

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 11TH APRIL 2024 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, G Folkard, T Pullin (Mayor), T Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
RFO: C Woodland
WCC and SC Cllr: T Butt Philip
Member of the press: A Vallis
Mr N Clarke, Wells Carnival Committee Assistant Chief Marshall

24/35/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllrs: S Cursley (Chair), H Siggs

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM UNITARY COUNCILLORS

SC Cllr T Munt

24/36/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr T Robbins declared an interest in agenda items 9(i) and 9(ii) as a SC Councillor.

24/37/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 14TH MARCH 2024

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

24/38/FCM FINANCE

The Town Clerk presented the draft Finance Reports for March 2024.

Questions raised:

Cllr L Agabani: spend against budget item rates was at 170.9%.

Town Clerk responded this is because there were some back dated rate payments.

It was confirmed the budget item Market Hall rent will from this year be split into two to show income from the Market Hall and the Old Post Office separately. There has been no correspondence from the proposed new tenant of the Old Post Office since their planning application.

Cllr I Von Mensenkampff: How were the budget items for the Cemetery maintenance / Cemetery Contractor defined / expenditure split. The contractor is solely the services of the grave digger and his equipment.

Portway Annexe Parking income was slightly down, it was confirmed we currently have 3 spaces vacant.

Cllr P Welch positively acknowledged the income for Portway Annexe lettings being 166.2% that projected at the beginning of last year.

24/39/FCM SUPPORT APPLICATION FOR WELLS CARNIVAL

Mr N Clarke, Wells Carnival Committee Assistant Chief Marshall presented an application for a community grant to assist carnival marshalls with new traffic management training that is a prerequisite for the role. The necessary training would then be valid for 5 years per marshall.

Cllr L Agabani proposed to support the grant application and support Wells Carnival.

Cllr T Pullin seconded the proposal.

All were in favour.

24/40/FCM PROPERTIES

The Town Clerk presented the disabled lift quotes for the Town Hall. There were three quotes obtained by the Town Hall Manager and all three were similar in cost.

None had offered a better value option for the installation of the two lifts as one contract, so the lifts would be done individually as budget constraints allow. Expenditure would be allocated from the Town Hall repairs budget for the coming year.

Cllr T Robbins suggested giving the Town Clerk and the Town Hall Manager the authority to thoroughly assess the three quotes, provide a decision and implement. Cllr I Von Mensenkampff proposed to approve this motion, and Cllr Folkard seconded the proposal. All voted in favour.

24/41/FCM ARCHIVES AND CIVIC ASSETS

i) The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the Archivist Manager was receiving multiple enquiries and none were outstanding. There are plans to have a display in the Town Hall later in the year of archive items for the public to peruse, as approx. 90% of archive items are kept in storage and unseen.

ii) The Town Clerk requested that quotes be obtained for a replacement Town Crier's hat as the current one was suffering wear and tear due to age, and becoming unsuitable for public use.

Cllr T Pullin mentioned the hat used by female Mayors also needed attention. It was agreed permission be granted to get quotes for replacements / repairs.

24/42/FCM UNITARY AND ACQUISITIONS

i. To receive an update about CCTV provision.

A discussion was held including the points:

- Somerset Council had proposed that continuation of cctv in Wells would cost the City Council £39k per year based on a three year contract, based on the number of cameras.
- There was no information available regarding hidden charges that may be in addition to this such as repairs & maintenance which need to be known.
- If discussion was not ongoing with SC and a commitment not made by Wells City Council then the concern is the cctv will be turned off, which will lead to it being decommissioned.
- Much more discussion is needed regarding the details, but cctv must be kept in Wells.
- In order to keep the Council in discussions and cctv operational, it was suggested by the Town Clerk that the Council commit to contribute £20k for 12 months to cctv support, to be allocated from the Unitary contingency budget.

Cllr L Agabani proposed a motion in favour of the Town Clerk's suggestion. Cllr I Von Mensenkampff seconded the proposal and all voted in favour of maintaining cctv provision.

ii. To receive update on the Union Street toilet block

A discussion was held including the points:

- Somerset Councillors voted to close the block which is the most used and most modern in Wells.
- If Wells City Council were to commit to permanently controlling the toilet block then all costs must be looked at including a cleaner, sanitary refuse disposal, security, insurance and public liability.
- Committee members were in favour of obtaining the freehold, or the payment of a peppercorn rent in return for keeping the block open.
- Leaving the toilet block closed would negatively impact on both residents and visitors to Wells greatly.
- The estimated cost in the short term for a cleaner and basic provision to reopen the toilet block was estimated to be £13k, until more secure arrangements are made between SC and WCC.

- A review of all public toilet facilities in Wells would be beneficial.
- Cllr L Agabani proposed the motion to agree expenditure from the Unitary contingency budget to employ a cleaner. Cllr P Welch seconded the motion and all voted in favour.

24/43/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

The Town Clerk asked for authorisation to allow free room lets for LCN related meetings, as requested by Somerset Council.
The Committee were unanimous in giving their consent.

Cllr L Agabani made an enquiry regarding the weekly markets held in the market place and Somerset Council's contract with Id Verde for erection and dismantling of gazebos. SC T Butt Philip was asked to pass request to the portfolio holder at Somerset and invite to a Council meeting.

24/44/FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 9th May 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:**