

CITY OF WELLS

WELLS ANNUAL CITY MEETING 2015

Minutes of Wells Annual City Meeting held on Tuesday 24th March at 6.30pm in the Old Court Room, Wells Town Hall.

Present:

City Councillors: The Mayor Cllr C Briton (Chairman), Deputy Mayor Cllr G Wilson,
Cllrs: M Brandon, A Gibson, N Kennedy, J Parkes,
City and District Councillors: J North, D Unwin
11 members of the public
In Attendance: Town Clerk: Mrs F White.

Refreshments were served at the start of the evening.

1. Apologies Cllrs: Anderson, Butt Philip, Osman, Robbins, Siggs (Cllr Wilson arrived later)

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2014

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, approved and signed by the Mayor.

3. The Mayor's Annual Report

The Mayor welcomed everyone and spoke briefly about his year in office; he then introduced each of the committee Chairmen to speak about the work of the Council.

4. Reports from Chairmen of City Council Committees.

The Chairmen presented their reports and answered questions.

i. Planning & Environment Committee Cllr Parkes

The City Council is a statutory consultee on all Planning Applications within the city boundary. The committee must have regard to the national planning policy, the district local plan, and potentially the neighbourhood plan, before making reasoned comment. The committee has advised and commented on some major developments within, and bordering on, the city.

Cllr Unwin spoke for Mendip District Council saying that the district council values the comments of the town and parish councils.

ii. Cemetery & Open Spaces Committee Cllr Kennedy

The Cemetery has had a busy year, with the highest number of interments for many years; the extension field has been opened and will provide space for perhaps the next 30 years. There are 15,000 graves and 6,000 memorial stones. The Cemetery office holds detailed records going back to 1854 and deals with many enquiries from the public every week. The Superintendent Registrar (RFO) and his staff were thanked for all their work.

The Open Spaces Team maintain hedges and verges throughout the city, on behalf of Somerset County Council Highways; they look after the Skateboard Park, three allotments sites and keep the water gullies in the High Street flowing. They work closely with Wells in Bloom. On behalf of the City Centre Management Committee they have this year repainted benches in the Market Place and put on the new Christmas Lights display.

There was a discussion about possible long-term options for future burial provision and the need to plan well ahead.

CITY OF WELLS

- The RFO answered questions explaining how the running water supplies to the streets work; the Open Spaces team clears the gullies weekly on behalf of SCC Highways.
- iii. Archives & Civic Assets Committee Cllr Gibson
The main part of the City Archive is now cared for at the Museum. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the continuance of the heritage and traditions of the council and city. Cllr Gibson particularly thanked members for their help in carrying out the Civic Review.
- iv. City Centre Management Committee Cllr Gibson
The committee has over-seen the May Fair and Carnival Fair, re-furbished the benches in the Market Place. The main project of the year has been to take the Christmas lights in-house. This resulted in an improved display and better value for money; thanks were given to Paul Toole, Jeremy Browne, and the City Council staff.
The new tourist maps and map boards had also been a big project. Comments were made that the Christmas lights had been a huge improvement. Cllr Gibson was commended by the Mayor for the huge amount of time and effort she puts in, being diligent and thorough in all she undertakes.
- v. Wells in Bloom Committee Cllr Brandon
This was another successful year for Wells in Bloom, thanks to the hard work of all the volunteers, and the support of the local businesses and community sponsors.
There was a short discussion about the National trust shop. Cllr Brandon explained the new arrangements being made to continue the bloom displays in that area of the Market Place.
The meeting agreed to put here on record, their appreciation of John Wood and the staff at the National Trust shop for all they had done.
- vi. Finance & General Purposes Committee The Mayor & Cllr North
The City Council budget is planned in November each year for the following April, due to national time constraints. Financial information is available on the Council website, the Town Clerk and RFO are happy to answer any questions.
The Old Court Room project has been completed this year. Grants have been given to local community projects. The committee has worked to ensure that data is stored safely and monitors the state of the council's finances. A zero increase budget was produced this year.
- vii. Wells Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Mr Welch
See report attached.
The Steering Group were thanked and commended for all the hard work that had clearly been put into this project. Some questions were put and concerns raised, these will be taken back by the Group.
The Town Clerk was thanked for her help.

5. Reports from Ward District and County Councillors

Wells Recreation Ground Trust (Mendip District Council) Cllr North
Mendip District Council as the sole trustee had set up a Trust Board and carried out extensive public consultation with the people of Wells to find out what they want for the future of the Recreation Ground and Bishops Barn; Cllr North summarised the conclusions. He spoke about the destination play area and explained plans for the formation of a new trust, of local people, that will be able to access appropriate funding. The greatest challenge is the preservation of the Bishops Barn.
There were expressions of frustration that there had been twenty years of decay and nothing had been done.
Cllr North answered questions and there was a discussion about the funding and viability of various options for the future of the Bishops Barn.

CITY OF WELLS

The Mayor commended Cllrs Parkes and Anderson for the WW1 Commemorative poppy bed and event. The Deputy Mayor commended Cllr North for the work he has done and the progress made in the last two years.

6. Open Forum: an opportunity to discuss matters of interest to the community

The following matters were raised:

i. Tourist Information

Mr MacKay referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2014, relating to the tourist information office. He stated that the TIC should be brought back to the Town Hall and that nothing had been done about it. He felt very strongly about this.

There was a lively discussion about locations and funding.

The Mayor spoke about the series of meetings that have been held with key partners and described some current projects:

- The Council has funded the installation of map boards; tourist maps will be available for sale.
- A pilot scheme involving electronic technology is commencing at the Town Hall as a partnership venture between the Council and the Visitor Information Service.
- The Museum, as current holder of the VIS, is investigating options, one being the possibility of multi- information points around the city.

There was general support for the concept that tourist information should be provided from the Town Hall.

Chris Winter, Chairman of the Civic Society, spoke warmly of all that the Mayor has done in his year of tenure; she thanked him for the way that he has raised the profile of the city, taken such an active part and done a very good job as Mayor.

No further matters.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

.....

CITY OF WELLS

City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting

24th March 2015

1. Introduction

At a meeting of the Wells Civic Society (WCS) in October 2013 the idea of a Neighbourhood Plan was put forward as a result of discussions initially about the High Street. After research and preparation, a proposal was put to Wells City Council in January 2014.

2. A **Steering Group** was formed, made up of 4 City Councillors and 4 members of the WCS committee. This group has met more or less monthly since then to progress the Plan.
3. A **£7000 grant** was applied for and received from *Locality* and a **consultant** was appointed in June. Stuart Todd guided the process and gave training sessions, which were shared with St Cuthbert (Out) NP steering group members.
4. In view of the shared boundary with St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council, which was also preparing a Plan, a **Memorandum of Understanding** was agreed and representatives from each group attended each others' meetings as well as holding joint meetings.
5. The Plan proposal was **launched** on 5th July at a public event held in the City centre.
6. Regular meetings have also been held with **Mendip District Council**.
7. From July until December 2014 wide ranging **consultation** with the community, organisations, and local and national institutions was carried out.
8. Using the feedback from the consultation process a **draft plan** was developed. This was launched in February at public meetings, through local media and online, with feedback forms delivered to each household and available online.
9. The closing date for feedback is 26th March but a **summary of responses** to date is appended. The average is just under 80% agreement with the policies and projects.

10. Next steps:

- The Draft Plan will be amended in line with feedback, consultation with MDC and the consultant's advice regarding the practicability of the Plan's implementation.
- The Plan will be submitted formally to MDC, who will conduct a statutory consultation.
- Amendments made as necessary.
- Plan subject to scrutiny by an Inspector appointed by MDC.
- Amendments made if necessary to ensure the Plan is in compliance with National and Local planning policy.
- Plan subject to a local referendum requiring minimum 51% assent.
- Plan 'made' and becomes a statutory planning document.