

## **WELLS CITY COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ESTATES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2025 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS** Cllrs: S Cursley, G Folkard, D Orrett, H Siggs (Chair), P Welch  
**PRESENT:**

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: H Wilkins  
Projects and Facilities Officer: L Wassell  
Non-member Cllrs: L Agabani (Mayor)  
WCC Staff: S Glendinning  
MP for Wells and Mendip Hills/Somerset Cllr for Wells: T Munt  
2 Members of the public

**25/12/E APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Cllr: T Butt Philip, G Robbins, T Kolizeras

**25/13/E DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

None declared.

**25/14/E ACTIONS FROM THE ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

No actions were needed.

**25/15/E MINUTES FROM THE ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**25/16/E MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Chris Simons referred to the Portway Annexe Usage Presentation report. He questioned why on a property there was no sinking fund included and held by Council as a sound business model.

Cllr Siggs advised financial decisions is the responsibility of the Finance Committee. However, the Estates Committee will be required to manage all estates and assess what spending is recommended and present this to Finance. In this instance, it is recognised as good practice, it may take some time for the council to work in this commercial manner whilst managing other constraints.

**25/17/E ANNEXE USAGE PRESENTATION**

The Projects and Facilities Officer presented her report of current usage of the asset. The internal program 'Rialtus' has been used to inform on room usage within both the Portway Annexe and the Town Hall.

The Mayor asked if the report can be broken down in more detail to weeks/days. This would allow decisions to be made on whether the buildings should be closed at certain times. If room usage is very low, are rooms better used for other purposes e.g. storage. The Town Clerk suggested a needs assessment on the services conducted within both buildings is carried out, looking at which building is most appropriate. There is a need to be very clear on what the offering is within each building and the creation of a vision for each building would guide the actions of council and officers.

Cllr Welch confirmed both buildings are for community use and we should be looking to maximise the usage in both.

The Mayor stated we need to be clear on what level of usage is acceptable in both buildings, working out the break-even point.

Cllr Folkard asked for an understanding on what other venues in Wells were charging. It was advised a bench-marking exercise had been undertaken and is detailed in 25/19/E. He also requested a report for each property covering value, income and yield. The Town Clerk agreed to add this information to the headline governance sheet which has been prepared for the Chair of the Estates Committee.

The Mayor asked for these reports to be produced regularly. It was agreed to provide another report for next month's meeting but then on a quarterly basis going forward. Cllr Cursley stated that the Portway Annexe was originally purchased as a community asset not as a commercial asset and also that revenue received from the car park was not included in this reporting. The Town Clerk agreed to include the car park income in future reporting. Cllr Siggs accepted that the Annexe was purchased as a community asset however there still needs to be an understanding as to how much the building is being subsidised.

#### **25/18/E CCS/WCC USER AGREEMENT (PREVIOUSLY CHARIS)**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update of the proposed extension of arrangements. The new subcontractor agreement is with CCS, Community Council for Somerset. CHARIS now just deliver to Taunton only. Home Office funding has been offered to CCS as the contractor and the agreement looks to formalise arrangements with Wells City Council as the subcontractor to deliver outreach services for displaced people. There will be a requirement for an SLA between WCC as the sub-contractor and Wells Community Network, who support the delivery of activity through the current hub.

A paper will be submitted to Finance and Full Council detailing the contract with CCS. This will be effective from July 2025 for two years.

#### **25/19/E FEES CHARGES BENCHMARKING**

The Projects and Facilities Officer presented her report. A benchmarking exercise has been carried out against our assets and some in the local area. Recommendation was to increase these on an incremental basis over a three year period.

Cllr Siggs stated we need to be sure that any increase doesn't price us out of the market.

The Mayor questioned whether all the venues used in the benchmarking were 'like for like'. Frome would have been a good comparison, but need to consider others such as Cedar Hall, looking not just at room rental but also civic function comparables.

Cllr Orrett asked whether the minimal parking at the Annexe and Town Hall was a factor in taking bookings. This was not felt to be an issue as there is parking nearby within our many car parks, which are free after 6pm.

The Town Clerk agreed to carry out a full fees and charges review (including weddings), throughout August and present this in the September meeting, with recommendations. Also to draft an information letter to all users to explain the impending fees increase.

#### **25/20/E FORWARD PLAN**

<b>Estates Committee Forward Plan</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Proposed date for consideration</b>
Planned Preventative Maintenance Programme and Condition Survey (excl. Chapel and Cemetery)	July 2025
Building usage and Analysis – Town Hall	July 2025
Energy Performance Review - Utility Monitor	Aug 2025
Portway Annexe – Charis User Agreement	July 2025

Building usage and Analysis – Portway Annexe	July 2025
Building usage and Analysis – Public Conveniences	Sept 2025
Building usage and Analysis – Bishop’s Barn	Oct 2025
Building usage and Analysis – Chapel and Cemetery	Nov 2025
Planned Preventative Maintenance Programme updated to include Chapel and Cemetery	Nov 2025*dependant of vacancy
Strategic Analysis – Allotments	Dec 2025
Strategic Analysis – Markets	Jan 2026

Cllr Siggs requested that once the Lodge and Chapel were vacated, they take a review of the premises before the new tenant moves in. This is likely to be end September.

**25/21/E ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

Cllr Welch thanked the Projects and Facilities Officer for providing all the reports and data for the meeting.

Cllr Folkard asked for clarification on liability for Health & Safety. Liability cover is in place for Staff and Councillors. The liability sits with the council not individuals. This will feature on the risk register.

**25/22/E DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025, 7pm in Wells Town Hall**

**Minutes signed by The Chair:** ..... **Date:** .....