

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 14TH MARCH 2024 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, S Cursley (Chair), G Folkard, T Robbins,
I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
WCC Staff: C Hobbs
5 members of the Public

24/23/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllrs: T Pullin (Mayor), H Siggs

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM UNITARY COUNCILLORS

Cllrs T Munt

24/24/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr L Agabani declared an interest in the Chess Club Grant Application, and that he would not take part in the vote.

24/25/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2024

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

**24/26/FCM MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
GRANT APPLICATIONS**

- i. Wells Theatre Festival Grant Application for £500 - Neil Johnson gave a brief report on the previous Wells Theatre Festival and explained the plans for the upcoming Festival scheduled for 20th to 23rd June 2024. Plans are to present numerous performances using a variety of locations, including a performance of Macbeth in the Bishop's Barn where plans are to create a black box theatre space within. The Wells Theatre Festival broke even last year, but the event costs up to £30k.

A brief discussion took place regarding the temporary addition and cost of 3-Phase power at the Bishop's Barn for the Festival.

- ii. Focus Counselling Grant Application for £500 – Helen Marton (Psychologist) reported that the organisation (with charitable status) has been working with people in Bath for 25 years, launched on 26th February 2024 in Wells and based in the YMCA. Deliver person focused therapy for adults, children, couples and families. There are eight, Counsellors, two of whom are children's workers. Focus Counselling have a sliding scale of costs in accordance with people's abilities to pay.

Helen Marton answered questions from Councillors regarding the number of people seen and responded that Year ending Feb 2024 the service had seen 406 clients.

- iii. Wells Chess Club Grant Application for £500 – Matthew Goatcher (Treasurer) reported that the recent first Chess Tournament had been very successful and brings much business to Wells. Great feedback from people who attended regarding the Town Hall as a venue and Wells generally. Costs are estimated at coming in at £4.5k.

Matthew Goatcher answered questions on costings and replied that he hoped that the event would be financially self-sufficient in the future.

- iv. Sing2Breathe Grant Application for £500 – Kate Lynch (Singing Leader) gave a presentation about the project. Trained in singing for Lung health with conditions like COPD and Asthma. Groups are already established in Cheddar and Bridgwater, and Wells group started 14th February 2024. Sing2Breathe is a sociable group and uses singing to manage breathlessness and build stamina. Sing2Breathe works closely with Wells Health Centre. Funding is to cover delivery costs, refreshments. Participants contribute a small amount.

Kate Lynch answered questions from members about the charitable status of Sing2Breathe and replied that it is not a Charity and that the funding is for a salary and the potential for Sing2Breathe of being self-sustained.

The Town Clerk thanked all applicants and confirmed that they would hear a response from Wells City Council in due course.

24/27/FCM FINANCE

The Town Clerk presented the February monthly reports and clarified details when asked to do so by members. The accounts and expenses for February 2024 were approved by the committee.

The Town Clerk clarified a duplicated transaction on the accounts that had been highlighted at the meeting of 8th February 2024 and forecasted that at Audit the Mendip Credit Union sum of £254 may be highlighted.

The Town Clerk has contacted the Internal Auditors who are due in April 2024 to carry out the Internal Audit.

The Indoor Markets are proving popular. The Stalls are low cost but may increase a little at some point. The recently acquired card reader is helping take payments and cutting down on invoicing and decreasing the workload.

Cllr G Folkard requested information about Income and Expenditure of the Bishop's Barn. The Town Clerk confirmed that all figures are shown in Wells City Council Accounts.

The Town Clerk will re issue figures following a query from Cllr L Agabani, for Staffing costs for the Portway Annexe. A breakdown is difficult due to crossovers of roles with members of staff.

Parking at Portway Annexe changes regularly but all lettable spaces are leased out. Bookings at the Portway Annexe are regular, with some days busier than others.

24/28/FCM Grant Application Decisions

Cllr T Robbins left the meeting at 7.46pm

- i. Wells Theatre Festival, £500 - Councillors voted to support the application.
- ii. Focus Counselling, £500 - Councillors voted to support the application.
- iii. Wells Chess Club - Councillors voted to support the application, with the sum of £350, rather than £500 as in application.
- iv. Sing2Breathe, £500 - Councillors voted not to support the application.

24/29/FCM PROPERTIES

Town Hall

Monday 25th March, 6pm. An inspection of the Town Hall has been scheduled for Councillors. Councillors will have the opportunity to offer ideas for further uses of rooms and suggest changes.

24/30/FCM ARCHIVES AND CIVIC ASSETS

The Town Clerk reported that the Mayoral robe will be sent to be laundered in readiness for Mayor making.

24/31/FCM UNITARY AND ACQUISITIONS

i. CCTV provision

Wells City Council have been asked to contribute the sum of £39k per annum for the provision of CCTV in Wells. The figure may reduce year on year with the inclusion of sponsorship. The system has been upgraded and is now a digital system and of good quality. Following a discussion, it was decided that statistics be provided and a tour of the facilities take place. The Town Clerk suggested that Wells City Council need more information on the system and future liabilities; this has been requested. A response is required by Somerset by the end of March 2024. It was agreed the Full Council should discuss CCTV provision and it will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

ii. Closing of Union Street toilet block by Somerset Council.

Somerset Council are closing the toilets on 31st March 2024 and have withdrawn them from the Id Verde maintenance contract. Somerset Council had asked for a contribution of £23,000 to keep the toilet block open, which has been refused. Wells City Council have the option to take over the cleaning and maintenance and have requested the freehold of the building. Negotiations are ongoing.

iii. Parking restrictions in the Market Place

The Town Clerk reported that he had no further information regarding the Traffic Order in the Market Place. There had however been progress on the request for the extension of yellow lines in South Street. A meeting has been arranged for Sara Davies from Somerset to inspect the area as well as other areas of concern.

24/32/FCM WELLS YMCA YOUTH PROVISION

Cllr P Welch reported that YMCA had visited the Blue School to talk to young people. Local clubs have been contacted who are already established. Those in Frome, Coleford, Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury and Street are all run by the YMCA. Cllr L Agabani requested that Wells City Council have direct contact from YMCA regarding the research of potential youth provision in Wells - if possible, at the next Full Council meeting. Cllr P Welch will contact YMCA for their availability to attend Full Council meeting on 28th March 2024.

24/33/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

24/34/FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 11th April 2024

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:**