

Report regarding Wells City Council Planning Committee at their AGM on 9th March 2022.

1. Since the 21st of March 2021 the Committee has met on 22 occasions and considered 137 planning applications including applications relating to trees. We have recommended approval to 86% of these applications. Mendip have failed to inform us of the outcome of these applications. This is a serious failing and has made it difficult for us to assess the impact of our recommendations.
2. Cllr Jenny Rust has been my dependable deputy throughout the year and I believe that we have worked well together. I am grateful to her and all the members of the Committee for the time they have put in to consider the plethora of applications that have come before us. An understanding of the planning system and an ability to view applications in the context of what considerations are "material" and those which are not, are fundamental to membership of the Planning Committee. So, I am pleased that all members of the Committee have received training in planning law and practice from the Somerset Association of Local Councils.
3. During the year, the Wells Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have met on a monthly basis and reported regularly to the Committee. The draft for consultation will be considered by the Council at their next meeting.
4. During the year, we have transferred from Zoom to face to face meetings. As part of the review of the meeting system, we have moved from fortnightly to monthly meetings. I believe that this has been an improvement. Attendance by the public to our meetings has been minimal but regular. An exception to this related to the application for change of surfaces at the Crest Nicholson housing site. 32 members of the public attended and I am grateful to Kevin Westwood, the Town Hall Manager, who dealt calmly and effectively with a potentially difficult situation. I am pleased that County Councillor Tessa Munt has been a regular attendee at our meetings and it has been useful to hear her views.
5. Back in 2020, I sent out the aims as below and it is interesting to note progress.

Draft aims for Wells City Council Planning Committee

1. Confirm commitment to completion of the Wells Neighbourhood Plan. **Achieved to an extent.**
2. Ensure all members attend a training course as set up by Somerset Association of Local Councils in January 2021 at latest. **Achieved**
3. Make it easier for the public to comment on applications on agendas by adding a direct link to Mendip DC planning search. **Achieved**
4. Engender a dialogue with St Cuthbert Out Parish Planning Committee on matters of common interest by setting up occasional joint informal meetings. **Not achieved although I have met with cllr Marcel Hayden, their chair on more than one occasion and gave evidence at an appeal hearing relating to a potential site on the edge of Wookey Hole (2019/2883). Marcel came to a WCC meeting prior to the appeal and set out the views of SCOP.**
5. Arrange for Bo Walsh, MDC Tree Officer, to address the Committee on dealing with tree applications. **Achieved**

6. Encourage reference to the list of valid grounds for refusal when considering applications. **I hope so**
 7. Work with Alex Westwood to facilitate better use of Zoom meetings by enabling display of photos, Google maps/street view during meetings. **Achieved**
 8. Become more aware of changes in planning legislation and respond to consultations. **I would have liked to have done this more often and effectively. We recently commented on a Mendip Supplementary Planning Document on Design and Amenity of New Development.**
 9. When appropriate set up public meetings, sometimes jointly with SCOPC, to discuss development in Wells and beyond. **Not achieved and I hope that the Committee will, in future, take this positive step.**
 10. Establish principles/ways of working for a) site visits and b) responses to planning appeals. **Achieved in part.**
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6. The next Council will encounter opportunities for devolution to itself of the role of determining planning applications. There should be a proper debate as to how this might work.
 7. So interesting times lie ahead for those members of the new Council who are interested in planned development of our lovely city. I am not standing for re-election to the Council. So, I am sad that I will not be directly involved in these discussions and a, hopefully, positive outcome. I have enjoyed the privilege of being involved as a member and then chair of the Planning & Environment Committee and wish my successors well.
 8. Finally, I would like to thank Steve Luck whose advice has been invaluable, Sue Glendinning and Sandy Bristow who prepare our agendas and minutes with great care and Alex Westwood who deals effectively with the technology

Adrian I'Anson

8.3.22