

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26th JANUARY 2023 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
Town Clerk Assistant: C Woodland
WCC Staff: C Hobbs,
Mace Bearer: C Price
8 members of the Public
Press: A Vallis

23/01/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: J Browne, N Kennedy
SCC Cllr T Munt

23/02/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022
None received.

23/03/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 22nd DECEMBER 2022

Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

23/04/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

David Regwell (Representative of the Somerset Bus Users Advisory Board) urged Wells City Council to contact MP James Heapey and other Somerset MPs to request that when the Covid 19 recovery grant comes to an end that investment in services continue. Investment is needed in the upgrading of bus stations and there is a need for North Somerset County Council to be involved so that a service to Weston super Mare can continue past Axbridge. He informed the meeting that timetables will be updated and in place in the Spring.

Chris Simmons (member of public) spoke to Councillors about A boards cluttering up the pavements particularly in Union Street and asked if the Market Place is supposed to be a traffic free zone, why at the time of the meeting was it full of parked cars

Rosa Kell (member of public) spoke about her wish for having Real Time information for the buses as well as upgrading of the infrastructure.

Beverley Anderson (member of public) spoke about concerns in the loss of the 126 bus service as young people can no longer get to Weston-super-Mare College.

23/05/C POLICE REPORT

PCSO Kayleigh Barrett presented the Police report (attached)

- In December 166 calls were received in relation to Wells City. There were 68 recorded crimes from those calls. Crime figures have reduced since the same time last year.
- Increased patrols in December to manage pick-pocketing and shoplifting. There has been a decrease in incidents. Crime prevention events took place.
- Anti-social behaviour in the Cathedral has been dealt with and youths from the Blue School were identified via CCTV and have been issued anti-social behaviour letters.
- Speed monitoring is taking place and speeding drivers are spoken to and/or prosecuted.

- Organised begging has decreased after two arrests in November. People in genuine need are supported and signposted to where they can get help.
- Three positive warrants were executed in December. These were issued by the Courts for failure to attend.
- Numerous public engagement events take place such as “Mini Police” which is a force wide programme to help children understand charity work and engage with Police in a positive way. “Cuppa with a Copper” and Surgeries are similar schemes.
- An abandoned car was removed from Ash Lane via the DVLA reporting system. The car was reported via the Community Facebook page. PCSO Kayleigh advised that it is more effective to report directly to Police rather than through social media.

Cllr T Robbins asked about alcohol related crime statistics in relation to Public Order or Violence against the person crimes. PCSO Sam White says that each crime would have to be looked at individually due to the way crime is recorded.

Cllr S Eden asked about violent crime statistics which were specifically recorded as domestic violence. Details are required by the recently created Domestic Violence sub- committee. PCSO Kayleigh Barrett said that she would get these figures to Cllr S Eden.

Cllr G Robbins mentioned that she had had complaints from residents who had been exposed to unpleasant interactions with anti vacs protesters in Market Street. Cllr G Robbins had experienced it herself. PCSO Kayleigh Barrett suggested that the Neighbourhood team be contacted when these events occur.

Cllr T Pullin requested contact details for the Officer at Avon and Somerset Police who works in relation to abuse to women. PCSO Sam White assured Cllr T Pullin that he will pass that information to her.

23/06/C

FIRST BUS PRESENTATION

Doug Claringbold (MD of First Bus, Wales & West) and Tom Hughes (Operations Manager)

i. Issues facing bus services in and out of Wells

Doug Claringbold gave a brief explanation of the Wells Bus Service and that 22 buses go out of the depot. The 172 and 173 services go to Bristol and Bath. More than 60 people are employed in Wells. All services are commercially operated and that First Bus in Wells is not supported by Local Transport Authority except some evening services on the 172.

The challenges facing services of First Bus in Wells and nationwide services are due to removal of funding which ceases at the end of March 2023. There is reduced patronage after covid-19 with concessionary pass users not returning as before. Labour and fuel costs are up and a shortage of drivers. The latter occurred as bus drivers who held an HGV licence were encouraged to return to driving lorries as there were driver shortages. Recruitment is underway in the West, 60 new drivers have started work. First Bus has a pledge that by 2035 all our buses will be zero carbon run buses.

Doug Claringbold apologised for poor services in the autumn and more recently and acknowledged that it was not good enough but that staff sickness had been an issue.

ii. Measures being taken to mitigate the impact of bus services affected

Recruitment of drivers continues. There is optimism about this area but patronage needs to continue to increase. Momentum is needed and any encouragement from Councillors to increase bus use is invaluable.

Cllr T Butt Philip asked what is being done to encourage patronage. Doug Claringbold spoke of a general price reduction as well as the £2 fare scheme. Cllr T Butt Philip asked why no one from First Bus had responded to his email enquiries about the threats to the loss of services, such as the 173 & 176. Doug Claringbold apologised for his failure to respond. Cllr T Butt Philip asked why doesn't the bus service provide more direct routes to places such as Taunton, the County Town? Doug Claringbold said that direct services are difficult to create without LTA support as existing services are struggling.

Cllr D Denis asked that timetables be kept up to date and replaced when necessary and that improvements are made to broken infrastructure such as timetable cases, bus stops and dirty buses.

Doug Claringbold agreed with all points that were made. The cleaning contract is under review and perhaps as a business they need to be proactive in getting the repairs completed.

Cllr H Siggs asked how the City Council can support First Bus in continuing and asked about the actual cost to provide Real Time information, in case there is the potential for finding the money once the details have been made available.

Doug Claringbold will provide that information to Cllr H Siggs.

Cllr P Welch asked how many staff are needed in Wells and was told that another 15 drivers are needed, some drivers are brought in from elsewhere in the short term. Two were recruited last week and training is underway as well as an active recruitment scheme.

Cllr D Orrett mentioned that the scanners on buses seem to be failing and asked does this then give an inaccurate number of bus passenger usage.

Tom Hughes responded that they were aware of scanner issues but that the drivers manually add the passenger numbers so that the data is accurate.

Cllr E Hobbs (SCC for Mendip Hills) asked in a particular instance, why two double decker buses go to one place when one might be taken away and serve elsewhere. Cllr E Hobbs also asked if there was the potential for some rural buses to take bicycles so that passengers can continue their journey by bicycle where the bus service doesn't reach. There is a scheme in East Yorkshire which provided this service.

Doug Claringbold explained that two double deckers are required as they need to have the capacity once they reach Bath to accommodate greater passenger numbers and that in his experience there is not a potential for putting bicycles on buses due to time they take to load, but that bicycle racks at stops might be possible. Cllr E Hobbs refuted this saying that a bicycle would take the same time as a pushchair or wheelchair to load on to a bus. Doug Claringbold agreed to look at the scheme in East Yorkshire to gain information.

23/07/C

PRESENTATION BY SIOBHAN GOODWIN, BISHOP'S PALACE

Siobhan Goodwin, Community engagement Manager explained that the Bishop's Palace is a Charity. The Palace Trust aims to conserve and share the Palace and its story as a place of enjoyment and reflection for the enjoyment of all. Siobhan listed some of the attractions at the Bishop's Palace such as the Gallery where the Queen's Diamond Jubilee exhibition was held. The Bishop's Palace works with Wells in Bloom, Duke of Edinburgh students and students doing work experience. Apprentices have come through as part of the Kick-start scheme.

There are plans for an aural history project in collaboration with the Museum and the Cathedral, gathering memories of past employees or of past events. There is a project underway, working with Exeter University and the outdoor spaces team in relation to people with cognitive impairment. Local groups will be contacted so that they can benefit. Concessions are given to local organisations such as local Food bank users, pupils from local schools and people of the diocese.

Following a question from Cllr D Orrett, a brief discussion took place about the pricing structure for tourists who don't require an annual pass. Siobhan Goddard explained that sadly it's not possible to please everybody and the annual pass does benefit local people.

23/08/C

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Parish Meeting

Civic Event

Legal Service, Wells Cathedral, Sunday 19th March, 3pm.

All councillors are invited to attend, more details to follow.

Mayor's Diary

- i. 28th Jan Mayor's Charity Quiz, Wells Town Hall
- ii. 2nd Feb Retirement of the Dean, Wells Cathedral
- iii. 10th Feb Les Misérables Performance, Wells Blue School
- iv. 16th Feb Ambassadors Meeting, Mayor's Parlour
- v. 17th Feb SCC Chair award, Taunton Rugby Club
- vi. 8th March, Annual Parish Meeting, 7pm, Well Town Hall **Cllrs to note**

23/09/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on:

- i. 4th January 2023, under delegated authority
- ii. 19th January 2023

No questions received

23/10/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2023

- i [Financial Regulations](#), as approved at the last Finance meeting, to be Adopted.
- ii [Standing Orders](#), as approved at the last Finance meeting, to be Adopted.

Cllr T Robbins proposed that the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders be adopted. Seconded by Cllr D Denis. The vote was carried unanimously.

23/11/C STAFFING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2023

No questions received

23/12/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- i. Sustainable Wells update from Cllr D Denis - No questions received
- ii. Wells and Mendip Museum report from Mrs J Rust - No questions received
- iii. The Elim Connect Centre report from Cllr P Welch - No questions received

23/13/C REPORT FOLLOWING LAST COUNCILLORS SURGERY ON 16TH JANUARY

Councillors in attendance: Cllrs: D Denis, P Welch

Cllr P Welch would like Wells City Council to write to HSBC bank to express concerns about the closure of the Wells branch. Cllr G Folkard suggested that all banks with premises in the City also be written to asking their intentions for the future.

23/14/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Report received from Cllr T Munt via email.

A brief discussion took place about a wish for a Mendip District Councillor to attend and the disappointment in a lack of representation. Cllr S Cursley will write to Mendip District Council again and request a Mendip Councillor attends the next Wells City Council meeting

Cllr P Welch asked Cllr T Butt Philip about changes to Local Community Networks (LCNs) / Area boards when Unitary Authority begins and has a budget been set for the LCNs? Cllr T Butt Philip explained that the change is to enable greater flexibility in voting membership. The budget has been set at £300,000 in reserves and work is underway to identify, within existing District Council budgets which might be repurposed.

23/15/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT.

None received

23/16/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 23rd February 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

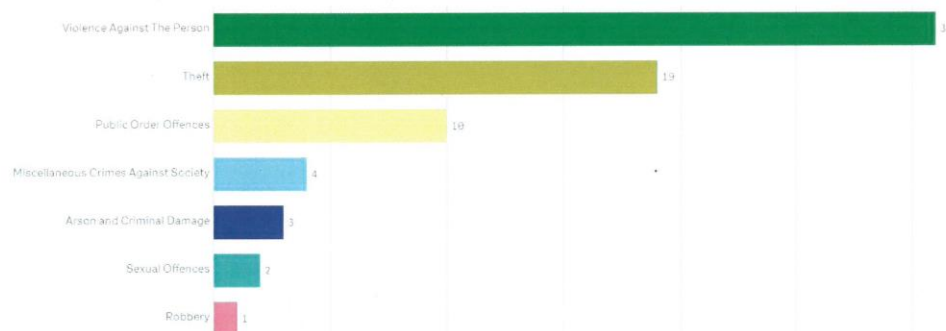
24th November 2022

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.

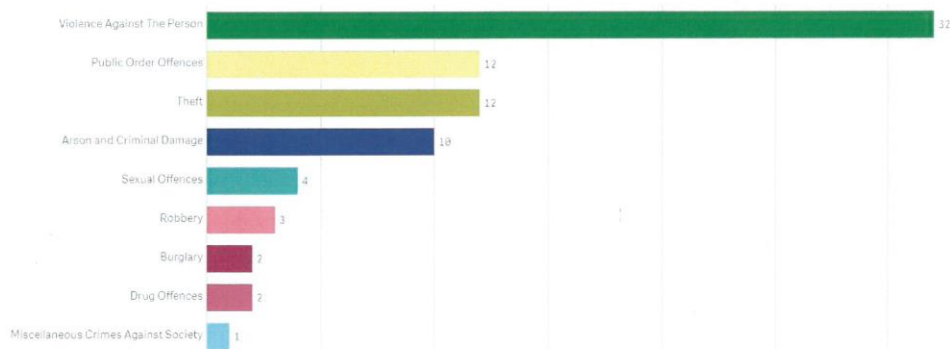
A short summary of incidents for November 2022

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!

