

# CITY OF WELLS

## CITY OF WELLS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2016

**Minutes of Wells Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 6.00pm in the Old Court Room, Wells Town Hall.**

Present:

City Councillors: The Mayor Cllr G Wilson (Chairman), Deputy Mayor Cllr A Gibson,  
Cllrs: M Brandon, N Kennedy, C Price, D Swain, C Wride

City and District Councillors: J North, R MacKenzie, H Siggs, D Unwin

City, District and County Councillor: J Osman

Town Clerk: Mrs F White

RFO: S Luck

8 members of the public

1 press representative

Refreshments were served at the start of the evening.

**1. Apologies** Cllrs: T Robbins, J Ludovino

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2015**

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, approved, and signed by the Mayor.

**3. The Mayor's Annual Report**

The Mayor welcomed everyone and spoke briefly about his year in office. He had attended 51 council meetings and 115 other engagements.

£11,644 had been raised for the Mayor's charities.

The Mayor spoke of the huge range of council business discussed during the year and thanked all staff for their unstinting support.

He referred to the matter of the Post Office and particularly thanked:

- The Town Hall staff for their hard work
- James Heapey MP, for his intervention
- The citizens of Wells for their responses
- The Wells Journal for sustained press coverage at the time

**4. Reports from Chairmen of City Council Committees.**

The Chairmen presented their reports and answered questions.

i. Finance & General Purposes Committee (Vice-Chairman: Cllr Price)

All council meetings are open to the public, papers and monthly accounts are published on the website.

The Finance committee scrutinises the accounts each month, prior to the meeting. The council is also subject to both an internal and an external annual audit; a clear audit has been received again this year.

The City Council income is received mainly from Town Hall and other properties rentals, together with the precept (share of the council tax).

Expenditure is on Town Hall up-keep and running of the council; the City Archives, open to the public by appointment at the Museum; the open spaces work – cemetery, grass-verge-cutting, Christmas lights; public toilets; grants to community groups and other bodies serving the city.

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- ii. City Centre & Open Spaces Committee (Chairman Cllr Ludovino, report presented by Cllr Price)  
This committee oversees the management of the 15 acre cemetery, with chapel; grass-verge-cutting, cleaning of the city centre water gullies and other highway maintenance works under delegated responsibilities from Somerset County Council Highways; daily checks, maintenance and litter clearance at the skateboard park; management and maintenance of the allotments; the town centre Christmas lights ; street furniture (for example dog bins).
- iii. City & Tourism Forum (Chairman: Cllr Gibson)  
The first year for this Forum has been very successful; we have brought together people who have the common target of promoting the city.  
Outcomes have been:  
- Provision of the touchscreen and an information point at the Town Hall – the Forum has plans to expand these to other locations.  
- City Council funding and support for an innovative modern local information website.  
- The map boards have been in place for just over a year and are proving popular with visitors.  
- The Forum is working with the B&B providers and hotels, each have a representative on the Forum.  
- There are now a number of businesses and groups talking and working together, this is the one of the most constructive achievements of the Forum meetings.
- iv. Archives & Civic Assets Committee (Chairman Cllr Gibson)  
Two new red robes were purchased as two old ones had to be moved on into the Archives.  
Heritage Open Day was very successful; plans to have HoD 2016 are well under way. Restoration projects for the Royal Charters and other archived material continue.  
Valuations of all civic assets have now been completed.  
The Chairman thanked Dr Julia Wood for her awesome efforts throughout the year.
- v. Planning Committee (Chairman Cllr Kennedy)  
The Planning Committee meets twice a month in order to comply with the statutory timetable for consultation responses. The major item this year was the Premier Inn application. Applications for larger housing developments around the edge of the city will continue to be an issue. The Council is planning to carry out a Housing Needs Survey, in partnership with St Cuthbert Out parish council, during the coming year. This project will provide both parishes with evidence to present to developers and the planning authorities. The Chairman thanked the committee for all their hard work this year, for their commitment in doing the training and attending the meetings, especially the new Vice-Chairman, Cllr Swain.  
With reference to the long-term provision of burial land at the cemetery, both parishes have requested that additional adjacent land be designated in the new Mendip Local Plan Part II.

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- vi. Wells in Bloom (Chairman Cllr Brandon)  
Sponsorship has held up well this year, this support is much appreciated; it is important for the local involvement of the community.  
The Chairman thanked the volunteers, without whom the whole program would not be possible. New safety vests are being issued for their use while out at work for Wells in Bloom. The closure of the National Trust shop had been a disappointment but Wells in Bloom has taken back the round planters and readopted them, also placed two new pyramids at the head of the Market Place, creating a good floral show there.  
There has been some accidental damage to installations but this has been overcome and everything reinstalled or replaced.

## 5. Reports from Ward District and County Councillors

### Mendip District Council: Cllr Siggs

Tackling financial cuts has meant more innovation; for Wells the new leisure contract has secured future leisure provision. There is also a new contract for 'back-office' services, shared with other councils. Cllr Siggs commended the good working relationships between Wells City Council and the partners at other tiers of local government. MDC is the trustee of the Wells Recreation Ground Trust; as such the council is committed to ensuring that whatever goes forward must be safe and sustainable for the future of the trust. An independent consultant is currently assessing the options for the future.

### Somerset County Council: Cllr Osman

The most frequent issues raised by Wells residents relate to speeding and parking. A Small Improvement Scheme at New Street has now been completed; there is temporary delay to the one for Milton Lane. Grants have been given to several local groups in Wells from the County Councillors' Health and Well Being budgets. SCC is planning to provide a New Enterprise Centre in Wells for small businesses. Cllr Osman spoke briefly about the regional devolution project, the Somerset Rivers Authority, and explained that SCC would need to make further savings next year.

The Mayor thanked everyone who had spoken. He said it is clear that all work very closely together and work cooperatively, to get the best of what is available for Wells.

## 6. Open Forum: an opportunity to discuss matters of interest to the community

The following matters were raised:

1. Various highways and environmental issues were reported; these were all noted, to be reported for action by SCC Highways, MDC Street Cleaning, as relevant.
2. The new disability access to the Town Hall was commended.
3. The new outdoor market stands were commended.
4. There was particular concern about highway safety in Priory Road. It was agreed that cars parked inappropriately cause a hazard and obstruction. Noted by County Cllr Osman for investigation; also referred to the PACT meeting.
5. Notice board in the Recreation Ground reported to be disused and in a very poor state: Noted for report to Wells Recreation Ground Trust.
6. Query regarding Town Hall lettings; the Town Clerk reported that income from Town Hall lettings is doing well.

No further matters.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.20pm.

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