report.

Boley Park Community Hall

The Playscheme is booked in for a week in April, 4 weeks (3 days per week) in August, and 4 days in the Christmas holidays. We continue to attract lots of children's parties and have a long waiting list for regular hire slots.

Maintenance work on the hall floor is due to be carried out during the Easter holidays. Arrangements will also be made for the annual service of the fire alarm and CCTV soon.

The Town Clerk is currently scheduling the AGM and a Management Committee/Trustee meeting following receipt of the audited accounts.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk is currently working on promotion of the Guildhall in an effort to raise the building's profile as an events venue. As part of this an *Open Day* has been planned for **Saturday 1 March** between 10.00am and 2.00pm.

During the event, rooms will be thoughtfully arranged to highlight the venue's versatility and charm. Guests will also be able to experience civic traditions firsthand, including viewing the city's sword and mace. Visitors will be able to explore the old prison cells to learn about the history of law and order in the city.

At 12 noon, local historian Jonathan Oates, will become '*Edwardian Jono*', and give a captivating talk on the Guildhall's rich heritage.

Guests will then be able to conclude their visit with a delicious canapé and a glass of complimentary non-alcoholic fizz.



This free event has been widely publicised in City Life magazine and on the Council's Social media platforms **#visitourvenue**.

In addition, a new virtual *Walk Through Tour* has been created and included on the City Council's [website](#), providing potential hirers with a useful insight into the building. Work continues on the publication of a new Guildhall brochure.

Further clarification is being sought on particulars regarding the Christmas Lights Switch On event before a full report can be presented to Council.

The Deputy Town Clerk is also working on agenda items for the next Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee meeting on the 1 April.

Meetings have been scheduled with District Council Officers to discuss the May Food Festival and the implementation of vehicle mitigation bollards in relation to the impact on the Markets and accessibility to the Market Square.

Training continues with all City Council employees regarding Health and Safety matters such as manual handling and the use of fire extinguishers. Members of staff have also been reminded of the City Council's protocols for Martyn's Law and critical incidents to ensure a heightened level of awareness is maintained as Civic events begin for 2025.