

# CITY OF WELLS

## CITY OF WELLS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2020

**Minutes of Wells Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Wells Town Hall.**

Present:

City Councillors: Cllrs: J Osman (Mayor), P Welch (Deputy Mayor), L Agabani, S Briton, O Hartley, A l'Anson, C Wride

Town Clerk: S Luck

1 member of Town Hall staff

3 members of the public

**1. Apologies** Cllrs: J Browne, P Crummay, S Cursley, J Rust

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

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

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

Welcomed all to the meeting. There are concerns in the community about Coronavirus and therefore we give our apologies for the lack of refreshments. It was thought to be sensible not to provide them this year.

It has been an interesting year and there has been an unprecedented turnover of Councillors. There is a lot of new blood and along with that new ideas. I am privileged to have been the 464<sup>th</sup> Mayor. Resignations by A Fawcett, T Robbins and J Dickson made way for new Councillors whom I would like to welcome. They are Joe Parker and Rachel Humphreys for St Thomas Ward and Jasmine Browne for St Cuthbert's Ward.

I would like to thank S Luck our Town Clerk and RFO and K Westwood, the Town Hall Manager.

The Clock has been installed on the Town Hall and a Water Fountain installed in the Portico of the Town Hall. There is a new Committee for the Climate Emergency. This committee has raised public debate on the subject and there are ongoing discussions regarding 5G.

The Tourist Information Centre returned to the Town Hall and plans regarding the Recreation ground are ongoing.

The first Saturday in the month I have held Coffee Mornings in the Mayor's Parlour which have been well attended. I have visited many Care Homes and attended several Concerts throughout the year. I enjoyed taking part in the Dementia Walk and started the Moat Boat Race.

Alex and Amelia were born last year and I would like to thank Philip Welch for his support as Deputy Mayor at that time.

The Bekynton Service and Legal Service are due to take place.

£1000's have been raised for the Mayor's Charity, the Forget me not Suite at the RUH, but unfortunately the Hooray for Hollywood event due to take place on March 28<sup>th</sup> has been cancelled due to the Coronavirus concerns.

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On the subject of Coronavirus, the City Council are monitoring the situation and taking all precautions.

## 3. Councillors' Reports

- i. L Agabani – I am Chair on the Outside Spaces Committee and Finance Committee. It has been a busy year in Outside spaces. I was voted to support Cemetery biodiversity. I am meeting with a consultant in April who will advise on how we can improve. Street furniture has been improved with Cycle Racks and a Water fountain has been installed at the Town Hall. I have been walking around and seeing if there are more benches needed due to the increase in Coach visits. There are 420 trees in the Cemetery. They are in an AONB but don't have TPO's and are surveyed yearly. We have 58 Allotments and the demand for these is huge. With regard to Finances, the Tourist Information in the Town Hall was visited by 80-90 people on their first day, showing it certainly is in the right place. There is a new Facebook page for the City Council which has been managed by Alex Westwood. Alex has done a great job. Community grants have been provided for the Connect Centre and Christmas Lights.
- ii. O Hartley – I am Chair of Archives and Civic Assets. Julia Wood the Archivist does an amazing job. The Charter from King John is wonderful and the Book of Mayors worth seeing in the Museum Archives. Can I please ask for everyone's support on 12<sup>th</sup> September which is an event showcasing the Architecture and culture of Wells. The Town Hall, Museum, Palace, Old Deanery and Gardens will be open to the public.
- iii. S Britton – Chair of Climate Emergency. The Climate Emergency had their first meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> July and have met five times since then. We want to involve the public in our working groups. These are Transport which covers Pedestrian and Public Transport and includes a Cycling group and an Energy Group which looks at retro fitting the housing stock.

The Climate Action network (Wells Can Do) now have a presentation that shows the battle we have with carbon usage. We won't meet the targets if we don't limit our carbon use. We need to do our best to take the campaign to the public. The presentation is a PDF and is on the website and can be downloaded. Someone from the Climate Action Group can come along if anyone wishes to hold a talk on the subject. Thank you to staff who have supported us.

- iv. C Wride – Good evening Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen and fellow Councillors, I am the Chair of the Wells City Council Staffing Committee and as such we sit about four times a year unless an important matter requires us to sit to deal with that issue.  
We as a committee support the Town Clerk in staffing matters, the appointment of new members of staff, we discuss any concerns that the staff representative may bring up on behalf of his fellow Town Hall staff members and we also have responsibility for training and the necessary training budgets.  
Last year we have appointed a new Town Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer following the early retirement of Felicity White. He has settled in quite well and has overseen a measure of reorganisation within the Town Hall. Three new members of staff have been appointed, two receptionists and an outside spaces operative. The Town Hall cleaner has had her hours extended and she has taken on responsibility for not only the main building but the public toilets outside and at the Bus Station and they are already smelling nicer from here!

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Alex Westwood has been appointed on a 6 months' trial contract to enhance the WCC's Communications sites and it seems to be working well – only time will tell. I am not IT savvy so it is all complete nonsense to me!

- v. A l'Anson - Chair of Wells City Council Planning Committee Having been elected in May 2019, I can only report on the proceedings of the City Council since their meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May last. Between then and the 5<sup>th</sup> of March the Committee has met on 26 occasions and considered 95 applications and numerous applications relating to trees.

Cllr Celia Wride chaired 16 of these meetings and I chaired the last 5. During this period, the Committee decided to revive the Wells Neighbourhood Plan and the Steering Group have been working on this with our consultant, Stuart Todd, since the beginning of the year. We hope to launch the consultation period soon after Easter.

It is also worth reporting that we have listened to a significant number of representations regarding concerns over the future roll-out of 5g antenna. As a result, we recommended to full Council that we should adopt “the precautionary principle” as regards any such applications. This would entail recommending refusal unless and until scientific advice clearly indicates that 5g masts are unlikely to cause significant harm. The Council accepted this recommendation and a public meeting is to be held to discuss this issue later this month.

We have also considered several applications relating to housing situated just outside our City boundary and in the area governed by St Cuthbert Out Parish Council. It is good that we are consulted on these matters as it is clear that such developments, if approved, will add a significant burden to the infrastructure of Wells.

I believe that it is fortunate that the proceedings of this Committee attract the public in significant numbers and we always listen to them carefully. I am pleased that we are able to give a voice to the community in this way.

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

- i. A member of the public asked L Agabani if the Tourist Information Centre is linked to the Visit Wells Website and if the International hits on the website are tracked.  
L Agabani replied that there is work ongoing with the redevelopment of websites and will amalgamate all City Council websites into one. An agreement has been made that the Bishop's Palace, Museum and City Council will share a Domain name.  
A question to S Britton that as Wells becomes a tourist venue and continues to grow that there will be an increase in carbon production. Can this be balanced out.  
S Britton replied that we are all waiting for information from Central Government. There are things we can do locally. We need to look at how sustainable tourism is implemented elsewhere. Bed and breakfasts, restaurants and Accommodations can use local produce for example. We are waiting for the parliamentary Advisory Assembly which will report in June. 2020 is a critical year. There is contention between the years 2030 and 2050 regarding becoming zero carbon. There will be significant challenges if we go for 2030. Individuals, Companies and Councils will all need to look at what they do.  
S Britton was asked about retro fitting of property and she responded that there is a need to look at energy efficiency. We have a large housing stock that need to think about using less, need better insulation and a whole range of ideas like

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Community energy projects especially in Conservation areas as they are unable to use energy saving installations such as double glazing.

Question for A l'Anson regarding the Neighbourhood Plan. Is it up to date with regard to sustainable housing and what teeth can the plan have once written?

A l'Anson replied that we are taking advice and we can look at proposals.

Policies could look at design layout and sustainability. Once it has been changed developers have to work with it and can't ignore it.

A question regarding plans for the Post Office building when they have moved to another location. Will it be a commercial venture or used by a Community Interest company?

J Osman replied that a new Tenant has already been found for the premises.

Question regarding Coronavirus – Has the Council an emergency plan. How will you support isolated members of the community?

J Osman – There has been no communication from Somerset as yet but National guidance may be forthcoming. The Town Hall may have to shut. There may be a necessity for the Council to help but we have limited resources.

Technology. At the first meeting in May 2019, Tessa Munt suggested that meeting via video streaming may be viable. Can Councils meet “Virtually”?

J Osman responded it has been looked at by SCC. Live streaming was looked into but there would be a substantial cost and then cost of storage. There wasn't the interest and at the moment legally, it is not possible to meet virtually. We do have more public attendance so people are becoming more engaged which is encouraging

L Agabani – I agree with J Osman and we don't have the broadband quality anyway even should the finances be available. We could discuss again when we do have the technology but we are not there yet.

S Britton – We need to consider the carbon cost of the increase in technology. We need to consider the carbon cost in all our activities rather than the financial cost.

P Welch – This is an important meeting. There have been some good presentations by Councillors and but we need more attendance from the Public as we only have three tonight.

L Agabani suggested that Coronavirus could be an issue that has affected Public participation at this meeting.

J Osman – We advertised the meeting well but agree that Coronavirus could be a factor.

A member of the public suggested that 6pm may be a little early and J Osman responded that next year the time of the meeting may be different but would be a decision made by the next Mayor.

**The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 6.45 pm.**

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