

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT – April 2021

1. Civic Matters: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

A virtual Civic service was held on Sunday 21st March 2021 at Lichfield Methodist Church. The Mayor, Cllr Deborah Baker and Sheriff, Dr Daryl Brown both pre-recorded a bible reading that was included in the service, this was made available via a YouTube link. Revd Roger Baker led the service which was full of important messages and hope for everyone which is very much needed during these difficult times.

Sadly, due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, there was no civic procession or gathering at the Guildhall for Easter Sunday. The Mayor and Sheriff along with their Consorts attended the service at the Cathedral in person. The Easter Sunday service at the Cathedral is available for viewing via YouTube, please refer to the Cathedral website for further information.

Preparations for the Sheriff's Ride due to be held on Saturday 11th September 2021 continue. It is still not known at this stage if this event will be allowed to go ahead in its usual format due to the uncertainty of COVID-19. The Sheriff's Ride is the largest civic event organised by the city council and takes many months of planning and preparation, necessitating a decision at this stage of the year to proceed on the assumption that the event will proceed as normal. The city council will follow the government guidelines in place at the time of the event.

We will continue to monitor the latest government guidance with regards to Civic Events and will provide updates accordingly. Anyone who wishes to join the civic list and sent updates of all civic and charity events can do so by emailing the city council at enquiries@lichfield.gov.uk

The Civic Officer has also been assisting with the day-to-day activities of the Markets, social media posts and training.

2. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Jo Wilson, Museums and Heritage Officer

The Birthplace Museum remains closed, but preparations for re-opening are underway. At the time of writing, the Bookshop is scheduled to re-open on April 12 under Stage 2 arrangements. Unlike the regulations in 2020, the current re-opening roadmap allows permitted business within otherwise closed attractions to open where they are self-contained and can be accessed directly from the street. The re-opening of the Museum will follow in Stage 3, set as no earlier than May 17.

Work to maintain the public profile of the Museum and reach audiences continues online, with 5,420 direct engagements digitally throughout February and early March. Content included World Book Day, and a guest submission from a recent University of Birmingham graduate on Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides. On World Poetry Day, Sunday 21 March, the Museum Support Officer (MSO) worked with the Lichfield Poets and the Runaway Writers from Burton to present an online event with writers reading original work on the

theme of 'Colours of Nature'. The event was held on Zoom and live streamed to YouTube. The MSO is working on arrangements for another online Storytelling event 'Ballad Tales: Stories from Samuel Johnson's Time' to take place live from the Birthplace on May 31.

The Museum made a brief appearance on BBC's 'The Great British Menu', where a local contestant created a Dictionary-themed dessert. Changing displays in the Bookshop windows also serve as a reminder for passers-by while the Museum is closed, with an Easter display.

The Museums and Heritage Officer continues to work on ground floor developments, with tender submissions received from Museum design companies, quotations for rewiring and liaison with architects over the plans, to prepare for the JBAC in April. Investigative work relating to the project revealed a minor structural issue under the floor at the foot of the staircase. This was repaired by heritage conservation contractors Messenger in March.

An annual report on the Birthplace Museum was presented at the Johnson Society's AGM via Zoom. The Museum's 3-year annual plan was updated and significantly altered to reflect the development plans, to be presented to the JBAC. Consultation to inform the revised plan was held with the Museum Attendant team. Other MHO work included a meeting to resume work on the sound installation piece for the Guildhall Prison Cells, and a further trial method for the restoration of the city-wide historical plaques was organised.

The MSO completed a shop stock audit and balanced the Museum's PayPal account ahead of financial year end. The MSO also attended a West Midlands Museum Development event 'Every Object Tells a Story', obtained an £800 grant for Museum collection care materials relating to training undertaken in February, and has carried out PAT testing at the Birthplace site.

3. Open Spaces and Tree Management: Nick Burton, Open Spaces Officer

There have been a number of planting projects in the last month. Six roses were selected to replace the ones lost over winter in the Heather Gardens to give a colourful welcome for people using this popular route into the City.

The Mayor, Cllr. Mrs Deb Baker officiated at the planting of a Holme Oak at Netherstowe.



This completes the work in this area to stop people driving onto the open space. Nigel Boden the new Open Spaces Officer can be seen on the right of the picture.

Another planting project is the continuation of the *wilding-up* for parts of the Festival Garden. Financed by Severn Trent PLC, fifty willow whips were planted by Transition Lichfield to help reduce the standing water by the south side of the brook. Care is taken in the landscaping, so this park will not lose its open aspect. Five different coloured varieties were used which when mature can be coppiced to provide material for weaving and community activities. A small corner by the notice board is to be planted to improve the biodiversity of the park and to provide further habitats for wildlife.

Other work has included the repair of a footpath off the Curborough Road and another path at Manor Rise where root risings were removed. The fence at Prince Rupert's Mound has also been repaired.



Nick Burton's last working day prior to retirement was 31 March 2021, and this is therefore his final report as Open Spaces Officer – his successor, Nigel Boden commenced formal employment with the City Council on 1 April.

4. Twinning: Gabriele Lasch- Burden, Twinning Officer

The project between the primary school “Ecole Chatelain” and Lichfield’s Chadsmead Primary School is progressing well. 23 pupils from Ste. Foy, aged between 8 and 11 years old have introduced themselves to their Lichfield counterparts. They have sent class photos and described themselves in English to their new Lichfield pen friends. Chadsmead school are now working on their response letters to the French school.

The present Mayor of Limburg, Dr. Marius Hahn, was re-elected on 28th March by Limburg city’s 26753 electorate for another 6 years in office, beating his rival candidate, Headteacher Stefan Laux, by nearly 53.93%. The 45 seats of the newly elected Limburg council have also been duly allocated, following the local elections on 14th March 2021.

A decision on whether the official Ring Twinning event in Limburg will be able to take place will be taken later in April by the Limburg Council. If possible, it will take place over the weekend of 8 -11 October 2021, travel restrictions permitting. The International Twinning Walking weekend, due to be held in Lichfield in June, has been cancelled due to Covid.

5. Markets Report: Lucy Clarke, Civic Officer

Officers continue to ensure the General Markets remain a COVID secure environment; the one-way barriers and hand sanitisers are part of the standard set-up for each market day. Officers continue to check that all traders have the correct PPE equipment (masks, hand sanitiser and gloves). Officers have informed traders that Face Masks are advised to be worn at all times following information received from the National Association of British Market Authorities.

Officers are preparing for all permanent traders to return to the markets effective from Tuesday 13 April 2021. All non-essential traders have been contacted and are all keen to

return to the market after such a long period of absence. The one-way system will remain in place when non-essential traders return to the market in addition to the 1m gap between each stall, this will effectively control pedestrian flow and enable social distancing to be maintained at all times.

Lichfield General Market and The Producers Market continue to be promoted on social media via the City Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Officers have actively joined local groups on Facebook such as *What's on Lichfield*, *Events in my local area Lichfield*, *Fradley Village Community*, *Spotted Burntwood*, *Lichfield Community Support* and *Fradley Village Observer*. Since joining these local Facebook groups Lichfield Markets are now reaching larger target audiences and engagements, effectively increasing customer awareness, and ultimately encouraging new customers to the market.

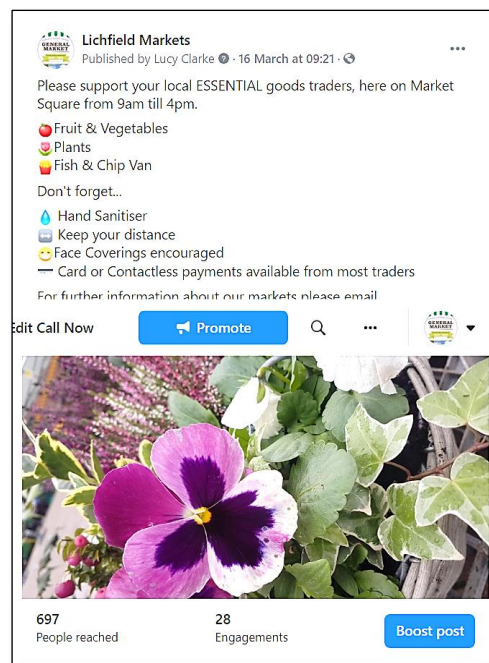
The Market Working Group met on 15 March 2021. Following a recommendation from the City council's Internal Auditor that Traders licenses should be reviewed the Committee discussed the implementation of revised trading terms and conditions to replace the now outdated licences. Officers sought advice as to industry best practice when compiling the document. It was agreed this document will replace the former Trader Licence annual agreement that expire on 31 March 2021. All traders have been sent the new Trading Terms and Conditions documentation via post or email. Only those traders that sign and agree to the new terms and conditions will be allowed to return to the general markets when non-essential retail resumes from Tuesday 13 April 2021.

Over the last 12 months, traders have provided their own stalls on all three general market days and reduced rents have been charged on this basis. The Market Working Group discussed the draft report regarding the provision of City Council stalls on expiry of the current contract, their recommendations being incorporated into the final report which is a separate item on the agenda for the April meeting of the Council.

6. Guildhall: Helen Winter, Guildhall Bookings Officer

Unfortunately, due to COVID19 restrictions, the only bookings permitted at the moment are Mencap (an educational booking) and the Dementia Support Group.

The next private booking will be a Wedding Ceremony on Saturday 17 April. Due to restrictions, no Wedding Reception is allowed and only 15 guests can attend the Ceremony for which a comprehensive Risk Assessment has been completed and approved by SCC Registrars.



The bookings secretary is maintaining contact with all hirers and re-arranging bookings where possible. There are very few Friday and Saturday's available for the remainder of 2021. All bookings will have to adhere to any COVID19 restrictions which are in place at the time booking takes place. Enquiries are still being received for post wedding parties/receptions as well as general bookings.

Contractors have been asked to return in May to remedy snagging issues on the new floor, and the new stage lights will also be checked. A number of annual checks such as PAT Testing and tension settings on the blinds are due to take place imminently. The 5 yearly Electrical Inspection will take place during the Easter holidays.

Though the renovations to the Main Hall were completed some months ago, COVID restrictions have meant that the room has been largely unused since that time. It is hoped that Annual Council, although likely to be a significantly scaled-down event, will be able to take place in person and will therefore be the first civic event to be held since renovations were completed.

Following unauthorised use of the Guildhall bins, locks have now been fitted and local residents made aware of the issue in order to prevent any reoccurrence.

The Bookings Officer continues to assist with Planning matters.

Currently only Pre-school are using Boley Park Community Hall and they recently took part in the Winter Wonderland project by decorating the windows. It is hoped that other regular bookings will return w/c 12 April as COVID-19 restrictions ease.



7. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk has been working closely with the Town Clerk on the public consultation regarding the proposed junction improvements at the Friary/A51. The consultation follows the original request, from Staffordshire County Council, for the disposal of the land to facilitate their preferred option improvements. At its March meeting, the City Council resolved to consult with residents and the resulting responses have provided the City Council with a strong evidence base as to the views of the local electorate.

As lockdown restrictions begin to ease, the Deputy Town Clerk is working with Officers on plans for Annual Council in May and continues to monitor the latest Government legislation regarding Covid -19 to ensure the Council and its employees are compliant.

Tentative forward planning is now taking place towards the Christmas Lights Switch On in November.

The Deputy will be providing secretariat support at April Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Working Party and continues to support the Bookings Officer on Planning matters.