

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WELLS TOWN HALL, ON THURSDAY 11TH JUNE 2015 AT 7.00PM

- PRESENT:** Cllrs: D Baker; C Briton; M Brandon; J North; C Price;
T Robbins (Chairman); H Siggs; G Wilson (the Mayor)
- IN ATTENDANCE** Town Clerk F White; RFO: S Luck
2 representatives of Wells & Mendip Astronomers
- 15/38F** **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**
The Mayor opened the meeting and called for nominations for
Chairman. Cllr Robbins was proposed, seconded, unanimously elected
and took the Chair.
The Chairman called for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Cllr Price
was proposed, seconded and unanimously elected.
- 15/39F** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Cllr J Ludovino
- 15/40F** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the
Council's Code of Conduct adopted 26th July 2012:
Cllrs Siggs and North each declared a personal and non-prejudicial
interest in public toilets (15/46F), as members of Mendip District
Council.
- 15/41F** **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8TH APRIL
2015** Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded,
approved and signed.
Matter Arising; Councillors commented on item 15/36ii
- 15/42F** **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**
Representatives to speak at 15/44F: Community grant application.
- 15/43F** **FINANCIAL REPORT**
i. To receive financial reports for April and May 2015:
The bank statements and accounts had been checked prior to the
meeting. The accounts for April and May 2015 were proposed,
seconded and approved.
The RFO reported a query on an invoice relating to the Wells
Neighbourhood Plan; payment would take the budget into a small over-
spend. Payment was approved by the committee as it was agreed that
the invoice should be honoured by the Council.
The Town Clerk was instructed to enquire with Locality what is the
status of the remaining 10% of the grant requested last year for the
Neighbourhood Plan, and then to write to the Steering Group to clarify
the situation.

ii. To appoint bank signatories:

It was agreed to appoint Cllrs Brandon, Robbins, Siggs and Wilson, as the Council's bank signatories.

15/44F

COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

Wells & Mendip Astronomers (*LGA 1972 s.137*)

The Chairman and Treasurer of the group were present to speak and answer questions. After interested discussion it was proposed, seconded and agreed to grant £500 as requested. Members were in agreement that the benefit to parishioners would be commensurate with expenditure.

15/45F

VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

i. To clarify the current situation with regard to Visitor Information Services in Wells

The Chairman reported:

1. The Tourist Information Centre was a limited company; it opened at the Town Hall prior to 1988.
2. The company became insolvent, ceased to trade and closed the centre in 2010.

It was noted that the Town Hall staff had consistently given every possible assistance to the TIC when it was in the Town Hall and had been shocked and surprised when it closed.

3. A different service started at the Museum, known as the Visitor Information Service.
4. We understand this service later gained accreditation with the national body as a tourist information office, able to display the familiar blue logo.

ii. To clarify the Council's current levels of grant funding and financial support for tourism (*LGA 1972 S 144*)

The RFO reported:

1. During the years that the TIC was operating from the Town Hall it was given an annual grant by the City Council. This grant always covered the cost of any rent charged. The City Council also provided heating, lighting and in-house staff support.
2. The City Council has continued to make an annual grant in support of tourism services.
3. Last year £3,000 was given to the Museum for tourism purposes.
4. This year there is again £3,000 in the City Council budget for tourism.

Members agreed that these reports were an accurate summary of the situation.

It was noted that the Museum receives support funding from the City Council in the form of payments for maintenance of the Archives and related services.

15/46F

PUBLIC TOILETS

To consider future contributions to the Mendip District Council public toilets contract (from July 2015) (Public Health Act 1936 s.87)

(See declarations of interests 15/40F)

The Chairman explained that there are four public toilet facilities in Wells.

1. Town Hall Buildings - City Council own, clean and maintain
2. Union Street - MDC own, clean and maintain
3. Princes Road - MDC own and clean; City Council pay cleaning cost
4. Recreation Ground
- Wells Recreation Ground Trust own; MDC clean; City Council pay cleaning cost

Numbers 3 and 4, Princes Road and Wells Recreation Ground public toilets are the subject of this agenda item.

The previous ten-year cleaning and maintenance contract expired in June 2014. Wells City Council was a partner with MDC in this contract. The City Council was not involved in negotiation of the new contract which appears to have a lower level of repairing service.

The City Council has paid monthly contributions to the cost of the new contract for one year only, there is no signed agreement.

After careful consideration it was proposed, seconded and resolved that the Town Clerk and RFO be instructed to continue paying the monthly contributions for a further year.

Cllr Siggs spoke about the Mendip District Council position.

The District Council will continue to provide the service at Union Street but not 3 and 4 (above) unless the City Council continues to pay.

After careful consideration it was proposed, seconded and resolved that the Town Clerk and RFO be instructed to:

- i. Open immediate pro-active dialogue with MDC to secure the medium to long-term future of the public toilet provision in Wells, in particular at Princes Road and Wells Recreation Ground, preparing a business plan for Wells City Council to take over responsibilities for toilet provision.
- ii. Negotiate with MDC regarding a long-term lease on the facility at Princes Road, with due regard for the maintenance issues at the premises; work with the Recreation Ground Trust to similarly ensure future provision.

A vote was taken on this resolution, Cllrs North and Siggs did not take part in the vote; all other members were in favour.

15/47F

MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

No further matters.

15/48F

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm Thursday 9th July 2015