



Lichfield City Council

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Town Clerk: Anthony Briggs

TB/JW/J1/2
30 October 2018

To: Members of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

Councillors R Awty, Mrs G Boyle, J Brooks, Mrs S James, C Spruce, A Thompson and R Yardley

Representative of Johnson Society

Mr P Jones

Also to:

Museums and Heritage Officer (Joanne Wilson)

Dear Committee Member

Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee to be held in The Moulton Room, Guildhall at **10.30am on Tuesday, 6 November 2018**

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

Apologies for Absence

AGENDA

1 MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 2018 (**copy attached**). [Minutes adopted by City Council on 23 April 2018].

2 MATTERS ARISING

3 MUSEUM ADMISSIONS 2017/2018 (ANNUAL REVIEW)

The Museums & Heritage Officer (MHO) to report on admission figures for this period, as **Appendix 1** attached.

4 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE

The MHO has registered the project with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) with the draft title 'Developing Samuel Johnson's Birthplace'. Work to prepare a broad budget for inclusion on a pre-application 'Expression of Interest' form is underway. It is not currently possible to submit the form because the HLF have closed the larger grant schemes ahead of the publication of their new Strategic Funding Framework and new funding portfolio in January 2019. This will include a single open programme for all types of heritage project, from £3000 to £5 million, with proportionate processes and requirements at different levels of grant. Current advice on the HLF website reads: "If you wish to continue to work on your project with a view to applying next year, we suggest you think through the general principles of what makes a strong, viable, and inclusive heritage project."

The MHO and Town Clerk are therefore pursuing the various aspects of the project with a view to submitting an Expression of Interest shortly after the new portfolio opens in January 2019, and to have a draft first round (or equivalent) application prepared for discussion at the Spring 2019 meeting of this committee.

Work to date has included meeting with staff from Staffordshire County Council's Highways Department and Lichfield District Council's Conservation and Design Officer for preliminary discussions around achieving wheelchair access at the market street entrance. Work on the draft project budget has included meeting with companies, or seeking advisory costs, based on the recommendations of the report including: building work, exhibition design, virtual tours and interactive displays, staffing costings, heating adaptations, paper conservation, lighting, windows and floor coverings. Other work to date includes research and content development for the new displays, and a planned collection store move into a larger room at the top of Donegal House will address some storage issues that may arise from the suggested re-allocation of areas in the development plan.

RECOMMENDED: *That the report be noted*

5 ASHMOLE ROOM PAINTING CONDITION REPORTS

Following the repainting of the Ashmole Room of Lichfield Guildhall, the Town Clerk requested that the condition of the paintings be examined. The four paintings on display are part of the collection of the Birthplace Museum. Paintings Conservator Ruth Bubb attended the site in September and has provided a detailed condition report and estimate of costs, a summary of which has been prepared by the MHO and is attached as **Appendix 2**.

The recommended treatments include cleaning and repair of surface damage, and re-glazing of all to conservation standards. The Portrait of Elias Ashmole has possible fungal growth on the surface, and removal of old overpainting and retouching is recommended for the Prospect of the City of Lichfield. The Portrait of Esther Day has a particularly interesting frame covered in stamped metal, in the style of Birmingham manufacturers of the period, and is described as appearing to be "experimental and exceptionally rare, with a strong local connection" about which more research and analysis is recommended.

Cost estimates for the recommended treatments are as follows (excluding VAT):

- Portrait of Elias Ashmole, 1836 (Inventory Number 2001.531): £3,740 - £4,090
- Portrait of a Member of the Dyott Family, late 17thc. (2001.533): £2,290 - £2,410
- Prospect of the City of Lichfield, c.1680 (2001.445): £8,380 - £8,780
- Portrait of Esther Day, c.1780 (2001.532): £7,030 - £7,200

The Committee's view on any appropriate next steps or recommendations to Council is sought.

6 KEELE UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Birthplace Museum is currently working with Keele University on the 'Eighteenth-Century Textual Studies at Lichfield' project. 11 doctoral students from across the country have now been selected to attend the two-day study events in February and March, and Lichfield secondary schools have been invited to attend additional sessions hosted by Keele staff and the MHO. It is hoped that this partnership will continue beyond next Spring with an application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme, which would see a PhD researcher using the Museum's collection as a basis for their research, and contribute to displays and events.

This will build on the previous application made in 2013, which was scored very highly but not ultimately funded. Partners at Keele feel that our ongoing partnership and changes in the AHRC funding structure would now make a stronger project, and an application is being drafted.

RECOMMENDED: The Committee to ask the Town Clerk to take the necessary action to ensure its ongoing support for the partnership with Keele University is evidenced in the application to the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award Scheme.

7 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Thursday 11 April 2019.

ANY OTHER URGENT OR NECESSARY BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN.

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Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee Meeting held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at 10.30 am on Thursday 22 March 2018

PRESENT:

Representing Lichfield City Council: Councillor R Awty, and Councillors Mrs G Boyle, J Brooks, C Spruce and R Yardley.

In Attendance: Joanne Wilson (Museums & Heritage Officer)
Tony Briggs (Town Clerk)

Apologies: None

50 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 October 2017 be confirmed as a correct record. [Minutes adopted by Council on 23 October 2017.]

51 FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the updated Forward Plan 2018-2021 (**Agenda Appendix 1**). The Museums and Heritage Officer outlined work identified for the 2017/18 financial year.

Councillor A Thompson suggested that further detail be added to the document to assist with funding applications for the proposed renovations that are currently in early planning stages. Such revisions to include the current limitations of the building but to emphasise ongoing success despite those limitations. Councillor Thompson also suggested revisions to the wording on page 3 of the document regarding attendance levels as it was felt this did not appropriately reflect the considerable achievement of surpassing the attendance level of the tercentenary year (2009) for the past five years

RESOLVED: That the Museums and Heritage Officer revise the Forward Plan 2018-2021 in line with the suggestions above and that the document be circulated to Members electronically for approval.

52 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY STATEMENT

The Museums and Heritage Officer provided an overview of the Statement (**Agenda Appendix 2**) to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Museum Environmental Policy Statement be adopted.

53 MUSEUM STAFF

The Museums and Heritage officer provided an update on the three recently appointed members of staff at the Birthplace, stating that all had settled in to their roles quickly and were performing well.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

54 DR JOHNSON'S BIRTHPLACE TRUST CO-OPERATIVE BANK ACCOUNT

The Committee considered the recommendations for the day to day administration of the Community Bank account held by the Museum at the Co-operative Bank. The account was originally opened in order to transfer the remaining balance of the Blum Fund (£6,190.66), a purchasing and collection care fund raised from the sale of duplicate books from the bequest of Daniel Blum in the 1990s. The Trust account money is intended solely for acquisitions to the collection and for caring for the existing collection.

RESOLVED:

- a) ***Signatories on the account to be the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Chairman of the BAC and Deputy Chairman of the BAC. Cheques require two signatures, one to be an Officer and one to be a Councillor***
- b) ***The Town Clerk and Museums & Heritage Officer be granted delegated authority to make purchases or commission conservation work for items under £500, and such purchases be***

reported to the BAC meetings. The £500 maximum being in line with existing procedures for the city council's Imprest account:

- *Any purchases or commissioned work over £500 to be approved at BAC meetings.*
- *An exception to this would be any time-sensitive opportunities to purchase significant items for the collection, where an emergency meeting would be convened, decisions taken to full council, or permission would be sought by members in correspondence, depending on the time available in individual cases.*

c) Account activity to be monitored and audited as currently by the Internal Auditor

55 DE- ACCESSIONING ITEMS OF FURNITURE

Members considered the report on the proposed disposal of four items of furniture (**Agenda Appendix 3**) consisting of:

1. Tavern Chair
2. Red Leather Armchair
3. Armchair
4. Prayer Stool

RESOLVED:

- a) *That permission be granted to dispose of the identified items from the Birthplace collection, and*
- b) *That the Museums & Heritage Officer carry out professional methods of removing these items, adhering to the guidelines within the Museums Association's 'Code of Ethics'.*

56 DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Museums and Heritage officer provided a verbal update to the Committee, confirming that workshop sessions had now been held and the consultants were in the process of preparing their recommendations. The consultants will be delivering their findings at a presentation to which all Councillors will be invited; the date of the event is currently to be confirmed but is anticipated to be in May 2018.

57 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Tuesday, 6 November 2018.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS

THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 11.10 AM

The
Samuel Johnson
Birthplace Museum & Bookshop

**Visitor Numbers 2017/2018
Annual Report**

2017/2018	2016/2017	2015/2016	2014/2015
18,287	17,687	18,523	17,291

This represents a 3% increase on the previous period. This was the twelfth full period after the introduction of free admission to the museum in October 2005. 2017/18 visitor figures represent a 65% increase on visitor numbers in 2007/08*. A significant rise in visitor numbers to 16,004 was seen during 2009/2010 for Johnson's tercentenary celebrations. Following an initial decrease in 2010/11, a steady increase has led to numbers that now consistently exceed that previously unprecedented year.

Apr – Jun 2016	4,226	Jul – Sep 2016	6,034
Apr* – Jun 2017	4,357	Jul – Sep 2017	6,681
Quarterly difference:	+3%	Quarterly difference:	+11%
Oct – Dec 2016	3,813	Jan – Mar 2017	3,479
Oct – Dec 2017	4,571	Jan – Mar 2018	3,052
Quarterly difference:	+ 20%	Quarterly difference:	-12%

Of the 18,287 visits to the museum in 2016/2017:

- 770 attended a paid event at the museum (613 in 16/17)
- 102 attended as part of an adult group visit (55 in 16/17)
- 532 attended as part of a school group visit (408 in 16/17)

Additionally, 1563 people had contact with the Museum through Outreach activities (compared to 119 in 2016/17)

Sales income had risen with an average spend per head of 78p (up from 38p in 2016/17 and 64p in 2017/18). The 2017/2018 period saw a 7% decrease in overall donations on the previous year, with annual donation box income at £ 7,028 (before additional gift aid refund) and an average gift of 41p per free-entry visitor. This is slightly down from 2016/2017, but strong shop sales mean that overall income has slightly risen.

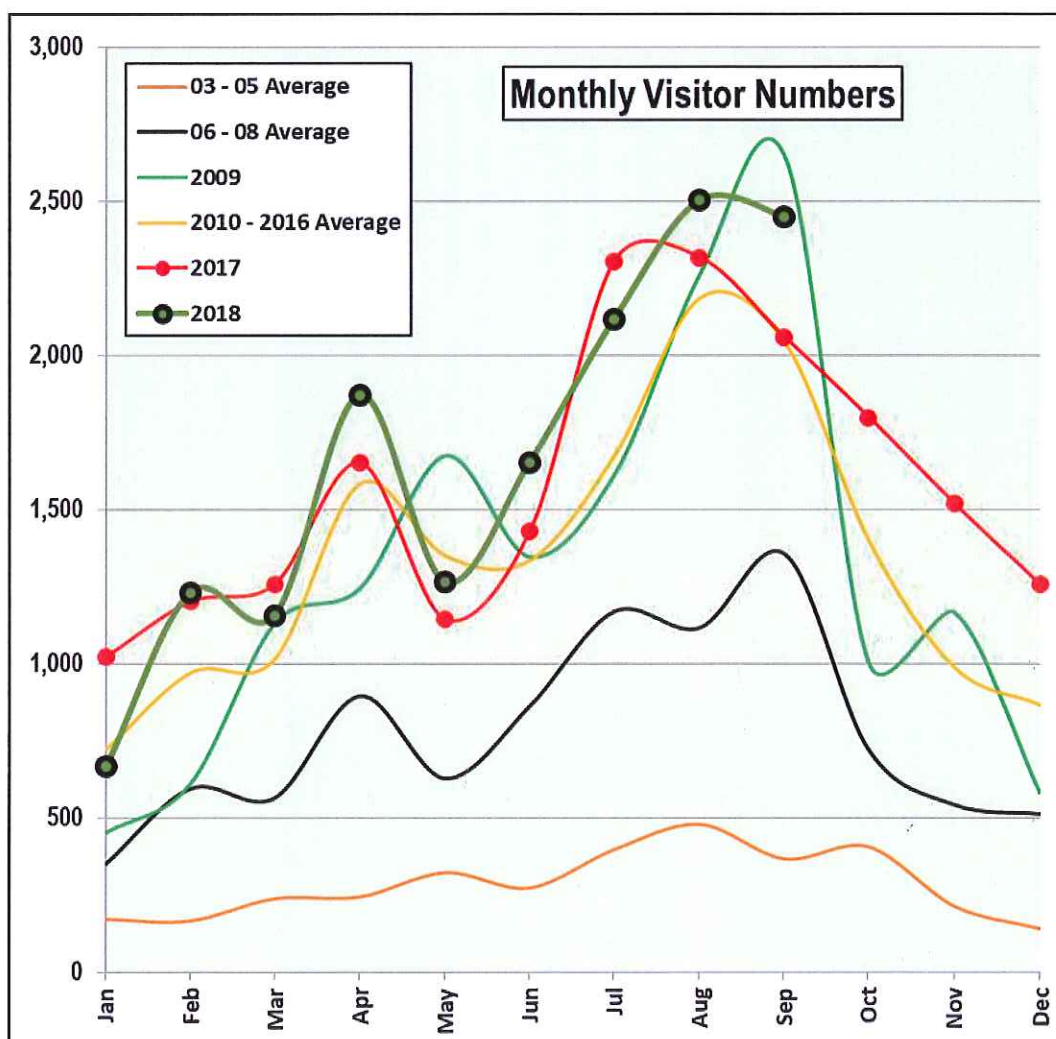
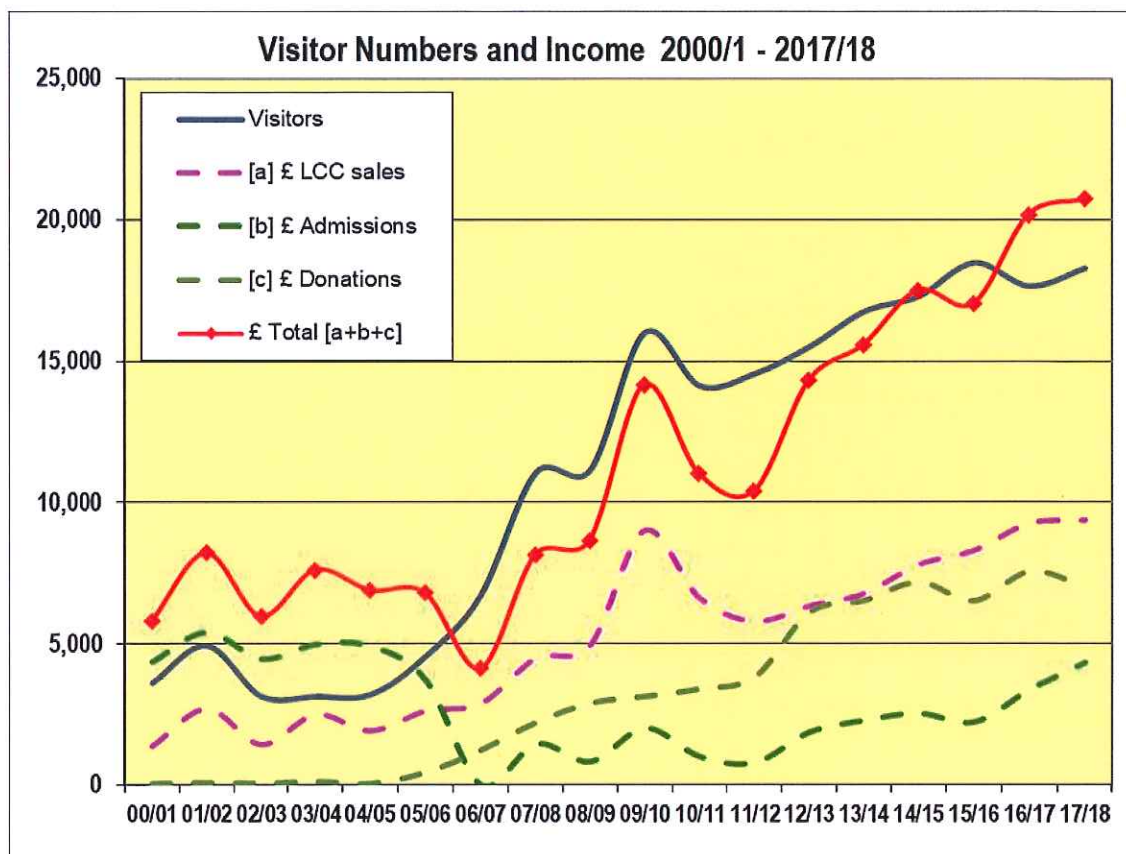
**2007/08 is used as the baseline because bookshop visitors were reclassified as service users from April 2007*

**the calendar quarters given total less than the annual reporting figures due to variations in the date of week 1.*

Indications from the beginning of the present financial year

The initial figures from the present financial year indicate an increase in visitor numbers, with the busiest summer period to date:

Apr – Jun 2017	4,357	Jul- Sept 2017	6,681
Apr – Jun 2018	4,787	Jul- Sep 2018	7,067
Quarterly difference:	+10%	Difference in this period:	+6%



ASHMOLE ROOM PAINTINGS

Summary of a condition report provided by Ruth Bubb Ltd, Conservation of Paintings.

General Observations

Light reading ranged from 342 – 700 lux (on an overcast day) depending on proximity to windows, considerably higher than recommended levels (150 – 200 lux for up to 8 hours a day). The most damaging part of light is UV. Conservation glazing will filter out UV. Closing curtains when room not in use is good practice. UV filtering film could be applied to the windows, which would also protect furnishings such as carpets and curtains.

Relative Humidity on the day was 51% at temperature of 23 degrees (Ideal range 45 – 65% at 19 - 22 degrees, so the room is at the low/dry end). Conservation framing effectively buffers and slows down response to environmental fluctuations.

Mechanical damage: the back edges of two of the frames had mechanical damage associated with attaching to the wall with mirror plates and screws. Consideration should be given to hanging the paintings from plate hooks on the backs of the frame, attached to two lengths of flat chain on the wall.

Portrait of Elias Ashmole, 1836 (Inventory Number 2001.531)

Condition:

- Condition of stretcher is sound, but canvas undulates in lower left quadrant
- Condition of paint and ground layers appears largely stable
- Numerous, fluffy white spots on the painting surface that have the appearance of fungal growth (last conserved following 1970s flooding at Birthplace, this may be related)
- Overall structure of frame appears sound, with multiple old repairs and some wood loss, gesso loss, and cracks. Appears to be a 19th century Wyatt frame.
- Glazing (acrylic) is not secured or sealed in the frame. No spacing between surface and glazing, trapped debris has damaged the varnish coating on surface of painting

Treatment:

- Removed from frame and surface cleaned
- Distortions in canvas investigated and reduced as far as possible
- Frame lightly surface cleaned (overall appearance will not be substantially altered)
- Acrylic glazing to be replaced with low-reflect glass or 'Optimum Museum Acrylic', which is lighter in weight, and dust-sealed in the frame with spacers (the depth of the back to be built up)

ESTIMATE: £3,740 - £4,090 + VAT

Portrait of a Member of the Dyott Family, late 17thc. (Inventory Number 2001.533)

Condition:

- Lined with some dents in surface
- Damage in hair over left shoulder. Old restorations discoloured and disfiguring in white sleeve and at lower left.
- Some damage to surface including staining and dried liquid spots at lower left
- Frame structure appears sound

Treatment:

- Surface cleaning and some cosmetic retouching to old restorations. Varnished.
- Canvas expansion keys secured
- Frame cleaned and glazed (as above)

ESTIMATE: £2,290 - £2,410 + VAT

Prospect of a City of Lichfield, c.1680 (Inventory Number 2001.445)

Condition:

- Canvas lined with material dating recent restoration to post 1980s
- Paint and ground layers stable. Areas of crude, mismatched and discoloured overpaint. Varnish not significantly discoloured.
- White specks on lower right of varnish, probably varnish dust but might be mould.
- Frame stable. No spacing between the glazing and painting surface, has damaged the varnish

Treatment:

- No major structural treatment recommended
- Appearance would be improved by removal of old restorations and sympathetic retouching.
- Legibility of the image would be improved by replacing glass and fitting to conservation standards (as above)

ESTIMATE: £8,380 - £8,780 + VAT

Portrait of Esther Day, c.1780 (Inventory Number 2001.532)

Condition:

- Structure of lined canvas and stretcher appear stable
- Network of brittle cracking throughout paint and ground; old repaired damages have discoloured
- Numerous surface marks, including sitter's right shoulder which has the appearance of food, and scratch in varnish at left of book.
- Wooden frame covered with embossed and oil-gilded metal. A very unusual technique for a full-size frame, with links to Birmingham innovators such as Matthew Boulton
"Three frame conservators, a sculpture conservator and two conservators of metalwork were consulted and had never encountered a picture frame made in this technique. It therefore appears that this frame may be experimental and exceptionally rare, with a strong local connection"

Treatment:

- Removal of surface dirt, damaged varnish and old restorations. Varnished.
- Canvas tensioned
- Frame to be treated by a frame conservator and unusual technique investigated further – a minimal treatment approach is proposed.
- Glazed (as above, with existing slip frame used as spacer)

ESTIMATE: £7,030 - £7,200 + VAT