

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk Assistant: C Woodland  
WCC Staff: C Hobbs  
WCC Staff: K Westwood  
Mace Bearer: C Price  
Somerset Cllr: T Munt  
Press: A Vallis  
3 members of the Public

**23/110/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Cllrs: S Cursley, S Eden

**23/111/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**  
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.  
None declared.

**23/112/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE 2023**  
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

D Denis requested an update on the letter being sent to Environment Agency and Water/Rivers Authority 23/103/C. The Town Clerk Assistant reported that the matter is in hand.

D Denis requested an update on the letter being sent to the food retailers 23/103/C. The Town Clerk Assistant reported that Wells City Council are in the process of compiling a list of retailers.

**23/113/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
Mr R Bevan (Protec) spoke about the increase in crime against retailers in recent months. He informed the meeting that there is a WhatsApp group that business members use to keep each other updated of offences and offenders. Signs are being issued to be placed in participating shops. Mr Bevan spoke of his frustration with a lack of contact and action of Police when a crime is reported and that he requested the Police be part of the WhatsApp group but they are not willing to use it as a method of communication. Mr Bevan suggested that Wells City Council fund a member of security staff.  
Mr Bevan then spoke about his concerns about the poor condition and subsequent lack of maintenance of pavements in the city and his concerns at the number of people sustaining injuries from unstable paving slabs.

A lengthy discussion took place about the level of crime in Wells. The current CCTV system was discussed along with the lack of police presence. Beat Managers are being allocated elsewhere. It was suggested that a discussion should take place about employing a PCSO when deciding next the budget.

Cllr T Munt suggested that Wells City Council write to the Chief Constable regarding the allocations of officers. There was a suggestion that PACT meetings be reinstated.

Cllr T Munt spoke about the pavement issues and asked all falls are reported with photographs. Falls and damaged pavements can be reported to reception at the Town Hall who will pass on the reports or report them directly to her. Cllr T Munt was supportive of the idea that in the future, Wells could manage their own pavement/road repairs. Possible alternative surfaces were discussed, dependent on permissions and cost. Suggestions were made for means of preventing delivery vehicles mounting the pavements.

**23/114/C POLICE REPORT**

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

**23/115/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Mayor's Diary**

- i 30<sup>th</sup> July – Ambassador gathering, Museum gardens
- ii 4<sup>th</sup> August – Wells Art Contemporary Private View, Wells Cathedral
- iii 6<sup>th</sup> August – Mid-Somerset Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament & Peace Group, Bishop's Palace
- iv 7<sup>th</sup> August – Wells Chamber of Commerce social, location tba
- vi 28<sup>th</sup> August – City of Wells Lions Club Moat Race
- vii 17<sup>th</sup> September – Battle of Britain Commemoration Service, St Cuthbert's Church

**23/116/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE**

Cllr J Browne presented the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.  
Cllr S Powell requested that on item 23/71/OSE that the names of the Fair operators be included on the minutes and that she be emailed with a copy of the 1873 Fair's Act.

Cllr P Welch requested information about the location of the Community Fridge.  
Cllr D Orrett confirmed that there had been opposition as it will bring increased traffic to the Portway Avenue area so alternative locations are being discussed.

Cllr D Denis sought reassurance that with regard to 23/75/OSE that the Climate Emergency group report will be included as a standard agenda item on all Outside Spaces & Estates Committee meetings. Cllr J Browne informed her that the report would be included.

**23/117/C STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Cllr T Robbins presented the minutes of the Staffing Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
No questions received.

**23/118/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

Cllr T Robbins presented the minutes of the Finance & Council Matters Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 in the absence of Cllr S Cursley (Chair)

Cllr J Browne requested information on the trial of the Civic Review in 23/73/FCM  
Cllr H Siggs will meet with Cllr T Pullin (Mayor) next week. Recommendations/changes will then be discussed at Finance and Council Matters.

**23/119/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr D Denis presented the minutes of the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and drew attention to the item 23/64/PE, Wells City Council has a precautionary principle with regard to 5G signed in 2019, and the matter will be discussed at the August meeting.

Cllr S Powell has noticed two omissions in the minutes. There had been a query from a resident of Carlton Mews regarding trees in the recreation ground. There was a request that Tree Officer, Bo Walsh be invited to attend a Planning and Environment meeting.

**23/120/C REPORT FOLLOWING LAST COUNCILLORS SURGERY ON 17<sup>TH</sup> JULY**

Cllr T Butt Philip reported that three members of the public attended and the subject discussed was residents parking.

**23/121/C CIVIC AWARDS**

Cllr P Welch told of plans for another Civic Awards Event scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024, with the possibility of combining with the Wells Moat Race awards. School students will be invited to play musical instruments. There will be the addition of two categories which cover sporting and health and wellbeing achievements. Retailer Cando4u will provide the trophies at a cost of £50 each. Sponsors will be approached.

**23/122/C 20MPH SPEED ZONE IN WELLS**

A lengthy discussion took place covering aspects mentioned in the report received from Somerset Council (attached) such as cost, effectiveness and the visual impact. Cllr T Butt Philip clarified that the £500 includes 2 first assessments and recommended that the idea be taken to the next step

Cllr H Siggs proposed that Finance Committee agree to fund the payment of £500 by delegated authority as there is not a Finance and Council Matters meeting in August.

Cllr T Robbins seconded the proposal. 13 Councillors voted for the proposal. 1 Councillor abstained.

**23/123/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

Cllr D Denis informed the meeting that the Sustainable Wells Environment day was a success.

Cllr S Powell reported that the Almshouses had been awarded a National Lottery grant of £158,000. There are plans to restore the Chapel which may be used to host concerts.

Report on Somerset Bus Partnership, Cllr D Denis (attached)

Cllr J Browne reported that the recent free day for the 376 bus had been a success. Cllr D Denis confirmed that the £2 fare will continue until October but Somerset Bus Partnership are trying to get some clarification on disparities across the region. First Bus are setting up a hub for the community to join. The email with details will be circulated to all Councillors.

**23/124/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS**

Cllr T Butt Philip referred to the report submitted which included details of the 20mph limits that have been discussed.

Cllr J Browne asked how the asset transfer process was proceeding. Cllr T Butt Philip replied that it is a slow process and that Somerset cannot yet give a date for transfer but all will be looked at from a financially sustainable point of view.

**23/125/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT**

Cllr G Robbins mentioned that she'd a met with the Outdoor Spaces Manager. There are plans to hold a Pride Event in the Bishop's Barn on a date during Pride month in June 2024

Cllr D Denis asked if the meeting schedule be reconsidered to hold a Full Council Meeting in August.

**23/126/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 its 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**