

**Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in the Guildroom, Guildhall, Lichfield
at 7.30 pm on Wednesday, 25 May 2022**

254 PRESENT

The Mayor of Lichfield (Councillor Jamie Checkland, in the Chair), and attendees and electors as entered in the attendance sheets.

255 OPENING REMARKS AND WELCOME BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor warmly welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Meeting and introduced the Town Clerk who outlined for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the proceedings, the order of business and conduct of the meeting.

256 MINUTES

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 26 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.*

257 CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

A copy of the Annual Report of City Council activities during 2021/22 was circulated for information.

258 REQUESTS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF ELECTORS

Mr Michael Hawkes read the following statement:

I would like to say a few words this evening about the City Council's decision at its April meeting to support the placement of plaques to Francis Barber and Anna Seward in our city. I am a member of a number of community groups in Lichfield which I know would support this project – the Johnson Society, the Friends of Erasmus Darwin House, the Civic Society and the Lichfield District City of Sanctuary. I am very pleased that the placement of these two plaques is now going ahead.

Both Francis Barber and Anna Seward are significant figures in Lichfield's 18th C history. Francis Barber was the manservant, friend and heir of Dr Johnson. He was an elected constable ('dozenor') for Stowe Ward and is thought to be the first black schoolteacher in England. Anna Seward was a noted poet and an influential person in Dr Darwin's social circle during the Enlightenment period.

There are a number of reasons to recognise their role in our social history. The plaques to Francis Barber and Anna Seward will, I feel, help our younger people to understand the contribution made to our country by black people and by women – two groups who often do not appear in our country's recorded history.

Now that the two plaques have been approved in principle by the City Council, I would urge the Council to expedite their production and placement. I understand that funding could be met from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). I have informed Cllr Colin Ball that I am a co-signatory of the savings account of a small community group that is being wound up where the signatories have agreed that the balance (about £100) should be transferred to the City Council and earmarked towards the cost of the Francis Barber plaque. Could the City Council set a target date – say the 30th September – for the two

plaques to be in place? I know that of number of people feel frustrated that the campaign to have the plaques especially to Francis Barber has taken so long.

I would also urge those city councillors who are also District Councillors to urge the Lichfield District Council to erect two information boards on the north and south sides of

Stowe Pool to highlight the historic significance of Dr Johnson, Francis Barber and Anna Seward. Reference could be made to the Johnson Willow, Michael Johnson's parchment factory on the pool's north side, the tannery on the pool's south side, Stowe House, Cruck House and Francis Barber's family home in Stowe Street. Such boards would an excellent complement to the Francis Barber plaque. Again they would help to educate our younger people about our city's remarkable 18th C history.

Thank you

The Town Clerk responded that a target date of September was desirable but dependent on many factors:

Francis Barber Plaque:

- It seems most likely the Barber plaque will be placed on Cruck House, with approval required from the Conservation Officer, and as the building is Grade II* listed, also approval from Historic England.
- Once agreement from external bodies is in place the design and wording of the plaque will be finalised with partners; the finalised design will then need to be approved by Council as owner of Cruck House, manufactured and installed. There is no intention to delay from LCC's perspective, but the process is reliant on some external forces and, in its final stages, the schedule of Council meetings.

Seward Plaque

- This was originally a Townswomen's Guild (TWG) project, and to have it placed at The Palace, it needs to be approved by the Cathedral's Fabric Advisory Committee (FAC). When they met to discuss the plaque the FAC requested further information, the City Council and TWG are working on this currently.

In regard to monies, it was noted that funding the plaques wholly via CIL was a strong possibility, though still subject to Council resolution, perhaps meaning that the monies mentioned could be allocated to another worthy cause.

The Town Clerk confirmed that approaches had been made by LCC to LDC in regard to the proposed information boards adjacent to Stowe Pool, including the offer of possible funding, but no response had been received. The Mayor reiterated that funding for the LDC project may be available via request to the City Council's Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Working Party.

Further discussion followed with the potential for the Seward plaque to be located on Market Street, and a suggestion from Cllr D Robertson that wording potentially be included on the plaque to reflect Anna Seward's place in the lesbian poetic canon.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS
THE MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.50 PM**