

Lichfield City Council

Donegal House, Bore Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6LU

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Town Clerk: Anthony Briggs B.A (Hons), CiLCA

20 October 2022

To: Members of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

Councillors G Boyle (Chair) and J Anketell, D Dundas, J Eagland, T Matthews, C Rapley, C Spruce and R Yardley

Representative of Johnson Society

P Jones and J Winterton

Honorary Members

Robert Awty and Antony Thompson

Also to:

Museums and Heritage Officer (Joanne Wilson)

Museum Support Officer (Lisa Hand)

Dear Committee Member

Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee (JBAC)

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee to be held in the **Moulton Room, Guildhall at 10.30am on Tuesday 1 November 2022** at which the following business will be transacted. Any member unable to attend should forward their apologies to the Town Clerk.

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

3 MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 April 2022 (**copy attached**). [Minutes adopted by the City Council on 13 June 2022].

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM JBAC MINUTES

5 VISITOR NUMBERS 2021-2022 (ANNUAL REPORT)

To consider the enclosed report by the Museums and Heritage Officer [**APPENDIX 1**]

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted

6 UPDATE ON PERSONNEL CHANGES

Following the departure of Penny Taylor in August, Lisa Hand was recruited to the post of Museum Support Officer and joined LCC in October. Lisa brings experience from working in events and hospitality at the Ashmolean Museum, Museum of London and Museum of Childhood, and studied English Language and Literature. Lisa will work 22 hours per week. New Museum Attendant Laura Bell was also recruited in August for two shifts at the Museum reception per week.

RECOMMENDED: *That the report be noted*

7 RE-INSTALLING THE 'JOHNSON'S HEAD' BUST ON BIRD STREET

To consider the report at **APPENDIX 2** (attached).

RECOMMENDED:

*That the Committee consider **whether or not** it wishes to make a recommendation to Council for the costs of £7,200 to be included in the 2023/2024 budget proposals [to be discussed by Council at its January 2023 meeting]*

8 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – UPDATE AND PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24

To consider the report at **APPENDIX 3** (attached).

RECOMMENDED:

1. That the report be noted

2. That the Committee make a recommendation to Council for the completion of items listed above (excluding those payable by CIL) during 2023/24 with the corresponding costs to be drawn from the Council's capital reserve; the projected costs being approximately £58,000 [any adopted recommendation will then form part of the draft 2023/24 Repair and Renewals programme to be considered by Council at its January 2023 meeting.]

9 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Tuesday 25 April 2023. Following adoption of the Minutes of the JBAC meeting of 6 November 2018, additional meetings may be called in the meantime if appropriate.

ANY OTHER URGENT OR NECESSARY BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.

* * *

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee Meeting held via 'Zoom' at 10:30 am on Tuesday 26 April 2022

PRESENT:

Representing Lichfield City Council: Councillors G Boyle (Chair) and J Anketell, J Eagland, C Rapley, C Spruce, T Matthews, D Dundas, and R Yardley

In Attendance:

Tony Briggs (Town Clerk)
Joanne Wilson (Museums & Heritage Officer)
Penny Taylor (Museum Support Officer)
Tony Thompson & R Awty (Honorary Member)
J Winterton (Johnson Society representative)

Apologies:

P Jones

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

9 MINUTES

Councillor C Rapley asked for clarification about Item 7 from the last minutes, specifically relating to the Minutes of the JBAC meeting on 6 November 2018. The Town Clerk explained that following the adoption of those minutes, additional meetings to those included in the calendar of meetings as agreed by council may be called if appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record. [Minutes adopted by Council on 6 December 2021].

10 MATTERS ARISING FROM JBAC MINUTES

None.

11 FORWARD PLAN: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 2022-2025

The Committee considered the updated Forward Plan aims and Objectives 2022-2025. Councillor D Dundas asked to include the acquisition of the building next door to the long term aims of the forward plan [*also see Minute 17*]. The MHO stated that although a line in the full document identifies this as a long-term goal, it could also be included in the table of strategic aims. Councillor D Dundas also requested the document include clearer aims for decarbonising the Birthplace. J Winterton requested some clarification regarding new facilities for the Birthroom, and the MHO explained that the funding for this would encompass items to improve private hire on the whole, like the toilet and tables. Councillor T Matthews praised the document. [*A draft of the revision was subsequently circulated for comment*]

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan Aims and Objectives 2022-2025 be updated as set out above, and adopted.

12 SJBM VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT AND POLICY

The Committee considered the updated Volunteer Policy and Agreement for the Museum. Councillor C Rapley stated that the intention to make provisions for disabled volunteers should be added to the policy. [*a draft of the amendment was subsequently circulated for informal comment and approval*]

RESOLVED: The Volunteer Policy and Volunteer Agreement be updated to include the Museum's intention to make provisions to support disabled volunteers, and adopted.

13 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – UPDATE ON MARKET STREET DISABLED ACCESS

The committee were asked to consider a report which states that Staffordshire County Council (SCC) do not support the proposal to add new stairs and a disappearing platform lift to the Market Street entrance of the Museum. Amended proposals were submitted which reduced the footprint

of the steps, referring to the areas used by other neighbouring businesses. It was reported that SCC would refuse any plans for the market street entrance, regardless of how little space they would take up, based on their records which state that the steps and tourist board were built “illegally”. T Thompson referred to the procedures followed in 1992, which show that the steps were built legally. Councillor C Rapley stated that SCC were potentially being discriminatory in their actions. R Awty and Councillor R Yardley echoed T Thompson, with Cllr Yardley questioning if lawyers had been consulted about SCC’s decision. The MHO and Town Clerk confirmed that discussions were ongoing and that further reports would be provided in due course.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, the legality of the existing structure be confirmed, and that robust discussions continue on this matter with further updates to JBAC to follow.

14 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – 2021/22 UPDATE & PROPOSED WORK IN 2022/23

Members were asked to consider a report which explored several factors which have affected the progress of development works on the building, mainly pertaining to SCC’s decision to refuse plans to make the Market Street entrance accessible. The committee agreed that waiting for other works to be completed based on the Market Street plans would increase the cost of redevelopment, and that improving the exterior decoration of the building, removing asbestos from the basement ceiling and replacing the smoke detectors should be prioritised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, and that that the revised 2022/23 proposed works be adopted.

15 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, by reason of the confidential nature of the business next to be transacted, the public and the press be excluded from the Meeting.

16 RESPONSES TO EXTERIOR REDECORATION AND REPAIR TENDER

The committee were asked to consider the Town Clerk’s report to select a contractor for the Birthplace’s exterior redecoration. The Town Clerk confirmed that appropriate delegated authority had been sought from Council and granted at the meeting of 20 April 2022. Following discussion, members selected ‘Messenger’ as the preferred contractor.

RESOLVED: That ‘Messenger’ be confirmed as preferred contractor for the exterior redecoration and repair tender, and that they be instructed as soon as reasonably practicable.

17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr J Winterton asked the Committee to give its in principle support for expanding the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum into one of the adjoining properties should such an opportunity arise; this would offer numerous benefits, notably in terms of making more of the Birthplace and its collections accessible to visitors, and creating better facilities for research, educational visits and events, but would of course create several issues, not least being funding for any such proposal. The Committee confirmed its ‘in principle’ support.

RESOLVED: That the proposal be noted and that JBAC supports the principle for the expansion of the Birthplace in this way.

18 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings of 10:30am on Tuesday 25 April 2023. Following the adoption of the Minutes of the JBAC meeting of 6 November 2018, additional meetings may be called in the meantime if appropriate.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS
THE CHAIR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 11:10am**

JBAC: 1 November 2022 APPENDIX 1

Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum Visitor Numbers 2021/2022 Annual Report

2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019
10,607	1,653	20,994	21,427

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Birthplace Museum has not been open for a full 12-month reporting period since 2018/2019. The building was closed to the public completely in March to July 2020 and from November 2020 to April 2021. Visitors were welcomed back under limited conditions over the summer period in 2020, and to the Bookshop only in April 2021 before the Museum reopened on 17 May 2021. A further short period of bookshop-only access was necessary in October 2021 while the building was rewired. The calendar year visitor figures for 2020 and 2021 were 5069 and 7,596 respectively.

Prior to the pandemic, visitor numbers had increased annually since the introduction of free admission to the museum in October 2005. An unprecedented increase in visitors to 16,000 during Johnson's Tercentenary celebrations in 2009 had been consistently surpassed from 2013 onwards, reaching over 20,000 by 2018.

The quarterly breakdown of visitors in the last reporting period was as follows:

<p>Apr – Jun 2020 0 Apr – Jun 2021 1,224* <i>Quarterly difference: n/a</i></p>	<p>Jul – Sep 2020 1,200** Jul – Sep 2021 3,591 <i>Quarterly difference: +199%</i></p>
<p>Oct – Dec 2020 453*** Oct – Dec 2021 2,781 <i>Quarterly difference: +513%</i></p>	<p>Jan – Mar 2021 0 Jan – Mar 2022 3,011 <i>Quarterly difference: n/a</i></p>

**Bookshop visitors only in April 2021 **Museum reopened on 14 July 2020
***Museum closed from 5 November 2020*

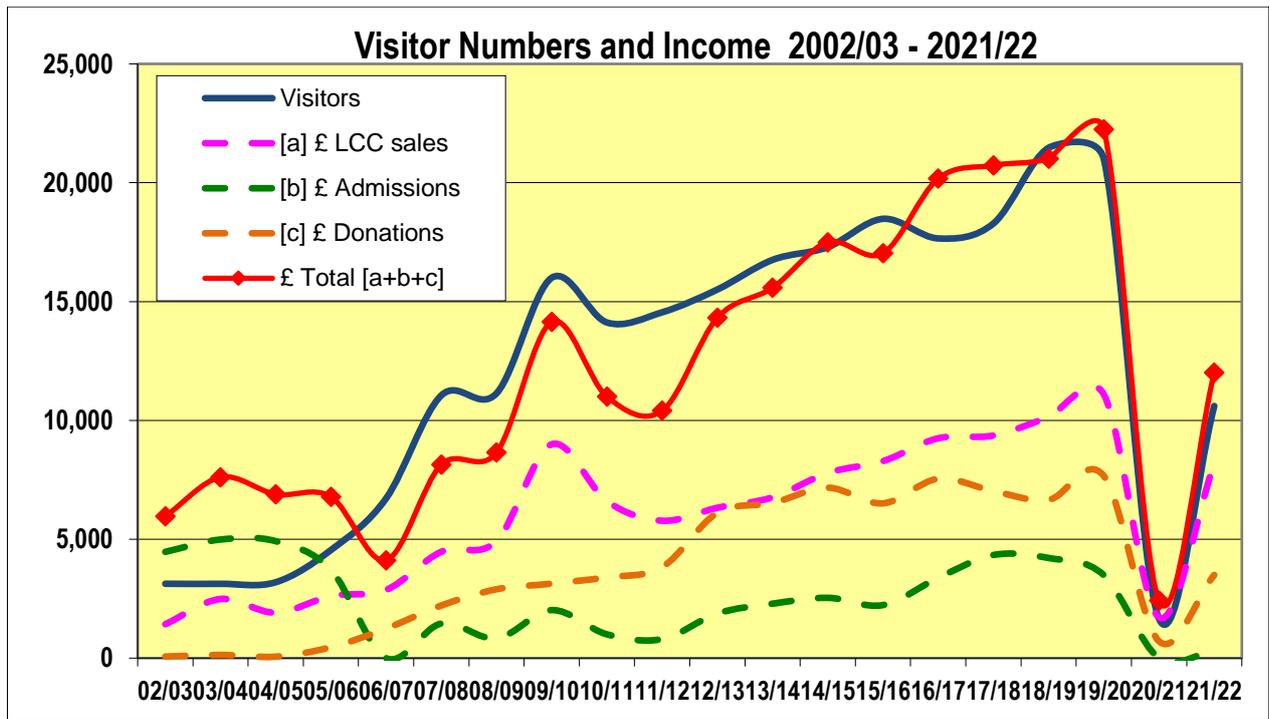
Donations from visitors averaged 33p per head in 2020/21 (Down 10p per head from the short open period in 19/20). Sales averaged 98p per head, which was down by 15% on average sales in 20/21, but a 46% increase on sales per head in 18/19.

Indications from the present financial year 2022/2023

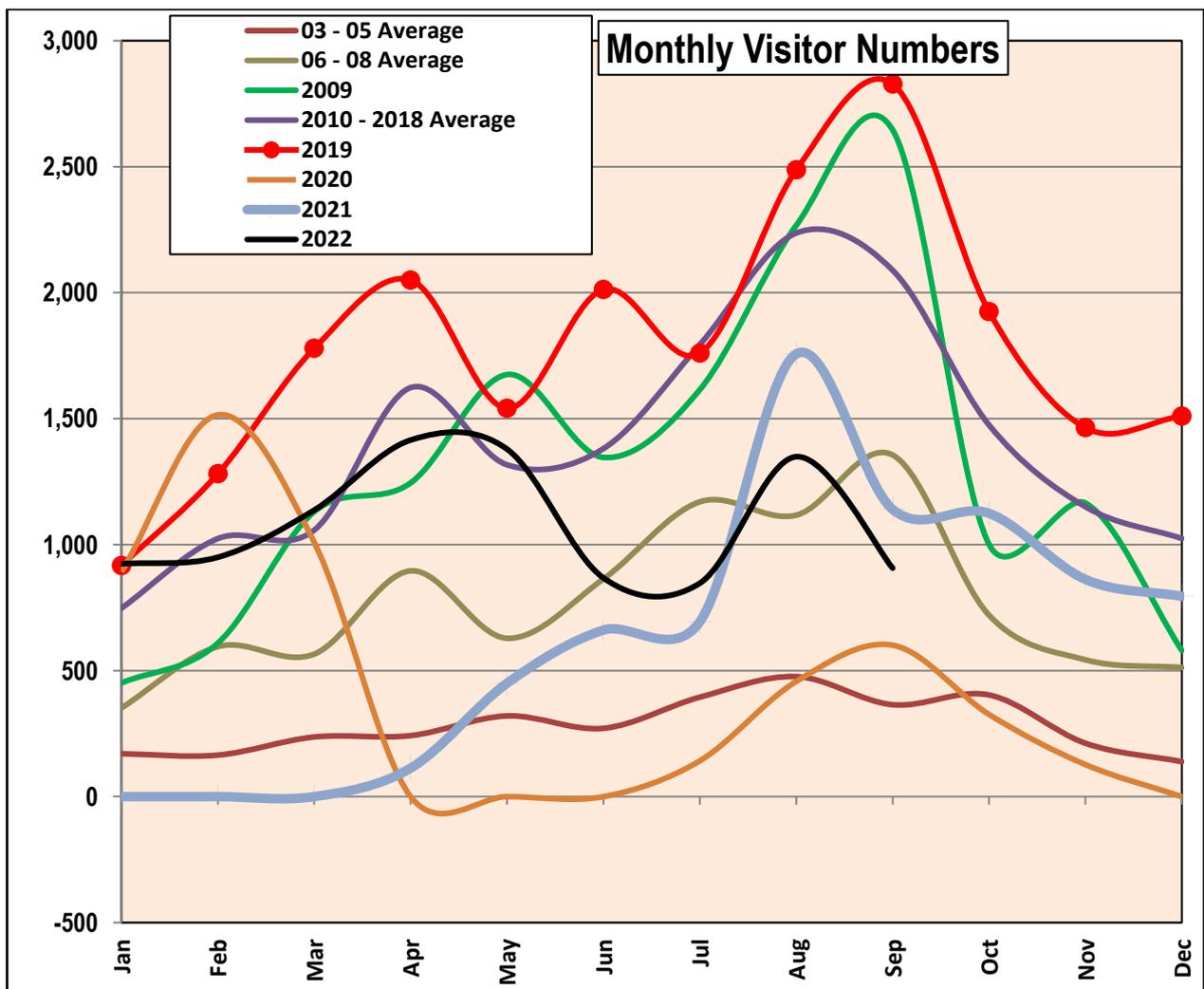
The current period, from April 2022, is the first full reporting period in which the Birthplace Museum has been consistently open since March 2020, with the exception of a few days of closure to enable scaffolding to be safely installed and removed. Spring figures indicate reasonable performance in the context of post-pandemic recovery, with visitor numbers improved on 2021 and at 65% of the same period pre-pandemic in 2019. Summer figures show a decrease. This may be due to scaffolding on the building, but factors such as hotter weather favouring outdoor attractions and the first full Summer of overseas travel reopening since the pandemic are also likely to have had some impact.

Apr – Jun 2021 1,224	Jul – Sep 2021 3,591
Apr – Jun 2022 3,662	Jul – Sep 2022 3,103
Difference: +199%	Difference: -14%

Please see overleaf for tables giving an overview of Annual Visitor Numbers and Income over the past decade, and Monthly Visitor Numbers.



*Admissions refers to guided tour, school and special events admissions from October 2005 onwards, when standard visits to the Museum became free of charge.



JBAC: 1 November 2022 APPENDIX 2

RE-INSTALLING THE 'JOHNSON'S HEAD' BUST ON BIRD STREET

In 2019 the Birthplace Museum was approached by the owner of a Bust of Samuel Johnson which was formerly installed over the door of Number 10 Bird Street, causing the building to be known locally as 'the Johnson's Head'. The owner had purchased the bust at auction and expressed an interest in the bust returning to Lichfield, on the condition that it could be placed in the original position. Provisional enquiries were made in 2019 but contact was lost in the intervening period. The Johnson Society re-established contact with the donor in 2022, who confirmed that he was still keen to make the gift if the conditions of display could be met, on the understanding that the installation costs would be covered by the recipient.

Historical Background

In 1809 bookseller and printer Thomas George Lomax established his business and moved into a premises at the corner of Market Street and Bird Street (10 Bird Street) "at the sign of the Johnson's Head", placing a bust of Samuel Johnson over the door. Lomax is an important figure in the history of the city, and in Johnsonian studies: the stock of his bookshop partly comprised purchases from the old Johnson family stock, and he was a collector of Johnsoniana. He was elected as Mayor and his son, Alfred Charles Lomax, continued the family business and civic involvement, and eventually donated many items of Johnsonian interest to the Birthplace Museum.

Printing was continued at the site by 'Lomax's Successors' until it finally closed in 1969, when the bust was removed and came to be sold at auction in 2017 and was purchased by the potential donor.

Permissions and Costs for Re-instating the Bust

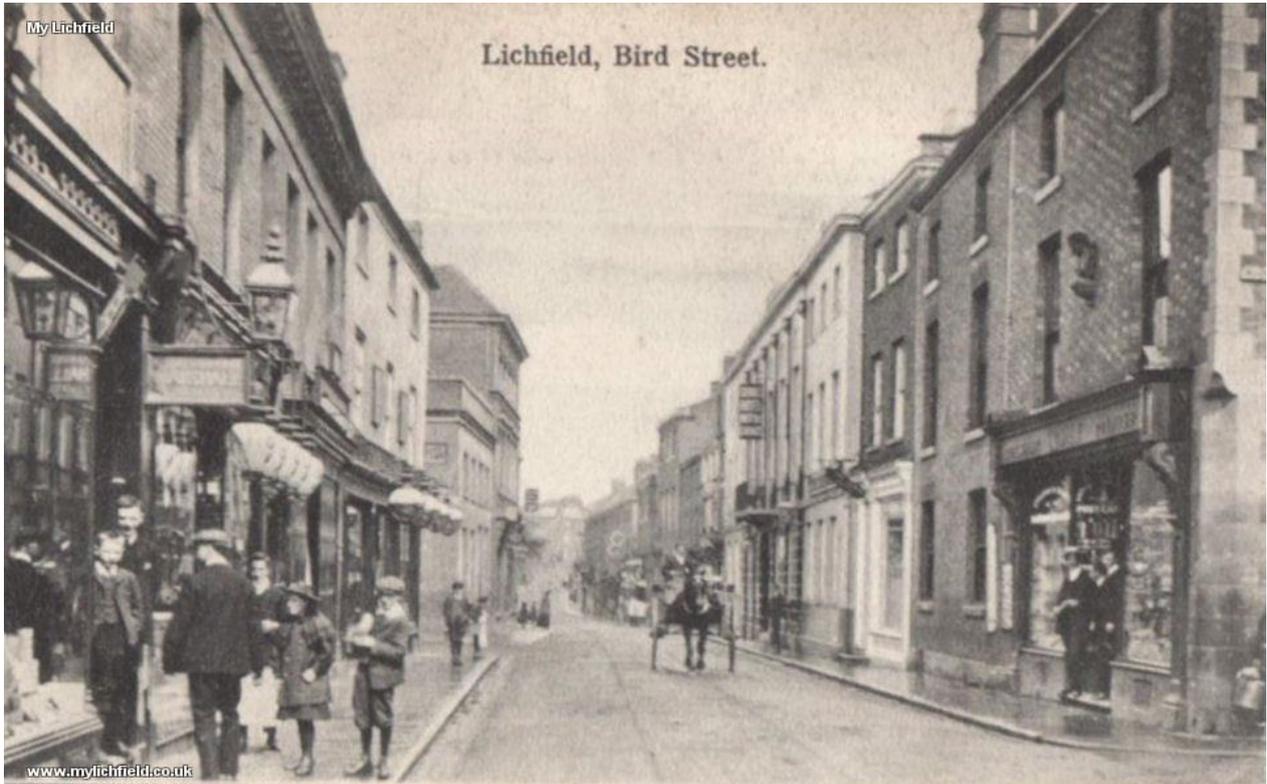
Number 10 Bird Street is owned by the George Hotel, the managing director of which has expressed provisional support for the project. The current tenants of the building are Viking e-cigs, and the manager of the shop has confirmed that they would welcome the bust. Ed Higgins, the Principal Conservation and Design Officer at Lichfield District Council, has indicated that he would support the reinstatement, subject to appropriate applications being made. 10 Bird Street is Grade II listed, and Listed Building Consent would be required. The approximate cost for Architects to prepare an application would be £1,500.

A provisional budget of £5,700 has been indicated by a specialist contractor for the installation. This includes scaffolding which would be required due to the height of the bust.

Should re-instating the bust be favoured, it is suggested that the bust could be donated to the Birthplace Museum collection, providing that considerations regarding insurance and ongoing care can be met.

Please see below for images.

RECOMMENDED: That the Committee consider **whether or not** it wishes to make a recommendation to Council for the costs of £7,200 to be included in the 2023/2024 budget proposals [To be discussed by Council at its January 2023 meeting]



The bust in situ on Bird Street (between first floor windows at front right of image)



The bust and original bracket (images supplied by owner)

JBAC: 1 November 2022 APPENDIX 3

Project Update

At its meeting of 3 November 2020, this Committee resolved to support the principle of a three-year Birthplace Museum redevelopment project and made a recommendation to Council that the elements included within year one of that programme be funded from the Council's capital reserve. The three-year project was based upon the following headline provisions and costings:

Year	Project focus	Estimated Cost
2021/2022	Rewiring; Toilet; Workroom;	£75,321.58
2022/2023	Bookshop; Steps	£90,304.58
2023/2024	Lift installation; Parlour	£118,216.58

On adoption of this recommendation by Council, 'phase 1' was included in the draft 2021/22 Repairs and Renewals programme and adopted by Council at its January 2021 meeting.

For 2022/23, this Committee again made a recommendation to Council for 'phase 2' of the project, with slight variation from that set out above:

- New Parlour Displays
- Improvements to library and research area (using Blum funding)
- New external steps to Market St elevation

The Committee also requested costings for the external repair and redecoration of the Museum, with the likelihood being that this work be included in 'phase 3' of the redevelopment in 2023/24.

However, an incidence of falling render in late 2021 gave this work more urgency, together with the area of bulging render on the Breadmarket St elevation. Difficulties and delays with the proposed Market St steps (a key feature of the approved 'phase 2' programme for 2022/23) led to the possibility of reprofiling the 2022/23 spend to allow this issue and other separate priority matters - the removal of the asbestos ceiling in the basement and replacement of ageing smoke detectors – to be addressed within the 22/23 financial year.

At its meeting of 20 April 2022, the City Council resolved to delegate authority to JBAC to consider reprofiling the 2022/23 elements of the Redevelopment Project within the existing overall budget of £75,000 that had been approved by council, *and* to appoint an appropriate contractor based on the quotations received *if* the Committee wished to undertake the external repair and redecoration work during 2022/23.

At its April 2022 meeting, JBAC agreed the reprofiling of 'phase 2' as set out above.

The external repair and redecoration was originally intended to take around 8 weeks, with the work needing to take place between Spring and Autumn due to the application conditions for lime plaster. Start date was 10 June 2022.

Unfortunately, when opening up was underway previously unidentified structural issues were revealed that required urgent attention. The extent of the work and its nature became apparent across the period from 24 June – 12 July, and included the replacement of significant areas of structural oak beams that support the timbers above, plus the introduction of steel on the corner of the Breadmarket St/Market St elevation to prevent further structural movement. The project went from an 8 week duration to approximately 20 weeks, and the original contract cost of £34,000 more than doubled to a final figure of approximately £74,000 (plus fees). There was no option but to carry out this work however, and it is perhaps fortunate that the more minor work revealed this issue before any further deterioration occurred.

Within the final costs are additional works that were identified while on site and have been carried out in the interests of value for money to the public purse. The scaffold arrangement was complex and expensive and it therefore seemed logical to address issues including the replacement of cast iron rainwater goods and hoppers that were reaching the end of their serviceable life, plus significant timber repairs to window frames. The Birthplace sign was also cleaned and leadwork on windowsills repaired or replaced as necessary. The example photographs below show the deterioration of an original oak beam to the second floor as identified during the 'opening up' process, and the extent of structural timber replacement required once further investigations had been undertaken.

The scaffolding was being removed and final painting underway at the time of writing, and the building is looking splendid. The first-floor fencing and water-filled barriers are scheduled for removed by 31 October and the project completed on this date.



No.9 Breadmarket St

Members will recall discussions at the April JBAC meeting regarding the 'in principle' support for the potential acquisition of a building adjacent to the Birthplace Museum to facilitate its expansion. It was noted during those discussions that a major barrier to such an ambition was the funding of the purchase and work required thereafter. A possible opportunity to acquire no.9 Breadmarket St arose during the Summer but following discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, plus discussions with Minority Group Leaders and the Deputy Chair of JBAC, there was no clear desire to pursue such a purchase at this time.

Representatives from the Johnson Society requested a meeting to discuss this position, and a meeting attended by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, the Deputy Chair of JBAC, the Town Clerk and three representatives of the Johnson Society took place on 20 September 2022, where these matters were discussed in detail. It was agreed that the long-term ambition to acquire an adjacent building remains, but City Council representatives did not believe that the opportunity should be pursued at this time due to funding concerns – notably the demands upon the capital reserve and the City Council's wider budgetary constraints - and the corresponding cost/benefit analysis for the Council and its residents. The meeting took place shortly after it emerged that 9 Breadmarket St had been re-let, which made discussions irrelevant to some degree, but they did assist in forming a position should future opportunities arise; the Council seemingly wishing to have confirmation of significant additional funding prior to progressing.

Other progress since April 2022

Progress on other matters is as follows:

- Architects have had difficulty in securing contractors willing to provide quotations for the toilet pod (for which listed building consent was received in December 2021) and are working on this currently. At this time, their advice is that the market has not been sufficiently tested to instruct a contractor. The updated cost for the toilet pod is in the region of £20,000+VAT and fees, though this may change
- Workroom windows have been reglazed to replace the mid-20th century wired glass with a firesafe alternative more in keeping with the historic property.
- Continued consultation with disabled access expert Ann Johnson and discussion with Staffordshire County Council (both directly and via Architects) to continue to seek a solution to SCC Highways objections to the Market Street disabled access scheme.
- Museum designers Vertigo started fabrication and sourcing of the contents for the new Workroom display off site, in close consultation with expert Bookbinder Arthur Green. The MHO has completed exhibition content for the interactive screen for the room and a step-by-step video on how a book is bound has been created by Arthur Green in collaboration with the MHO and voluntary video editing support. Any further work on the workroom is currently on hold until the toilet pod schedule is confirmed. This is due to the limitations of space adjacent to the Birthplace yard.

The total spent in 2022/23 to date is £68,527.96. With the anticipated final invoice from the contractors and forthcoming professional fees, the total projected spend on the exterior project in the 22/23 period is £82,000.

Three items are outstanding from the reprofiled works for 2022/23:

- Removal of the Asbestos Insulation Board ceiling, floor tiles and old boiler flue lining in basement of Museum and replacement with appropriate alternatives (budget £15,820)
- Replacement of aging smoke detector heads (budget £6,900)

- Minor making-good repairs to ceilings and floorboards (budget £5,000)

Given the necessary nature of the work, it is preferable that the smoke detectors be replaced before the end of the financial year, resulting in a final projected spend in 2022/23 of **£89,000** against a budget of £75,000. The asbestos ceiling is currently managed and monitored, posing no immediate risk, and can be completed within a package of other works in the coming financial year. Members are asked to note that the 2021/22 allocation to the Birthplace redevelopment (£75,000) was underspent by approximately £47,000.

Proposal for work in 2023/24

JBAC is asked to consider proposals for works in 2023/2024 to inform the budget setting meeting scheduled for January 2022 and make a recommendation to council that any second phase elements are funded by the City Council. Such projects would be funded from LCC's *capital* reserve which is estimated to be around £1.3m at 2022/23 year end.

With consideration to the unexpected necessary structural work undertaken in 2022, issues to be resolved with identifying a contractor for the toilet pod, and the ongoing conversations with SCC regarding a solution for disabled access, it is proposed that 2023/2024 should be a consolidation year to bring some of the outstanding items of the project to completion.

This would consist of:

- Installation of the toilet block (approx £20,000)
- Completion and installation of new Workroom Displays (£11,500 *remaining from the allocated CIL budget*)
- Removal of the Asbestos Insulation Board ceiling, floor tiles and old boiler flue lining in basement of Museum and replacement with appropriate alternatives (estimated budget £15,820)
- Minor making-good repairs to ceilings and floorboards (budget £5,000)
- Architects and Officers to continue discussions with SCC with the aim of reaching a solution regarding disabled access to the ground floor.
- Reviewing the original internal ground floor display plan following the conclusion of discussions with SCC regarding disabled access, with a view to presenting JBAC with a revised schedule, costing and funding plan for further redevelopment works for consideration before 2024/2025.
- Standard 5% defects retention on contractor fees for the external works carried out in 2022/23 will be due for payment in 2023/2024 (£3,000)

The budgeted cost to complete the work listed above (not including monies allocated from CIL funding) would therefore be £43,820, plus £8764 in fees (approximated at 20%) and 10% contingency, bringing the total cost to **£57,850**.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That the report be noted

2. That the Committee make a recommendation to Council for the completion of items listed above (excluding those payable by CIL) during 2023/24 with the corresponding costs to be drawn from the Council's capital reserve; the projected costs being approximately £58,000 [any adopted recommendation will then form part of the draft 2023/24 Repair and Renewals programme to be considered by Council at its January 2023 meeting.]