

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: J Browne, S Cursley (Mayor), G Folkard,  
T Pullin (Deputy Mayor & Chair), H Siggs, P Welch

**IN ATTENDANCE:** WCC Cllrs: D Denis, S Powell, G Robbins  
Town Clerk/RFO: S Luck  
WCC Staff: S Glendinning  
1 member of public

**23/11/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**  
Cllrs: T Robbins and I Von Mensenkampff

**23/12/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.  
None declared.

**23/13/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023:**  
The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.  
No matters arising.

**23/14/FCM MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
Nobody wished to speak.

**23/15/FCM FINANCE**  
The Town Clerk presented the Finance Reports for January 2023 and answered questions. The accounts and all expenses for January 2023 were approved by the committee.

- i. Scheme of Delegation
- ii. Asset Register
- iii. Council Risk Assessment

The above documents had been circulated prior to the meeting. No changes were requested. It was proposed, seconded and approved to present these three documents to Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

The Town Clerk advised the end of year accounts will be assessed by an external accountant on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April, with the Internal Audit carried out shortly after.

**23/16/FCM VAT REGISTRATION**  
The Town Clerk explained VAT registration is a complicated area. Some of the council owned buildings are VAT registered and the Council is VAT registered. The Town Hall and Portway Annexe are currently not VAT registered. We are not allowed to over-charge for lets/services and make a profit, otherwise VAT is payable. With the addition of the Portway Annexe resulting in extra income it is felt a review is necessary to ensure we are compliant.  
The Town Clerk made a proposal to ask an expert in local government finance to take a review. It is estimated this will be at a cost of £500. This proposal was agreed by the Committee. A review will be taken on the end of year accounts and any recommendations will be brought back to Finance in June 2023.

**23/17/FCM WELLS CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

The Town Clerk advised, prior to COVID Wells Citizens Advice provided a 'face to face' service at the Town Hall. No charge was made for the rooms used. Five years ago they were going to close all branches and make staff redundant due to lack of funding. MDC agreed to provide them with £15,000 per year to keep the service up and running and WCC provided a further £5,000. As a result of COVID, the 'face to face' service ceased but the funding from MDC and WCC continued allowing them to provide an over the telephone service. An advice phone 'hub' has since been set up at the Portway Annexe and there will be another at the Town Hall. Most enquiries are now dealt with over the telephone, however a 'face to face' meeting is sometimes more appropriate.

They have approached the Town Clerk asking for a free let for 'ad hoc' 'face to face' meetings. As a rule, free lets are not permitted.

After some discussion it was proposed by Cllr Siggs and seconded by Cllr Welch to ask for clarification on what the £5,000 grant is currently being used to allow the committee to consider a further discretionary grant.

It was also agreed to invite Ian Byworth, Chief Executive Officer to the Finance Committee meeting.

**23/18/FCM ARCHIVES AND CIVIC ASSETS**

Cllr Siggs advised he will shortly arrange for all Councillors to visit the archives.

The Scrase catalogue will shortly be placed on line.

The Civic Review document had been circulated. Meetings will be arranged to review its content. Councillors wishing to get involved should advise the Town Clerk or Cllr Siggs.

The museum receive a grant from WCC to house the archive, £550 per quarter.

Energy costs have increased, it was proposed for Cllr Siggs and the Town Clerk to meet with the museum and agree an appropriate increase. This was agreed by the committee.

**23/19/FCM UNITARY AND ACQUISITIONS**

The Town Clerk still attends an online update meeting every fortnight. The areas for the LCNs has been agreed. Ours sits with St Cuthbert Out and a few other Parishes. The start date is envisaged for late summer.

**23/20/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

Cllr Folkard asked whether any progress had been made in separating the accounts for each different asset with regards to staffing, utility costs etc. The Town Clerk advised he would look to produce, once more costs are known.

The Town Clerk advised he had met with the WCN Ukrainian volunteers as the 'hub' project has been extended. The demand for the facility is growing, covering the needs of Glastonbury and Street. They are looking at another £50,000 government grant to cover costs for the 'hub' manager and room lets over the coming year.

Twinning are arranging a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration with Bad Durkheim to coincide with the carnival weekend in November. A request has been made for the incoming Mayor to host a dinner for the visiting Mayors on the Saturday evening. On the Sunday all WCC councillors will be invited to an event in the Town Hall. The Town Clerk has a meeting to discuss further on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb, more details will follow.

The Town Clerk advised that a matter had been raised in the Outside Spaces Committee concerning the watering of public owned flower baskets. He will be advising the committee that we are not insured to water these.

The insurers are able to cover the project at Tor Woods being looked at by Sustainable Wells.

**23/21/FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**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 report.

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