

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22ND DECEMBER 2022 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the corresponding Agenda

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, T Butt Philip, S Cursley (Mayor), D Denis, S Eden, D Orrett, S Powell, T Pullin, H Siggs, I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
Town Clerk Assistant: C Woodland
WCC Staff: C Hobbs,
Mace Bearer: G Woodland
2 members of the Public
SCC Cllr: T Munt, Cllr E Hobbs

22/151/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllrs: J Browne, G Folkard, N Kennedy, T Robbins

22/152/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022
None received.

22/153/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 24TH NOVEMBER 2022
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

22/154/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Mr C Price enquired where funding of the Bus Service came from and was informed by the Town Clerk that it was self-funding.

22/155/C POLICE REPORT
Report attached.

22/156/C SOMERSET COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PRESENTATION
Mr Justin Sargent OBE, Chief Executive Officer
The Somerset Community Foundation is part of a UK network of community foundations. The core principle is to help people make a difference locally by encouraging local philanthropy which will then fund local projects and social enterprises. The Foundation holds funds donated by people within the community. In the region of two million pounds per year goes to good causes across Somerset. Any person who donates money is asked what they would like their money to be used for should they have a particular interest. Small organisations are the main recipients of the Foundation's funding. Some examples of organisations in Wells who have received donations are Wells Dementia Action Alliance, Elim Connect Centre, Wells and Mendip Astronomers, Citizens Advice, Wells Vineyard, Laurence Centre, Heads up, Active Living group, Cricket Club, City Harriers, Wells Art Contemporary, Wells Food Network, The Almshouses, Community Shed, Wells and Mendip Museum and the Skatepark. All these are important and run by local people for local people.
The Foundation also works with areas within the public sector such as Somerset County Council and the Somerset NHS. Between two and three million pounds lying dormant has been transferred existing charitable trusts to the Foundation so that the assets are not lost. The Foundation runs appeals such as Surviving Winter which is the winter fuel payment scheme. People donate their winter fuel payment to the scheme which is then distributed to people older people who are struggling with the cost of heating their homes. £200,000 has been raised this year for this. Examples of other schemes are the Covid fund as well as an

appeal to help for those affected by floods in 2013/201. Both raised £1.5 million. Another appeal running for helping with the cost of living crisis has raised £0.5 million, which is used to help charities continue to function when they are struggling with such things as increases in inflation, utility costs and the rise in demands for their services. The endowment is £8,000,000. This small by Community Foundation standards and we are looking to grow our funding and partnerships. We would like our funding to be flexible and long-term funding rather than the short-term funding and give grants that are less restrictive. Cllr E Hobbs and Cllr P Welch thanked Mr Justin Sargent for the donation from the Foundation to the local Parkrun and the charities in Wells that have benefited from funding.

22/157/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Invitation from The Mayor to join him in the Mayor's Parlour after this meeting for Christmas refreshments.

Civic Event - Bishop Bekynton Commemoration Service on Sunday 15th January 2023, 3pm, Wells Cathedral. All Councillors are invited to attend.

Mayor's Diary

- i. 13th Jan Chamberlain Street Book Launch, Wells Museum
- ii. 17th Jan Promiseworks Breakfast for local businesses, Mayor's Parlour
- iii. 28th Jan Mayor's Charity Quiz, Wells Town Hall

22/158/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2022
Cllr D Denis presented the minutes. No questions were raised

22/159/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2022
Cllr S Powell presented the minutes. Cllr D Denis requested that wording in 22/76/OSE be removed from the minutes and a discussion take place at the next Outside spaces meeting for clarity. It was documented that a flower bed was requested by Cllr D Denis. The Town Clerk agreed to remove the wording.

22/160/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2022
Cllr T Pullin presented the minutes. No questions were raised.

22/161/C ANNUAL BUDGET

Recommendations from Finance & Council Matters Committee

- i To agree the annual budget for year 2023-24
- ii To agree the precept of £1,149,307 for year 2023-24 which includes contingency of £50,000 to provide any devolved services from the unitary authority

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that a vote is required and that the precept request needs to be presented to Somerset County Council by 20th January 2023.

Cllr H Siggs suggested that efforts should be made to trim the budget rather than increase as the budget has doubled in three years. Cllr H Siggs disagreed with the £50k contingency in the budget and requested a named vote.

Cllr Powell agreed with Cllr H Siggs that savings be made and until Wells City Council has a clearer picture of what services will be given after Unitary that the budget be rejected and go back to Finance Committee.

Cllr L Agabani expressed his opinion that there is a necessity to increase reserves in the event that it may be needed to provide services that may be lost after Unitary, he suggested that a £50k extra reserve is not enough and that £100k be a more realistic figure.

Cllr D Denis agreed with Cllr L Agabani's comments of £100k reserve but accepted the £50k figure, she would rather not ask £100k from the residents at this time.

Cllr T Butt Philip expressed concerns about the increase in the Councils expenditure in recent years and we should consider in the next year what we do and what the money is spent on to see if savings can be made. Cllr Butt Philip agreed that reserves are not high enough and he will not oppose the budget.

Cllr D Denis proposed to agree the annual budget for year 2023-24 and was seconded by Cllr L Agabani.
Votes in favour Cllrs L Agabani, T Butt Philip, S Cursley (Mayor), D Denis, S Eden, T Pullin, I Von Mensenkampff and P Welch.
Votes against Cllrs S Powell and H Siggs.
One abstention, Cllr D Orrett.
The Budget for 2023/24 was passed by majority vote.

Cllr H Siggs proposed that there was no increase in the precept for year 2023-2024. Seconded by Cllr S Powell.
Votes in favour Cllrs S Powell and H Siggs.
Votes against Cllrs L Agabani, S Cursley (Mayor), D Denis, T Pullin, I Von Mensenkampff and P Welch.
Abstentions, Cllrs D Orrett, T Butt Philip and S Eden.

Cllr L Agabani proposed to agree the precept of £1,149,307 for year 2023-24 which includes contingency of £50,000 to provide any devolved services from the unitary authority. Seconded by Cllr I von Mensenkampff.
Votes in favour Cllrs L Agabani, S Cursley (Mayor), D Denis, T Pullin, I Von Mensenkampff and P Welch.
Votes against Cllrs S Powell and H Siggs.
Abstention, Cllrs D Orrett, T Butt Philip and S Eden.
The Precept for 2023/24 was passed by majority vote.

22/162/C NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

To receive the revised City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan Pre-submission Consultation

Cllr D Denis proposed that the Neighbourhood plan be accepted and the minor amendments to be corrected afterwards. The meeting voted unanimously to accept the Neighbourhood Plan as amended.

22/163/C DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN WELLS AND HOW TO RAISE AWARENESS

Cllr Isa von Mensenkampff requested that a campaign be set up to support local people who are living with Domestic violence. There are many charities who support people but often victims don't know where to access help. Cllr I von Mensenkampff has liaised with Avon and Somerset Police and numerous organisations who are supportive of the idea. 10% of children are living in an environment where domestic violence is present and this has a significant impact on their mental health.

A brief discussion took place about the worthwhile nature of this proposal. All Councillors expressed their support for the campaign Cllrs T Pullin, D Orrett and T Munt (SCC) offered to join Cllr I von Mensenkampff on the campaign.

22/164/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

i Recreation Ground Trust Management Group. The written report was received and noted. Cllr S Powell reported that a meeting will take place on 5th January 2023 with members of the public who have joined the management group.

ii Wells & Mendip Museum

The written report from Mrs Jenny Rust was noted. No comments received.

Cllr P Welch, representative of the Connect Centre, also reported that a meeting will take place on 5th January 2023 with Dr Pearce from Wells City Practice and members of the Outreach Service at the Connect Centre.

22/165/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Cllr H Siggs requested that a report be obtained from a Mendip District Council. The Town Clerk will write to the Councillors concerned and request a report at next Full Council Meeting.

22/166/C PLAY EQUIPMENT WORKS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY MDC
The Town Clerk reported that MDC will be doing work to update and replace some play equipment at Parsons Way and Bignal Rand Drive funded by S106 money.
Members approved of the work.

22/167/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT
The Town Clerk announced that Wells City Council Staff member, Alex Westwood, and his wife, Abby, had become parents.

22/168/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The next meeting of Wells City Council will be Thursday 26th January 2023, 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:**

Council finances

All local authority budgets remain under enormous strain and Somerset County Council is no exception. In November the council's projected spend for this financial year was £21.2m in excess of the budget (5.5%), the projected overspend is currently declining month on month, thanks to the work of officers and the Executive Lead Member for Finance, but the council is clearly still under enormous financial pressure. Looking towards the 2023/4 budget for the unitary authority, even after £27.8m in savings and income generation proposals are taken into account, and assuming the cost of social care reform are fully funded, there remains a budget gap of £38.2m to be addressed. The new authority's budget is due to be agreed at the 22nd February 2023 full council meeting.

Local government reorganisation

The new Somerset Council will come into existence in a little over four months' time. Work is continuing to ensure that the new authority is legal and operational by 1st April 2023 – attempting to do this in the short time remaining, coupled with ongoing financial pressure and the day-to-day business of running a local authority means the staff are under enormous pressure.

The consultation on Local Community Networks (LCNs) has now closed – thank you to Wells City Council for ensuring its submission went in. Unsurprisingly the consultation on LCNs did not give an entirely clear steer as to what the geography and functions of the new LCNs should be. A report will be brought to the Executive in January which it is anticipated will enable a decision to be made as to what LCNs will look like from April 2023.

A decision on how planning will be managed once the new unitary comes into existence is expected before the end of the year.

Council tax support

The creation of the new unitary necessitates the creation of a single council tax reduction scheme across Somerset (previously each district operated its own scheme). At its meeting this Wednesday, the full council agreed to a scheme for working-age people (discounts for those of pensionable age are dealt with by a different, nationally-set scheme) agreed to a scheme of council tax reduction which would mean those on the lowest incomes pay no-council tax at all (currently the maximum discount under the Mendip scheme is 80%).

Under the scheme of council tax discounts and premiums the Somerset Council will also offer a 100% discount on council tax to care leavers under 25 and a 50% discount to qualifying foster carers and special guardians.

Cost of living crisis

At its July meeting of the full council a decision was made to declare a cost of living emergency, subsequently a cost of living working group was set up which reported to the Executive in October. Work is ongoing to implement the recommendations of that group including initiatives to tackle food insecurity and supporting the Warm Welcome initiative.

Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt

County Councillors for Wells

24th November 2022

www.police.uk

Please visit the above website, where you can enter the post code or city where you live and will be able to find a more detailed crime report by crime type and details of your local neighbourhood team with meetings and priorities that have been set for your area.

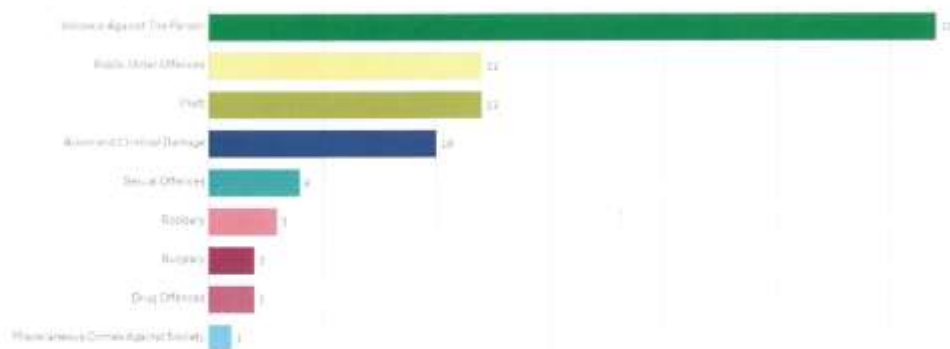
A short summary of incidents for November 2022

During the month of November, the police have received 160 calls in relation to Wells City which has resulted in 73 recorded crimes with the majority being, 31 Violence Against a Person Offences, 19 Thefts, 10 Public Order Offences and 3 Criminal Damage Offences.



Although these figures may appear higher than normal, we have seen a reduction from the same time period last year, November 2021 where police received 199 calls relating to Wells City resulting in 81 recorded crimes with the majority being, 32 Violence Against a Person Offences, 12 Thefts, 12 Public Order Offences and 10 Criminal Damage Offences.





PRIORITIES

Shoplifting and purse snatches during the Holiday period –

The Neighbourhood Team have increased patrols in areas such as the High Street and Queen Street. We continue to regularly engage with our shops, conduct floor walks and provide reassurance to our local business owners. On Saturday 17th December the team held a crime prevention stand at the Wells Christmas Market where we handed out leaflets as well as anti-purse theft bells which attach to zips/ bags in order to notify you of potential bag tampering.

Speeding –

The team conduct regular speed monitoring in areas such as Mountary Road, Portway, Chamberlain Street, Priory Road, Glastonbury Road and Bath Road. These are areas identified to us by the Wells City communities as being areas of concern. Drivers are given education and suitable words of advice and where appropriate or necessary, enforcement actions.

Organised Begging -

The Wells Neighbourhood Policing Team have arrested two organised beggars that regularly frequent our city streets in the month of November. On arrest, one individual had over £220 in notes and coins as well as a quantity of food. The Team continues to engage with those who are in genuine need of food and support and signpost to local charities each time someone is spoken to.



GOOD NEWS

OP TONIC – On the 13th December, PC Darren Pearson took charge of an anti-drink/drug drive campaign involving officers from Wells, Street and Glastonbury whereby drivers are stopped and spoken to about the dangers of driving whilst under the influence and where appropriate, a breath test is conducted. The Team are happy to report that over 100 vehicles were stopped, and no further action was needed against anyone spoken to or breathalysed.

PARKING BUDDIES – After increased interest from Wells residents and the Council members towards our 'Parking Buddies', PC Dan Williams has been able to secure funding from the High Sheriff of Somerset for 3 more buddies. These buddies will be solely for the people of Wells and will be utilised outside schools, in congested streets and on busy roads in order to provide visibility, reassurance and more importantly, safety to our communities.

VICTIMS OF FRAUD – PCSO Donna President attended the homes of Wells residents who had fallen victim to a scam in the US. Alongside a representative from Trading Standards, the victims were reimbursed over £900.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS FROM LAST COUNCIL MEETING

Councillor Von MensenKampff asked about the levels of recorded violence within the Wells City statistics. As seen in the two charts above, we have seen a reduction in the same month, 1 year on. Broken down into their categories, the 31 'Violence Against Person' reads as 13 Assault without injury, 7 Harassment, 4 Assault with injury, 3 Malicious Communications, 1 Assault injury on Emergency Worker, 1 neglect of child, 1 threats to kill and 1 Violence with injury to a Constable. Compared to November 2021 where we see 13 Assaults with injury, 11 Assault without injury, 4 Stalking, 3 Harassment and 1 Murder.

Tessa Munt asked about parking offences around St Cuthbert School. As seen above, we have been able to secure funding for an additional 3 parking buddies which will remain in Wells, used by the Neighbourhood Team for the people of Wells. These will play a significant role in educating parents when driving to and from the school. Any apparent offences will be dealt with appropriately by officers when in attendance.

Edric Hobbs asked about tackling drink and drug drivers during the holiday period with a campaign similar to the one in Bridgwater. As seen above, the Wells Neighbourhood Policing Team have taken part in our forcewide operation OP TONIC – An anti drink/ drug drive campaign. The team stopped over 100 vehicles and fortunately no further action was needed against anyone spoken to or breathalysed. These targeted operations continue to happen in our area by ourselves and other departments such as Traffic.



The Team apologise for not being able to attend on this occasion but welcome any questions from the Councilors. We will endeavour to answer these in the new year.

Please make sure all questions raised are sent to the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

The police service is only as good as the relationship it has with the public. For our part we must work to build on trust and confidence by working to the highest standards and responding effectively to your needs.

I ask you to engage with your local team to let them know of any information or concerns you may have about crime or antisocial behaviour.

If this is an emergency, please use the 999 system, for reporting non-emergency incidents and crimes this can be done via 101 or online is also an effective method of keeping us informed at: www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report

We are here to serve you, so whatever you need from us, please get in touch!

