WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2026 AT 7PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

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

IN ATTENDANCE:
Town Clerk: H Wilkins
RFO: C Woodland
WCC Staff: S Glendinning
Mayor of Wells: Cllr D Denis
Somerset Cllr for Wells and MP for Wells and Mendip Hills: T Munt
3 members of the public

26/110/F APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Cllrs: I Von Mensenkampff

26/111/F DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022.

The Mayor declared an interest in 26/115/F as she has the YMCA as one of her chosen charities for her mayoral year.

26/112/F MINUTES FROM THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON 10th SEPTEMBER 2026
The RFO advised one amendment had been made to 26/96/F when discussing the grant for Wells Environment Network (WEN), there were two councillors who had abstained from voting.

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

26/113/F ACTIONS FROM THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON 10th SEPTEMBER 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. *This was referenced later in the meeting.*
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. *This was referenced later in the meeting.*

September 2026	The Town Clerk to provide verbal update regarding Market VAT and HMRC. *The Town Clerk has sought further advice. Renting the pitch is not subject to VAT, VAT paid on running costs becomes exempt input VAT and is not automatically recoverable. It must go through the deminimist test (the partial exemption test) which involves the limit for exempt input VAT being £625 pm on average or 5% of the authorities total input VAT. The RFO is seeking further advice from HMRC as we are on the threshold of this amount.*
September 2026	RFO to provide clarity of expenditure within noted title for line 2070 within 31st July 2026 Accounts. *Cllr Siggs had asked for clarification under 26/97/F where a payment of £2,000 for First 4 repairs had been made. The RFO explained this related to emergency lighting at the Outside Spaces unit.*

Cllr Powell asked for an update on the Valentine's coffee in the Recreation Ground. The Town Clerk advised she would share a copy of the lease agreement and that a tender document had been prepared.

26/114/F MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr Chris Simons stated that he was pleased to see the draft budget prepared this early in the financial cycle. He raised a concern over the continual loss incurred in the running of the Portway Annexe and stressed that the council should implement changes.

Cllr Agabani responded and explained the Estates committee had asked the Town Clerk to prepare a paper on the cost analysis of keeping or selling the Annexe. The Town Clerk confirmed the paper was being prepared for the next Estates meeting and offered to bring it to the next Finance meeting also. This was agreed.

Cllr Siggs stated that to refer to the building as making a loss was misleading. The building provides a number of ambitions that the Council set when taking on the building. But he agreed the council need to agree what level of loss is acceptable, how much are we prepared to subsidise.

26/115/F PRESENTATION FROM MENDIP YMCA YOUTH PROVISION

A presentation was provided by the Marketing Director of Operations and the Youth & Community Lead in Wells.

They have 60 young people registered here in Wells for the Youth Club (mainly aged 10 – 19 years) with on average around 20 that attend each session. They meet in Elim Church for two hours on a Monday evening during school term time. Activities are planned such as craft, cooking, first aid with an underlining learning message. They have good connections with the Bishop's Palace and Somerset Film. The young people are often from vulnerable backgrounds and the group provides a safe place, place of belonging, sense of community for them.

Cllr Agabani stated the council funding provided for 60 children would equate to £250 per child. Is that value for money? The YMCA advised they have not been provided any funding from Somerset Council and asked the question, what was the cost to the young people of not doing a youth club.

Cllr Powell stated that there was £3,000 of our donation shown in their accounts for management fees. She did not believe that the funds were there to cover this. This was discussed and felt to be necessary to obtain qualified helpers.

Cllr Butt Philip asked what sort of learning messages were included. Examples were given, such as first aid, mental well-being, the environment/climate change. The current venue capacity is up to 30 young people. Most of those attending live in Wells with a few coming from Coxley, South Horrington. Cllr Butt Philip suggested that conversations may need to take place with neighbouring parish councils. He asked does the council fund the youth club or do they provide a youth club on the council's behalf? It was felt they provide a club on our behalf.

Cllr Agabani suggested there may be an opportunity for Corporate Sponsorship. The Town Clerk agreed to explore through the sponsorship policy.

Cllr Butt Philip asked if the service could be expanded. They felt the need was there to expand, maybe splitting into different age groups to provide more age appropriate learning.

Cllr Siggs asked how dependant they were on the current location. They have limited storage but they felt the Elim Centre worked well.

Cllr Agabani asked if they pay rent at the Elim Centre. They did not know and would follow this up with the Town Clerk.

26/116/F FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES FOR WELLS CITY COUNCIL

The RFO presented the report for September and answered questions from the committee.

Shown within income the allotment annual rent is due and is now being received. WIB sponsorship has also been requested and is being received. There is one car park space at the annexe that has been cancelled and the

rent refunded, as it is paid up front for the year. This space will shortly be re-let.

The RFO pointed out some areas of expenditure. There had been some tree maintenance around the Almshouses, The Town Hall had some work carried out on lintels/rendering. Some tree management software has been purchased for the Outside Spaces Team and training for park inspections has also been provided. A payment has been made for closing the road during the two day Christmas market.

The Chair asked whether we were up to date with account reconciliation sign off. Cllr Agabani has been signing and the Town Clerk confirmed there was a process now in place for a weekly sign off on accounts.

Cllr Agabani asked why the insurance amount was higher than normal. The Town Clerk advised a thorough review had been undertaken and some shortfalls had been identified and now corrected, resulting in extra insurance having been put in place. Next years budget has been adjusted accordingly.

The RFO explained electricity costs had been higher over the summer due to the heat and the need to run fans for the staff, again this has been factored in the budget going forward.

The outstanding rent from the Film Centre has now been paid.

The Market Hall (Ask) rent needs to be reviewed as they are still operating on a COVID agreement. The RFO advised that the Estates Manager has this in hand. The Chair asked if this was relevant for any other of the council properties. The RFO will report back. It was agreed to action this as a priority and for clarity of current agreements to be provided by email.

Cllr Siggs asked if discussions had been concluded with Somerset Council on the repair of Union Street toilets. The Town Clerk advised this had still not been finalised. It was requested for MP Munt and Cllr Butt Philip (Somerset Cllrs) to follow up as a matter of urgency.

Cllr Siggs queried why WIB sponsorship income was lower. The Town Clerk advised they were looking at larger sponsorships through business, as part of the sponsorship policy. The Mayor suggested advertising to the wider public to obtain new sponsorship. Cllr Butt Philip asked how much income had been received last year through WIB sponsorship. It was agreed for the RFO to provide this information.

The Town Clerk advised any training requests will be reported through the Staffing & Personnel committee going forward.

The RFO presented her staff costs report which included the annual pay increase back dated to April.

The RFO had produced a report detailing under/overspend. It was agreed for these reports to be emailed. Income currently exceeds expenditure by £35k.

26/117/F FINANCE REPORTING AND VARIANCES FOR WELLS RECREATION GROUND TRUST

The RFO presented the report for September.

Items of expenditure were for renovating the bandstand, tree maintenance around Park Cottage, materials for the new table tennis table.

Cllr Butt Philip asked what income is received from the WRGT fund. The RFO advised it was paid monthly, other investment accounts were being looked at which would provide a better yield. Delegation is in place for the RFO and Chair to action this as a matter of urgency.

26/118/F FEES AND CHARGES

The RFO explained this was brought to Finance in the previous month and this month's report was to clarify costs on market pitch fees and storage fees.

The Market Pitch fees were questioned.
Cllr Agabani requested the Saturday fee be increased to £39.60 to justify extra demand with Wednesday at £34.20. Cllr Siggs thought this may be an issue outside of the busy summer months. Cllr Butt Philip suggested further discussion was needed. The RFO agreed to provide further clarity and for the paper to presented at the next meeting.

The storage fee cost report was presented by the RFO. It was proposed to charge £2.50 per m2 with a minimum charge of £130. Cllr Butt Philip agreed with the principal of charging for storage but felt this recommendation was not appropriate. He suggested looking at what is paid in rent for individuals, compared to the suggested storage cost. Some listed as a business are not i.e. CAB/Hilliards. Cllr Agabani asked if our insurance provision covered everything in storage. The Town Clerk proposed that officers reviewed and came back with two options: 1) to apportion insurance cover 2) lower storage rates. This was agreed as the way forward.

26/119/F MULTI YEAR GRANT POLICY

The RFO presented a report which outlined a proposal to agree a sum for community events and projects for the 2027-28 budget.

Cllr Siggs suggested a budget line of £25k, which was supported by Cllr Butt Philip.

It was agreed to show a separate budget line for youth provision and multi user agreement grants with further refinement being detailed at the next meeting.

26/120/F 2027-28 DRAFT BUDGET

The Chair explained that they wouldn't be able to give a full discussion to the first draft of the 2027-28 budget at this meeting and it was suggested that a separate workshop for all councillors be set up. This was agreed.

Cllr Butt Philip suggested that there should be no uplift to the local tax payer and we should challenge to find saving in the budget.

Cllr Siggs did not agree with a zero budget, he pointed out that there was no head room for subsidising a number of properties or in developing the leisure strategy.

Cllr Powell suggested consideration needs to be given as to how the WRGT is funded.
Cllr Siggs asked for energy costs to be re-looked at in view of the predicted New Year energy increases.

The Chair summarised that a separate meeting would be set up to discuss the budget fully. The second draft would come to Finance in November with the final budget in December for Full Council approval on 17th December. All present were encouraged to put forward, in writing to the Town Clerk, Chair & RFO, any other concerns that they wish to be discussed prior to the proposed budget meeting

26/121/F STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER Q2 UPDATE

The Town Clerk provided an update on the strategic risk register.

There were no new risks.

One increased risk.
WCC016 – audit qualifications to be discussed in 26/122/F

Reduced risks as follows:
WCC002 – emergency extreme weather, policy now in place
WCC012 – business continuity, process now in place
WCC013 – data and cyber risk, procedures with Flotek in place
WCC029 – landlord lack of inspections, now in place
WCC040 – financial cashflow, we now have increased reserve
WCC041 – partnership dependency around the welcome hub
WCC043 – tenant fire risk, now compliant

There are two closed risks:
WCC011 - Staffing cross-skilling completed
WCC027 - First Aid Training completed

26/122/F EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE 2025-26

The RFO has received the auditor's report and opinion, and is challenging their response. The committee will be kept informed.

26/123/F FORWARD PLAN

Topic	Month
RFO Budget Report and Variances	RFO Budget Report and Variances
Budget – Final Draft	November 2026
Budget – Sign off	December 2026

26/124/F ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

There were no matters of urgent report.

26/125/F DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 12th November 2026, 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: ……..……