

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025 AT 7PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cllrs: T Butt Philip, G Folkard, T Kolizeras, T Robbins (Chair), H Siggs, P Welch

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: H Wilkins  
RFO: C Woodland  
WCC Staff: C Hobbs  
Cllr L Agabani(Mayor)  
Cllr D Denis  
1 Member of Public

**25/01/F APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Cllrs: S Cursley, I Von Mensenkampff

**25/02/F DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Cllr T Butt Philip declared an interest in his capacity as a Somerset Unitary Councillor for Wells.

**25/03/F APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

Cllr H Siggs nominated Cllr G Folkard for the position of Vice Chair of Finance. Cllr T Butt Philip seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. Cllrs all voted in favour of the nomination.

**25/04/F ACTIONS FROM THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025.**

No actions other than those on the agenda.

Cllr H Siggs made reference to a question he'd asked a response for in item 25/49/FCM. The Town Clerk clarified that the question will be answered when the item is discussed on the agenda.

**25/05/F MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025**

The minutes of the previous meeting were signed as a true record by Cllr T Robbins.

**25/06/F MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Mr C Simons asked for clarification about items in the Internal Audit and of his concern for Wells City Councillors being sole trustees for the Recreation Ground Trust. He requested details of the interest generated when the asset was transferred from Mendip District Council in 2022. For transparency, WCC can provide maintenance of the asset by putting the work out for tender. Mr Simons spoke of a sum of 500k that he believed Mendip paid on transfer and had this sum been ring-fenced.

Mr Simons then asked about salary figures and asked if they were a net figure?

C Woodland replied that the salary figures are a net figure.

H Wilkins reassured Mr Simons that there will be a full report pertaining to governance about the Recreation Ground Trust at next Full Council, which will answer a lot of the questions brought up by Mr Simons. C Woodland is doing a lot of work regarding salaries, specifically in terms of allocating costs of salaries across budget lines which will give greater transparency.

Cllr D Denis asked for clarity regarding the climate change budget and a balance of £5000 which had been allocated for heat retaining curtains at the Portway Annexe and if there was a balance to be brought forward.

C Woodland replied that monies had been reallocated elsewhere.

Cllr D Denis mentioned that assumptions had been made but as there were not the monies available to cover costs of Eco Week when staff time had been allocated use of Bishop's Barn and recreation ground required, would the event have to be withdrawn.

H Wilkins reassured Cllr D Denis that costs associated with staff time can be managed and as the rental of buildings are internal movements within the budget that Cllr D Denis will not have to reduce any plans. H Wilkins acknowledged that and that the budget available ought to have been explained.

Cllr D Denis stressed that she believed the budget available was in lieu of not having a climate change officer and that climate change does bear a cost and that in the absence of any money in the budget that the responsibility will fall to WCC.

Cllr L Agabani suggested that any expenditure, always go through the finance committee prior to proceeding.

Cllr G Folkard asked for guidance regarding the rolling over of underspends and overspends. Would it be useful to have guidance as to what is permitted.

H Wilkins responded that virements at the end of the year in terms of understanding how one year moves into the next.

#### **25/07/F REVIEW COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

H Wilkins reported that there were no significant changes.

The meeting voted unanimously to accept the new terms of reference

#### **25/08/F FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES**

C Woodland presented her report and asked for questions.

Cllr T Kolizeras asked for clarification of Bishop's Barn utility bill payment go out of their budget or WCC account.

H Wilkins answered that the accounts show the situation for the month that they pertain to and currently all budget movements are within WCC accounts rather than the Bishops Barn Trust.

#### **25/09/F RESULTS OF INTERNAL AUDIT**

C Woodland asked that in line with recommendations from the Internal Auditor that there be a member of the committee who is not the Chair be nominated to sign off the accounts each month.

Cllr H Siggs suggested that there were three Councillors be nominated, any of whom could sign off the accounts.

Cllrs: G Folkard, T Kolizeras, H Siggs offered to be signatories.

C Woodland presented the report and asked for questions.

Cllr H Siggs asked the percentage figure for the pension expenditure.

C Woodland will provide the figure.

#### **25/10/F EXTERNAL AUDIT**

C Woodland presented the External Audit.

No questions were received from members of the committee.

Section 1: Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 and agree to send to Full Council for signing.

C Woodland explained her rationale for her answer in the section pertaining to Trust fund responsibilities.

H Wilkins explained that the Governance statement asked for clarity and that the Auditor had asked for further amendments.

Cllr T Robbins asked if all issues are due to be resolved within the next month.  
H Wilkins said that WCC are working with the Auditor and are aware of the work WCC need to consider.

Cllr G Folkard asked if the subject will return to this meeting on a recurring basis?  
H Wilkins responded that the two items for resolution are levels of reserves which won't come back as a standing item and Trust fund governance are matters which will go before Full Council.

C Woodland presented the Accounting Statement 2024/25 and explained the figures that make up the annual return at year end. Should there be a variance greater than £20000 or 15% per annum, the variance requires explanation. Box 3 figures have a decrease variance due to the Recreation Ground Trust

#### **25/11/F STANDING ORDERS**

To receive and approve the standing orders, updated in line with the NALC model document 2025.

H Wilkins explained that the Auditors had recommended small amendments to Standing Orders in line with national guidance.

C Woodland confirmed that the Standing Orders had been received and approved in their entirety at a previous Finance Meeting.  
The meeting voted unanimously to approve the Standing Orders.

#### **25/12/F PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD**

Cllr T Robbins (Chair) declared an interest in this item and did not take part in the discussions)

H Wilkins updated the meeting that the public works loan was in relation to the purchase of Wells Cinema. The condition report has been requested but not yet received. The resolution we passed at Full Council looked to have guidance from SALC and NALC to the requirements of the loan. NALC have highlighted that further public consultation is required in order to complete the application for the loan.

C Woodland set out the Resolution to borrow. "To determine at the Wells City Parish Council Meeting of Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025 that it sought to seek the approval of the Secretary of state for housing and communities and local government to apply for borrowing approval for a loan of £150,000 over a borrowing term of 25 years, to purchase the premises on Princes Road in Wells, occupied by Wells Film Centre. The annual loan repayments will come to £13,000. It is not intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayments."

H Wilkins reassured that the resolution was no different to the resolution which had been previously debated at Full City Council but due to minor wording alteration the resolution required agreement.

Cllr H Siggs proposed to accept the resolution to go before Full Council Meeting  
Cllr P Welch seconded the proposal.  
The meeting voted unanimously to accept the resolution.

#### **25/13/F HEALTH AND SAFETY EMERGENCY LIGHTING WORKS**

H Wilkins explained that an Officer recommendation report had highlighted required works to emergency lighting at the Portway Annexe. Under the Health and safety at work act and Electricity at work regulations that relevant lighting should be in place and that

there are instances where this is not the case. The proposal sets out that the additional works are required immediately and are estimated to cost £4581 plus vat.

A brief discussion took place as to maintenance of the lights in previous years and under previous management of the lights, changes in legislation and the available budget for the maintenance of assets.

H Wilkins answered questions regarding details of the tender process for the required works.

6 members voted to approve a budget spend for the emergency lighting works. with 1 abstention.

**25/14/F FORWARD PLAN**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Proposed date for consideration</b>
RFO Budget Report and Variances	Monthly
Contracts over £500 Policy	July
Grants Policy	July
Income Strategy	Sept/October
Forecasting 6-month review	September

H Wilkins presented the forward plan and explained that the RFO is looking at policy documents in terms of income strategy and grants. Work is in progress to resolve that contracts over £500 are published on the website and that the six-month review will take place in September.

**25/15/F ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

Cllr T Robbins thanked Cllr S Cursley for his hard work as previous Chair of the Finance and Council Matters Committee

**25/16/F DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

**EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Note:** It is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence, it was proposed by the Chair that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended to allow a private report.

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

**Date:** .....