

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22ND JUNE 2023 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, J Browne, D Denis, N Kennedy, S Powell, T Pullin (Mayor), G Robbins, T Robbins, H Siggs, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
Town Clerk Assistant: C Woodland
WCC Staff: S Glendinning
Mace Bearer: G Woodland
Somerset Councillor: T Munt
0 members of the Public

23/91/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: T Butt Philip, S Cursley, S Eden, G Folkard, D Orrett, I Von Mensenkampff

23/92/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

23/93/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 25TH MAY 2023

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

23/94/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

None present.

23/95/C POLICE REPORT

The Police were not in attendance, no report was provided.

23/96/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor's Diary

- i. 25th Jun, 400th Anniversary of Axbridge Town Maces, Axbridge Town Hall
- ii. 29th Jun, Symphonic Finale, Wells Cathedral (Cllr Cursley attending)
- iii. 29th Jun, The Mayor's New Clothes Charity Launch, Wells Town Hall
- iv. 30th Jun, Speech Day, Wells Cathedral
- v. 1st Jul, Wells Environment Day, Portway Annexe
- vi. 1st Jul, Wells Ballet School Summer Dance Show, Wookey Hole
- vii. 2nd Jul, Romulus & Remus Twinning Festival
- viii. 2nd Jul, Annual Civic Service, Yeovil
- ix. 2nd Jul, Wells Theatre Festival Launch Party
- x. 3rd Jul, Wells Rotary, The Crown
- xi. 5th Jul, Wells in Bloom School Award Ceremony, Bishop's Palace
- xii. 16th Jul, Tortoise & Hare Run, Wells Football Club
- xiii. 25th Jul, Meet the residents, Abbeyfield House

23/97/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE

Cllr Browne presented the minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2023.
Cllr Welch congratulated the committee on all the hard work being carried out.
There were no questions.

23/98/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Denis presented the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2023.
No questions were raised.

23/99/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

In the absence of Cllr Cursley (Chair), Cllr T Robbins presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2023.

No questions were raised.

23/100/C INTERNAL AUDIT

The Town Clerk presented the internal audit which had already been submitted to the Finance & Council Matters Committee on 8th June 2023. Questions were answered.

The Internal Audit and its recommendations were proposed by Cllr T Robbins, seconded by Cllr Siggs and approved by all members.

23/101/C EXTERNAL AUDIT

The following documents had already been presented at the Finance & Council Matters Committee meeting on 8th June 2023.

- i To approve and sign the Annual Governance statements for the year 2022-23.
It was proposed by Cllr Siggs, seconded by Cllr T Robbins and approved by all committee members.

- ii To approve and sign the Annual Statements of Accounts for the year 2022-23.
It was proposed by Cllr T Robbins, seconded by Cllr Siggs and approved by all committee members.

23/102/C CLIMATE WORKING GROUP

The Town Clerk asked the committee for volunteers to join the climate working group.

Cllrs G Robbins, Powell and Denis agreed to join. It was also agreed for the Town Clerk to circulate an email to all councillors after the meeting as a number are absent.

23/103/C SLURRY BLIGHTING LIFE IN WELLS

Cllr Denis explained she had been contacted by Simon Nash who resides in St Thomas Ward. He has also written to Somerset Councillors T Munt and T Butt Philip. Concern has been raised over the recent slurry spreading and the impact it has on the water ways and gas pollution in Wells. It has also been spilt on local roads whilst it is in transportation.

After discussion, it was agreed for the Town Clerk to invite the Environment Agency and the Water/Rivers Authority to attend the Full Council meeting.

Cllr Munt also suggested it be taken to the LCN meeting by Cllr Welch, the Wells City Council representative. Cllr Welch agreed.

23/104/C REPORT FOLLOWING LAST COUNCILLORS SURGERY ON 12TH JUNE

Councillors in attendance: Cllrs D Denis and P Welch

Cllr Welch explained no members of the public had attended the June surgery.

Cllrs Butt Philip and Eden will attend the next surgery on Monday 17th July.

23/105/C NEW ROTA FOR FUTURE COUNCILLOR ADVICE SURGERIES

A rota will be circulated to all councillors asking for volunteers for the scheduled advice surgeries up until February 2024. Two councillors are required for each month and it is the councillor responsibility to arrange a substitute if they are unable to keep their selected time.

23/106/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Welch presented his report on The Connect Centre which had been circulated with the agenda. There were no questions.

Cllr Denis presented her report on Somerset Bus Partnership (attached). No questions were asked.

23/107/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS

A written report had been circulated to all councillors from Somerset Councillors Munt and Butt Philip. Cllr Munt answered questions.

23/108/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr G Robbins has been approached by local residents and businesses concerned with the proposed road closures for central Wells. Cllr Robbins also raised the issue of hazardous pavements in the High Street causing residents and visitors to trip. After discussion it was agreed to invite Somerset Highways to attend the Full Council meeting. The Town Clerk agreed to send an invitation.

Cllr Kennedy raised the issue of two trees that had recently been cut down on Strawberry Way on the edge of the Durkheim Drive estate. It is not clear who they were cut down by. Somerset Cllr Munt advised she was aware of this and was in the process of obtaining a map of trees from Somerset Council. Once received she would share with WCC which will help to identify tree locations in the City. A way of protecting trees needs to be sought.

Cllr Denis asked for the Town Clerk to write to food retailers to ask if they would consider providing a food outlet in the High Street. Local residents feel a more central offering is needed. It was agreed by the committee for the Town Clerk to write to a variety of food providers.

23/109/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 27th July 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:**

Minutes 23/106/C

Somerset Bus Partnership

Wells Bus User Group manned a stand at Wells Bus Station on Wednesday 14 June and Saturday 17 June. There was a lot of interest from the public passing through and several had come to sign the petition to save/improve our bus services in and out of Wells. The bus timetables for all the services were printed and made available by the Somerset Bus Partnership and were all taken up by people who said they have difficulty in accessing timetables.

At a recent Bus Group Meeting, John Perrett stated- "There had been promising engagement with North Somerset Council to run a through service on the 126 service. The costs of the service would be shared across the two councils, with work ongoing on a draft timetable, preserving critical journeys, to then commence the tender exercise. The current contract has been extended to the end of August with hope of the new services starting in September."

Cllr D Denis 21.6.23

Minutes 23/107/C

Somerset Councillors' report to Wells City Council – June 2023

Council Finances

Local Government finance remains in the same difficult position as has been highlighted in previous reports. We are still awaiting the publication of the accounts of the previous county and district authorities – once this has happened we will have a clearer picture of the financial situation the authority faces.

Local Community Networks

Local Community Networks have begun to meet and the initial meetings have, so far, been broadly successful.

The first meeting of the Wells & Rural Local Community Network will take place on Thursday 29th June at 7pm in Priddy Village Hall.

The agenda has been published and, together with electing a Chair and Vice Chair, will mainly consist of a workshop-style session discussing local priorities, it will also discuss the frequency of meetings for the coming year. All are welcome to attend this meeting, though (in the event of a vote having to take place) only nominated “core members” the LCN – of which Wells City Council has one - will be able to vote.

Tree strategy

Somerset Council's Executive adopted the Council's 10-year tree strategy earlier this month. Working together with partners such as the Exmoor National Park Authority, the AONBs and the Woodland Trust, the Council aims to increase Somerset's tree cover (which is below the national average).

The strategy can be read here:

<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s8474/1.%20Somerset%20Tree%20Strategy.pdf>

Adult Social Care

Also at it's July meeting, Somerset Council's Executive took an important decision about the transformation of how adult social care will be delivered in Somerset. This involves continuing to work with external partner Newton Europe to deliver better ways of working and to reduce demand, with a view to saving over £10m per year (Somerset County Council's adult social care budget was £160m in 2023/23 and Somerset Council's adult social care budget is £186m this year).

Early Careers Strategy

Finally the Executive adopted the Council's early careers strategy, which seeks to bring together the good work done by each of Somerset Council's predecessor authorities to provide opportunities for young people to begin their careers with Somerset Council.

Traffic lights

The signal recovery project remains on schedule. Work continues at Wookey Hole Rd/Portway – the new “Urban 64” temporary traffic light system is now in place and in use – this system mirrors the operation of permanent traffic lights and traffic flow in the area appears to be greatly improved compared to the short period when this system was not in use. This phase should be completed in the autumn, after which the final signal at the junction of East Liberty and St Andrew Street will be replaced.

Buses

The all the timetables at Wells bus station remain out of date or missing. This has again been raised with the bus operators (who are responsible for providing the timetables).

Work continues between Somerset Council and North Somerset Council to extend the route of the 126 beyond Axbridge to connect with Weston-super-Mare.

20mph

We are awaiting further guidance on how best to progress this – it remains a key priority for us both.

Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt

Somerset Councillors for Wells

22nd June 2023