

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD IN THE EAST ROOM, WELLS TOWN HALL, ON THURSDAY 16TH JANUARY 2020 AT 7:00PM

PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, P Crummay, S Cursley, O Hartley, J Osman (Mayor),
P Welch (Deputy Mayor), and C Wride

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk/RFO, S Luck
Cllrs: J Rust and A l'Anson
1 member of the Public
Minutes Secretary, S Wride

In the absence of the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Osman (The Mayor) took the Chair

20/01F ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllrs L Agabani and C Wride were both proposed; Cllr L Agabani was elected Chair by five votes to two.

Cllr Agabani took the Chair,

20/02F APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

20/03F DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 26th July 2012.

None declared.

20/04F MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2019:

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

20/05F MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Wells Food Festival Director, Mr P O'Hagan, will speak in relation to agenda item 20/07F.

20/06F FINANCE REPORT

To receive the Finance Reports for December 2019:

The bank statements were checked prior to the meeting by Cllr C Wride.

The Town Clerk answered questions from members on the accounts.

The accounts for December were proposed, seconded and approved.

20/07F GRANT APPLICATION

To consider Wells Food Festival 2019 refund request:

The Town Clerk pointed out that the grant procedure prohibits retrospective applications (noting that the previous Council had advised the Wells Food Festival Board that it would not make a grant for fees incurred during the 2019 event).

Wells Food Festival Director, Mr P O'Hagan, asked that the Council consider an application for the 2020 event; he was encouraged to re-apply in April, the beginning of the next financial year.

20/08F TO RECONSIDER BUDGET 2020 – 2021

To consider budget implications of the Wells Recreation Ground Trust:

MDC asked to meet the Town Clerk and the Mayor, Cllr J Osman, informally to discuss the future of the Trust.

MDC offered to give WCC a three-year lease on the Recreation Ground from 1 April 2020; this would include limited income from South Street car park and the Wells Bowls Club tenancy; WCC would also be able to bid for the £525,000 capital funding available to be spent on the site.

MDC suggested the three years after legal advice to enable them to establish a transfer with the Charity Commission, but MDC have not shared this legal advice at the meeting. The Town Clerk proposed that £15,000 be added to the precept to cover costs and maintain the 25% reserve required under WCC policy. The funds raised would be added to the Open Spaces budget, 2020-21. If full Council does not agree to MDC's terms, the precept will be lower next year to compensate for the measures taken during this financial year.

The F&GP Committee agreed to propose this to full Council on 30 January and set up a Working Group, consisting of Cllrs J Osman, C Wride, P Welch, and P Crummay, to support WCC staff in negotiations with MDC.

20/09F ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

To review:

i. Financial regulations

The Town Clerk drew attention to the following changes: (a) in his job-title (changed to Town Clerk/RFO); (b) Town Clerk/RFO can now authorise payments under £1,000 (raised from £500); and, (c) safeguard of two more members of staff being trained as Proper Officers (to deal with salaries and payments).
Approved for recommendation to Full Council.

ii. Financial Risk Assessment

The Town Clerk clarified for Cllr S Cursley that all risks were unlikely as there are safeguards in place.
Approved for recommendation to Full Council.

iii. Internal Financial Controls

Approved for recommendation to Full Council.

iv. Reserves Policy & Investment Strategy

Approved for recommendation to Full Council.

20/10F INSURANCE REVIEW

The Town Clerk and Senior Officers met insurance broker WPS.

WCC was advised to swap to get best value from Aviva to Sun Alliance insurance provider.

The Wells Recreation Ground will need to be covered separately.

Health insurance cover in place for Councillors and Staff.

20/11F PROPERTIES

To review Town Hall licence to occupy:

1: A Licence to occupy the Town Hall, due for renewal in September

The Town Clerk recommended that WCC not renew this lease. This will result in a loss of income but the three rooms are needed because MDC and the Wells City Archives have taken over Interview Rooms 1 and 2 and the Town Hall staff need an upstairs staff room.

Proposed, seconded and approved.

2: Post Office, Market Place

The Post Office contacted the Town Clerk today to request an extension to their lease because they had not started the public consultation about their relocation to a new location in Wells;

The Town Clerk will contact Stuart Taylor from the Post Office and keep members updated.

WCC have the offer of a long-term lease of 25 years (incl. the cost of repair-work) from another interested party in leasing this building. WCC's solicitor and Letting Agent have advised that this is a good opportunity.

Cllr L Agabani noted that another shop is still interested in hosting the Post Office; reason for the delay that *Peacocks* have just been busy acquiring shops countrywide.

20/12F ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

1: Proposal to close St. Andrews Ward, the acute mental health unit at Priory Park, will be published at midday 17.01.20; a twelve-week statutory consultation period will then start. If St. Andrews closes, the nearest ward to Wells will be in Yeovil. Cllr J Osman (The Mayor) asked that WCC let the Town Hall for free to hold a public meeting for residents, family members and patients to give their view to the Somerset Partnership. Proposed, Seconded and Approved.

2: Cllr L Agabani advised that the Charity Commission have not yet allocated *Visit Wells* a charity number, so they are not yet able to open a bank account; the opening of the Tourist Information Centre will be postponed until 29 February 2020.
Noted.

3: Request that WCC consider a free let of the Town Hall for World Women's Day on 8 March 2020.
Proposed, Seconded and Approved.

20/13F DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 13th February 2020