

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 Mrs 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)
Mr Tony Thompson & Mr R Awty (Honorary Member)
Mr J Winterton (Johnson Society representative)

Apologies:

Mr 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 1 November 2022. 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**