

CITY OF WELLS

CITY OF WELLS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2024

Minutes of Wells Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Wells Town Hall.

ELECTORS PRESENT: WCC Cllrs: T Butt Philip, D Denis, G Folkard, D Orett, S Powell, T Pullin (Mayor), H Siggs

Members of the public: A l'Anson, C Simons, C Woodland (Assistant Town Clerk), one other

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllrs: S Cursley, L Agabani, S Eden

1. Apologies WCC Cllrs: J Browne, N Kennedy, T Robbins, P Welch
SCC Cllr: T Munt

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8th March 2024
Minutes of last year's meeting were approved and signed by the Mayor.

3. The Mayor's Annual Report (Attached)
The Mayor presented her report and invited questions. No questions were received.

4. Chair of Committee Reports

i. Finance and Council Matters Committee
Chair, Cllr S Cursley presented the report (attached) and invited questions. No questions received, Cllr Folkard gave thanks to Officers for the work on the budget for 2024/25.

ii. Outside Spaces and Estates Committee
Vice Chair, Cllr S Powell presented Chair Cllr J Browne's report (attached) in their absence and invited questions.

C Simons enquired about the Recreation Ground Trust's status and it was confirmed it was no longer deemed as a charitable one. All Council members were still Trustees. The funds that came with the transfer of the Trust remain ring fenced.

C Simons enquired if the recent tidying of the Bishop's Barn flooring had received Listed Building Consent. LBC was not necessary for that work undertaken, and all future work has been halted while professional help is sought.

C Simons also enquired about the possibility of temporary trench covers being used in the Outside Spaces Team's new delegated authority to mend minor pavement faults, as cones are too easily moved from the site of the fault. It was agreed this suggestion would be considered.

Cllr D Orrett gave thanks in general to the Outside Spaces Team who are visible in their work maintaining Wells.

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iii. **Planning and Environment Committee**

Chair Cllr D Denis presented the report (attached) and gave special thanks to Mr A l'Anson for his work seeing the Neighbourhood Plan to fruition. The pledge to acknowledge climate change had been taken very seriously by each committee and staff.

Questions were invited. Cllr S Powell raised the subject of flooding in recent heavy rain and where help could be sought by the public. Links to the Somerset council online advice are to be added to the Council website.

Claire Woodland, Town Clerk Assistant, briefly informed the meeting of the updated staff sustainability report (attached)

iv. **Staffing Committee**

No report was received but in the absence of Chair Cllr T Robbins, Cllr S Eden informed the meeting that Staff structure and plans after retirement of the Town Clerk were the topics of importance for the Committee. Cllr S Eden invited questions but none were raised.

v. **Management Groups:**

- **Portway Annexe**

Lead Cllr D Orrett presented the report and invited questions. C Simons asked if a detailed budget breakdown for the Portway Annexe was available, for example showing staff costs and maintenance costs.

In response it was noted that wage costs are reported comprising all Council staff, and that a member of staff had been relocated from the Town Hall to the Portway Annexe in order to oversee the building and bookings in conjunction with their other role. Council staff all have input in the running of the building, it would be impossible to separate out wages as a separate cost. The current maintenance budget is £30,000.00

It was suggested this enquiry be taken back to the Finance Committee for more scrutiny.

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

No questions were raised.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.50 pm.

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Mayor's Report to Wells City Council's Annual Parish Meeting on 6th March 2024.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as the 649th Mayor of Wells and I hope my enthusiasm, commitment and belief that the City Council can change people's lives for the better and the positive effects are being felt. It has certainly been a very busy and enjoyable time.

Whilst I have drawn on the experience I gained as a former Mendip District Councillor and Wells Central City Councillor it wasn't until I became Deputy Mayor, shadowing the incumbent Mayor Stewart Cursley, that I began to fully understand just what the role of Mayor involved and what I had let myself in for!

I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to Stewart who has been a fantastic mentor and role model. Along with his wife June, they have been exemplary in their support for me, helping me to understand what it means to be both a Mayor and a Mayoress.

As Deputy Mayor we shared a very busy calendar led by national events following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and Coronation of King Charles III in early May 2023. Working with Stewart and June and thanks to their kindness and inclusivity I was well prepared for my year in Office.

My time in Office has been guided by the following beliefs:

"Everybody matters, everybody is important, and everybody should be listened to. No one needs to be lonely or homeless and we should respect everyone."

I have been quoted as saying:

"No mission is too big or no problem too insignificant. No matter will be too small to deal with, the most important thing is that we listen, most people never listen, we need to acknowledge that everybody is important: that the people of Wells have a voice, and Wells City Council are willing to listen, even though we may have trouble finding the finance to be able to do it. We will be relentless in communicating with Somerset Council to get work done in Wells, like mending the paving stones on the pavements and ensuring the bins are emptied."

It is of critical importance to me at a time of reducing resources in local government that the issues that are closest to our local communities understands the needs of our constituents and is fully accessible to them. Everybody is important and everybody matters. It is important that the voices of all community members are heard and valued from the oldest to the youngest.

The Mayor's Parlour has played a small part in this increased approach to community engagement, working overtime to provide a base for tea, cake and communication. No matter how big or small the issue. Everybody is always welcome, and advice and signposting given when necessary.

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This is why we need to have a Council that is open and diverse to all ages or genders. We are then more capable of making rounder decisions for the greater good of Wells.

Our beautiful natural and built environments need protecting and enhancing.

Along with other Councillors, I have been pleased to support the Council's focus on Dark Skies and environmental sustainability. Together we have launched initiatives aimed at preserving Wells' natural beauty while promoting green practices among residents and businesses. With the help of the outside space team, we have attempted to improve our green public spaces and implemented sustainable waste management practices, thereby ensuring that Wells remains a beacon of environmental stewardship.

The Christmas lights and flower borders were a sight to be proud of. We have so much to thank for the work of the Outside Spaces Team.

I also love our amazing built environment from the Market Square ,the Cathedral and the Bishops Palace and am really pleased how we have been able to utilise these spaces and build stronger relationships with those responsible for their upkeep through my fund raising activities.

The Wells Ambassadors have played a massive part of my year in terms of helping both visitors and locals to understand what an amazing place we are and where important information can be found. Their good works need to be acknowledged.

I am also absolutely committed to recycling and up cycling but more of that later!

Local business matters

Using my background in business I hope I have made businesses understand just how important they are not only in supporting the local economy but also providing services and goods that make living in the city such a special place.

It is good that we are gaining much wider recognition of our visitor Tourist Information Centre (TIC), but it is also important that we continue to support our local businesses in these difficult and unpredictable economic times.

I hope I have played a small part in fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and an increase in small business ventures and local employment opportunities.

The Mayors new Clothes – Tanys Transformations

It is not by accident that perhaps my year in office will be best remembered for The Mayor's new Clothes – Tanys Transformations and the events that have surrounded it.

I guess I have pushed the boundaries of the Mayor's key role in raising funds for local charity. Linking that to a commitment to 'everybody matters' and 'recycling', then I think we have got a winning formula which is promoted as 'Tanys Transformations'.

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The upcycling of wedding dresses and the community collaboration and engagement that flows throughout the project has been a massive part of my work during my time as Mayor together with a full programme of events. Firstly, the dress launch on June 29th, then the Halloween quiz night, followed by the premier preview Cat Walk, then a second quiz night on Valentines weekend. The project is going from strength to strength due to the help of 1000 volunteers who have been involved to date and is shortly to be established as a Community Interest Company to sustain its work in the longer term.

I must give particular thanks to Councillor Jasmine Browne, the Mayor elect, who is supporting events that are planned beyond my term of office including a Gala Dinner in June and major Cathedral Cat Walk in August. Jasmine will be an amazing Mayor, who will put her own stamp on Wells.

On a final note, I must thank all Councillors who believed I could undertake this role and who have supported me in fulfilling my duties as Mayor. And last, but by no means least, I need to acknowledge and praise the Town Clerk, Steve Luck, and all the staff in the Town Hall who have been truly amazing and have embraced all my demands where possible and given me wise advice when best not to! Sadly, I must acknowledge we have had a couple of sad deaths within the council staff who are greatly missed. Also, we have had a couple of loyal long-standing members of staff retire through ill health. We wish them well and hope they have a very happy healthy future.

I recently received the following quote from the local press. If I have achieved just a small part of this I will be happy:

“Tanys Pullin, serving as the 649th Mayor of Wells, has distinguished herself through a commitment to community engagement and sustainable development. Her tenure is marked by a hands-on approach to leadership, prioritising accessibility to her constituents and championing initiatives that aim to enhance the quality of life in Wells. Her dress project has been a beacon of excellence, with the beautiful dresses great in the Cat Walk, mid-January. Tanys has a loyal group of volunteers who have made the exhibitions in Wells Cathedral, Bishops Palace and Museum a sight to behold showcasing the wealth of talent that exists within our community. The administration of this project has been expertly managed with a social media and website campaign to show everybody the wonderful work that has been achieved so far”

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has been involved in the Tanys Transformation project and the people who have guided me through my amazing year of being Mayor. <https://tanystransformations.co.uk/>

Key events

30th May, fashion show supporting local business.

3rd June: Bath's Mayor Making.

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5th June: HM Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Mr Mohamed Saddiq, awards for excellence.

7th June, visit to Crandon Springs Care Home, Wells

14th June, Supporting Catch the Bus initiative.

19th June: Attending Oliver at Wells Cathedral School.

26th June: Axbridge Mayor Making followed by the celebration of the Maces in the museum

29th June, Lunch of Tanys Transformations, the Mayor's New Clothes

June, Wells Environmental network.

June: Open Day at Heads Up

2nd July: Romulus and Remus

2nd July, Inauguration of Yeovil Mayor

July: Cathedral School Speech Day.

6th July, Art Review and A Level exhibition at the Blue School

6th July, Blue School Summer Music Concert

7th July: Opening of Charlton House, Montego Resorts

7th July, Priddy Folk Festival

9th July, Wells in Bloom School presentations for decorative Wheelbarrows

9th July, As You Like It, open-air theatre club

9th July, Visit from the Mayor or Cairn regarding the Blessing of the waters of Wells.

18th July, The Hare and Tortoise, motorbike rally

30th July, celebration of the ambassadors of Wells and The Talk by Helen McCann about her book, running, blind and cold

6th August, raising awareness of Hiroshima at the Nuclear Disarmament Peach Group

10^h August, Opening the flower festival in the Bishop's Palace

20th August, talk at, making spaces. River blessing in Glastonbury with all the Mayors and chairs the local area attending.

28th August: Wells Moat Boat Race

2nd September, hosting the Mummings of Wells, Morris Dancing and attending a Wells Football match.

2nd September, attending a contemporary art exhibition

3rd September, Glastonbury Mayor Making, Indra Donfrancesco

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8th September: Represented Wells with a visit to Bad Durkheim

12th August, Opening Wells railway fraternity exhibition

17th September, Battle of Britain event followed by the premier at the Cedars Hall of the Pianist

30th September, Mayors meeting at the Top of the Tor in Wedding Dresses.

7th October, Sew and Sew in the Town Hall

8th October, Attending Wells Food Festival, and found she was very good at spinning plates.

9th October, County Awards, where Wendy Ray received an award for service to the Community.

14th October, Wells in Bloom

18th October, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucestershire Visited the Wells Arms Houses.

Late October, Halloween Quiz night

November, Hosted the Twinning weekend in November with representatives from Paray-le-Monial, France, Bad Dürkheim, and Fontanellato,

December: Multiple Concerts in the Cathedral

January 2024: Met Queen Camilla, in London Guild Hall

January 2024: Civic Awards, Mayor's Award. Dawn Payne was recognized for her hard work for Wells Twinning, Maurice Day for his dedication to Wells Carnival

Thanks go to Kevin Westwood and Nick Marshman, who both retired in 2023 after many years of service at Wells City Council.

Cllr Tanys Pullin

649th Mayor of Wells

Feb 2024

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FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

The Finance & Council Matters committee is one of the standing committees of the council. It meets once a month and continued to meet during lockdown by means of zoom meetings, it normally has a membership of 8 councillors, including a chair and vice chair.

Its functions are:

To exercise the powers of the City Council regarding: -

- Consideration and determination of all financial matters of the Council unless otherwise delegated, except those reserved by statute. (Finance & Council Matters Committee shall not have authority over the use of budgets assigned to other committees.)
- Management of the Council's expenditure and budgetary controls.
- Awarding grants. (Budgets assigned to other committees shall not be used to award grants.)
- Use of assets and routine management of property, i.e., buildings, including public toilets (except where assigned to City Centre & Open Spaces Committee).

To make recommendations to the City Council regarding: -

- The annual Budget and Precept.
- Strategic management of property (buildings, including public toilets).
- Procedures and policies: Annual reviews required by Standing Orders: Governance documents; data protection procedures; key policies.
- To consider cost implications of any major Council civic/ceremonial event

Following are a sample of organisations the council have given grants during the year, and we welcome future requests.

Wells Lions
Project Factory
International Music Exchange
Somerset Bus Partnership
Wells City Band

Cllr Stewart Cursley
Finance and Council Matters Committee
26th February 2024

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Outside Spaces and Estates Committee

Annual Parish Report 2023-2024

Meeting Schedule

The meeting schedule was amended on 6th July 2023 to assist progression of plans for the Bishop's Barn and Recreation Ground. It was agreed that the Outsides Spaces and Estates Committee would continue to meet monthly but that every other month the emphasis would be placed on matters pertaining exclusively to the Recreation Ground and Bishop's Barn. All discussions regarding the Recreation Ground and Bishop's Barn were agreed to be held exclusively at these meetings to improve cohesion between the public, Councillors and Council Officers and to avoid duplication. This is subject to review.

Outside Spaces

The Outside Spaces Team continues to be led by Matt Johnson. There has been significant positive praise and feedback from the public for the Outside Spaces Team. Some of the work carried out has been over and above the normal responsibilities of the Open Spaces Team such as clearing blocked drains to reduce flooding. This has been key to preventing flooding in the City and Wells Residents have benefitted as a result. The work of the Outdoor Spaces Team is extremely appreciated by the Open Spaces and Estates Committee.

The new storage unit at Underwood Business Park has continued to provide vital space for the Outdoor Spaces Team.

New mowers have been acquired this year which are more suitable for areas where grass needs to be cut shorter such as in the Recreation Ground.

Bulbs have been planted in the Bus Station to enhance the overall environment.

'No Mow May' took place in May 2023 and is scheduled again for May 2024.

The Bowling Club lease was extended for 11 years in May 2023.

Cllr. Orrett was thanked for organising the successful litter picks in 2023-24 which have made a considerable contribution to improving the outside spaces in the city, in particular the roadsides.

The Town Clerk reported that Somerset Council has now granted permission to start repairing pavement defects and trip hazards and the Outdoor Spaces Team have been given the necessary training. Dropped kerbs were acknowledged to be lacking in Wells and discussions are ongoing at Wells City Council to improve pavements in the city.

Portway Annexe

Repairs and maintenance that have taken place in 2023-2024 include:

Replacement of cracked windows

Installation of new boiler

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LED light replacement

Repair to leaks called by heavy rainfall

Soundproofing has been installed in the music rehearsal room.

An i-pad has been installed to ease the signing-in process.

The car park continues to provide revenue for Wells City Council through the lease of secure designated parking spaces.

Discussions to provide a community fridge at the Portway Annexe are still underway.

Friday Community coffee mornings managed by Liz Webber have been reported as a success.

A new twilight member of staff has been appointed.

Discussions have taken place around suitability of the placement of a mosaic with a Tree of Life design on the outside of the Portway Annexe and are still underway.

Recreation Ground

Cllr Powell presented a report on the Bishop's Barn Open Day which took place on Saturday 20th May 2023 in which members of the public were invited to give their views on the Recreation Ground and Bishops Barn. Cllr. Powell was thanked for her report.

A short-term plan for the Recreation Ground was prepared and submitted to the Open Spaces Committee by the Chair, Cllr J. Browne. Committee members voted to accept the plan on 2nd November 2023. The plan included addressing anti-social behaviour, ordering new equipment and benches, commencing work on trees and trialling a refreshment kiosk.

The Bishops Barn public hire prices remain on the WCC website and the space is available to be booked as is seen by contacting the Outdoor Spaces Officer. Some private events have taken place there including a wedding in the Summer of 2023.

The trial of a pop-up vendor in the Recreation Ground to improve the area for families and to create a more amenable environment around the former playground took place over the summer period. Although unsuccessful on this occasion, a new tender has since been prepared by the Assistant Town Clerk and has been published in local media and placed on the WCC website. It is hoped that the summer season will attract further interest.

Members of the public have repeatedly expressed concern at Open Spaces meetings about the condition of trees on the Recreation Ground. Issues have arisen with the trees on the Recreation Ground on account of complications arising from Tree Protection Orders. A survey was carried out and all identifiable dead wood was subsequently removed by Mendip Trees and Landscapes in December 2023. In order to carry out further work, a planning application has been submitted to Somerset County Council to allow for a two-metre 'exclusion zone' between existing trees and residential properties.

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English Heritage were approached by Wells City Councillors to establish whether the organisation would be interested in taking over the Bishops Barn. This was unsuccessful but further discussions with other organisations have not been ruled out.

In response to reports of anti-social behaviour at the Recreation Ground, a new CCTV camera has been installed and police have assured WCC that they regularly patrol the area. Toilets are cleaned twice a day by WCC staff and any problems immediately reported.

A request to move benches from the area surrounding the public toilets at the Recreation Ground was turned down as this particular seating was considered necessary for parents whose children are using the toilets. However, to improve the overall area, four additional picnic benches were ordered to give people alternative seating areas and to make the location more inviting to families and visitors.

Additional equipment for the children's play area is being investigated and costed and are planned for the future subject to available funds.

Additional rubbish bins were installed in the children's playground and more have been ordered for the Recreation Ground.

Cllr Denis has been working with members of the public to look at options for creating a sensory garden in a designated corner of the Recreation Ground with appropriate plants and shrubs.

The Outdoor Spaces Officer has requested a survey of existing tarmac in the Recreation Ground with a view to carrying out repairs or removing the current tarmac to replace it with grass.

The following minor repairs were agreed by the Outdoor Spaces committee and have been carried out on the Bishops Barn in the Committee Year 2023-24:

Sanding of internal floor

Cleaning of flaking paint

Removal of graffiti

The insurance company carried out an inspection and renewal of policy has been agreed for a further 12 months. Two oak doors need to be repaired and wood in the barn requires fire retardant treatment. The lighting also needs improvement.

However, following intervention from Historic England, it was agreed that from now onwards, only specialist contractors would carry out work on the Bishops Barn in keeping with its status as a Grade1 Listed Building.

Wells in Bloom

Public feedback had been overwhelmingly positive on the hanging baskets and planters across the City of Wells.

Andy Allen has handed over the Wells in Bloom role to Nathaniel Bell in the Outside Spaces Team. The Committee are grateful to Andy Allen for his brilliant work and commitment during his tenure.

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Questions have been raised over increasing income for the Wells in Bloom Scheme by increasing Corporate sponsorship and splitting larger areas. Discussions are ongoing.

The Wells in Bloom School Awards are scheduled for 4th July 2024 for schools (to be held at the Bishops Palace) and 4th October for other categories (to be held at the Town Hall)

The Committee members extend their thanks to Cllr Denis for her work with Wells in Bloom.

Cllr Jasmine Browne
Chair of Outside Spaces & Estates Committee
Feb 2024

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Planning & Environment Committee Report to Annual Parish Meeting 2024

The Planning Committee met monthly throughout 2023-2024 to consider an average 7.4 planning applications at each meeting and make their recommendations to Somerset (Mendip East) Planning. There was one meeting held under delegated authority. Members of the public have attended several meetings, and their views and comments were welcomed.

The Wells City Council Climate Emergency Motion 2019 has ensured the Committee focussed on how a planning application could be negatively by climate changes and where the plans show designs which are positive to the effects of climate.

Whilst most applications were for moderate changes to properties such as adding extensions, loft extensions, windows and porches, there have been some notable applications involving listed buildings such as the Bishops' Palace, the old Deanery, Cathedral School buildings, the Swan and Outline Planning for many repairs/ restorations and change of use in Vicars Close. They were assessed as to whether they met the 8 Material Considerations and decisions taken to recommend Accept or Refuse to the Local Authority Planning were recorded against each decision.

Applications for change of use are always challenging. Vacant commercial properties in the High Street and the lack of affordable housing in the City from Class E (Commercial Business and Service) to Class C3 (house, flats apartments) influenced the committee to approve change of use in this case in commercial buildings adjacent to 25/27 Broad Street. 9 members of the public attended for the application for change of use from Class C3 (Coachhouse) to Class E (14 Office spaces) in 2023/1236/FUL. The committee recommended Refusal. In both cases the outcomes have still not been decided by Somerset Mendip East Planning.

WCC recommended Refusal to 2023/0125/FUL Change of Use from Subway to Kebab House based on the lack of information relating to air extraction and ventilation of the kitchen. This application was referred to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Somerset Planning Committee because the recommendation of the Planning Officer for approval differed from that of Wells City Council. The Decision was made on 24 November 2024 to approve the application- with

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conditions made that the extraction system should be tailored to the type of cooking carried out in the proposed restaurant. Wells City Council have not been informed of the outcome by Mendip East Planning.

I have requested feedback from Somerset Planning Authority on decisions which vary from Wells City Council's recommendations, but this is still not happening. Wells City Council will continue to seek feedback improvements.

Planning approved applications for the installation of a 20-metre-high slimline monopole on East Somerset Way and Whiting Way- the committee requested a Full Council review of the Wells City Council 2019 5G Precautionary Principle following the 2nd application, resulting in the removal of the Precautionary Principle based on improved research, and the National Guidelines and requirement to monitor safety following installations.

We received a talk by Somerset Council Tree and Woodland Officer, Bo Walsh on Tree Planning and Policy in August which was attended by 11 members of the public who wished to raise concerns about the lime trees in the Recreation Ground close to the Carlton Mews homes, and an application to remove a hedgerow. Mr Walsh explained the procedures that need to be followed in conservation areas and for tree preservation orders.

The Planning Committee has made 3 public comments on Planning Applications for larger housing developments outside the parish boundary of Wells, which will impact negatively on the services and infrastructure of the City. These comments were considered valid and taken into account in the decisions by the Planning Inspectorate for housing on land off Wookey Hole Rd, and by Somerset Council at New Farm Haybridge.

Wells Planning recommended refusal of application 2023/1275/FUL from the Churchill Retirement Homes for 44 apartments on the Glastonbury Rd for inadequate parking and lack of affordable housing. The outcome decision by Somerset is still outstanding.

Where applications involved a loss of biodiversity, the Planning Committee has taken a proactive approach, suggesting replanting more trees to replace the loss of trees which will be removed in the application. In the case of a recent Retrospective application for the construction of a Bund by Serious

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Staging, Wells City Council Planning recommended refusal on grounds of removal of biodiversity without a survey before the works were started.

Future planning applications will necessitate consideration of changes to the environment and the resultant effect on biodiversity. In England, Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory from 12 February 2024 under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than before development.

The **Wells Neighbourhood Plan** Process was reported on by the Steering Group to Planning through the year. Somerset Council carried out a Consultation Process, we received the Report from the Independent Examiner, and the Referendum passed the vote (1114 votes in favour and 255 against) on 25 January and resulted in the **Wells Neighbourhood Plan** being made by Somerset Council on 14 February 2024. The Planning Committee would like to officially record its thanks to the Chair of the Steering Group, Mr Adrian l'Anson, for his committed and dedicated work, to help Wells City Council achieve a very comprehensive and valuable Neighbourhood Plan.

I would like to end by thanking my fellow committee members for their support and contributions to all the above work we have undertaken. This Committee has to consider the implications resulting from Planning legislation and guidances and as we have seen this year- it is a moving feast!

Cllr D Denis
Chair of Planning & Environment Committee
Feb 2024

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Climate Emergency Annual Report 2024

Climate Emergency Working Group 2023-2024

Cllr Denise Denis, Cllr Sarah Powell, Cllr Deborah Orrett, Cllr Georgie Robbins, Cllr Gordon Folkard, Maddy Milnes and James Mochrie

Climate Emergency Working Group Aims (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound).

1. Develop, lead and/or enable, in conjunction with residents, local businesses, community organisations and Unitary Council Sustainability leads, a minimum of three agreed projects that have one or more of the following objectives:

(a) Promote a better understanding of energy loss and savings, leading to lower energy usage (b) Promote the use of green infrastructure and renewable technology to generate energy. (c) Promote and develop training and employment potential in both energy production and energy saving areas. (d) Encourage the use of low carbon alternatives to the private car. (e) Strengthen links to tackle energy poverty (f) Reduce waste, through minimising packaging for example, re-using, and recycling

2. Support the work of the Well City Council (WCC) on projects that relate to the Council's resilience objectives.

3. Work with the WCC and allied partners/projects to ensure joined up thinking with local organisations.

5. Work with other similar post holders across Mendip and Somerset to share good practice.

6. Identify opportunities for relevant funding, grants and awards and support business and community organisations with accessing these funds

Outcomes from Strategies for 2023- 2024

1. Winning Hearts and Minds Campaign March- December 2023:

- Climate Emergency Wells City Council webpage regularly updated, and posts added to Facebook.
- 2 online and street surveys to find out where people are in their understanding and journey for climate emergency actions. 56 people took part. In the second survey 90.63% respondents were worried about climate change and 50% rated climate change 10/10 as a concern for National Government, Somerset, and Wells. (appendix A)
- Coordinated a community event- WEN Open Day on 1 July at Portway Annexe to showcase local organisations working to improve the environment, protect biodiversity and mitigate effects of climate change- attended by 60 people and young persons.
- Manned a stand on the Market- 4 October to engage with the public and promote online survey.

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2. Improved Knowledge and Understanding within the Council

- 4 councillors- D Orrett, D Denis, S Powell and G Robbins attended Radical Adaption for Parish & Town Councillors: Creating Green and Resilient Communities (on Wednesdays 11th, 18th and 25th October) run by Centre for Alternative Technology.
- Cllr Denise Denis attended a certificated course- Zero Carbon Britain: Carbon Literacy Training for SALC on Tuesdays 3rd, 17th and 31st October 2023- along with other councillors in Somerset. Pledged to offer a Carbon Literacy Seminar to Councillors and staff in 2024.
- Monthly Reports to Wells City Council Outside Spaces Committee.
- Part night lighting- the Climate Group brought a proposal to Full Council for consideration to offer to support any future Somerset-led initiative. This was turned down on grounds that further work is required to provide more information for a fuller debate.

3. Worked with Local Partners and Organisations:

- The Climate Working Party members attended 4 Wells Environment Network Meetings over the year to link up with other organisations to share knowledge and assist in organising the WEN showcase event in October 2024.
- Avalon Community Energy is developing partnerships with Citizens Advice/ parish councils/Wells City Council to enable a bid for funding to help residents who are in fuel poverty. The Climate Group have supported this initiative from Maddy Milnes for a presentation to Full Council.
- Supported Bus Partnership to apply for WCC Community Grant and Cllr DD reports regularly to Full Council.
- Supported Litter Picking Volunteers led by Cllr Orrett.
- Tor Hill Lane Pilot project supported by WCC through signage and insurance and Outside Spaces team.

4. Climate Budget: £5000 allocated 2023-2024. Current spend £587 on training, and survey leaflets. Reserves were allocated by CWPG to replace windows Town Hall for energy efficiency but remains unspent. The CWPG request that these reserves are carried forward for this purpose to 2024-2025.

Cllr D Denis
Climate Emergency Working Group
Feb 2024

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Update on **The Portway Annexe** for the Parish Council meeting on March 6th2024

The Wells City Council owned Portway Annexe continues to be a thriving centre for multiple social, cultural and educational activities growing in its outreach since opening in May 2022.

Activities held there include:

Strode College's re-employment courses, Portway Music School, Wells u3a, tots play, children's ballet, adult tap, photography, art, sewing, counselling, meditation, birthday parties and concerts, a Friday morning café open to all and a Citizens Advice access point.

The Audio Visual Room is now fully equipped and soundproofed and can be hired for band rehearsals and recording.

Portway Performing Arts engages with the community each Saturday teaching all forms of theatrics, acting, singing, costume design and prop making.

The Annexe has also worked well as a Polling Station (Neighbourhood Plan) and hosted the Wells Environment Day last summer.

The stained-glass expert Edgar Philips is currently resident there; he offers Art Experience Days for those with mental health issues, disability and health conditions.

The Annexe has excelled at providing a Welcome Hub for the Ukrainian families living in the area where they can socialise, undertake language classes and gain all manner of support from the Charis funded part time Hub Manager assisted by WCN Ukraine. The building is also now acting as a Central Hub for satellite refugee centres with Charis substantially increasing their funding.

Space at the Annexe was offered to the Blue School whilst their accommodation is compromised by concrete failings.

Two successful "Monkey Markets" have taken place where families can buy and sell items relating to small children and babies.

The Annexe is manned 6 days a week including evenings and is very ably led by manager Alex Westwood who, along with his team and WCC Officers has great vision for the facility. It can also be available on a Sunday for a higher fee.

A Portway Annexe Management Group has been convened and meets every 3 months. This comprises 2 WCC Officers, 4 WCC Councillors and two residents from the vicinity.

Income from lettings has hit the £4,000 monthly target. Some months (where there are no school holidays or half terms) yield considerably more. January 2024's takings exceeded £5,000 and March this year is predicted to bring in £5,337.

Our aim is that it is self-sustaining by June this year.

Hire charges are intentionally kept reasonable so that it fulfils its intention of being an affordable community facility. VAT at 20% had to be added to all hire fees last April. Happily, no groups have had to leave as a result.

24 parking spaces also yield a considerable annual income (predicted £24,000). 3 remain vacant and the newly opened Sheep and Penguin Pub nearby may hire these for their summer guests.

CITY OF WELLS

Mendip Community Transport were asked to leave due to erratic driving.

Refurbishment of the building continues with the aim of making it more environmentally efficient. The boiler has undergone major repairs with research into a grant for a new eco boiler in future. All lights will be LED in the next 2 years. The main heating feed pipework has been insulated and window glass replaced where cracked. Rotten roof verges have been removed and WCC Outside Spaces team work hard on keeping the grounds tidy. A local resident, Keith, tends the area alongside the building erecting structures and planting vegetables for community gathering!

We wish to see the Portway Annexe continue to be used as a vibrant community building for people of all ages to meet, learn, create and have fun.

Please do contact Alex on 01749 673091 or comms@wells.gov.uk if you wish to make bookings.

Cllr Deborah Orrett.

Chair, Portway Annexe Management Group. 27/02/2024