

Outside Spaces Committee report for the Annual Parish Meeting, March 10th 2026.

The Outside Spaces team is ably led by WCC Officer Matt Johnson who has a team of 4.5 rangers and a part time admin assistant.

The prime responsibilities of the team are:

- The management and upkeep of Wells Cemetery
- Support for the 3 Council run allotments
- Overseeing the annual Wells in Bloom planting and maintaining the colourful displays throughout the seasons
- The Christmas Lights
- Supplying Dog waste bins
- Maintaining Grit bins

The OS team, under delegated authority from Somerset Council and the Highways Department, clear gullies, maintain pathways through weed clearance and hedge cutting and carry out litter picking within the boundary of the City.

The Outside Spaces committee comprises a Chair, a Deputy and 6 Councillors. The Town Clerk and a member of WCC Clerical staff attend. The Outside Spaces Officer is present or sends a report. We meet on a monthly basis (omitting May and August).

Members of the public frequently attend to ask questions and make comments. Climate emergency is also covered at these meetings and we now have the standing agenda items of Traffic, Parking & Highways and a Police & Crime update.

A Forward plan is also agreed.

Work Undertaken over the past year.

Lovers Walk hedges have been reduced in height to support safety measures for St Teresa and St Joseph's pupils and parents crossing to the school gate.

Grass cutting has continued in areas of the Cutting Plan post Devolution with a visual map for the public showing the areas of responsibility between Wells City Council and Somerset Council.

On and around Tor Woods, grass cutting has been carried out using swathing techniques.

The OS team have worked with volunteers at Mendip Hospital cemetery to cut back the undergrowth so that it can be more easily maintained.

There have been proposals to plant pollinator friendly plants in planters in some areas.

Wells cemetery has a new caretaker and has been described as a "spectacular asset" and indeed WCC are looking at Green Flag awards for cemetery services.

A review is being carried out of the allotments which belong to WCC. There are 60 plots currently but a waiting list of 85 individuals. [Unfortunately, there is no land available within the boundary of Wells to buy more].

Recreation Ground

Wells Recreation Ground is an ongoing source of pleasure, and measures are in place to produce a long-term vision for this space as well as implementing short term changes.

Benches and waste bins have been taken away and repaired as have goal posts.

A dog bin has been moved to discourage users from entering the park by the wall in South Street car park which can be a hazard as narrow and slippery.

When the weather improves a table tennis table and suitable base will be installed and the Band Stand will be painted.

Play equipment is frequently checked for safety and ongoing repairs are carried out.

There is also ongoing maintenance and repair at the other play areas in the residential areas of the city – these have now been devolved from Somerset Council to WCC. WCC are developing a Leisure and Play strategy for all green and open spaces which will determine the best locations for all activities for the benefit of all.

Valentines vending van continues to be a success.

Other updates.

The **Wells Litter Pickers** have managed to keep the city centre, residential roads and some of the approach roads to Wells free of litter with the three times a year organised picks. Many individuals also go out on their own accord. Insurance is now in place due to a new Volunteer Policy produced by the Town Clerk. WCC provides the kit and Somerset Council collect the rubbish.

A second, highly successful **Eco Week** took place in October with numerous voluntary bodies involved. This involved cross parish working with St Cuthbert's Out.

Three Councillors sit on the Wells Environment Network who create the momentum.

Act to Adapt was launched with £1000 received to go towards drought planting beds in the Recreation ground. Act to Adapt is being developed for residents in an around Wells to focus on alleviating floods and droughts.

£500 was also received from the Community Wilder scheme towards the drought beds.

10 local schools were involved in the **Wells in Bloom competition** with support provided by the Outside Spaces team

Parking continues to be a discussed topic. New signage is due to be installed in place in the Market Place for disabled parking.

Several residential streets have become "Residents Only" parking so this has made other residential streets become more congested.

Concern has been expressed by residents re; crossing for school children across the Bristol Hill from Ash Lane to College Road. A petition is being mounted and any form of collision or near miss recorded as evidence of this unacceptable health and safety risk.

WCC has scoped out the work and cost in implementing a 20mph zone around local schools

Bids for SID (Speed Indicator Device) will be submitted in the new financial year with a view to encouraging Speed Watch using volunteers.

More dropped kerbs were installed across the city and residential areas in January 2026 to accommodate wheelchair users and prams and push chairs. Thanks here go to Accessible Wells.

The OS officer has made a log of all cobbled areas which are” outside tolerance” and in fact a trip hazard. This has been sent to Somerset Council Highways.

The **market** was taken on by WCC on April 2nd 2025. Staff employed in putting up and taking down are employed on a casual basis. OS staff offer backfill if required. A Market Manager is in post and new gazebos purchased and an overhaul of the market trailers has been completed.

Regular updates on local **crimes** come from the Neighbourhood Policing team.

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented at a Full Council meeting and improved communication has been an outcome.

Enormous thanks must go the Outside Spaces team, the Town Clerk and WCC staff plus Councillors on the OS committee for maintaining high standards within existing resources whilst enhancing the overall presentation of our city for residents and visitors alike.

Cllr Deborah Orrett

Chair of Outside Spaces Committee

February 2026