

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Lichfield City Council held in Guildhall, Lichfield on Monday 8 December 2025 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors C Pinder-Smith (Mayor), J Anketell, H Ashton, D Baker, C Ball, J Blackman, R Bragger, J Christie, M Field, A Fox, C Greatorex, A Hughes, P Knight, A Lax, J Madden, J Marshall, P McDermott, P Ray, D Robertson, A Rushton, S Schafer, J Smith, E Strain, B Watkins, and R Yardley.

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Eagland, K Farrelly (parental leave), R Harvey-Coggins and M Warfield (medical advice).

52. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor asked that the best wishes of the Council be passed to Councillor M Warfield for a speedy recovery and congratulations be extended to Councillor K Farrelly on the birth of her first child.

The Mayor then detailed some of the events and functions she had attended since the last meeting of the Council which included Remembrance Sunday, the laying up of the Old Colours of the Mercian Regiment, the Christmas Lights Switch On and the Mayor and Sheriff's Black and White Charity Ball.

In addition the Mayor noted how much she had enjoyed meeting the winners of both the Christmas Lights Switch On Competition and Christmas Card competition.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Councillor C Greatorex declared an interest in agenda item 7 (minute 57), regarding a question under Standing Order 8(2) as he is a County Councillor and left the room during that agenda item.

Councillor J Smith declared an interest in agenda item 10 (minute 59), as the City Council representative and plot holder on Dovehouse Fields and took no part in discussion or voting thereon.

54. COUNCIL MINUTES

Councillor C Greatorex pointed out a typographical error at minute 50 of the Officers Report regarding the spelling of NACTSEW.

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30 September 2025 (No's 40-51) as amended be confirmed and signed as a correct record.*

55. MATTERS ARISING

None.

56. PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: *That comments submitted to Lichfield District Council for the period 26 September 2025 to 4 December 2025 and made in the name of LCC via delegated authority, be received.*

57. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 8 (2)

Councillor P Mc Dermott asked the Mayor:

'Madame Mayor will you, on behalf of Lichfield City Council, unequivocally condemn the divisive and racist language and opinions reportedly expressed on social media by the leader of Staffordshire County Council, Cllr Ian Cooper, and call for his resignation from his position as leader should the allegations against him be proved correct?'

The Mayor Responded:

'Lichfield City Council unequivocally condemns racist language and divisive rhetoric in all its forms, particularly within public life. Such language has no place in our communities. We believe that those who engage in this behaviour should face appropriate consequences through the proper processes. Our commitment is to uphold respect, equality, and inclusion for all'

THE MAYOR ADJOURNED THE MEETING FOR PUBLIC FORUM

A member of the public addressed the Council and asked

'It concerns Lichfield City Amenity Land.

How many of these areas exist in the City, please, and what are the responsibilities of the City Council to maintain these areas?

We have one adjacent to Hazel Grove which has received scant attention for many years so that it can no longer be classified as an amenity.

Children can no longer play there as it is unsafe, being littered with fallen branches and debris. What used to be a pleasant, mowed clearing is sadly neglected.

As in previous years, we, residents, should like once again to plant some hedgerow plants to revitalise this area but it is pointless, sadly, when the area is not maintained and so uncared for.'

The Mayor Responded

'The City Council owns more than 60 separate open spaces around the city, as well as approximately 40 pathways. These sites are inspected regularly. The Hazel Grove site has received significant attention in the recent past, but it seems clear that there are issues remaining. I will ask the Town Clerk to contact you directly to move this matter forward, and I also ask the Town Clerk to keep ward members updated with progress'. I hope that this will see the matter resolved quickly, but please do bring it back to the attention of the council if that does not occur'.

THE MEETING WAS RECONVENED

58. JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Councillor A Hughes noted that the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum was a great asset and how important it was to ensure it was maintained. Councillor C Greator asked if further funding could be obtained to achieve this, possibly from charitable organisations. Councillor A Hughes responded that a series of Grant Applications were planned and that JBAC was also looking into the possibility of commercial sponsorship.

RESOLVED: *That the minutes and recommendations of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee held on 4 November 2025 be adopted.*

59. COMMERCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillor J Blackman informed Members that the Guildhall micro website was almost complete and work had begun on the Markets micro website.

RESOLVED: That the minutes and recommendations of the Commercial Services Committee held on 10 November 2025 be adopted.

60. GRANTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Councillor C Ball noted a typographical error at minute 35 and informed Members that any underspend of the Grant allocation would be carried forward, asking Members to reach out to community groups who this may be of benefit to.

RESOLVED: That the minutes and recommendations of the Grants Advisory Committee held on 25 November 2025 be adopted.

61. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor A Fox commended the Town Clerk, Internal Auditor and Accounts Officer for their hard work in delivering a half yearly report which was close to the predicted targets.

RESOLVED: That the minutes and recommendations of the Audit Committee held on 3 December 2025 be adopted

62. POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS

Members noted the following changes in political affiliations:

- Councillor J Anketell resigned from the Labour Party and became a Green Party Councillor in September 2025
- Councillor S Schafer resigned from the Labour Party and became an Independent Councillor in November 2025

As a result, Members' attention was drawn to the political balance of the Council now being Labour (13), Conservative (6), Liberal Democrat (6), Reform UK (2), Green Party (1), Independent (1), and that the City Council is currently under no overall control.

Members confirmed that there was no desire to make changes in committee membership as a result of these developments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that no changes be made to current Committee memberships.

63. FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT- 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2025.

Councillor J Marshall commended Officers for their accuracy in the report and maintaining good financial controls.

RESOLVED: That the Financial progress report 1 April to 30 September 2025 be noted.

64. REVIEW OF EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

At the October 2024 meeting of Council, members granted a request for a period of extended leave of absence made by Cllr A Lax. A request for an extension was granted in June 2025, with a review date set for December. Cllr Lax had advised that on expiry of the current dispensation she did not wish to make a request for further extension and took the opportunity to thank Councillors for their support. Councillor J Marshall responded on behalf of the whole Council to wish Councillor Lax the best recovery possible stating that he had found her conduct in recent months inspirational.

RESOLVED: That Council confirm that the dispensation granted to Cllr Lax (firstly in October 2024 and extended in June 2025) be withdrawn from 8 December 2025 as no longer required.

65. OFFICERS' REPORT

Councillor C Greatorex commented on the upgrade to the presentation boards at the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum and urged Councillors to visit the museum to see the improvements. He also asked if an LED A Board could be provided on the market square to inform the public when, and which, markets were taking place. Councillor J Blackman confirmed that the Commercial Services Committee had already researched this possibility but that it had proved cost prohibitive and would likely be subject to vandalism.

Councillor C Ball commended the Open Spaces Officer for the work carried out across the City , in particular at Christian Fields. Councillor E Strain also noted the excellent work at Festival and Heather Gardens.

Councillors R Bragger and J Blackman both commended the work of the Markets Officer and Office Administrator on maintaining a full market across all three days and their work on the Community Days and Festive Market.

Councillor A Hughes thanked the Deputy Town Clerk for facilitating the visits to the winners and entrants of the Bug Hotels competition set by the Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee.

The Mayor and Councillor A Lax commended the Deputy Town Clerk and Officers on the organisation of the Christmas Lights Illuminations Switch On event.

RESOLVED: That the Report be noted.

66. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Councillor C Greatorex queried the purpose of a credit from SAGE accounts. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was for an element of an update that was not required.

RESOLVED: That payment of accounts be approved and confirmed for the period

- a) 1 August 2025 to 31 August 2025 in the sum of £91,049.95 General Account, and £9.45 Imprest Account.***
- b) 1 September 2025 to 30 September 2025 in the sum of £142,194.25 General Account, and £1,553.18 Imprest Account.***

67. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 press be excluded from the meeting.

68. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Members considered the recommendations of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 6 November 2025 (at **AGENDA APPENDIX 8**).

RESOLVED: That the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 6 November 2025 be adopted.

69. RECRUITMENT – RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

Members considered the Town Clerk's confidential report at **AGENDA APPENDIX 9**

RESOLVED That the Council confirm its desire to recruit to the role of Responsible Financial Officer as set out in the draft job description and person specification as informally approved by members of Staffing Committee and the Leader and Deputy Leader of LCC.

70. GUILDHALL ROOF REPAIRS

Members considered the Town Clerk's confidential report at **AGENDA APPENDIX 10**

RESOLVED: That the tender for the Guildhall roof repairs, submitted by Messenger Construction Ltd and recommended by the City Council's professional advisors, be accepted.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE MAYOR DECLARED
THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.10PM**

MAYOR