

For Council: 27 July 2026 APPENDIX 4

OFFICERS' INFORMATION REPORT

1. Civic Matters: Harriet Chatwin, Civic Officer

Following the investiture of the new Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff, the civic team's first official engagement was the Court of Arraye, held at the Guildhall on Monday 25 May. The 7th Lichfield Scout Group kindly supported the event once again by providing six Men at Arms who were ceremonially 'inspected' by the Mayor, Cllr Rosie Harvey-Coggins and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Russ Bragger.

This year's High Constables, Julian Cragg and Simon Horton, called upon the Dozeners to deliver their reports to the Lord of the Manor.

The civic party then assembled on the dais for the traditional Lichfield Bower procession, which featured music, dancers, local community groups and the Bower Queen float, where the Mayor officially crowned Katie Adams. The celebrations later moved to Beacon Park, where a variety of rides and stalls offered an afternoon of entertainment for all.



The Mayor led the Lichfield City Council team in the annual Swinfen Broun Challenge Trophy bowls match against the Lichfield Museum Bowling Club on Wednesday 17 June.

With the sun shining and spirits high, the event proved to be an enjoyable evening for all involved. Despite a valiant effort from the City Council team, the Bowling Club once again emerged victorious, securing the trophy with a final score of 110 to 50.

Following the match, the Mayor presented the trophy to Club President Andy Hayes, who expressed his gratitude to all participants and supporters. The Mayor also shared a brief history of the long-standing tradition, noting that the challenge match has been played since 1924. The trophy itself was donated in 1926 by local benefactor Colonel Swinfen Broun and has been contested annually ever since.

After the presentation, players and guests gathered at the Hub for a light supper prepared by members of the Bowling Club. The evening concluded with the Mayor drawing the raffle, which raised over £200 in support of the Museum Bowling Club's upcoming charity fun day.

The City Council and Bowling Club look forward to continuing this tradition next year, with the next match scheduled for Wednesday 16 June 2027.



The Mayor, Cllr Rosie Harvey-Coggins, presenting the Swinfen Broun Challenge Cup to the Lichfield Museum Bowling President, Andy Hayes

At the time of writing this report, preparations are ongoing for the following quarter, including the Back-to-School Uniform Bank in the Guildroom on Friday 21 August, and continued preparations for the Ring Twinning Celebrations taking place over the weekend of Friday 2 October to Monday 5 October 2026.

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

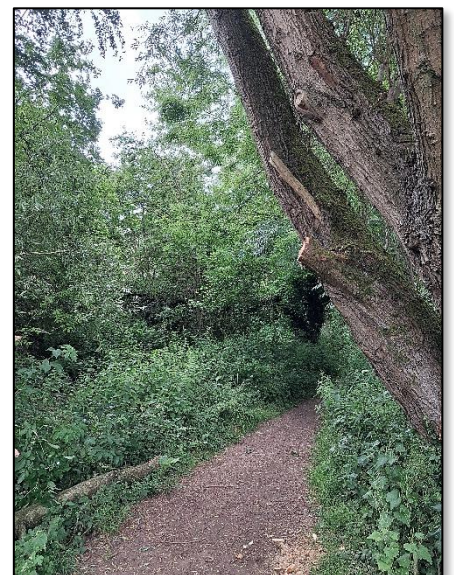
Remembrance Gardens (Site 28)

Visibility of summer planting enhanced by removal of box hedging that had been badly affected by box blight.



Christian Fields (Site 1)

Reported broken branch over footpath near footbridge cleared away



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

- **Festival Gardens (19C)** – Fallen branch cleared on path near Central Garage, overgrowth cleared around Franciscan View apartments, memorial plaque added to bench at request of local resident.
- **Beaconfields (15B)** - Yew tree reduced in height and two large sycamores reduced and dead wooded. Removed dead tree on the roadside of Swinfen Broun Road, cut back tree from lamppost, and removed deadwood.
- **Ash Grove (17C)** – Foliage overgrowth to rear of 25 Ash Grove cut back from fencing.
- **Bracken Close (47A)** – Wall/fence has been damaged due to overgrowth. Ivy removed from wall; hedge reduced along the perimeter and various overhanging tree branches cut back.
- **Christchurch Extension (61)** – various tree works to rear of properties at Christchurch Gardens, including crown lift 2 sycamore and multiple lime trees. Reduce group of hawthorns to enable light into neighbouring property.
- **Curborough Community Field (9)** – A hole which appears to have been dug in ground on recreation area has been filled in.
- **Haymoor (53)** – Following concern regarding possible vehicle access from Sunbury Avenue, 10x timber bollards have been installed on boundary along previous small hedge line. Also path leading from Abbotsford Road onto Haymoor open space cut back.



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

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum has continued to attract record numbers of visitors. During the first quarter of the financial year, 6,215 people visited the museum, sustaining the highest attendance levels recorded to date.

Events, Learning and Audience Engagement

June and July were particularly busy, with a varied programme of events, educational visits, group bookings, and outreach activities.

Museum Attendant Sarah Dale delivered two Samuel Johnson's Lichfield walking tours and introduced a new Literature and Writers' Tour. This guided walk explores Lichfield's rich literary connections, visiting locations associated with writers including Johnson, James Boswell, George Farquhar, Erasmus Darwin, Anna Seward, George Eliot, and Philip Larkin. Three evening talks were also held during this period:

- The War of the Three Kingdoms – historical interpreter and museum educator Rik Sowden explored the impact of the British Civil Wars on the Midlands (pictured).
- How to Dress a Georgian Woman – fashion designer Gemma Thompson examined eighteenth-century clothing and explained how fashion reflected social status, wealth, and daily life.
- Murder Most Foul: Poisoners, Body Snatchers, and Killer Servants – popular local speaker Sheelagh James explored crime and punishment in Georgian Britain through a series of engaging historical case studies.



These events continue to attract a wide range of audiences and support the museum's aim of making history accessible and engaging.

The Birthplace welcomed a local school for a guided visit led by costumed historical interpreters, alongside two self-guided school visits.

The museum also hosted a visit from an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) group and delivered a guided tour for Manchester University alumni.

Museum Attendant Christine Genders gave an external talk to a local Brownies group, introducing young people to the life of Johnson and his family in Lichfield.

Staff Development

The Museums and Heritage Officer (MHO) and Museum Support Officer (MSO) undertook professional training. They attended a course delivered by Historic England, with a second course scheduled for the end of July at Tamworth Castle.

The Historic England course introduced the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act (Martyn's Law) and explored how the legislation applies to heritage organisations, alongside current security risks, and practical measures to improve visitor safety.

The course at Tamworth Castle will focus on disaster preparedness for museums and historic buildings, including emergency planning and practical approaches to protecting and salvaging museum collections in the event of an incident.

Volunteers

Volunteers continue to make a significant contribution to the Birthplace's activities.

Volunteer-led craft sessions have begun for the school summer holidays and are running every Thursday, providing fun activities that encourage families to engage with the museum and its collections.

Collections volunteers have also started using the museum's new Tinytag environmental monitoring system. These compact data loggers continuously record temperature and humidity throughout the building, enabling staff to monitor environmental conditions, protect the collections from damage, and support the museum's conservation and accreditation requirements

Interpretation and Displays

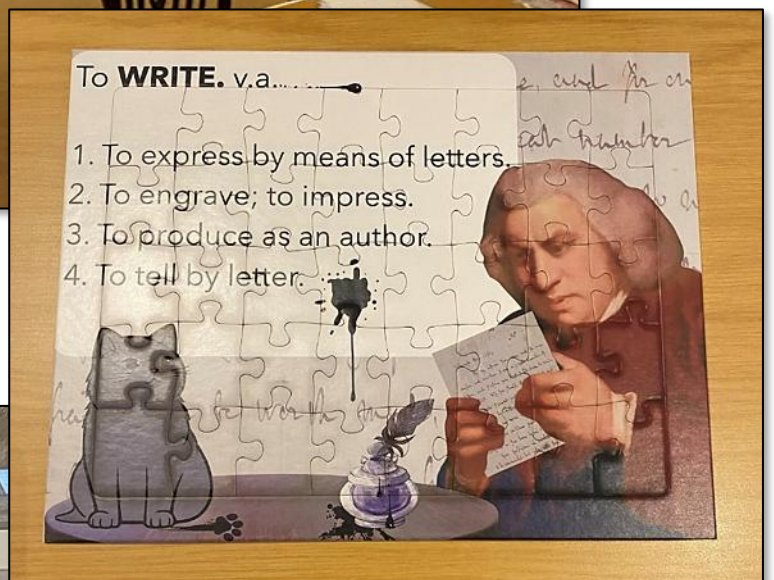
Following on from the previous Officer report, the small pop-up exhibition A Life in Letters has been installed on the top floor of the Birthplace. It is now open to visitors and will remain on display until 31 October 2026.

Drawing on items from the museum's collection, the exhibition features three letters written by Johnson, a letter by the writer Anna Seward, and David Garrick's wax seal. Alongside these objects, six interpretation panels explore Johnson's correspondence and the practices of letter writing and postal communication in the 1700s.

The mini exhibition was developed following a student placement completed by Harvey Venables, a History student from Keele University. Through his research, Harvey played an important role in shaping the exhibition's content, selecting the objects featured, contributing to the writing of the interpretation, and supporting the installation. The placement provided Harvey with valuable hands-on experience, allowing him to develop skills in research, collections work, interpretation, and exhibition development.

Alongside the display of original objects, the exhibition includes a range of hands-on and participatory activities designed to deepen engagement. Visitors can sit and read transcriptions of letters written by Johnson, complete a jigsaw puzzle, design their own wax seal, and write a letter to Johnson.

Early feedback indicates that the letter-writing activity has been particularly well received, with visitors creating thoughtful and personal responses. These letters provide valuable insight into how audiences engage with Johnson's life, revealing the aspects of his character and work that connect with them.



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

On Saturday 23 and Tuesday 26 May the general market was cancelled and the market square hired to Pat Collins Fun Fairs as part of the traditional Bower weekend activities.

Tuesday Market Update

Three traders have completed their initial twelve-week trial period on the market, and arrangements have been made for them to sign licences and become permanent Tuesday traders. These traders are *The Shoe Man*, *Rewind Vintage Toys*, and *Bloom & Bliss*.

Their transition to permanent status will help strengthen the Tuesday market offer, leaving just one remaining casual space. *Peak Sales*, a wicker basket trader currently trading on a casual basis, is expected to be able to take up a permanent pitch within the next few weeks.

We currently have one of the Tuesday Traders absent due to illness. This pitch is being covered by a new trader "Greek Gyros" who will be covering until the permanent trader returns. We have sent our well wishes for a speedy recovery.

On Tuesday 23 June only nine Traders attended the market due to the exceptionally high temperatures.



Friday Market Update

The Friday Market continues to operate at full capacity. However, on Friday 26 June, three traders were unable to attend due to the Red Weather Alert issued for extreme heat.

Saturday Market Update

The Saturday Market continues to operate at full capacity. The Markets team receives regular enquiries for stalls, particularly for the Friday and Saturday markets. As a result, a strong list of casual traders is maintained, enabling the team to offer pitches when permanent traders are absent or on holiday.

This approach helps to ensure that the markets remain fully occupied and has received positive feedback from traders.

Vegan Market

The Vegan market returned on Sunday 17 May 2026, the first of their three planned markets for this year.

On Sunday 20 September the *Staffordshire Biodiversity & Regenerative Food Festival* will launch on the Market Square. Operated by the organisers of the Vegan Market, the festival will bring together growers, producers and organisations that contribute to a regenerative local food system.

There will be a collection of organic growers, bakers, street food vendors, crafters, charities, community groups, and product demonstrations.



Following the success of the Antiques Market, Officers continue to explore opportunities to introduce additional themed Sunday markets. This includes a new event on Sunday, 23 August: the Lichfield Community and Wellness Festival, which will be organised and operated by a local business.

Officers have identified the possibility of holding a Young Traders market. The NMTF is organising a national initiative to provide a vital platform for young entrepreneurs to highlight their innovative products and ideas. Young traders from 16 -30 are invited to take part, as the scheme spans eleven regions across the UK.



The Market team is also looking into the possibility of celebrating the granting of the market charter, and if it is possible to have the charter regranted by the King.

Community Day



The first Community Day of the year was held on Thursday 28 May. The event benefited from bright sunshine and dry weather, resulting in high footfall throughout the day. As the event took place during the school holidays, it attracted many families, who commented positively on the opportunity to enjoy a free community event.

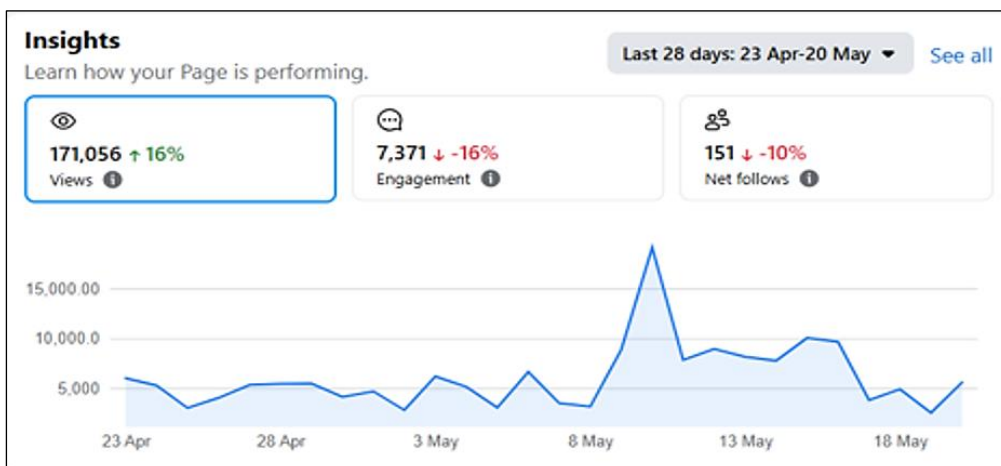
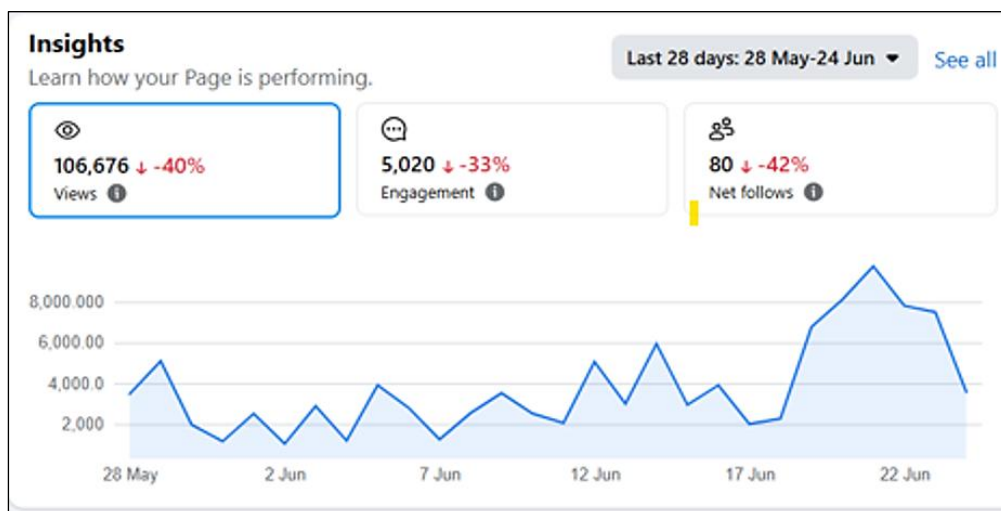
A range of activities was provided, including a football penalty shoot-out, an inflatable dart board, face painting, and a *Design Your Own World Cup Jersey* competition, the winner of which was Elliot aged 6. The event was well received and contributed to a vibrant atmosphere on the market square.



Social Media Insights

The Markets Team has recently increased its focus on promoting the market through X and Instagram, where engagement has declined in recent months. Efforts are being made to strengthen the market's presence across both platforms.

The statistics below show Facebook followers and engagement over a 28-day period. Officers continue to support existing traders by regularly featuring them in "Trader Spotlight" posts to promote their businesses. New traders are also given dedicated social media features to showcase their arrival at the market, helping to raise awareness, increase footfall, and support their sales.



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

Recent Guildhall bookings and events since the beginning of June have obviously been impacted by the Guildhall roof repairs. Roof work has been impacted by the weather – both due to rain and then due to extreme heat – but completion of the re-tiling is imminent at the time of compiling this report. Extra cleaning is scheduled to ensure the building is ready for the wedding on 25 July.

Civic Events

There have been no recent civic events in the Guildhall, apart from the Civic Portraits.

Subsidised Rate

Recent bookings in this category include our regular hirers: Bridge x6, Chess x1 and Band Practice x2. Other regular hirers are having their usual summer break and U3A has moved to another venue during the repairs (they cannot use the Main Hall during the daytime whilst work is being carried out on the roof).

Lichfield Arts held their annual 2-day Blues and Jazz Concerts. This year, the Entrust Youth Jazz Orchestra also held a concert (made up of 2 orchestras) which went very well, and we hope they will return next year.

We also had 6 meetings under this category.

Lichfield Festival have some bookings coming up in the Main Hall as part of their summer programme.

Standard Rate

3 meetings have been held under this category. We also had a surprise 80th Birthday party booked in on 11 July – with the end extended due to the football match!

Commercial Bookings

Market Research companies had 2 bookings. However, due to the increased hire costs, they are looking for alternative premises for future bookings.

A local business also held a wellbeing coaching session in the Ashmole Room.

On Saturday 11 July a new craft provider booked the Guildroom with stalls and displays.

During June, a local company chose the Guildhall to celebrate their anniversary by holding a quiz which raised over £1,000 for St Giles Hospice. The Main Hall was full to capacity. They also ran their own bar to maximise profits. Photos follow overleaf.

In the next few weeks, we have 4 weddings at the Guildhall, the first one being on Saturday 25 July. The Guildhall will be fully open again for bookings from 25 July.

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 June/July, we have had the following occasional bookings:

- 4 children's birthday parties
- Stamp Fair
- Charity Murder Mystery
- 2 x pre-loved clothes sales
- Antique valuations day
- 2 Day church activity days
- A holiday playscheme returns during August

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

There is a also waiting list for regular hire slots.

6. Deputy Town Clerk: Sarah Thomas

The Deputy Town Clerk has provided secretariat support at the Commercial Services Committee meeting on 8 July and full Council on 27 July and continues to support the Town Clerk with the administration of planning applications.

The Deputy Town Clerk is also working closely with the RFO to streamline and improve various internal processes across all the Council's functions.

Community Engagement

The Community Day, held on Thursday 28 May 2026 this time focused on promoting services for young people. The sun shone and holding the event during the school half-term holiday resulted in strong footfall throughout the day.

Free activities included face painting and the ever-popular Minnie Town Crier competition. Additional attractions included a penalty shoot-out football, inflatable dart board, and table tennis plus a colouring competition to design your own football shirt.

The event provided valuable networking opportunities with partner organisations, enabling conversations with families and promoting the range of support services available. Attendees included representatives from Staffordshire Council Voluntary Youth Services and the Lichfield Family Hub. Entertainment was provided by the Liberty Jamboree Sign and Shine Choir, soloists from Lichfield Arts Emerging Talent, and there was a chance to meet Councillor's and the local PCSO.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many commenting on the enjoyable atmosphere and variety of activities on offer.

A selection of photographs appears on the following page, capturing the atmosphere of the day.

The next Community Days are scheduled for 23 July and 20 August.

7. Responsible Financial Officer – Lisa Davies

The RFO is working closely with the Accounts Administrative Officer and Internal Auditor in reviewing the current accounting systems and looking to make some changes that will increase time efficiencies and better manage the flow of work. This is a long-term project that will evolve over time and is taking place as a collaborative effort within the team.

The RFO has continued to work with the Museum Support Officer on the new point of sale system for the Birthplace and is considering how such a new system may be utilised in other areas such as Markets and Guildhall bookings in the future.

The RFO continues to meet with the Deputy Town Clerk and Guildhall Bookings Officer to review and improve the Guildhall booking procedures with a current focus on initial enquiries.

The RFO attended her first full council meeting on 8th June and the Commercial Services Committee meeting on 8th July which focused on how the new pricing structure is impacting current Guildhall Bookings.

