WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2025 AT 7PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

COMMITTEECllrs: T Butt Philip, S Cursley, G Folkard (Vice Chair), S Powell, T Robbins (Chair), H Siggs, I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: H Wilkins

RFO: C Woodland

Non-member Cllrs: L Agabani (Mayor), D Denis

WCC Staff: S Glendinning 2 Members of Public

25/63/F APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

None

25/64/F DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

None Declared.

25/65/F ACTIONS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2025.

The Town Clerk confirmed:

25/56/F saving option proposals across all budget lines for 2025-26 had been provided. 25/60/F a workshop had taken place to discuss the budget.

25/66/F MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2025

The minutes for the previous meeting were signed as a true record by the Chair.

25/67/F MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mark Wilcox of the YMCA spoke and gave his appreciation to Wells City Council for the support given to the youth club. The club is growing and they regularly see over 20 young people attending. Various activities are organised. Over the summer they got to listen to bats in Vicars Close and they also had the opportunity to make a film. Mark asked the council to continue with the SLA for next year and agree to a multi-year

agreement for 2/3 years which provides security to the club.

Cllr Powell asked to see the budget sheet from the club, the Town Clerk agreed to circulate. Cllr Powell also asked where their funding comes from. Mark explained it is from other local councils and from their own fund raising.

This item was discussed further in the meeting 25/72/F.

Chris Simons raised questions on the base line of the draft budget. It was explained that the expenditure line for this year has been low but there were projects such as PPM planned for the next year.

25/68/F FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES FOR WELLS CITY COUNCIL

The RFO presented the October 2025 Financial report and answered questions.

Cllr Folkard asked for the current forecast position, the RFO agreed to send this to members.

Cllr Siggs asked whether there were any areas for concern. The RFO explained she was looking at utility costs across the different premises as there were some variances in this cost code, but other expenditure looks to be on target with projections.

25/69/F FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES FOR WELLS RECREATION GROUND TRUST

The RFO presented the October 2025 Finance report and answered questions.

Cllr Folkard stated that the figures clearly show the Bishop's Barn is losing money. The Town Clerk explained conversations were taking place at the Estates committee to prioritise a clear proposal for the barn. These would be taken to Full City Council for approval in due course.

25/70/F ESTATE BREAK EVEN COSTS

As this item was commercially sensitive it was moved to the end of the meeting and members of the public were asked to leave to allow a private report.

Councillors asked for additional clarification on some areas to be made and for the item to be provided to the Estates Committee next meeting. This should include the costs of the City Council function within the Town Hall to clearly reference the use of space and apportionment to the councils functions and running.

25/71/F ST CUTHBERT OUT PARISH COUNCIL CEMETERY CONTRIBUTION

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update and explained they were reviewing the arrangements in place with St Cuthbert Out and expenditure for the cemetery. A further update will be provided at a future meeting.

25/72/F BRUNEL YMCA FUNDING REQUEST

The Town Clerk followed on from the information provided from Mark Wilcox of the YMCA in public session and presented her report and the bi annual report from the club.

The proposal was to increase the funding from £15,000 to £16,000 for 2026-27 to allow for inflation, request other funding sources be sought to sustain the service longer term and request the provider to continue to provide bi annual reports .

A proposal was made to increase the funding to £16,000 for the next year and commit to longer funding in the future. The proposal was made by Cllr Butt Philip, seconded by Cllr Powell. All members voted in agreement.

25/73/F DRAFT BUDGET 2026-27 (2nd Draft)

As members had attended the budget workshop and had been given the opportunity to discuss the draft budget prior to the meeting, the RFO offered to highlighted the significant changes and answered questions.

The RFO agreed to clarify the following:

- General Admin there is a proposed cost saving in salaries based on a new staff structure. It was agreed to incorporate this within the budget.
- Civic the figure for Elections EMR would be reviewed. It was stated that no amount for elections had been accumulated over the last 3 years. Figures presented indicate a £9,000 deficit.
- Outside Support –a breakdown is to be provided of the WRGT Grant, £53,594.
- Outside Support clarification was sought on the amount forecast for skatepark maintenance and EMR as the draft suggested additional balance was being built in, which wasn't the agreement of Council.
- Cemetery an explanation is to be provided on the decrease in cemetery income against projection.
- Portway Annexe Portway Car Park Income is lower, there are a few spaces that
 are not being rented. It was agreed to look at options for using the car park more
 efficiently as a 2026 project.
- Markets a breakdown was requested for the market income for both Saturdays and Wednesdays, including the project impacts of kipper rents in January and February and the proposed income and expenditure of the Christmas Market.

Outside Support - It was requested not to remove the community grants budget.
 Noting that there was a requirement for the RFO to review the process and ensure that it was fit for purpose and that there was clear review and checks and balances in place to evidence to council the benefit of the grant awarded.

A review of storage for Outside Spaces and IT equipment costs should be reviewed with a view to reducing these costs. The Town Clerk agreed these were valid points and would be taken forward in 2026, however, to assume savings would not be prudent.

Cllr Butt Philip referenced that he was of the opinion that the precept increase should be kept to £0.

Cllr Folkard asked about building staff costs/allocation into the budget by 1/4/26 to ensure that budget lines clearly represented the costs of the function, including staff costs. The RFO referenced that this was planned for the new accounts from 1st April, but work could be done to represent this within the draft budget.

Cllr Folkard queried the budget recharge from WCC to The Barn for staff time and sundry costs. RFO agreed to confirm that this income was reflected in the draft budget. He also queried whether the bank reconciliation had been signed off by a councillor recently.

Cllr Folkard asked if the council is confident that end of year processes including accruals would be managed effectively this year, to ensure correct accounting, and resolve issues seen in early 2025. The Town Clerk advised that end of year processes would be more effective this year and accruals in place to manage any expenditure across years.

The Chair suggested that a further review of the budget be taken and the budget brought back to the December meeting where a vote will be required to be taken in order to meet delivery timescales. Any concerns should be taken to the RFO and Town Clerk in advance of the next meeting to allow resolution to be applied or explanation provided. The Town Clerk advised that a renewed Draft would be provided to Finance Committee members week commencing 24th November.

25/74/F PRIVATE SESSION – The following agenda item moved from 25/70/F was discussed and members of public were asked to leave the meeting as the item was considered to be commercially sensitive.

ESTATE BREAK EVEN COSTS

The RFO explained the report had been prepared looking at the break even report for each of the buildings run by WCC. Cllr Siggs explained it should have been presented to Estates Committee prior to this meeting to make additions, but the information wasn't available in time.

Cllr Folkard stated that the figures were not split showing usage at what time of the day. Cllr Siggs said more work needs to be carried out on marketing the buildings, looking at better community usage.

The Town Clerk advised that a revised document would be presented to the next Estates Committee including AM/PM and Evening splits, the incorporation of wedding impacts, and the impacts of the City Council functions within the Town Hall.

25/75/F FORWARD PLAN

Item	Proposed date for consideration
RFO Budget Report and Variances	Monthly
Final draft budget 2025-26	December

25/76/F ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

The Town Clerk explained there was ongoing discussion with the current supplier who carry out the put up and take down of the Christmas lights, who is in the last year of a three year contract to provide the provision.

The Clerk advised that concerns had been raised associated with supporting infrastructure, and following engagement with the Chair of Finance and Mayor, a second opinion was sought to understand the severity of the concern and any immediate remedial actions needed. On review, whilst it would be best practice to load test all wires and fixings annually, this hadn't been done previously and the last significant remedial works were completed in 2018. It was therefore a requirement for 2026 onwards to build this into the councils planned works. Given the timescales and both opinions, the committee agreed to the hanging of the Christmas lights from the existing infrastructure, with the exception of the two points highlighted as insufficient.

The Town Clerk advised that an alternative solution was provided by the current supplier, however this was not deemed cost effective.

The Town Clerk advised that her intended actions were to seek further engagement from the current supplier, should they not wish to deliver the work, it would be offered through tender in the normal manner to other suppliers. Members unanimously agreed to proceed on that basis.

25/77/F DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 11th December 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: