

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: L Agabani, J Browne (Mayor), S Cursley (Chair), G Folkard, T Pullin, T Robbins, H Siggs, I Von Mensenkampff

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: S Luck  
RFO: C Woodland  
Devolution Officer: H Wilkins  
WCC Cllrs: D Denis, S Powell, P Welch  
WCC Staff: S Glendinning  
Wells Voice: A Vallis  
1 Member of Public

**24/55/FCM i. Welcome the newly-appointed Chair, Cllr Stewart Cursley**

The Committee welcomed Cllr Stewart Cursley as the newly-appointed Chair, who had already been voted in at the May 2024 Full Council meeting.

**ii. Appoint Vice Chair**

The Chair asked for nominations. Cllr Siggs proposed Cllr T Robbins, Cllr Browne seconded. Councillors voted unanimously and Cllr T Robbins was appointed as Vice Chair.

**24/56/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

None

All Wells City Councillors had been invited to the meeting. The following apologies were received. Cllrs: Butt Philip, Eden, Orrett, Kennedy, G Robbins.

The Mayor advised due to another mayoral event she would need to leave the meeting early.

**24/57/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

As he is a Somerset Councillor, Cllr T Robbins noted a personal interest ahead of the Devolution Presentation 24/63/FCM.

**24/58/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024**

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

**24/59/FCM MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

The member of public did not wish to speak.

**24/60/FCM FINANCE**

The RFO presented the draft Finance Report for May 2024 and answered questions.

Cllr Siggs highlighted with more assets being taken on by Wells City Council, our annual insurance package has increased and is likely to continue to increase as we take on further assets through the devolution process.

The accounts and expenses for May 2024 were approved by the committee.

#### **24/61/FCM INTERNAL AUDIT 2023-24**

The Town Clerk advised the recent audit had now been completed and approved. It had been conducted by Independent auditors and was far more detailed, lasting over 2 ½ days. There were a few areas highlighted:

- Bank Reconciliations – we have been asked to separate the capital fund for the Recreation Ground from normal funds.
- Draft accounts at the end of the year – changes are required once interest is calculated for the final month and a revised version sent to councillors.
- Employment contract – one member of staff required a new contract of employment due to a salary increment.
- Fixed asset register – a new more extensive list has been requested. Updates are required with anything sold or purchased throughout the year. Archives items still need to be categorised.
- Marriage Fees – paid at time of booking in advance of the date of ceremony. A cash input system is required.
- Risk Assessment – these are now required to be completed by officers of the council and presented to councillors for decisions to be made. The Town Clerk explained councillors could have personal liability for decisions made.

Cllr T Robbins proposed to present the internal audit to Full Council. This was seconded by Cllr Folkard and agreed by the committee.

The Chair thanked the RFO for all her hard work in preparing her first audit.

#### **24/62/FCM EXTERNAL AUDIT 2023-24**

The Town Clerk presented the External Audit papers. It was proposed by Cllr Siggs, seconded by Cllr Pullin and agreed by the committee to pass to Full Council.

Cllr T Robbins thanked the Town Clerk and the RFO for all their hard work during the audit process.

#### **24/63/FCM UNITARY AND ACQUISITIONS**

Haylee Wilkins, Devolution Officer provided a presentation on the devolution of services and associated assets from Somerset Council. A copy of the presentation had been distributed prior to the meeting. It is now known the ID Verde contract with Somerset Council will come to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025. Although it is expected the playgrounds will be dropped by the end of 2024.

The Mayor left the meeting.

Questions and discussion throughout the presentation took place and it was agreed a working party should be created immediately to meet weekly. The following members were agreed:

From Finance & Council Matters Committee, Cllrs: Siggs, Cursley (Chair), Folkard, Van Mensenkampff

WCC Officers: Town Clerk, Devolution Officer, RFO and minute taker

The Mayor would also be involved in these meetings.

All meetings will be minuted and made available to all councillors.

Cllr Denis asked whether other councillors will be involved. The Town Clerk advised councillors will be consulted depending on the nature of the service or asset being considered.

Cllr Pullin was concerned that Somerset would be dropping services without public consultation. The Town Clerk confirmed it was vital WCC have a strategy in place to work with Somerset Council during this process.

**24/64/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

Cllr Powell was concerned with councillors having personal liability as mentioned in 24/61/FCM. Cllr Siggs advised advice from officers can be taken, councillors can make alternative decisions and not take the advice. They are personally liable if that decision is reckless/illegal. Cllr Denis stated they had confidence in the officer's advice but she now felt unable to attend a meeting and make alternative suggestions without fear. The Town Clerk advised any recommendations they make to council will be made after considering all risks involved.

**24/65/FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 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:** .....