

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2023 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk Assistant: C Woodland
WCC Staff: C Hobbs, K Westwood
Mace Bearer: G Woodland
4 members of the Public
Somerset County Cllrs T Munt, E Hobbs

23/17/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllrs: N Kennedy, D Orrett, S Powell, H Siggs
Town Clerk: S Luck

23/18/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022
Cllr T Robbins declared an interest in item 23/30/C BRITANNIA INN

23/19/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 26th JANUARY 2022
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

23/20/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
No members of the public wished to speak.

23/21/C POLICE REPORT
PCSO S White gave a brief report (attached to agenda) reassuring the meeting that work is ongoing regarding shoplifting, anti-social behaviour, speeding. There is a reduction in organised begging. A man in his 20s has been arrested on suspicion of sexual assault and is on police bail after an incident on Glastonbury Road on 30th January 2023. Cuppa with a Copper at the Blue School and other community engagement events are taking place. New Supervisor Beatrice Gane has started a 12 month Secondment. Events will take place at Wells Market and Library and Portway Annexe.

Questions raised at Full Council meeting held on 26th January 2023 were answered.

- i. Cllr T Robbins asked about violence against the person crime numbers relating to alcohol and was informed that 15 crimes in January 2023 within Wells were violence against the person and 3 of those were alcohol related. 2 were in a domestic setting and 1 a public premises.
- ii. Cllr T Pullin asked about figures for emotional abuse within domestic violence. In January 2023 there were 6 recorded domestic violence incidents. 4 were violence against the person, 1 sexual offence and 1 public order offence. Coercive behaviour data cannot be extracted from statistics without going into each crime individually. PCSO Sam White informed the meeting that a colleague has been awarded a bravery award for surviving Domestic violence and is happy to be contacted to work with the Domestic violence sub-committee.
- iii. Cllr D Denis asked two questions. 1. Age limits when recording crime. 2. How to help people who are begging if they don't want to engage. PCSO S White explained that age of criminal responsibility is 10 upwards. People begging are signposted to organisations such as Street-link but that some people don't want to engage.

Cllr E Hobbs asked that there be attendance by Police on Market days in Wells when there appears to be an increase in people begging. PCSO S White said he would feed that back.

23/22/C

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SOMERSET PRESENTATION

Stewart Crocker (Chair of Wells Food Network) soon to be renamed Sustainable Food Somerset. Stewart thanks Wells City Council for supporting the Food Trail in 2022 and explained that the Food trail began 6 years ago. It was started to challenge issues with food waste, farming, over processed food and public health. The aim is to improve farming methods, increase demand in sustainably grown food, bio diversity and community cohesion. There are 19 enterprises in and around Wells involved. Ambition is to run the Food Trail again and celebrate great food and drink and their production. We attracted £35000 in funding in 2022 towards our costs. £5000 from Wells City Council. Two thirds from Local Authorities and a third from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) WWF are not able to fund in 2023. We are inviting enterprises to apply to be part of the food trail and lay on a 30 mile feast, all sourced with food within that distance. 40 applicants have come forward so far and hope to double that number. We are volunteer led. S Briton coordinated the Wells Cluster in 2022 and we are looking someone to co ordinate the event in 2023.

We are nurturing relationships with people who already embrace the ethos of sustainable food. A conference is planned, hopefully in February 2024 to increase understanding, connections and the demand for nature friendly farming in the hope that sustainable food will become the norm. The Unitary authority is supporting us with creating the Conference along with the Wildlife Trust.

Cllr G Robbins offered support to Sustainable Food Somerset, Cllr T Pullin praised the initiative and D Denis offered her support and hoped Wells City Council supported the Food Trail in 2023.

Cllr J Browne praised the Food Trail of 2022 and reported that the event had attracted tourists

Cllr G Folkard asked about the affordability of sustainable food. Stewart Crocker reported that the initiative "Nifty and thrifty," run by S Briton was run to explain that food can be produced easily and cheaply by reducing waste.

23/23/C

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday 8th March, 7pm, Wells Town Hall.

Civic Event

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

King's Coronation Celebration Day Sunday 7th May, planned celebrations for the City (attached)

Mayor's Diary

- i. 1st March, Grand Organ Appeal, Wells Cathedral
- ii. 8th March, Annual Parish Meeting, 7pm, Well Town Hall Cllrs to note
- iii. 9th March, Social Reception for Civic Staff, Mayor's Parlour
- iv. 12th March, Countrywide Service of Thanksgiving, Wells Cathedral
- v. 13th March, Twinning AGM, Deputy Mayor attending, Wells Town Hall
- vi. 13th March, Youth Concert, St Cuthbert's Church
- vii. 19th March, Legal Service, 3pm, Wells Cathedral Cllrs to note
- viii. 23rd March, Symphony Orchestra Concert, Deputy Mayor attending, Wells Cathedral

23/24/C

NOMINATION OF MAYOR-ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR-ELECT

Cllr T Robbins nominated Cllr T Pullin to be elected as Mayor at Mayor making on the 25th May 2023. Seconded by Cllr J Browne. The vote was carried unanimously.

Cllr T Butt Philip nominated Cllr J Browne to be elected as Deputy Mayor. Seconded by Isa Von Mensenkampff. The vote was carried unanimously.

- 23/25/C** **OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE**
To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February
No questions received
- 23/26/C** **FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE**
To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 9th February 2023
Cllr D Denis asked a question regard item 23/16/FCM VAT REGISTRATION and will Full Council be informed of the VAT outcome. Cllr S Cursley reported that the Finance committee and Full Council will be informed of the outcome
- 23/27/C** **GOVERNANCE REVIEW**
To adopt policies approved by the Finance Committee.
i Scheme of Delegation
ii Asset Register
iii Council Risk Assessment
Cllr T Pullin proposed that the above policies were adopted. Seconded by Cllr T Robbins.
The vote was carried unanimously.
- 23/28/C** **PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**
To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 16th February (to follow)
Cllr D Denis reported that item 10 (The Old Deanery) on the agenda had been discussed at Mendip District Council Planning board and that the application had been approved.
The Neighbourhood Plan's Basic Condition Statement needs to go before Full Council meeting for approval before being presented to Mendip District Council along with slight amendments to the public consultation document.
- 23/29/C** **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROJECT**
Cllr Von Mensenkampff asked for assistance from fellow Councillors regarding spaces to display posters. Cllr P Welch offered support with publicity of the project.
- 23/30/C** **BRITANNIA INN**
To approve the application to place the former public house on the Register of Community Assets with MDC, Cllr Butt Philip
Cllr T Butt Philip proposed that the Britannia be added to the Register of Community Assets with MDC. Seconded by Cllr P Welch. The vote was carried unanimously.
- 23/31/C** **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**
Cllr D Denis reported that a Climate Change Survey has been uploaded to the Wells City Council website and asked that in the next week it be filled in to test out potential glitches.
- 23/32/C** **REPORT FOLLOWING LAST COUNCILLORS SURGERY ON 13TH FEBRUARY**
Councillor in attendance: Cllr D Orrett was not present at the meeting. The written report was attached to the agenda.
- 23/33/C** **TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS**
Cllr T Butt Philip reported that as the Meeting of Somerset County Council Meeting had taken place the day before this Full Council meeting that the written report will be provided at a later date.
Cllr P Welch started a brief discussion about the Planning Committee process and Local Community Networks after the commencement of the Unitary Authority. The discussion continued about the possibility of power being delegated to Parish Councils with regard to the planning process. Cllr T Butt Philip suggested that delegation is unlikely but changes may occur in the future.

Cllr S Cursley asked about recruitment at Somerset County Council and whether appointments had been made from Mendip District Council. Cllr T Munt reported that Tier 1 and Tier 2 appointments (Directors of Service) had been made. Tier 3 appointments are ongoing.

Cllr S Cursley asked about the progress for changing of assets and which assets are likely to be allocated to Wells City Council. Cllr T Munt said that work was ongoing and that it is a challenging process.

23/34/C

ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr D Denis requested that a Strategy day Discussion Proposal be added to the next Full City Council Meeting. Cllr T Butt Philip was in agreement.

Cllr D Denis informed fellow Councillors of the Charity Walk for Dementia Action Alliance

Cllr T Butt Philip informed that the Wells Transatlantic Slavery Conference is taking place on 16th March 2023

Cllr P Welch reported that there will be a minute's silence at 11am on 24th February 2023 to mark a year passing of the war in Ukraine. The Ukrainian flag will be flown at the Town Hall.

23/35/C

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

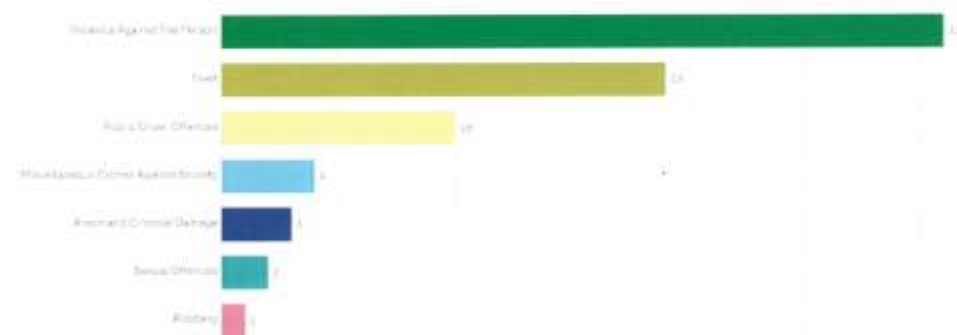
24th November 2022

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.

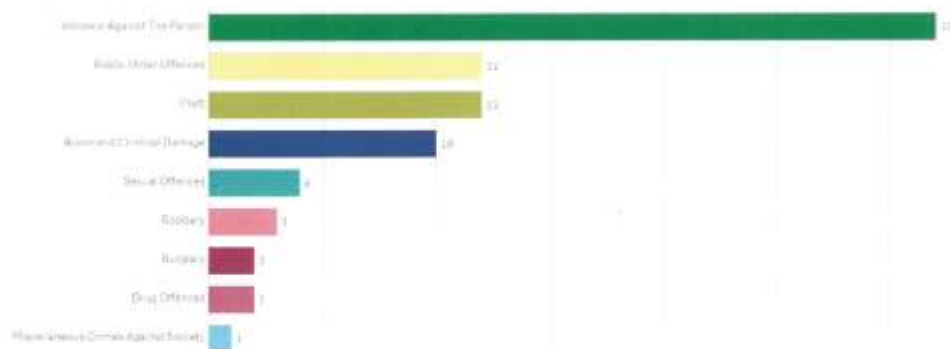
A short summary of incidents for November 2022

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

Councilor 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!

