

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at 10:30 am on Tuesday 1 November 2022

PRESENT:

Representing Lichfield City Council:

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

In Attendance:

Sarah Thomas (Deputy Town Clerk)
Joanne Wilson (Museums & Heritage Officer)
Lisa Hand (Museum Support Officer)
J Winterton (Johnson Society representative)

Apologies:

R Awty, Cllr D Dundas, P Jones, Cllr C Rapley,
T Thompson and A Briggs (Town Clerk)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None.

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 April 2022 be confirmed as a correct record. [Minutes adopted by Council on 13 June 2022].

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM JBAC MINUTES

None.

4 VISITOR NUMBERS 2021-22 (ANNUAL REPORT)

The Committee considered the agenda report. When considering the indications from the current reporting period, the MHO reported that the 14% decrease in visitor numbers over Summer 2022 could also be partly attributed to the cancellation of Johnson's Birthday Celebrations following the death of HRH the Queen. Cllr Anketell described the figures as encouraging. Cllr Matthews requested details of the opening hours and times, which the MHO provided. It was recognised by members that the occurrences of closures due to the pandemic made recent annual figures difficult to compare, and that the coming year would provide a clearer view of post-pandemic recovery.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

5 UPDATE ON PERSONNEL CHANGES

The Committee formally welcomed Lisa Hand to the role of Museum Support Officer and Laura Bell as Museum Attendant.

RESOLVED: The update be noted.

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

The Committee considered the agenda report regarding the 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 bust was removed in 1969, with the current owner purchasing it at auction. The current owner expressed an interest in the bust returning to Lichfield, on the condition that it could be placed in the original position and installation costs covered. The Committee was advised that a quotation for installation had been received in the sum of £5,700 – largely due to the scaffolding required.

Additional costs included a listed building application (to be progressed by professional advisers). The total estimated cost for the project being £7,200.

The Committee was asked to resolve whether or not it wished to make a recommendation to Council that this cost be funded by LCC as part of its 2023/24 programme. The MHO advised that professional advice had been sought regarding the gift being accessioned to the Museum collection, and that concerns regarding this route had been raised. Members discussed the matter and were unanimously in favour of the principle of reinstalling the bust, on the condition that assurances were that the gift was in perpetuity, and a decision made on to whom the gift would be made.

However, mindful of the pressures on the 2023/24 budget and the nature of the project, members questioned whether CIL funding would be a more appropriate route for this project. Members requested more detailed information on the installation and costs involved, and that comparative quotations for the work be sought, with a view to exploring an alternative source of funding.

RESOLVED: That the Committee support the re-installation of the bust, subject to final costs and ownership issues being resolved, and requests Officers provide detailed costs for the project for consideration by the Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Working Party.

7 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – UPDATE AND PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24

Members were updated on the progress of the revised 'phase 2' of the redevelopment of the Museum, as agreed by the Committee at its April 2022 meeting. The major project of note was the external repair and redecoration of the Museum, which had encountered considerable delay and increased cost due to the identification and subsequent remedy of significant structural issues. Members were also updated on the decision not to pursue an opportunity to purchase an adjacent building which arose during Summer 2022. John Winterton expressed the disappointment of the Johnson Society in this matter and stated that they stand ready to support with fundraising and potential seed monies if and when the opportunity arose again.

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 was proposed that 2023/2024 should be a consolidation year to bring the outstanding items of the project to completion. Items suggested as being funded from the capital programme were:

Item	Budget Cost (£)
Installation of toilet block	20,000
Removal of asbestos board ceiling/tiles/boiler flue, appropriate disposal and replacement with suitable alternatives	16,000
5% retention payment for external repair/redecoration	3,000
Minor repairs to ceilings and floorboards	5,000
Fees/contingency	14,000
TOTAL	£ 58,000

Other items included in the overall 2023/24 programme were:

- Completion and installation of new Workroom Displays - funded from CIL (£11,500 remaining from the allocated CIL budget)

- Architects and Officers to continue discussions with SCC with the aim of reaching a solution regarding disabled access to the ground floor. Members discussed this item in detail, and Cllr Matthews and Cllr Eagland offered support in future discussions.
- 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.

RESOLVED: That the Committee supports the proposed 2023/24 programme as set out in the agenda report.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That the Council favourably consider the allocation of £58,000 from its 2023/24 capital programme to allow completion of the elements of the redevelopment project set out above.

8 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 11:20am**