WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, T Butt Philip, S Cursley, G Folkard (Chair), S Powell, H Siggs,

IN ATTENDANCE:
Town Clerk: H Wilkins
RFO: C Woodland
Facilities Manager: L Wassell
WCC Staff: C Hobbs
Cllr D Denis (Mayor)
2 members of the public

26/91/F APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Cllrs: S Eden, I Von Mensenkampff

26/92/F DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022.

Cllr D Denis declared an interest in agenda item 6 as YMCA is the Mayor's Charity and for her involvement with WEN.

Cllr S Powell and G Folkard declared their interest in Agenda item 6 for involvement with WEN

26/93/F MINUTES FROM THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON 9th JULY 2026
Cllr D Denis asked for information regarding the details for YMCA central costs and details of income and frequency of the Valentine's Coffee van.
The RFO reported that a payment had been received from Valentine's Coffee and that discussions were taking place regarding their contract.
The Town Clerk reported that she had been informed by YMCA that the CEO had resigned and details of the new contact has been provided. This person has been invited to the October Finance meeting to give their quarterly update ahead of budget setting.

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

26/94/F ACTIONS FROM THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON 9th JULY 2026
Open actions not on the agenda are listed below:

Date Raised	Description of Action
May 2026	Explore graphical reports to aid understanding of information, for both cashbook, forecasting.
July 2026	Consideration for future growth and savings Following verbal request from Chair of Committee for any known/expected in year growths or savings to inform forecasting

The Town Clerk reported that the RFO would discuss the graphical reports during the meeting.

The RFO mentioned that some elements of the upcoming reports do demonstrate consideration for future growth and savings

Cllr H Siggs would like growth items pertaining to Estates be given consideration at Finance meetings.
The Town Clerk suggested that the RFO extends an invitation to each committee chair to gain understanding of any items for consideration ahead of budget setting.

26/95/F MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

C Simons spoke about Agenda item 9. He referred to the issue of uplift on the Markets which he believes incurs vat. C Simons declared that in his opinion vat should have been charged from inception and is likely to be in the region of £15K
The RFO reported that this was correct and following advice from a tax consultant that contact would be made with HMRC to correct the situation. The figure is unlikely to be less that C Simons referred to.
A discussion took place about advice received prior to WCC taking over the market.
The Town Clerk agreed that VAT had not been applied prior to WCC running the markets and that WCC are looking into the criteria which may show that payment of VAT won't be applicable. Advice from a reputable source is that WCC are required to pay VAT on market fees. We will challenge this, but need to be prepared. WCC have contacted National Association of Markets and are awaiting a response. which will be passed on to this meeting when it is received.

Cllr S Cursley asked if this issue had contacted the internal auditor.
The RFO will be contacting them.

The discussion took place about payment implications should payment of VAT be required.

The Town Clerk requested that the RFO further explore the matter and present a report to the next meeting on associated implications, risks and HMRC and auditor notification requirements.

26/96/F TO CONSIDER COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

Request	Compliance with policy	Value of request
YMCA – Spencer House	Yes	£ 300.00
St Joseph and St Teresa's Church	Yes	£ 500.00
Wells Environmental Network	No accounts received	£ 500.00
Theatre Festival	No accounts received	£ 500.00
RAW Mosaics	No accounts received	£ 500.00
Jazz and Blues Festival	Yes	£ 500.00
Accessible Wells	No accounts received	£ 500.00

Cllr S Powell questioned why applicants who have applied who don't meet the necessary criteria, have been included in the application process, given that the Finance committee set out new qualifying criteria last year.

A lengthy discussion took place about the necessity for applicants to provide accounts, when an organisation may not yet have a year's accounts. It was discussed that other financial information could be provided which would be acceptable in certain circumstances and discretion should be applied by the RFO.
Cllrs excluded The Theatre Festival and the Jazz and Blues Festival, as accounts had not been submitted or where not deemed acceptable. .

YMCA – A discussion took place regarding the application.
Cllrs declined the application.
2 votes in favour of supporting the application and 4 votes against

St Joseph and St Teresa's Church - A discussion took place regarding the application.
Cllrs approved the application 5 votes in favour with 1 abstention.

RAW Mosaics - A discussion took place regarding the application
Cllrs voted unanimously to support the application

Accessible Wells - A discussion took place regarding the application.
Cllrs declined the application. 5 votes against with 1 abstention

WEN - A discussion took place regarding the application.
Cllrs declined the application. 4 votes against with 2 abstentions.

26/97/F FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES FOR WELLS CITY COUNCIL

The RFO presented the monthly reports for July and August.
Cllr H Siggs asked for clarification on the duplication of pension payment. Page 1456 on July accounts.
The RFO explained that there was an error made in her absence during a payroll payment and the payment was paid twice, which corrected itself in August 2026.
The Town Clerk assured those checks had been put in place to prevent further errors.
Cllr H Siggs asked for details on page 398 payment regarding a First 4 repairs payment for £2000 itemised as "First 4 repairs"

The RFO confirmed she would provided clarification to committee ahead of the next meeting.

Cllr H Siggs asked why uniform expenditure had increased?
The Town Clerk explained that PPE such as protective footwear for the Outside spaces team had required replacement due to the end of its life. The Town Clerk assured the meeting that all purchases are signed off and that rather than historical ad-hoc purchasing, quarterly consideration was now in place and being monitored

Cllr H Siggs stressed that local businesses and independent traders should be supported by WCC when purchasing goods, following review of expenditure to larger chains/businesses
The Town Clerk assured him that this is WCC policy and adhered to where possible.

Cllr G Folkard asked the RFO for her opinion on WCC's current financial position if there are any decisions that require attention in the next three months.
The RFO mentioned that additional expenditure has been on salaries and associated contributions due to upskilling of staff to cover staff sickness, maternity leave and to give resilience to staff cover. The RFO demonstrated a graph which demonstrated that the budget is even paced. The forecast for the Portway Annexe is slightly over budget but being managed with amended spend for the next quarter.
Cllr L Agabani expressed his views on which style of chart gave more clarity.
The RFO said that she is trialling different options and would bear in mind the preferences offered.

Cllr G Folkard asked if there are decisions that will need to come back to this committee between now and year end.
The RFO replied that only the items on the agenda tonight. The RFO also explained that expenditure had been higher due to CCTV costs and there was expenditure of a large civic event. No other variances were highlighted.

26/98/F **FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES FOR WELLS RECREATION GROUND TRUST**

The RFO presented the reports for July and August.
There is an item of income on Page 28 from Valentine's coffee and other Bishop's Barn income.
There has been some expenditure in September due to equipment purchases for the renovation of the bandstand and for the table tennis table.

Cllr L Agabani asked what period the Valentine's coffee covered and was informed it was for the previous quarter.

Cllr D Denis mentioned that Valentine's coffee attendance is not as much as used to take place.
The Town Clerk acknowledged that this was being looked at and that a tender process will be required in the coming months as the agreement with the current supplier had reached its end and is now a rolling agreement.
Cllr L Agabani asked for a copy of lease arrangements. The Town Clerk advised the tender details could be shared in due course.

26/99/F FEES AND CHARGES

The RFO presented the draft fees and charges in order that Cllrs approve any uplift from 1st April 2027

Wells Cemetery

A discussion took place about price increases for areas in the cemetery.
Cllr T Butt Philip asked about the age limit for plots for child burials as currently Wells cemetery limit for children is aged 16 and he felt that age 18 should be applied.
The Town Clerk agreed and suggested that this could be applied through discretion immediately.
Cllrs voted on the 5% uplift of cemetery fees with immediate application of the age change for child burials.

Room Hire

The RFO explained that prices for room hire were last uplifted in January 2026. As part of this process, there is a second uplift in order to support the longer term hirers rather than they have one large increase. In addition to inflation uplift, new items such as stage hire have also been added as these were previously not accounted for and in these instances, there is significant setup time.

Storage fees

Storage fees have been suggested at £2.50 per square meter per week.

Cllr D Denis asked if there could be different rates. A community rate and commercial rate.
The RFO reported that a community rate could be investigated.

A discussion took place about usage of the Town Hall for storage
The Estates Manager advised that they would break down information on individual users regarding their current storage use to allow Cllrs to understand the impact of this proposal
Cllr H Siggs asked if the purpose of issuing charges is to increase income or deter users from storing property at the Town Hall.
The Estates Manager reported the purpose was to manage the corporate space being used for minimum return. We have little room but a significant amount of property is stored at the Town Hall.
A discussion took place about the potential proposed costs per month.
The Town Clerk reported that the proposal allows WCC to open up conversations and rationalise use for community use and free up space if possible.
Cllr G Folkard asked for information to be presented at the next Finance meeting before a decision is made on storage fees.

Room Hire Fees

The RFO explained that the increase of 3.4% applied to room hire
All Councillors agreed to the increase.

Bookings

The Town Clerk reported that these fees are for additional items which are currently not taken into consideration such as officer time with stage hire etc.

Cllr L Agabani proposed charges apply immediately.
The Town Clerk assured that bookings taken after 1st October 2026 will have these costs applied.
The Estates Manager mentioned that stage hire was already on the booking form but that a charge is now proposed for tablecloths, glasses, crockery.
All Councillors agreed to the increase.

Marriage Ceremonies
The RFO announced that these prices have not received an uplift since 2023 and that a 10% increase will keep WCC at a competitive rate.

Cllr L Agabani asked about VAT for room bookings?
The RFO reported that all room bookings require VAT
Cllr L Agabani asked in future reports that net values are included.
All Councillors agreed to the increase of 10% for Marriage Ceremonies

Portway Annexe
The RFO reported uplift of 3.4% as at Town Hall.
All Councillors agreed to the increase.

Car Parking costs
The RFO reported that currently the charge is £98.40 per space including vat. and is suggesting an uplift in line with inflation.
All Councillors agreed to the flat rate increase in line with inflation.

Bishop's Barn
The RFO suggested an inflationary increase.
All Councillors agreed to the increase

Market Pitches
The Town Clerk suggested that with reference to the earlier conversation with regards to VAT that this item be deferred to the next Finance meeting agenda.

Allotments
The RFO suggested that these did not require an increase as it is a statutory function and that there had not been any increase in expenditure to warrant increase.

Cllr T Butt Philip asked how the expenditure calculation is made.

The Town Clerk asked the RFO to report running costs for two years be documented to committee and presented to the next Finance meeting so there is a more accurate picture of the expenditure to allow decision.

Sponsorship Fees and charges
The RFO reported that these costs were agreed in June and that they appear in the report as information.

The RFO presented a document which demonstrated income on individual rooms and the growth and changes between functions
The Town Clerk informed the committee that this shows a positive picture of usage and change towards a corporate and community hub model.

26/100/F GRANTS – MULTI YEAR AGREEMENT POLICY

RFO presented the policy for consideration of its implications regarding next year's budget setting and adoption.
Cllr H Siggs spoke of his opinion that the multi-year agreement should be used to develop better community development.
Cllr L Agabani concurred and asked about how the authority would be delegated. Would it be Town Clerk and officers deliver the policy on an ongoing basis.
The RFO confirmed that information on running costs etc will be with the Finance Committee next month.
Cllr G Folkard when the first draft would be available.
The RFO informed the committee that she would provide that information directly to members and report to the next meeting of the Committee.

26/101/F PENSIONS REVIEW

The Town Clerk informed the committee that Staffing committee have received this resolution and that the resolution is required to evidence the decision of the Council to the LGPS provider.

The RFO read out the resolution for the purposes in order that it be minuted.

Eligibility of the Local Government Pension Scheme
As a member of the LGPS, administered by Peninsula pensions, Wells City Parish Council confirms that all permanent and casual posts within the Council are eligible to join the scheme. That eligibility backdated to commencement of peninsula pensions for Somerset in 2013

Finance Committee voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

26/102/F ANCHOR TESTING REPORT

Estates Manager presented the report that states the anchor points have been surveyed as per the request of the Estates Committee and that the existing infrastructure is requiring maintenance. Complications are such due to the multiple buildings, landowners and inconsistent wayleave agreements.
The anchor point faults cause issues for the placement of Christmas lights. A resolution is being sought that will provide a festive light provision, which will be cost effective and will suit the infrastructure as it is, until such time the anchor points are repaired. The Estates Manager has sourced icicle lights at a cost of £7203 plus vat and throughout the procurement of testing, the supplier will provide installation. This can be extended to a two year agreement if committee wishes, at an additional cost (year 2 cost) of £2500.

A brief discussion followed and a description of icicle lighting was given.
The Town Clerk stressed that the only option for provision of Christmas lights was the icicle lighting. The other option being no Christmas lights in 2026
The discussion continued about the length of the agreement, whether it be one or two years.
Cllrs voted unanimously for a two year provision of icicle lighting and a phased roll out of anchor point and electrical testing to support future needs. The committee asked for visual representation to be provided to them to confirm the colour requirements of the lighting.

26/103/F ASBESTOS WORKS AT PORTWAY ANNEXE

Estates Manager informed the committee of work associated with removal of asbestos behind external barge boards at Portway Annexe is previously discussed with the Estates Committee. The costs associated for removal will be £11385 plus vat.

Cllr H Siggs requested details of any previous knowledge of the presence of asbestos, given that the building was purchased from Somerset Council and a register must have been kept.

The Estates manager confirmed that details of the asbestos were noted in the required register and therefore, should have been known at the time of purchase.

The Estates Manager confirmed That the contamination unit will be housed within the car park and some closure would be needed to support the project.

26/104/F SPEED INDICATION AWARENESS DEVICE PURCHASE

Town Clerk reported that three quotes have been received for the purchase of three Speed Indication devices (SIDS) as discussed and agreed through Outside Spaces Committee. The cost just exceeds the spend budget hence being brought before committee. There is an established budget in the earmarked £25000 and the intention is to draw down from that budget.

Cllrs voted unanimously to proceed with the purchase and delegated to the Town Clerk to resolve and apply the function.

26/105/F FORWARD PLAN

Topic	Month
RFO Budget Report and Variances	RFO Budget Report and Variances
Q2 Forecasting report	October 2026
Budget - 1st Drafting	October 2026
Budget – Final Draft	November 2026
Budget – Sign off	December 2026

The Town Clerk confirmed that she will include Fees and charges deferments to the Forward Plan

26/106/F ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

Cllr S Cursley asked that VAT be added to the Forward Plan

26/107/F CONFIDENTIAL - PUBLIC TOILET PROVISION

To receive confidential report. Vote to be take on the below motion associated with confidential content.

The committee are required to consider passing a resolution under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Note the agenda item number and name). Where possible, reference the specific paragraph from Schedule 12A:

Personal information - This report contains information relating to an individual and is therefore exempt by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

AND
Commercially sensitive information - This report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information)

26/108/F CONFIDENTIAL – THRIVE WELCOME HUB ANNUAL REPORT
To receive confidential report. Vote to be take on the below motion associated with confidential content.

The committee are required to consider passing a resolution under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Note the agenda item number and name). Where possible, reference the specific paragraph from Schedule 12A:

Personal information - This report contains information relating to an individual and is therefore exempt by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

26/109/F DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 8th October 2026 at 7pm, Wells Town Hall

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: ……..……