

WELLS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WELLS CITY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WELLS TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 28TH JANUARY 2016 AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Cllrs: M Brandon; C Briton; A Gibson (Deputy Mayor); N Kennedy;
J Ludovino; R MacKenzie; J North; J Osman; T Robbins; H Siggs;
D Swain; D Unwin; G Wilson (The Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: F White
RFO: S Luck
Mace-Bearer: M Goody
Chaplain: Canon G Dodds
Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner
2 members of the public
1 press representative

16/01C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: C Cox; C Price; C Wride

16/02C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 27th July 2012:
None declared. See 16/11Ci.

16/03C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 17TH

DECEMBER 2015 Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

16/04C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- i. Mr R Bennett spoke about the proposed relocation of the Post Office and about the site of the former Co-operative store.
- ii. Cllr Reeves (St Cuthbert Out Parish Council) spoke about the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations; item referred to the City & Tourism Forum.

16/05C PRESENTATION

Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, Sue Mountstevens.
The Commissioner spoke about her role, and answered questions.

16/06C WELLS POST OFFICE

Proposed new location, subject to public consultation:
The Mayor opened this item by reading an extract from the local press report; Through out the debate members expressed serious concern regarding the misleading nature of the press statement from the Post Office.
The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee drew members' attention to the statement issued by the City Council; the Council not been contacted by the Post Office about this proposal prior to the launch of the public consultation.

In answer to questions the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee reminded members that council has duty of care to obtain the best return possible in terms of rentals on commercial properties it holds on behalf of people of Wells.

Members continued to express extreme disappointment with the announcement by the Post Office.

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to make a united response to the consultation:

The objections from Wells City Council to the proposal, on behalf of the city, are:

- i. Parking – the proposal would aggravate existing problems
- ii. Pedestrian safety – there is no designated crossing area for Burcott Road directly to the store
- iii. Lack of consideration for customers:
 - The walking distance from the town centre is unacceptable. This will adversely affect the high proportion of elderly residents in the city centre.
 - Visitors to the city will not be able to find or access the Post Office, this is a tourist destination city; tourists will be poorly served.
 - Foot fall: The current site is a very busy one, often with long queues. Does the Post Office not appreciate its present customers?
- iv. The City Council believes the consultation to be a travesty and the decision to be already made.
- v. Cllr Siggs summarised the historical context showing a helpful relationship between the City Council and the Post Office. Considerable repairs had been made to keep the premises suitable for the business. Every effort has been made to negotiate with the Post Office to help in ensuring that the service remains secure in the Market Hall.

It was agreed to invite a representative from the Post Office to attend the next council meeting to explain their statements and answer questions. If the Post Office is serious about consultation they should come to the meeting and listen to the elected representatives, and to any of the residents of Wells wishing to attend.

It was agreed to continue press release on this issue and contact BBC Radio Somerset.

16/07C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- i. The Legal Service: Sunday 13th March 2016
- ii. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group: Cllr Swain was appointed to fill a vacancy. Any councillor wishing to volunteer to fill the second vacancy is asked to contact the Town Clerk in the first instance.
- iii. 20th February: Mayor's Charities Barn Dance
- iv. 15th April: Council Dinner
- v. 27th April Annual Parish Meeting; Chairmen of committees were asked to be present at this meeting
- vi. Message of thanks from a member of the public for the Bekynton Commemoration
- vii. To congratulate the Town Crier on his 70th birthday
- viii. To congratulate Cllr Alison Gibson (Deputy Mayor) on her engagement to Steve Luck

16/08C MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meetings held on 17th December 2015, 7th January 2016 and 21st January 2016:
The Chairman presented the minutes and invited questions.

16/09C MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2016:
The Chairman presented the minutes and invited questions.
Council noted receipt of the Council Tax Support Grant.

16/10C REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

i. Wells Recreation Ground Trust

The Mayor reported on the response received from the Charity Commission to the letter sent by the City Council.

Cllr North reported that the Trustees had concluded the City Council's questions were justified and would welcome a proposal from the City Council.

The Trustees have reviewed a business plan put forward by the advisory board and are asking an independent consultant to look into the issues further.

Target date for completion of the play area is June 2016.

Cllr North and Siggs answered questions from members.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed that the Finance and General Purposes Committee be asked to examine the feasibility of Wells City Council taking on the responsibilities of the Bishops Barn and the Recreation Ground.

Cllrs Siggs, Unwin, North, MacKenzie and Osman each declared a personal interest as trustees and abstained from the vote; all other councillors present voted in favour of the proposal.

It was proposed that the Town Clerk be asked to write to Mendip District Council to request a delay to their final decision on the make-up of the new trust, to allow time for this assessment to be carried out. This proposal was deemed unnecessary, as Council accepted a statement from Cllr Siggs to the effect that the five Wells District Council members have agreed at all times that the new body will have Wells City Councillors on it, and that Mendip District Council would be very pleased to have Wells City Council put forward a bid.

ii. Mendip District Council

- Cllr Siggs reported the 'five way' business contract has been approved.
- The Folk Dance Festival on 11th June will celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday.
- Cllr MacKenzie reported the Licensing Board is preparing new policies for the next five years, to include street trading licensing.

iii. Somerset County Council

- Cllr Osman reported the 'Heart of the South West' devolution bid is complete.
- He spoke about the annual council tax; some increase is expected to ensure provision of essential services.
- He answered questions about the devolution bid.

iv. iv. District Health and Well-Being Forum

-Cllr Swain reported from the recent meeting of this Forum. It was agreed to hold a training session for Councillors and staff, by the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

16/11C COUNCIL DIARY

To approve the Council calendar of meetings for 2016: RESOLVED (unanimous)

16/12C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

No further matters.

16/13C DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will take place at **7.00pm on Thursday 25th February 2016.**