

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH JANUARY 2022 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs: S Cursley (Deputy Mayor & Chair), N Kennedy, J Rust, P Welch (Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk/RFO, S Luck
WCC Cllrs, D Denis, S Powell
Town Clerk Assistant, C Woodland
WCC Staff, S Glendinning, A Westwood
SCC Cllr T Munt
2 members of the public

No attendance: Cllr J Osman

22/01FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllrs: J Browne, S Johns, T Robbins

22/02FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

22/03FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2021:

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, approved for signing by the Chair.

22/04FCM MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

Nobody wished to speak.

SCC Cllr Munt asked to arrange a meeting with the Town Clerk to discuss the future usage of the market place. There is a traffic regulation order of £1,200 to pay to keep the area closed to traffic. It is likely WCC will be asked to pay this fee. The Town Clerk responded that this is an MDC controlled area. Cllr Munt will follow this up with the Town Clerk outside of the meeting.

22/05FCM FINANCE

The Town Clerk presented the Finance Reports for December 2021.
The bank statements were checked prior to the meeting by Cllr Kennedy.

Cllr Rust asked for an understanding on what the Mayor's annual allowance of £7,180 is used for and questioned whether this amount should be reduced. The Town Clerk explained the allowance is paid in two amounts within the year, it is given to the Mayor to cover expenses such as mileage/entertainment/costs incurred in organising fund raising events. In his experience this amount does not cover the total cost incurred by The Mayor. If the full amount is not used, it is returned to the council. Expense receipts are retained by the Mayor.

Cllr Powell queried whether a breakdown should be provided to council on all Mayor expenses. The Town Clerk stated that was up to the council to decide. Cllr Cursley (Deputy Mayor) stated he was happy for any increase in transparency of expenses should he become the next Mayor.

Cllr Denis felt thanking volunteers was important to ensure they felt valued.

22/06FCM ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

To review under Standing Order 5:

- i. Standing Orders
No changes have been made to this document.
- ii. Financial Regulations
Has had minor changes.
- iii. Committees' terms of reference 'Scheme of Delegation'
The Town Clerk thanked Cllr Rust for her input into the working group document.

These documents are in draft form, they will return to this committee again in February and then taken to Full Council on 24th February for sign off. Cllrs were asked to feedback any comments to the Town Clerk before the next Finance & Council Matters Committee Meeting on 10th February.

22/07FCM WILDFLOWER & VERGES PROPOSAL

Cllr Denis presented her report.

The Town Clerk explained there was already money in the budget following a recommendation made previously by a former councillor. As the funds have already been allocated, this proposal was for information only.

MDC were meeting on 13th January to discuss and if the proposal was agreed, the next stage was to set up a working group in Wells. £180 is requested for signage to be placed on each verge, so that local people and Id Verde know what is happening. Cllr Denis will provide a further update at the next meeting.

22/08FCM UNITARY & ACQUISITIONS

To receive update from Town Clerk

The Town Clerk has arranged a meeting with the new unitary authority team later this month to discuss our proposal.

We have asked MDC for a list of assets, anything with a monetary value cannot be transferred to WCC as it forms part of the unitary process. Other assets have been requested, for example: the freehold of the Burcott Road allotments, the closed mendip hospital cemetery, the Blackdog community gardens. MDC have replied saying they will return subject to WCC paying the district valuation and legal fees which could cost up to £5,000 per asset. The Town Clerk sought agreement to confirm we were not willing to pay these costs and the council will wait for discussions on asset transfers with the new authority. This was agreed by all councillors present.

22/09FCM ARCHIVES & CIVIC ASSETS

To receive update from Lead Councillor J Rust.

Cllr Rust will circulate the museum newsletter recently drafted by Dr Wood (Wells City Archivist) to all councillors.

22/10FCM STAFFING

To receive update from Lead Councillor T Robbins.

In the absence of the Lead Councillor, the Town Clerk gave an update.

Dr J Wood, Wells City Archivist has advised she will be retiring in April 2022. The Town Clerk will work with Dr Wood to consider the way forward.

The Town Clerk stressed that a review of current staffing levels needs to be a priority. Additional support is vital for the Outside Spaces Team and contingency needs to be in place for senior staff approaching retirement.

Claire Woodland, Town Hall Assistant, was congratulated on passing her first exam towards her clerk qualification.

22/11FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

The Mayor asked for advice on requesting a grant of £1,000 towards the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The Town Clerk advised the steering committee should put in a formal request to WCC.

The Chair handed out a poster (attached) advising of a Saving Energy Workshop organised by Emma Jakins, Sustainability Officer. To be held in Wells Town Hall on Sat 5th February 2-5pm.

22/12FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 10th February 2022, 7pm

EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Note: It is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence, it was proposed by the Chair that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended to allow a private property report.

Minutes signed by The Chair: **Date:**