

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT 7.00PM

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, J Browne, S Cursley, D Denis, S Johns, T Leach, S Powell, T Pullin, T Robbins, J Rust, P Welch (Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk/RFO: S Luck
Town Clerk Assistant: C Woodland
WCC Staff: S Glendinning/A Westwood
Mace Bearer: C Price
SCC Cllr T Munt
7 members of the Public

22/15/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM MEMBERS
Cllrs: A Bayley, R Humphreys, A l'Anson, N Kennedy, J Osman

22/16/C DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 27th July 2012.
None received.

22/17/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 27TH JANUARY 2022
Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, confirmed as a true record and were signed by the Mayor.

22/18/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Mr Martin Pearse from the Connect Centre gave a presentation. Their Outreach team look after rough sleepers, people who are vulnerable in Wells and surrounding areas, helping with mental health, getting people back into accommodation, helping with addiction and budgeting. They also run a direct access hostel on the Mendips. Relationships have been built up with these people over the years.
This work is currently funded by Mendip District Council but this funding is stopping on 1st April 2022, which is a major concern that the needs of these vulnerable people will no longer be met. Mendip are taking the service 'in house'. The three other districts in Mendip run this service 'in house', but it has shown they don't have the necessary resources to provide these people with the same level of care.
Cllr Pullin has been lobbying to support this team and explained that she had not been made aware that MDC were stopping the funding, despite her role as a Mendip Councillor. She expressed how much vital work is carried out by this team and it is essential their work continues to be funded.
Cllr Rust asked whether there were any other sources of funding, Mr Pearse confirmed they are solely funded by MDC. Cllr Rust said other districts carry out this work 'in house' and asked why they thought a service run by MDC wouldn't be as good. Mr Pearse explained that although they would be able to assist with housing, other health and well-being needs would not be met.
Cllr Denis supported Cllr Pullin. She has seen the valuable work carried out by the Outreach team and agrees this vital service will not be provided at the same level if moved 'in house' to MDC.
Cllr Browne questioned what was meant by 'in house' and Mr Pearse explained MDC would employ people directly to deal with these vulnerable people. Cllr Browne also supported Cllr Pullin's views, as to neglect the most vulnerable members of society is not part of a civilised society.
Cllr Agabani asked how much funding from MDC they were losing. Mr Pearse confirmed this was over £100,000 a year.

Cllr Powell asked how they wanted WCC to help. Mr Pearse confirmed future funding for their service is vital to continue providing the relevant care for these vulnerable people. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to arrange a meeting with MDC Councillors to obtain a better understanding and agree the best way forward.

Roy Mackenzie spoke about the future uses of the Bishop's Barn and gave useful hints on funding for those involved with small clubs and charities. The members thanked Mr Mackenzie for his advice.

Colin Price stated how disappointing it was to see only three members of the Planning & Environment Committee were present at the last meeting. The Mayor said he and the Town Clerk had been unable to attend this committee as they were at a two and a half hour meeting with Somerset County Council about how the creation of the new Unitary county council in 2023 would affect smaller councils like WCC.

22/19/C

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor gave an update on plans for Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Wells

- Children's entertainment will be provided by Wells Rugby Club and Wells City Football Club
- Wookey Hole Caves will provide workshops for children
- Daleks and Cybermen will be present
- It is hoped a tightrope walker will walk across the Cathedral Green, the cost of this is being investigated
- Fundraising for the event continues
- More volunteers are needed to help with the preparations. Councillors who were able to help were asked to email The Mayor

Civic Event

Sunday 20th March Legal Service, Wells Cathedral at 3pm. The official invitation has now been sent to all Councillors.

Mayor's Diary

- i 25th Feb Wells Lions Charter Dinner, The Swan Hotel
- ii 7th Mar Twinning AGM, Wells Town Hall
- iii 9th Mar Annual Parish Meeting, Wells Town Hall
- iv 13th Mar Axbridge Civic Service, Axbridge
- v 17th Mar Western Section's Annual Luncheon, Swindon
- vi 25th Mar Blue and Cathedrals' joint concert for Mayor's Charity, Cedars Hall
The first time the two schools have been brought together
- vii 26th Mar Wells Town Twinning Social, Seager Hall
- viii 28th Mar Reception for Wells Litter Pickers. Wells Town Hall

22/20/C

NOMINATIONS OF MAYOR-ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR-ELECT

Nominations were made in preparation for the next Mayoral year.
(Subject to councillors' re-election and confirmation by new council.)

Mayor-Elect

Cllr Cursley was nominated by Cllr Agabani and seconded by Cllr Leach. There were no other nominations. A vote was taken, Cllrs Rust and Johns voted against. All other members voted in favour.

Deputy Mayor-Elect

Cllr Pullin was nominated by Cllr Leach and seconded by Cllr Browne. There were no other nominations. A vote was taken, Cllr Rust abstained from voting. All other members voted in favour.

The Mayor congratulated Cllrs Cursley and Pullin.

22/21/C MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2022

Cllr Cursley presented the minutes.

22/20FCM Cllr Johns confirmed he had abstained from voting on the Platinum Jubilee grant application. It was agreed to alter the minutes accordingly.

There were no further questions.

22/22/C ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

To adopt policies recommended by the Finance & Council Matters Committee:

- i. Standing Orders
- ii. Financial Regulations
- iii. Committees' terms of reference 'Scheme of Delegation'

The Town Clerk explained the documents have been to the Finance & Council Matters committee twice and were now at Full Council for approval. The 'Scheme of Delegation' has been updated to include guidance for the new management structure at the Portway Annexe and Bishop's Barn.

Cllr Agabani asked if these continued into the new Council. The Town Clerk explained they are ongoing, renewed annually as part of the audit process, will again be delegated in May to the Finance & Council Matters committee.

It was proposed, seconded and agreed to adopt these three documents.

22/23/C MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 17th February 2022

Cllr Rust presented the minutes and re-confirmed the point made earlier by Colin Price. There are eight councillors on the committee and only three were present. Two councillors had to declare an interest on two applications, so they were inquorate. It is an important committee and she hopes attendance will improve.

Cllr Pullin asked if committee members knew they were not able to attend, could other councillors step in. The Town Clerk confirmed this was not possible.

22/24/C MINUTES OF THE OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2022

Cllr Agabani presented the minutes.

The Mayor asked for the latest position on the graffiti in the City. The Town Clerk confirmed he had met with the local police and they have identified the suspected culprit and have the situation in hand. He explained it is the responsibility of MDC but WCC Outside Spaces Team help out where possible if resources allow. If councillors are contacted about graffiti in the City they should approach MDC.

The Mayor expressed his thanks to the WCC staff who have operated shorthanded in recent weeks overcoming challenges caused by sickness and the storm damage.

22/25/C UNITARY AND ACQUISITIONS

The Town Clerk gave an update on the online Unitary Conference he and the Mayor had attended on 17th February. There were two presentations from the Town Clerks in Salisbury and Shrewsbury. Contact with Salisbury will continue as Wells shares a lot of similarities and this may help us with our service and asset transfer work. There was also a joint presentation from SLCC/SALC who are putting together a charter for the new unitary authority and parish councils. The Town Clerk will continue to provide updates.

22/26/C

PROPOSAL TO FULL COUNCIL

Proposal from Cllr D Denis, seconded by Cllr T Pullin

“The City Centre roads are in a terrible state - potholes down the High Street, edges of roads breaking up, road markings disappearing (almost non-existent pedestrian crossing!), paint flaked off the lampstands at St Cuthbert’s Church completely, Priory Rd surface cracked and thin.

“I call on Wells City Council to write to Somerset Highways to ask for immediate repairs to make good the required improvements before this Summer as the current shabby state is not acceptable to a City which is a tourist attraction to this county.”

Cllr Denis presented her proposal emphasising her dismay at the upkeep of the Wells High Street. Cllr Kennedy agreed with Cllr Denis, particularly on the unclear markings of the pedestrian crossing. Cllr Rust agreed improvement was needed but felt the pedestrian crossing was sufficiently marked and lit. She suggested that the matter be taken forward by SCC Cllr Munt who agreed to look into and report back at next month’s meeting. Cllr Munt requested any county matters should always be copied into her. A vote was taken for SCC Cllr Munt to take this issue to SCC Highways, which was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed.

Cllr Browne asked why the water had been turned off in the High Street. The Town Clerk explained this happened every year when there was a chance of ice/snow to avoid freezing water on the High Street.

22/27/C

TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- i Wells City Council Police Report – February 2022

The report had been received late and a copy circulated at the meeting. Cllr Robbins was surprised to see no mention of drugs which is a known problem in the City.

- ii Report from Cllr Welch on the Connect Centre’s Outreach service grant from MDC stopping from 1st April 2022.

22/28/C

TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS

The MDC report had been distributed on the day of the meeting. The Mayor stated that the comprehensive report was detailed and not specific to matters concerning Wells. Cllr Powell stated the MDC report provides information on grants available for tenants/landlords. In order to increase awareness, could we include information on the new WCC website? This was proposed, seconded and agreed.

SCC Cllr Munt gave an update. The budget for the final year of SCC has been voted on. They have raised some concerns on contract procurement. The carers assessment census in Somerset shows there are 58,000 unpaid carers, only 78 of those have had a carer’s assessment. A proposal has been made to ensure carers assessments are more accessible. If this group of people are given a little bit of help, those being cared for are less likely to end up in residential care.

The Town Clerk mentioned that SCC Chairman Cllr Nigel Taylor is gravely ill. It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed to send him our best wishes.

22/29/C

ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr Agabani asked for a document giving Pre-election Guidance to be emailed to all councillors, the Town Clerk agreed to do so.

Cllr Browne asked if WCC could provide any support to St Thomas Church on the repair of the church spire lost in the recent storm. Also repairs are needed in the children’s playground near the Bishop’s Barn. The Town Clerk advised MDC were awaiting the spares in order to repair the playground.

22/30/C

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be Thursday 24th March 2022, 7pm

EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Note: If it is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence, it will be proposed by the Mayor that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended.

Minutes signed by The Mayor: **Date:**

Wells City Council Police Report – February 2022

In the last 28 days there have been 65 recorded crimes that have occurred within the boundaries of Wells City. These crimes have been broken down into the following categories:

- Violence against person – 28
- Public order offences – 9
- Arson and criminal damage – 7
- Theft – 7
- Sexual offences - 5
- Burglary – 3
- Vehicle offences – 3
- Fraud – 1
- Possession of weapons – 1

If we compare this to the same time period from last year there were 33 recorded crimes:

- Violence against person – 8
- Public order offences – 7
- Arson and criminal damage – 3
- Theft – 9
- Vehicle offences – 4

The increase in figures is most likely due to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, allowing more people to enter the City, travel and leave their homes. However, the figures shown above for 2022 are not considered high for a City of our population and your local policing teams continue to provide our residents with a high visible presence.

Recent occurrences

Graffiti – Police have been made aware of a recent spate in Graffiti tags showing up in all areas of the City, a suspect has recently been identified and further actions are due to take place in relation to this in the very near future. Investigation is still ongoing at this time and positive action will be taken.

Catalytic converter thefts – There have recently been a handful of reported catalytic converter thefts in the area. Wells Neighbourhood Policing Team have been a small number of catalytic converter marking kits available to us which we have been distributing out where necessary. The team are currently looking into getting further funding in order to obtain more kits.

ASB driving on the Cathedral Green – Back in December 2021 a group of young males with two vehicles drove onto the Cathedral Green which resulted in one of the vehicles causing damage to the grounds. The driver of this vehicle has since been identified and issued with a Section 59 Warning Notice and the vehicle is no longer on the road.

Upcoming events

- Wells NPT will be on shift and will be getting involved in the Queen's Jubilee Events in Wells on 5th June 2022
- Bike marking events (summer) dates to follow and will be advertised once confirmed.