

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 27TH APRIL 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, 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: G Woodland
Somerset Councillor: T Munt
5 members of the Public

23/53/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllrs: N Kennedy

23/54/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022
None received.

23/55/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 23RD MARCH 2023
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

23/56/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Emma King from Save Somerset's Community Services Group, spoke to the meeting about her concerns for the closure of St Andrew's ward in Wells which is due in November 2023, after which it will be relocated to Yeovil. This decision has been made by the NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB). Emma King explained that the concerns are that public transport links are poor and that with the increase in demand for Mental Health services, due to Covid and the Cost of living crisis, that once the service has been lost, it's lost. Emma King asked that all Councillors individually to the ICB, MP James Heapey and to the ICB. Councillor Heather Shearer has set up a working group in order to campaign against the closure. There is a petition which includes a QR code and contact details of the ICB and MP. The petition currently has 4400 signatures on it. All Councillors pledged to write to the ICB to show support for the retention of St Andrew's ward in Wells.

23/57/C POLICE REPORT
No representative was present from Wells Neighbourhood Police Team, but a written report was provided (attached, page 5).

23/58/C WELLS UKRAINIAN HUB PRESENTATION
Anna Tumanova, Manager of the Welcome Hub at the Portway Annexe reported that there are six Welcome Hubs across Somerset. And that Wells Community Network approached Wells City Council to ask that it be set up in order to help Ukrainian families living in and near Wells. The Welcome Hub is a welcoming and safe place for guests to visit. Some of the services provided are

- Mental health support (with Ukrainian therapist)
- A variety of Classes (DBS checked Teachers)
- Preparing for employment
- Support in budgeting, clarifying UK financial banking process, payslips, Council tax etc
- Support of the Sponsors and host families

- Signposting visitors to other services

In February 2023 there were 149 visitors to Wells Welcome Hub, from 5 different nationalities and services continue to improve.

Anna Tumanova thanked Cllr S Cursley (Mayor) for his support and presented him with a carved wooden Mace.

23/59/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor's Diary

- i 7th May – Celebration of King's Coronation, Wells Cathedral 10:30am
- ii 7th May - King's Coronation Celebration Day, Cathedral Green 12 – 6pm
- iii 8th May – The Big Help Out, Litter Pick organised by Cllr Orrett
- iv 10th May – Axbridge Mayor Making, Deputy Mayor attending
- v 11th May – Meeting with Cllr Laura Wolfers, Chair of Street Parish Council
- vi 14th May – Mendip Vintage & Classic Tour, Cathedral Green
- vii 20th May – Mayor Making
- viii 25th May – Wells u3a 30th Anniversary Celebration, Wells Town Hall, Deputy Mayor attending

The Mayor invited all councillors and staff present to join him in the Mayor's Parlour after this meeting to mark the end of his mayoral term.

23/60/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2023

No questions received.

Cllr S Powell reported that there is an Open Day at the Bishop's Barn on the 20th May 2023.

23/61/C STAFFING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2023

No questions received.

23/62/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2023

No questions received.

23/63/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2023

No questions received.

Cllr D Denis reported that an Application for development of the "Armchair Field" at Wookey Hole (Parish of St Cuthbert's Out) had gone to appeal and asked that Wells City Council also write to the Planning Department with its objections.

23/64/C WCC PLAN

Proposals from Cllr D Denis for Workshops for Councillors to Develop a Vision and Objectives for Wells City Council

i Proposal 1- The proposal is to have 3 workshops approximately 2-2.5 hours long, in May, June and July so that there will be a set of guiding principles from September 2023.

ii Proposal 2- The first workshop date is proposed to be Wednesday 10 May.

iii Proposal 3- The 1st workshop comprises of Councillors, Chaired by the Mayor. The 2nd and 3rd Workshop will comprise of councillors and town Clerk and other officers.

iv Proposal 4- The workshops will break out into smaller cross-party groups with one spokesperson to feedback.

All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal

23/65/C WELLS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr D Denis reported that the Wells neighbourhood Plan had been accepted by Somerset Council. There will now be a 6 week public consultation process. Cllr D Denis thanked A l'Anson for all his continuing hard work.

23/66/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES (see reports attached to previous Agenda)

i. Museum report from Jenny Rust

Cllr S Cursley expressed gratitude to J Rust for working so hard and reported that J Rust was standing down as Trustee at the museum.

ii. Wells Environment Network Day from Cllr D Denis

Work is in progress in organising the Network day. Cllr D Denis asked Councillors to get involved and/or attend to show support.

iii. Somerset Bus Partnership Report from Cllr D Denis

Cllr D Denis reported that electric charging points are planned for the Bus Station and that there may be the potential for First Bus to use electric vehicles in future.

A brief discussion took place about the size of vehicles that are appropriate for electrification and which routes might be appropriate.

An Officer from Somerset Council has been approached again about Wells Bus Station receiving a deep clean of the Bus Shelters.

23/67/C REPORT FOLLOWING LAST COUNCILLORS SURGERY ON 17TH APRIL

Councillors in attendance: Cllrs S Powell and T Robbins

i. Query was about the state of St Andrews Stream running alongside Silver Street – Cllr Robbins is making enquiries.

ii. Buskers with amplifiers and protestors on the Cathedral Green.

Cllr S Powell requested that the Buskers charter be made more prominent on the WCC website. Work with police to check on buskers' activities and assessing whether their busking consists of a nuisance.

Cllr S Powell reported that there had been a complaint that the area where the post-box is near the Bishops Eye needs cleaning up and that this was being looked into.

iii. The implementation of a 20 mph limit on Milton Lane along with a traffic calming scheme
A brief discussion took place about the process for changing speed limits. Cllr T Butt Philip reported that a meeting had taken place and that the details would be sent to Cllr T Munt (SC), Mike Rigby (Highways and Digital SC)

A brief discussion took place regarding Advice Clinics planned for 15th May and 12th June.

Cllr I Von Mensenkampff put her name forward for the 15th May, Cllrs: D Denis, P Welch put their names forward for the meeting of 12th June 2023

23/68/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS FOR WELLS (Received and emailed to Councillors on 27th April. Attached, page 8.)

23/69/C UPDATED CALENDAR OF MEETINGS AND ENGAGEMENTS

The Councillor Advice Clinics are now included on the Calendar of meetings

23/70/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr H Siggs gave a vote of thanks on behalf of the Council and expressed his appreciation for Cllr S Cursley (Mayor) and J Cursley (Mayoress) for their hard work and commitment during the past year of Mayoral duties.

23/71/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 25th May 2023, 7pm**

The Meeting entered a closed session proposed by Cllr H Siggs, seconded and agreed.

Members of the public, Wells City Council Staff left the meeting.

Cllr Agabani left the meeting.

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.

23/72/C

The Town Clerk presented details of a confidential property matter. Members discussed a written offer to buy a vacant council property and it was unanimously agreed to refuse the offer. The Town Clerk working with the independent property agent was given authority to continue to negotiate with interested parties to lease the building. The best offer received will be presented to the Finance committee to consider and agree before proceeding.

The Meeting was closed.

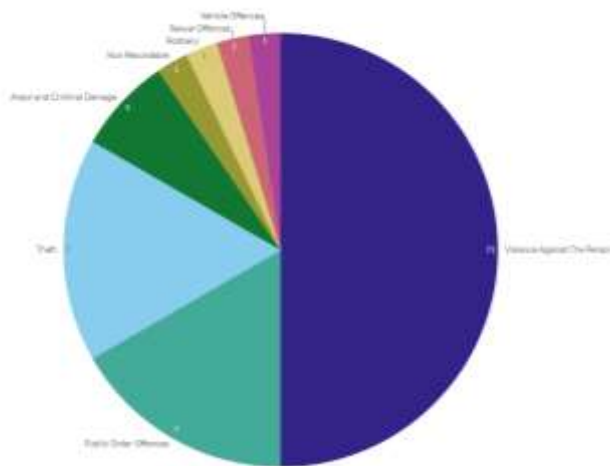
Minutes signed by The Mayor: **Date:**

www.police.uk

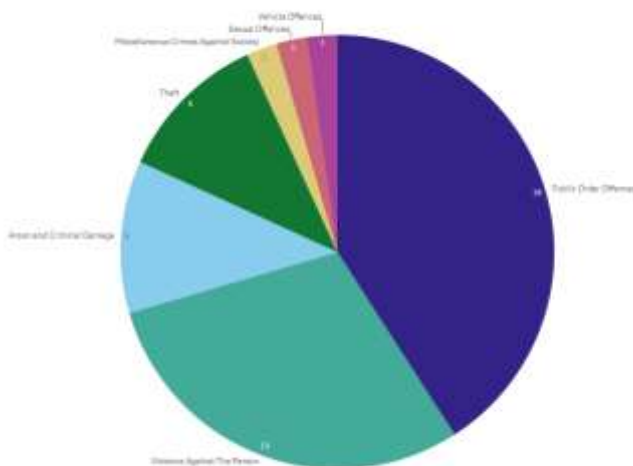
Please visit the above website, where you can enter the post code or city where you live and will be able to find a more detailed crime report by crime type and details of your local neighbourhood team with meetings and priorities that have been set for your area.

A short summary of incidents for MARCH 2023

During the month of March, the police have received 152 calls in relation to Wells City which has resulted in 42 recorded crimes with the majority being 21 Violence Against The Person Offences, 7 Public Order Offences, 7 Theft.



We have seen a reduction from the same time period last year, March 2022 where police received 161 calls relating to Wells City resulting in 44 recorded crimes with the majority being, 18 Public Order Offences , 13 Violence Against a Person Offences, 5 Criminal Damage Offences, and 5 Thefts.



PRIORITIES

Anti-Social Behaviour

Local businesses and residents have spoken to Neighbourhood officers about their concerns over perceived increase in occurrences of Anti-Social behaviour (ASB), including drunkenness homelessness and gathering of youths in the Cathedral Green, Market Place, and High Street area of Wells, and in the vicinity of our several supermarkets. Our response to this is to set up a management occurrence in order to gather intel and information, allowing us to tailor our patrol plans effectively, allowing us to proactively engage with residents, businesses, and tourists in our city.

Safer, stronger communities are enhanced by positive relations with neighbourhood police. We will continue to patrol these locations and deal positively while supporting individuals in need with any of these incidents.

Speeding

Speeding continues to be a priority for Wells NPT. Local officers are regularly conducting high visibility speeding checks throughout Wells City with the aim to deter such behaviour and educate drivers. Wells NPT officers are posting small slips to say you might of missed us through households in locations speeding checks are being conducted to reassure residents that local officers are out tackling this issue.

Local speed watch groups are now also able to operate and will be conducting regular speeding checks in their local areas. Avon and Somerset Police are then informed where local officers will make contact with the offender for educational purposes. To find out how you can get involved, please contact your local NPT to learn more about Speed watch in your area.

Organised Begging

The Wells Neighbourhood Policing Team continue to engage with beggars in the Wells area and in the first instance safeguard them by directing them towards places of support including the Connect Centre and the Mendip Outreach Team. We have seen a small handful of beggars re-enter the city that are known to police and have previous for organised begging within Avon and Somerset. We work closely with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team in order to protect our citizens from these individuals. Any person who is seen to be begging will be reported to the Anti-social behaviour team where repeat offenders will be dealt with via professional channels which can include being reported for summons at court.

GOOD NEWS

THE YOUTH OF WELLS – PCSO Donna President and PCSO Leann Chinnock are underway with the next intake of Mini police with local schools. Mini Police is a 9-week programme which is part of the national volunteer police cadets aimed at children aged 8 – 11. It is a fun and interactive way to introduce children to a positive experience of policing and getting them involved within the local community.

CANNABIS FACTORY – Due to concerns about an address, Neighbourhood Officers Dan Williams and Darren Pearson attended an address located on the high street, where a cannabis factory was located. A scene was then put on while officers seized the plants and equipment.

Cuppa with a Coppa – Neighbourhood officers Dan Williams, Darren Pearson and PCSO Coral Forde attended the blue school to engage with students whilst handing out hot chocolates. This happens once a month and allows students to have a positive input from their neighbourhood team, increasing positive public relations.

Come Meet us @ Wells marketplace: In order to remain visible to our community, Wells NPT will now have a table at the Market place every other Wednesday and Saturday (where operationally possible). This will allow member so the community to seek support advice and guidance if needed. Some tables will be themed to raise awareness of subjects of public interest.

UPCOMING EVENTS

20th May – Bike marking @ Halfords

24th May – Come meet us @ Wells Market Place

QUESTIONS

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

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

Somerset Councillors' report to Wells City Council – April 2023

Council Finances

The new financial year has started and Somerset Council is now working with the budget passed in February. The financial situation for all local authorities, especially those with responsibility for social care, remains extremely challenging.

The new Council's policy of paying 100% of city, town and parish council's precepts early in the financial year has now been implemented for the first time – this should now have been paid to the City Council.

Local Government Reorganisation

Somerset Council came into being on 1st April.

Contacting Somerset Council

The Council's new website can be found at the same address: www.somerset.gov.uk

The new phone number for Somerset Council is: **0300 123 2224**, there's also a general enquiries email address: generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk

Staff continue to work from all the former district and county council offices across Somerset, including Shape Mendip.

The Council is also maintaining and expanding a network of Customer Service Points and Customer Access Points throughout the county.

Customer Service Points will be staffed by dedicated members of Somerset Council's Customer Service team for set hours on set days. Our nearest Customer Service Point is here in Wells, at the **Town Hall** every **Wednesday** and **Friday 10am-1pm, 2pm-4.30pm**. There are also Customer Service Points in Shepton, Glastonbury and Street.

Customer Access Points will provide digital access to Somerset Council's services and meetings – members of the public will be assisted where necessary to access these services by the existing staff in those locations. Our nearest Customer Access Points are in Cheddar, Langport and Wincanton.

Local Community Networks

As previously reported, the first meeting of each LCN will take place between June and August. We would therefore expect to have the date for the first meeting of the LCN covering Wells next month.

Somerset Council's website contains a section dedicated to LCNs which can be found here:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/local-community-networks/>

Given the first meeting of our LCN may be as soon as 8th June, the City Council should consider selecting its representative to the LCN at the AGM on 25th May.

Staffing

Appointment of tier 3 staff (Service Directors) has almost been completed. Excluding the Public Health, Adults and, Children, Families & Education Directorates (which continue largely as they did under SCC – although the Service Director for Children's Services has yet to be recruited) 13 Service Directors have been appointed, with one remaining vacancy (Service Director for Strategy & Performance) still to be recruited. The 13 appointed so far come from:

- Somerset County Council: 6
- Mendip District Council: 3
- Sedgemoor District Council: 1
- Somerset West and Taunton Council: 1
- South Somerset District Council: 2

Former Mendip District Council staff appointed as Service Directors are:

- Service Director for Partnerships and Localities: Sara Skirton – former Head of Corporate Services at Mendip District Council. Part of Sara Skirton's job will include overseeing the implementation of LCNs.

- Service Director for Governance, Democratic and Legal Services: David Clark – former Head of Legal & Governance Services and Monitoring Officer at Mendip District Council. David Clark will take over as Monitoring Officer after the Somerset Council AGM.
- Service Director for Culture: Liz Dawson – former Head of Service for Special and Strategic Programmes at Mendip District Council

Climate Emergency Newsletter

Following on from the work done by the district councils before April, Somerset Council has now launched a new Climate Newsletter as part of its Climate and Ecological Emergency work. Anyone can sign up for the monthly newsletter at: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-food-safety/climate-and-ecological-emergency/newsletter-sign-up/>

Buses

Somerset Council now owns Wells Bus and Coach Station and we hope there will be opportunities to improve the maintenance of the site in the near future.

Problems with out-of-date timetables at the bus station continue. Updating timetables is the job of the bus service operators and we are in touch with them about improving the situation.

Extension of the bus recovery grant and the £2 local bus fare cap has been positive. Since the introduction of the £2 local bus fare cap bus usage in Somerset has increased by 14%. All four of the main bus operators in Wells (First West of England – 173/174 and 376; Buses of Somerset – 77; Libra Travel – 126; and Mendip Community Transport – 67) are now taking part in the scheme.

Traffic lights

The signal recovery project remains on schedule with work on the crossing at Strawberry Way south (near Lidl) having started early this month and due for completion in the middle of May. After this work will move to the Wookey Hole Rd/Portway junction and finally East Liberty.

20mph

As discussed at the March City Council meeting, we attended the planned briefing on Somerset Council's policy on implementing 20mph zones earlier this month. Somerset Council is supportive of implementing 20mph zones where communities want them, however Somerset Council does not currently have the budget to implement this across the county.

Somerset Council will support communities which wish to bring in 20mph limits or zones, however these will need to be supported by (and likely paid for by) the relevant city, town or parish council. Given the support shown for a 20mph zone covering Wells, we have discussed the implementation of this with the Executive Lead Member for Transport & Digital. We also attended a meeting this week with representatives of the Cathedral School and the Mayor where a city-wide 20mph zone and other road safety measures were discussed.

New Education Strategy

Somerset Council launched its new education strategy, "Education for Life" last month. The five-year strategy has been developed in response to reports that Somerset is in the top ten Local Authorities nationally for the proportion of inadequate schools, and recent poor exam results across the board.

The strategy sets out four goals:

1. Improved access to support in the early years of life so that every child is ready to start school confidently
2. Increased inclusion in all schools, educational settings and in our communities so every child is actively involved in their education 100% of the time
3. Strong and supportive leadership capacity within and between Somerset schools so that improvement is shared, sustainable and educational outcomes are improved in every key phase
4. Ensuring young people have access to further and higher education in the county, so they can develop adaptable skills equipping them to join and progress in the workforce in Somerset.

Details of the strategy can be found at: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/how-the-council-works/education-for-life-strategy/>

Homes and Horizons

Somerset Council's Homes and Horizons project has been shortlisted in the "Innovation in Partnerships" category of the Municipal Journal Awards 2023.

The Homes and Horizons partnership involves Somerset Council working with Homes2Inspire (part of national charity, Shaw Trust) and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, to ensure every child and young person in Somerset has a safe place to live and learn, where they are listened to, cared for and understood so they can thrive.

The project is delivering 10 family-sized homes for children as part of a new model of care for Somerset's most vulnerable young people. It will also provide 20 specialist foster carers and a brand-new, therapeutic education service on two sites within the county, designed to increase our young people's life chances through better educational results and improved mental health and wellbeing.

Just over half of Somerset's young people who live in our care currently live outside the county. The Homes and Horizons project is designed to make sure that our most vulnerable young people can come home to Somerset.

Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt
Somerset Councillors for Wells
26th April 2023