

For Council: 8 June 2026 APPENDIX 8

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

The annual St George's Court was held at the Guildhall on Thursday, 23 April. This traditional manorial court was well received, with over 70 people in attendance. Ale Tasters Doug Smith and Andy Smith, in their first year in the role, delivered their witty reports, along with this year's High Constables, Mark Jones and David Mills. Following the passing of Geoff Mumford of Burton Bridge Brewery, the Duke of York kindly donated a cask of ale for taste-testing purposes. The Court was then closed, and proceedings ended with the toast to 'The Immortal Memory of St George,' led by the Chair of Lichfield District Council, Cllr Keith Vernon.



The annual Sheriff's Darwin Walk took place on Sunday, 26 April, with the Sheriff joining participants as they set off from Bunkers Hill, Beacon Park. Following a well-established route along the city boundary, walkers enjoyed stunning views of the city. Encouraged by the good weather, over 50 people took part, many bringing their dogs along to join the walk.



Final accounts are still awaited, but indications are that Cllr Claire Pinder-Smith and Revd Ian Hayter will have raised just over £5,000 during 2025–26 for their chosen charities. It is hoped that cheques will be presented to representatives of Lichfield Arts and the Pathway Project in late June.

Over the course of the year, the Mayor attended more than 44 local engagements within the city, the Deputy Mayor attended 21, and the Sheriff more than 55, visiting a wide range of local communities and organisations. The Council extends its sincere thanks for the invitations received.

The investiture of the new Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff for Lichfield City Council took place at the Guildhall during the Annual Council meeting on Wednesday, 13 May 2026.

The new Mayor of the City is Councillor Rosie Harvey-Coggins, proposed by Councillor A Hughes and seconded by Councillor J Marshall. The Mayor's Consort for the ensuing year is Andy Harvey-Coggins.

In accepting the office of Mayor for the forthcoming year, Councillor Harvey-Coggins thanked her fellow councillors for their support and stated that it was a great honour and privilege to be elected. She also paid tribute to the work of the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Claire Pinder-Smith, and Sheriff, Revd Ian Hayter, who together raised just under £5,000 for their chosen charities—Lichfield Arts and the Pathway Project—through a number of events held during their year in office.

The new Deputy Mayor is Councillor Russ Bragger, whose appointment was proposed by Councillor C Ball and seconded by Councillor A Hughes. The Deputy Mayor's Consort for the ensuing year is Catherine Bragger.

Completing the new Civic Team is Councillor Andrew Fox, who was elected Sheriff of the City, following a proposal by Councillor P Knight and secondment by Councillor R Bragger.



L-R: Sheriff, Cllr Andrew Fox, Mayor, Cllr Rosie Harvey-Coggins & Deputy Mayor, Cllr Russ Bragger

The Mayor proudly announced her appointment of the Mayor's Cadet, Royal Air Force Cadet Corporal Amelia Wooldridge, and the Mayor's Chaplain, Revd Ian Hayter, for her forthcoming year in office.

Following the investiture of the new Civic Team, the retiring Mayor and Sheriff were presented with replica badges of office.

During their year in office, the Mayor and Sheriff will jointly host four events to raise money for their nominated charities: Grace Cares and Friends2Friends.

Following Council, the Mayor's Banquet was held in the Guildhall. Reports on this, the traditional Court of Araye on Spring Bank Holiday Monday, and the Swinfen Broun Bowls Match will follow in the next officers' report.

2. Open Spaces: Nigel Boden, Open Spaces Officer and Jane Varley, Clerical Officer

Festival Gardens (Site 19C)

Dismantling and processing of large storm damaged branch from chestnut tree which had fallen across Trunkfield Brook. Further inspection of tree to be undertaken.



Birch Grove (Site 17A/B)

Local residents are in process of developing a community planting area at this site.

The trial project features bulbs and shrubs on each side of road.



Other matters progressed/completed since the last report and in addition to routine inspections include:

- **Wissage Lane (site 14C)** – cut back several overgrown trees on open space which overhang pavement and roadside.
- **Netherbridge Ave & Cornfield Drive (site 14B)** - Various trees lifted and elm tree deadwooded, removing lower branches overhanging car parking area.
- **Christian Fields (site 1)** – Previously felled branches have been chipped & firepits cleared
- **Kean Close to Terry Close (site 5)** – Area of overgrown weeds removed
- **Pool Walk (site 29)** – Replacement pump fitted to Cycle Repair Station
- Debris from recent storm damaged trees and bushes cleared at various locations including: Furnivall Crescent (site 13C), The Friary to Parnell Avenue (FP41), Bishops Walk (FP20), Haymoor (site 53), St Michael's Churchyard (site 60)

3. Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum: Kimberley Biddle, Museums & Heritage Officer

The 2026/27 financial year has begun on an extremely positive note, with the highest number of visitors recorded for this period in any previous year. Since April, Museum Attendants have welcomed a total of 3,277 visitors to the Birthplace.

Museum Accreditation Achievement

We are delighted to report that the Birthplace has successfully achieved full Museum Accreditation status. This reflects the significant work undertaken to ensure the museum operates to recognised professional standards and continues to provide high-quality care for its collections and visitors. Museum Accreditation, administered by Arts Council England, is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries. Accreditation demonstrates that a museum is appropriately governed and managed, cares effectively for its collections, and provides accessible and engaging services for the public. It is widely recognised as the benchmark for well-run museums and galleries.

The Accreditation Return process required a comprehensive review and update of the museum's plans, policies, and procedures to ensure continued compliance with the Accreditation Standard. This included updating documentation, addressing outstanding recommendations from the previous assessment, and aligning procedures with current sector requirements.

Achieving full Accreditation represents a significant accomplishment for the Birthplace.

Interpretation and Displays

A small pop-up exhibition, *A Life in Letters*, is scheduled for installation on the top floor of the Birthplace at the end of May and will remain on public display until October. The exhibition explores how personal correspondence can provide insight into relationships, personalities, and social attitudes in the eighteenth century.

The exhibition was developed following a student placement undertaken in November 2025 by Harvey Venables, a History student from Keele University. The placement focused on museum research and interpretation, providing practical experience working with historic collections while contributing to the development of new displays at the Birthplace.

Drawing on items from the museum's collection, the exhibition features three letters written by Samuel Johnson, a letter by Anna Seward, and David Garrick's wax seal (pictured), accompanied by interpretive panels.



The display presents several perspectives on Johnson's life and reputation. One letter to the bookseller Jacob Tonson highlights Johnson's determination to defend his work and professional reputation, while correspondence with Hester Thrale reveals a more personal and humorous side to his character. A letter to Sophia Thrale demonstrates Johnson's encouragement of education and intellectual curiosity, particularly in relation to the education of young women.

SEALING A LETTER

Like most people in the 1700s, Johnson usually wrote his letters on a single sheet of paper. The sheet was folded to create four writing pages.

When the letter was finished, it was folded again into a small packet. A blob of hot wax sealed it shut, and the address was written on the outside. The letter became its own envelope.

This careful folding protected the contents and kept the message private until it reached the person it was sent to. The wax seal also showed whether the letter had been opened along the way.



SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED

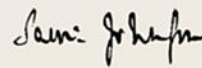
From 1635, and throughout most of the 1700s, letters were carried between towns by post-boys on horseback. It was slow and sometimes dangerous work. Riding alone with bags of mail, post-boys were easy targets for highwaymen.

In 1784, faster horse-drawn mail coaches began to replace post-boys on major routes. Each coach carried a guard armed with pistols to protect the mail.

Lichfield stood on an important coaching road. By the 1780s, the George Hotel had become a busy postal hub, with regular deliveries travelling to and from London.

Once the mail arrived, the postmaster or postmistress sorted it. Most people collected their letters in person from the local post house, often an inn, shop, or private home. In some places, a messenger called a foot-post delivered letters locally for an extra fee.

'By my absence from home, and for one reason and another I owe a great number of letters, and I assure you that I sit down to write yours first.'

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to Samuel Johnson.

Interpretation panel design proof for A Life in Letters pop-up exhibition

The exhibition also includes a letter by Seward, known as the "Swan of Lichfield", offering a contrasting contemporary opinion of Johnson and reflecting the influence and prominence he held within literary society during the period.

Building Maintenance

Annual building maintenance is currently underway, including CCTV system maintenance, insurer inspections of the boiler and water heater, and the annual flushing and servicing of the non-return valve to help prevent flooding. PAT testing has now been completed across the site, and arrangements are currently being made to schedule the remaining planned preventative maintenance works for the year. This includes coordinating the programme for the five-yearly electrical inspection and testing to ensure continued compliance and safe operation of building systems.

Events and activities at the Birthplace

From family crafts and walking tours to book club, Latin classes, and evening talks, the Birthplace continues to offer a varied events programme with activities for all ages.

In May, Museum Attendant Sarah Dale led a tour titled *Portraits in Focus*, exploring the remarkable eighteenth-century paintings currently on display. Through close observation and storytelling, the tour examined the sitters, the artists who painted them, and the personal and historical stories connected to each portrait. The event gave visitors deeper insight into the people, artistry, and social history of the period.

4. Markets: Jeremy Williams, Markets Officer/Michelle Read, Office Administrator

The Friday and Saturday markets are fully occupied with only three pitches available on the Tuesday Market. The Fruit & Vegetable stall continues to trade on Wednesdays alongside *Poppies* floral displays; both are proving popular with shoppers.

On Thursday 6 May “*Spin on the Square*” were on the Market Square raising money for a children’s cancer charity. After a hard day pedalling they collected an amazing £911.



Tuesday Market Update

Officers are actively seeking new traders to fill the three vacant pitches on the Tuesday market. There are two new casual traders *Peak Sales Basket & Giftware* and *Rewind Vintage Toys*. In addition The Shoe Stall is now also standing on Tuesdays as well as Saturday.



Friday and Saturday Market Update

On Saturday 4 April due to the predicted high winds, a restricted market was operated allowing trading from vehicles. Unfortunately, due to the conditions only nine traders opted to stand. For safety reasons the market closed at 1:30pm on Saturday 11 April due the wind gusting at over 40mph.

The majority of new enquiries that are being received are for Friday or Saturday, as these days are currently fully occupied new traders are offered a pitch on the Tuesday market as a starting point.

Antique & Vintage Market

The first Antique & Vintage market operated by *Dark Antiques* took place on Sunday April 12. The inaugural market was officially opened by the Sheriff of Lichfield, Revd Ian Hayter and the City Councils' Town crier, Adrian Holmes who performed a special 'cry' from the steps of the Johnson Birthplace Museum. Although the weather was inclement traders reported having a successful day. As a result the operator has booked an additional four dates in May, June, July and September and it is hoped that this will become a regular market. In addition *Dark Antiques* have booked the Guildhall in October for a Halloween themed event and a Christmas antique market on the square.



Vegan Market

The Vegan market returned on Sunday 17 May alongside the Food Festival. It proved extremely successful with a good footfall throughout the day.

Producers' Market

The Producers' Market, operated by CJ Events, is held on the first Sunday of the month. The market is well supported by 30 traders standing. It is immensely popular with customers, with many revisiting every month. There are a high number of traders that attend, not always the same traders each month and all have variety of goods to sell.



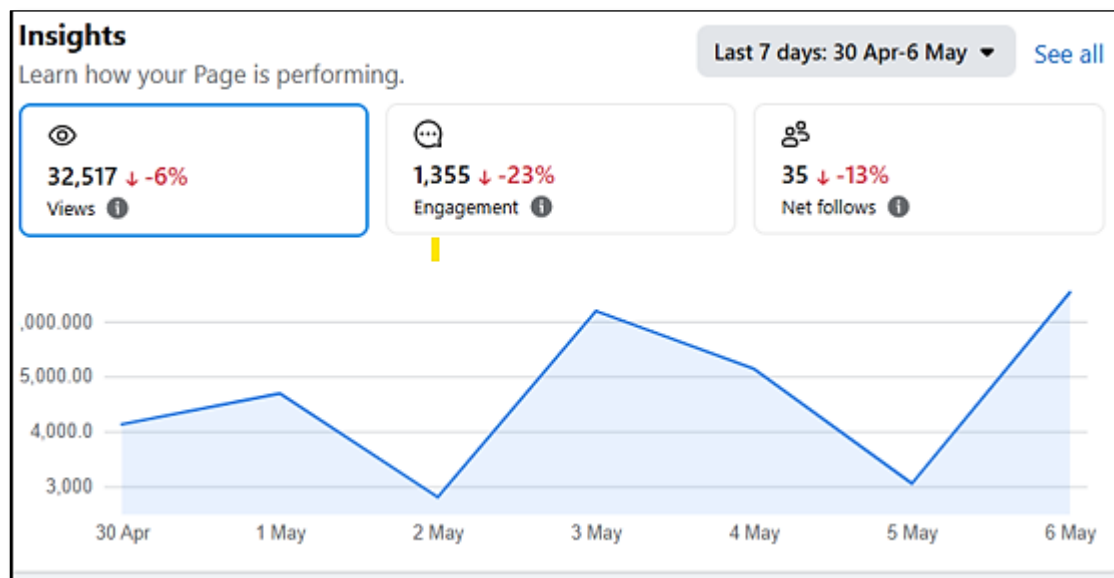
Lichfield Food Festival

On 16 and 17 May Lichfield Food Festival, organised by Lichfield District Council, took place. Due to the rise in the UK threat level the decision was made by organisers to extend the market until 5pm in order to control the movement of vehicles. There were a number of logistical issues which have been fed back to the LDC events team. LCC Officers will continue to work closely with LDC Officers to ensure solutions are found ahead of the next Food Festival in August.



Social Media

All social media platforms maintain a good following. The statistics below show the number of followers and interaction for a 28-day comparison from April to May on Facebook. Officers are focusing on existing traders by giving them a spotlight and promoting their stall on a regular basis. Any new traders that come onto the market are given an in-depth showcase on social media to help promote their arrival on the Market and to help increase footfall.



5. Guildhall & Boley Park Community Hall: Helen Winter, Bookings Officer

Recent Guildhall bookings and events have included the following:

Civic Events

St George's Court and Annual Council/Banquet. The Court of Araye was held on 25 May. Other City Council meetings/events include Council, our Annual Town Meeting and the Johnson Museum Writers Group

Subsidised Rate

Bookings in this category include our regular hirers: Bridge x 8, Chess x 7, U3A x 1, and RSPB x 2, Band Practice x 2 and the National Trust x 1. Sinfonia also held their Spring Concert.

Other bookings in this rate included 6 meetings and 3 rehearsals.

Lichfield Arts held 6 concerts during April and May and a volunteers training session and the Bower Model Fair returned to the Guildroom on Saturday 23 May.

A local group put on a History of Lichfield display/exhibition during May in the Guildroom (pictured).



Standard Rate

1 meeting has been held under this category.

A 75th Birthday Party was held in the Guildhall.

Lichfield Society of Artists held a wonderful 5 x day Art Exhibition in the Guildroom; their next Art Exhibition will be held in October.



Commercial Bookings

Market Research had 3 bookings during this period, we also had a first booking for a 'Flip & Thrift' clothes sale – with the queue of those attending stretching down Bore Street.

Impact of Roof Repairs

The number of bookings will be reduced until August whilst roof repairs are taking place. The Main Hall will not be available during Monday - Friday daytime. We are continuing with evening and weekend Main Hall bookings where possible.

The daytime bookings of other rooms during this period are reviewed as necessary (hirers are likely to have noise disruption). We are continuing with evening and weekend bookings in other rooms.

The calendar has been quiet because the roof repairs were originally due to start after the Wedding on 11 April but were delayed due to an additional survey. The scaffolding is now in place at the front and rear of the Guildhall, and work to the roof is ongoing.



General Maintenance

Other maintenance includes various plumbing repairs including replacing the hot water tank which supplies the first-floor kitchen, and both sets of main toilets. The Skywinder has also had its 6 monthly service. The overhead fans in the first-floor kitchen have also been serviced.

The Old Prison Cells

The Old Prison Cells have reopened to the public on Saturdays during April – September, from 10:00 – 16:00, with volunteers on hand to assist visitors. The Cells will be closed during whole building bookings and weddings.

BOLEY PARK COMMUNITY HALL

During April and May the following occasional bookings took place:

- 3 children's birthday parties
- Stamp Fair
- Charity Barn Dance
- 3 x pre-loved clothes sales
- Craft De-stash Event
- Holiday playscheme for 3 days over the Easter holidays.
- Vintage Valuations Day
- Pre-school's Spring Fair

Regular hirers include:

- Boley Park Pre-School – 5 mornings a week
- Zumba
- Yoga x 2 groups
- Line Dancing
- Ballroom Dancing
- Fitness/Pilates
- Total Stars Stage School
- Sequence Dancing
- Karate

Routine servicing was carried out on the CCTV and Fire Alarm.

The NHS Breast Screening Trailer has returned to the car park outside the hall for 12 months. An agreement has been made for invoicing electricity used.

Following the vandalism over the Easter Holidays which resulted in 4 broken windows, all repairs have been completed and invoices passed to the Police for their case.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk has provided secretariat support at the Annual Council meeting on 13 May and Annual Town Meeting on 20 May.

The Annual Town Meeting (ATM) was attended by around 30 people. As Members know, the ATM is a meeting for the electorate of the parish of Lichfield and gives Councillors an opportunity to comment on the Council's Annual Report. Grant recipients are also invited to attend and explain how their funding has been used. This year, 14 recipients took part, each offering a helpful overview of their charity's work. This part of the meeting is both informative and valuable, giving attendees a better understanding of the charities working across the city. The meeting also ends with an opportunity to network over tea.

In addition the Deputy Town Clerk is also supporting the Town Clerk with the administration of planning applications and work continues on streamlining internal processes, particularly in relation to Guildhall bookings and markets.

The next community day is scheduled for Thursday 28 May on the Market square and will focus on services for young people. A full report will be included in the July Officers report to Council.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premise Act) 2025 , otherwise known as Martyn's law received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025, and it is expected that the implementation period will be at least 24 months. In anticipation of this Officers have been working on robust processes and procedures for the last two years, which has included training for all employees. As a result the City Council is now well prepared for the anticipated enforcement in 2027. The Deputy Town Clerk will also be attending a one day conference at the beginning of June about the implantation of Martyn's law which will provide a valuable opportunity to network with other Parish authorities and share experiences.

7. Responsible Financial Officer – Lisa Davies

The RFO is continuing with her induction programme, having completed her Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration (FiLCA) qualification, and introductory GDPR and critical incident training. She has also been observing and undertaking training with the Accounts Administrative Officer and Internal Auditor on the year end accounting procedures.

The RFO is looking at our sales invoicing systems and has formed a focus group with the Deputy Town Clerk and Guildhall Bookings Officer to review and improve the Guildhall Bookings procedures and is currently supporting the Museum Support Officer with comparing potential alternative point of sale (POS) systems to be introduced at the Birthplace.

The RFO has streamlined some of the processes regarding payroll which has created time efficiencies within the team, including introducing passworded electronic payslips and linking HMRC into SAGE payroll to directly update tax codes whilst complying with GDPR.

Again, the RFO would like to extend her thanks for the warm welcome she has received.