



Lichfield District Council **Annual Report**



2022/23

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Leader of the Council Statement

It seems as if every year is described as an 'extraordinary year', and as we come to the end of 2022/23 the last 12 months have indeed been 'extraordinary'. Our communities, still recovering from the impacts of Covid-19 have faced new challenges, most acutely the rising cost of living. 2022/23 was also the year where we saw the devastating humanitarian impact of the war in Ukraine and we mourned the passing of our longest serving monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Despite the challenges we face locally, nationally, and internationally, the Council has continued to be ambitious for our residents and strived to deliver the very best for our district. This report is an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in the past 12 months, and how we have worked to support our residents and businesses in 2022/23. At the heart

of everything we do is working together, with our public sector partners, local businesses, voluntary and community sector, and most importantly our residents – we cannot deliver our ambitions alone. We have seen major progress in a number of key regeneration projects for the district, including the announcement of a joint venture to bring a cinema to the district, an important catalyst to development on the Birmingham Road Site in 2023, protecting our leisure centres and securing a way forward for a new leisure centre. Lichfield District Council is beginning to be recognised nationally for its ability to provide high quality services for our residents and businesses, and I am hugely proud of all that has been achieved in 2022/23. I look forward to the district continuing to grow from strength-to-strength in 2023/24, which will no doubt be another 'extraordinary year'.

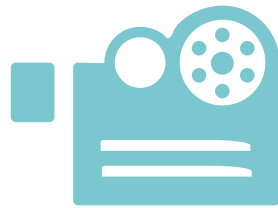


COUNCILLOR DOUG PULLEN
LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Highlights from 2022/23

£5m invested

in a new cinema for the district, repurposing the old Debenhams store into a **new leisure destination** and building work has already started



£10m invested

in a new leisure centre at Stychbrook Park and we are bringing the management of the leisure centres back in-house



Provided support

during the cost-of-living crisis through energy rebates and discretionary housing payments. We created a network of **Warm Spaces** across the district with partners and prevented more than **80 individuals and families** from becoming homeless

£1.5m invested

in new leisure and sport activities across the district, such as a **climbing wall, 4G pitch** and **Padel Tennis**

Over 10,000

people have engaged with us on the future of the district, leisure facilities and our budget. Established a new **'Lichfield District Youth Council'** to engage differently with young people

£35,000

has been raised for **60 local good causes** through our Community Lottery

Over 250,000

people have now enjoyed the annual, free, Lichfield Proms in Beacon Park since it started in 1999 with **15,000 attending** in 2022



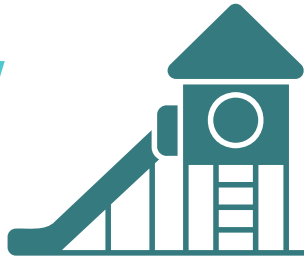
We've investigated

over 1,000 reports of different issues including, housing conditions, nuisance noise, smells and smoke. We've undertaken **over 445 food safety inspections** and cleared up **265 reports of fly-tipping**



Highlights from 2022/23

Two new play areas



have been installed further enhancing our
16 parks and **80 public open spaces**

We emptied over **2.5m**

bins and bags, working with our residents
to reduce the amount of waste we
produce and increasing how much
we reuse and recycle

Provided over **600**

residents with community safety
information and support to help them
stay safe



Created a new

Business Hub in Lichfield for 11 local
businesses, with a further 10 moving
in during 2023/24

Saved **£1.5m**

by Being a Better Council,
which has helped us to
freeze **Lichfield District
Council Tax** for
residents in 2023/24



Awarded **£3.2m**

of **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** to
deliver a range of projects across the
whole district, including Burntwood
and our rural communities

£3.61 per week

is what the average household pays
towards our services, **only 9%** of your
total Council Tax bill

Delivering Against Our Priorities

Active

LICHFIELD DISTRICT

Our Strategic Plan 2020-24 outlines our overarching goal to work collaboratively to enable people, shape place and develop prosperity across Lichfield District. Significant progress has been made on our priorities in the last year.

We know that being active and having a healthy lifestyle is a key priority for our residents. Local sport and leisure facilities can help people to live longer, healthier, and happier lives. They are fundamental to supporting the health and wellbeing of our communities.

In February, Council agreed to a number of key decisions to enhance and protect leisure and sport facilities across the district:

- Investing £10m into a new leisure centre at Stychbrook Park to replace Friary Grange leisure centre. Works on the new leisure centre are due to commence in October 2023 and it is expected to open by December 2024,
- Bringing the management of the leisure centres back in-house, to our wholly owned trading company, to protect the future of public leisure and sport facilities across the district
- Investing £1.5m into additional leisure and sport facilities across the district including an Aqua Park, Climbing Wall, Soft Play, Adventure Golf and 3G pitches in Burntwood and Lichfield City. Over 1,400 residents responded to a consultation in December 2022 to help prioritise which leisure facilities to invest in.



New Cinema Development

In December 2022 we announced that the District Council had agreed to create a joint venture with Evolve Estates, the new owners of Three Spires Shopping Centre, to bring a cinema to the district in the old Debenhams store in Lichfield City Centre.

This is perhaps the most exciting and significant achievement of this year and work is now underway to both attract a cinema operator and to attract food and beverage providers to the site. A design for the layout of the interior of the building has been agreed and is now going through the normal planning process. This is a significant financial investment, of just over £5.3 million by the District Council, matched by our partners Evolve Estates. Our expectation is that the cinema will open for business in early 2024.

More practically, work has begun on site. The building has been 'stripped-out', ready for the refit to commence in 2023, subject to planning permissions. Residents are able to monitor progress on the development via an online time-lapse video facility which is available on our website.



Birmingham Road Site

The council has commissioned a range of site surveys and investigation work to develop the plans for the Birmingham Road Site (BRS) and help prepare for the planning applications.

We have teamed up with Create Streets to engage with residents and stakeholders to gain their views on the design of the new housing and business premises that will be built on the site. We are developing plans for moving the coach park and bus station to a different location, so we can maximise the potential of Birmingham Road. Work on the multi-storey is well underway, and we are aiming for demolition work to start in the summer of 2023. During 2023 we will be creating what is called 'Meanwhile Use' on the site, including a mixture of new food and retail outlets along with, hopefully, an outdoor cinema while we wait for the new cinema to launch.



Pedestrianisation Scheme

As part of our work to make Lichfield City Centre a vibrant and safe place for people to visit work and live, an 18-month trial pedestrianisation scheme has gone live in early 2023. It will make it safer for people

to walk around the city and it aims to both improve air quality and promote sustainable travel. We look forward to hearing resident and business feedback as the trial continues.

Cost of Living

Undoubtedly one of the most significant challenges facing our residents in 2022/23 has been the rising cost of living. Lichfield District Council, working with our partners, has provided much needed support and advice to our residents, including:

- The creation of a Warm Space in District Council House for residents worried about the cost of heating their homes. Offering a place where people can come to keep warm, there is space for babies and toddlers, comfortable seating and books and games for children. This Warm Space, which is open on weekdays from 8am to 5pm, is part of a network of Warm Spaces running across the district.
- The Council has administered energy rebate payments and eligible residents are being supported with Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness.
- A more generous Local Council Tax Support Scheme, based on an applicant's income, is being developed for launch in April 2023. Payment plans are being tailored to support residents struggling to make Council Tax payments and historic Council Tax arrears are being reviewed, so that appropriate debt relief can be given to those in greatest need.
- The Council's Customer Services Team are visiting Burntwood Foodbank and Lichfield Foodbank on a regular basis to assist and offer Council Tax and benefits guidance.
- The Council has created an online cost of living support page (lichfielddc.gov.uk) which features details of support being offered by the council, some useful contacts, a directory of Warm Spaces running across the district and a directory of organisations and charities providing guidance and aid.
- Warmer Homes Greener District, delivered for us by charity Beat the Cold, has supported 233 households with energy advice and grant referrals between April-December 2022. We are partner of Staffordshire Warmer Homes helping to deliver grant-funded energy improvements and installations to eligible homes across the district.



Community Power

In March 2022 we launched our refreshed Community Power Strategy, reaffirming our vision to understand, engage and involve our communities in what we do.

A key element of the strategy is working with local groups and organisation to improve the outcomes for our communities. We are committed to supporting our local voluntary and community sector (VCSE) to thrive, helping people to help themselves and each other. Through our partnership with Support Staffordshire, local voluntary and community groups can access support and advice to set-up, sustain and grow. In the first six months of 2022/23, Support Staffordshire has supported local groups to access over £160,000 in additional funding, provided 26 training sessions to local groups and held two volunteer fairs with over 100 attendees per fair to promote local volunteering opportunities.

Lichfield District Council supports a number of different schemes to enable local voluntary and community sector groups to access additional funding:

- The Councillor Local Community Fund has awarded over £10,000 of funding to local groups doing great work across the District, including sports clubs, lunch clubs, children and young people uniform groups and many more.
- The Lichfield Community Lottery has supported over 60 good causes over the last 12 months and has raised almost £35,000. At a celebration event for the first anniversary of the Community Lottery held at the Hub at St Mary's in the summer we learned how it is making big differences to the groups who are signed up to benefit from the scheme.
- We Love Lichfield Community Fund offers grants of up to £1,000 to local community and voluntary organisations, and is aiming to award £35,000 of grants in 2022/23. Lichfield District Council is a key supporter of We Love Lichfield including contributing to the grant on an annual basis.

In 2022 we launched the Together We Survey to understand the thoughts and priorities of residents from across the district, to help us co-create a vision for Lichfield District 2050.

We received over 7,500 responses, once of the largest responses we have ever received to a survey – thank you! We are working through all the data and feedback and are aiming to share our draft plans with you asap in 2023. We have also established a new 'Lichfield District Youth Council' to give local young people a space and platform to discuss issues that matter to them and help give younger residents a say over the place they live and the services they use. We want to empower young people to feel part of the solution to local problems – supporting them to be active citizens and leaders of the future. The youth council will be a strong representative body and sounding board, that is consulted on decisions impacting young people in the district.

TOGETHER

WWE

**Build
Imagine
Budget**

Tackling Climate Change

Tackling climate change is a key priority for our residents and the District Council. Over 3,000 trees were planted across the District in 2022, creating 6 Tiny Forests.

Each Tiny Forest can attract more than 500 different species within the first three years of planting and is an important accessible green space for residents to reconnect with nature. We continue to work with our residents to reduce the amount of waste that is produced in the district and increase how much we reuse and recycle. We recognise that how we implemented the roll out of the blue bags at the

start of the year wasn't good enough, we have learnt lessons from this and are working hard to rebuild residents' confidence in the service.

In June we made a Nature Recovery Declaration in which we have made several commitments that will help to restore nature that provide many benefits to help adapt to the impacts of climate change. We are seeking to manage at least 30% of council-owned land for the benefit of wildlife by 2030. We know there is more that we could and should be doing to tackle climate change, and work is underway to develop an ambitious action plan to move this forward.



ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS
MUCKLEY CORNER

Supporting Ukraine

Working with partners, we have been committed to do all we can to support Ukrainians fleeing the war in Ukraine.

To date in 2022/23 we have supported 161 Ukrainian guests who are being housed by hosts within the district. The Council also made 344 payments to 71 hosts who have made their homes available for Ukrainian guests. Together with other public sector organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations and individual volunteers, we continue to provide assistance to guests to make them feel welcome and supported during their time within Lichfield district.



WELCOMING UKRAINIAN GUESTS



Chief Executive Statement

We recognise that the needs and expectations of our residents have changed and that local public services need to rise to the challenge of both delivering better services and making our district the very best place to live, work and learn in. Through our Being a Better Council Programme, Lichfield District Council has changed beyond recognition this year. A three-year, £750,000, transformation programme was designed and launched to help us create a council that is 'Better Equipped', 'Better Led' and 'Better Performing'.

Better Equipped has led to new technologies being introduced – we now have two robots providing parts of our services 24/7, alongside 'Sam', our new webchat facility and new contact centre technology to help us respond more efficiently to your needs. We have developed key new data sets on wellbeing across the district to inform service planning and have tried to stop being a complex organisation

of multiple services and contact points for residents by creating a single 'Front Door' for residents. Better Led has started to tackle the leadership challenges the council faced; creating new tiers of leadership and investing in the modern management skills a local authority requires today. Better Performing is a new performance culture which seeks to set, manage, and achieve more challenging outputs and outcomes for residents.

I am hugely proud of what we've achieved in 2022/23, working with partners and our communities, and genuinely feel we have turned a corner. However we know there is more to do. The programme has realised savings of £1.5m in 2022/23, which has been key to enabling us to invest in priority place-shaping projects such as the new cinema and a new leisure centre. There is a positive new energy, momentum and confidence within the organisation, which puts us in a great position to continue to transform and be a better council in 2023/24.



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SIMON FLETCHER**

LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Service Review

The council delivers a wide range of different services on behalf of our residents and businesses – including planning, benefits, council tax, waste collection, environmental health and street scene to name but a few. As such we receive a wide range of different enquiries on a daily basis. In 2022 we responded to over 100,000 telephone enquiries. On a monthly basis we action on average 350 emails and undertaken 450 face-to-face enquiries. In 2022/23 we have transformed how residents interact and engage with us, reducing the number of different, siloed contact points, creating a single ‘front door’ for residents to interact with us.

Technology continues to change how we live our lives, and the District Council is committed to utilising digital technology to improve how we better engage with and deliver services to our residents and businesses. In November 2022 we piloted live chat and a new chatbot called Sam on our website, which is helping people to find the answers they need when they need them. Since launch Sam has dealt with nearly 5,500 queries, meaning that council officers can focus on more complex queries and support. We are reviewing feedback from residents on the pilot, with the aim of fully rolling it out in 2023. We launched a new telephony system that is helping us to better help customers who contact us by phone. The system will also help us to offer new and improved ways to contact us in the future.

We have invested in robotics to free up our staff from undertaking repetitive, process-based tasks. This will allow staff to focus on those activities that make a big difference to our residents, and it will also help to speed up how long these processes take, which leads to less chance of human error. We have already identified a lot of the basic things we do that could be automated; we are currently piloting automating 16 different processes, the first two processes are already saving the equivalent of one full-time employee in man hours, per month.

Working with our communities and developers to bring forward new housing opportunities to deliver the right houses in the right places is a key priority of the District Council. In 2022 our planning teams processed over 1,100 minor applications, and 28 major applications as well as agreed a range of section 106 agreements and contributions to the community infrastructure levy to ensure local infrastructure is delivered alongside new developments. Our planning team was shortlisted and came runner up for in-house planning team of the year in the West Midlands Royal Town Planning Institute award for planning excellence. However, we recognise this important service does not always function as effectively as it should. We have started to review how the team is structured and managed and expect to see a significant improvement in 2023.



Service Review

So far, 214 new affordable homes have been built in 2022/23, in line with our aim of building 220 new homes per year. Of these, 139 were homes to rent and 75 were for shared ownership.

These new homes boost the housing supply in the area, helping residents to find a place called home. We know more needs to be done; we recognise a growing demand for affordable homes and a rise in the number of homelessness applications in 2022/23. At the end of December 2022, we had received 276 applications, compared to 251 at the same point in the previous year. We are focused on preventing homelessness whenever we can. We have prevented 80 households from becoming homeless this year, this means we are on course for surpassing the number we prevented in 2021/22.

We have purchased 6 properties to help tackle rough sleeping. In partnership with Spring Housing

Association all properties are currently occupied with people who were either rough sleeping or in danger of rough sleeping. We have allocated £500,000 of funding to provide more properties next year. We have recently further enhanced the support on offer, by offering employment support in partnership with Beam.

Through our Disabled Facilities Grants, we have supported 52 residents to make 73 adaptations, including stair lifts, ramps and level access showers so they can live independently for longer. From April 2023 we are transforming how we deliver Disabled Facilities Grants to speed up and improve the service for our residents and deliver better value for money.

Our enforcement and regulation services work to keep the district safe and support the local economy. Key highlights from the last 12 months include:

- Investigating over 1,000 reports of different issues including housing conditions, nuisance noise, smells and smoke
- Undertaking over 445 food safety inspections
- Cleared up 265 reports of fly-tipping

In partnership with the Police, Fire Service and Lichfield Crime Prevention Panel we have run regular Community Safety Events to provide advice and support to residents on keeping safe and how to minimise the chance of becoming a victim of crime. These events are held across the district and are being warmly received by residents.

In November we held a World Café Event in Burntwood, to discuss local views on how activities for young people could be improved and how anti-social behaviour issues could be tackled. Approximately 50 people attended sharing their views and feedback. An Action Group is meeting regularly to take forward the feedback, including:

- Securing funding for a Youth Worker to focus on hotspot areas of anti-social behaviour
- In partnership with Liberty Jamboree, commissioning research with young people in Burntwood
- Working to improve the MUGA in Burntwood
- Exploring establishing a Pride in Your Community Day



COMMUNITY SAFETY
DELIVERY DRIVER VEHICLE CHECKING

Parks, Open Spaces and an Active District

The District Council manages and maintains over 80 public spaces, which includes 16 parks with equipped play areas. In 2022 we have delivered new play facilities in Stowe Fields and Burntwood Park, with additional items also fitted in Chase Terrace Park in partnership with St Johns Church and Burntwood Town Council.

We are committed to enhancing and protecting leisure and sporting facilities across the district. In the last 12 months there has been more than 340,000 visits to our leisure centres; 1,700 children have taken part in swimming lessons, 30 local sports club have used the facilities to aid match play or training and there has been in excess of 88,000 attendances to exercise classes and the fitness suite. Our Active Lichfield Team has engaged with local health care professionals and local social prescribers, to support specific groups of residents to lead a more active lifestyle. In the last 12 months we have seen 2,800 attendances to activities include walking football, walking netball, walking cricket, walking groups, active fitness sessions, Tia Chi and yoga.

Sport and physical activity also play a part in the local economy, providing jobs, volunteering opportunities, promoting positive activities and supporting social cohesion. We have supported 24 volunteers to gain experience in the leisure industry, 6 now have regular paid work. Active Lichfield has also provided courses which enabled 30 local young people to gain a recognised sports qualification in the last 12 months. The Getin2it project provided by our Active Lichfield Team, is a specific diversionary programme to reduce anti-social behaviour among young people aged from 7 to 25 years. By working with local agencies including the Police, Youth Offending Team and Children's Services to refer those young people most at risk. We have successfully engaged with 539 local young people, who have taken part in activities such as just play football, parkour, boxing, dodgeball, multi-sport and glow sport sessions.



Lichfield Proms in Beacon Park

A highlight in the district calendar

The end-of-summer free concert attracted an estimated 15,000 people in 2022, and featured performances from the City of Lichfield Concert Band and the British Police Symphony Orchestra.

Over 250,000 people have enjoyed the Proms since it started in 1999. The Proms has gained significant recognition over the years for being a high-quality event, alongside other local events such as Lichfield Bower, Care in the Park, Fuse Festival, Food Festivals and Burntwood Wakes. Events such as these support the health and wellbeing of residents, as well as boosting the local economy – both through tourism and supporting the local supply chain.



£3.2m of UK Shared Prosperity Funding

In December 2022 we were awarded £3.2m of UK Shared Prosperity Funding to deliver a wide range of projects across the whole district. This includes supporting the delivery of the Burntwood Town Deal, projects to support people back into employment, projects to increase and sustain young women's participation in sport and physical activity, projects to support high streets in the district and developing a Business Hub in Burntwood.

We have been working hard in 2022/23 to review how the District Council buildings can be better used to support the local economy and our communities. Covid has probably changed peoples' ways of working forever, as such we have reshaped how we use utilise District Council House.

Developments include:

- Establishing a business hub, for start-up and smaller businesses. As at February 2023, 11 businesses are based in the building, with 10 more due to move in during 2023/24.
- CASES, the citizens advice bureau, is relocating to District Council House. In 2023 we will further integrate their work with that of our Customer Services team to improve outcomes for residents.
- A café (Penni at DCH) has also opened on the ground floor. Our aim for 2023 is that this space becomes used by community groups as a meeting place in the city centre.

Our Employees

In 2022 we launched our Belonging and Wellbeing Strategy, setting out our vision to full embed a sense of belonging and wellbeing across the Council. Key highlights from the last 12 months include:

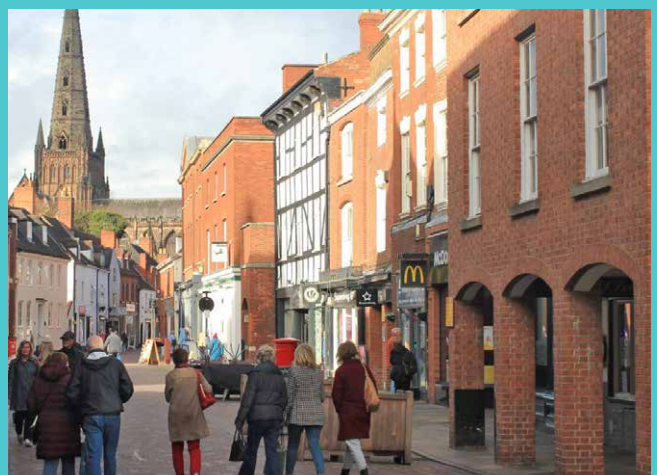
- The refurbishment of District Council House, creating a modern workplace that supports collaboration and innovation
- Removal of core working time and a focus on time recording, to enable freedom over how, when and where employees work.
- Strengthened our internal communications channels, to help staff feel informed and engaged
- Establishment of a number of staff groups to foster inclusion and collaboration

In the next 12 months we will be reviewing all our staff policies to ensure they support our vision, exploring how we can expand how we support our employees and look to widen the number of staff network groups that exist across the organisation. As a key local employer, the District Council has an important role to play to support young people into the economy. In 2022 we have invested in apprenticeships and recruited 12 apprentices. Our apprentices are working throughout the Council, making a real difference. We have already committed to bringing on a further 4 apprentices in 2023. In 2023 we will also be welcoming three Local Government Association National Graduates to Lichfield District Council, who will spend three years working for us whilst studying for an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) certificate.

Financial Outlook

The District Council is financially stable and lives within its means.

We are committed to delivering value for money for our residents and making sure we deliver the greatest impact from every pound that we spend. In 2022/23 spend is projected to be in line with the budget of £13m and includes savings delivered of over £1.5m through our Being a Better Council programme. Our stable financial position has meant that we have both been able to withstand financial and economic challenges and invest in a new leisure centre and cinema development, all whilst freezing Council Tax in 2023/24.



Looking Forward

2023/24 is already shaping up to be an even more exciting year for both the district and the District Council. Key priorities include:

- Further progress on the Birmingham Road Site, including the demolition of the multi-storey car park to create what is called 'Meanwhile Use', a mixture of new food and retail outlets along with, hopefully, an outdoor cinema while we wait for the new cinema to launch.
- We expect to have completed planning permissions and be on site building the new leisure centre by October 2023, with the official opening expected in December 2024.
- Transforming the quality of our leisure services, as we bring management of the leisure centres back in-house, with the development of a suite of new sports and leisure facilities and activities across the district.
- Early in 2023/24 we are aiming to announce the cinema operator and work will continue to refit the old Debenhams store to house the multiscreen cinema and some new food and beverage outlets.
- Working with partners to develop further opportunities for inward investment in Burntwood, including establishing a local community and business hub.
- Launching the Lichfield District 2050 Strategy, informed by views and feedback from the Together We surveys – this will look at the long-term priorities, identified by you, for our district. We want this new strategy to be owned by everyone, to help tackle some of the complex issues it identifies.
- Further improvements to key services like Planning and Waste, to ensure they work better for residents.

PHOTO CREDIT. CHRIS DAY

