

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WELLS CITY COUNCIL HELD VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 7.00PM

COUNCILLORS PRESENT (VIA ZOOM): Cllrs: L Agabani, J Browne, P Crummay, S Cursley, O Hartley, R Humphreys, A l'Anson, J Linsdell, J Osman (Mayor), J Parker, C Rees, J Rust, P Welch (Deputy Mayor), C Wride

IN ATTENDANCE (VIA ZOOM): Town Clerk/RFO: S Luck
WCC Staff: S Bristow, A Westwood
SCC Cllr T Munt
SCO Cllr M Cooke
4 members of the public

NOT PRESENT: Cllr N Kennedy

20/74C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllr S Briton

20/75C DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 27th July 2012:
Councillors were asked whether they had any declarations of interest. No declarations were received.

20/76C MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 23RD JULY 2020
Cllr Osman referred to item 20/70C District Cllr Ayres' verbal report as being not entirely accurate (*note, written report was requested but not received*) and pointed out that WCC had sole interest in Wells Recreation Ground.
Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, confirmed as a true record and will be signed by the Mayor.

20/77C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Mr C Simons spoke (i) Planning permission Waitrose delivery yard - the problems evolving with regard lorries driving into Whiting Way and backing into the yard. Cllr Osman requested more detailed information from Mr Simons and asked him to copy in Cllrs Osman, l'Anson and the Town Clerk. (ii) Mr Simons enquired as to why tenants of the council were given a six months rent-free period following two days into lockdown.

Chair of Finance, Cllr Agabani, confirmed that the tenants were given this rent-free period in light of the current crisis. The Town Clerk responded saying that the council had a choice between taking legal action against the tenants who could not pay their rent, or offering the rent-free period. Six months down the line, one of the two businesses has gone into liquidation and the viability of all service industry tenants is a concern.

Cllr Osman added that legally it is increasingly more difficult for landlords to obtain rent from tenants who default on payment.

SCO Cllr M Cooke talked about the Local Government Reorganisation Working Group and proposed representation by the Mayor. His comments were considered later in the meeting (see **20/86C**)

20/78C WELLS FOOD FESTIVAL
Mr J Abbot, Chair of WFF Organising Committee, gave an update on the virtual Wells Food Festival which is due to take place 10/11th October. He spoke of the sponsorship by Charlie Bigham. Cllr Osman thanked Mr Abbot for his hard continued work.

20/79C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wells St Andrews Ward will sadly be closing. On the plus side, it has been announced that there will be 35 new mental health experts working in the Mendip area. The Bridge will remain in situ and the premises will not be put up for sale.

Urgent proposal re Portway Annexe (Somerset Skills & Learning) - future of adult provision. To be discussed under item **20/94C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT**

HMS Flying Fox in Bristol visit was unfortunately cancelled due to the Covid restrictions.

20/80C CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 30th July 2020:

In the absence of Cllr Briton, Cllr Cursley announced that Cllr Briton is standing down as Chair and on behalf of the committee conveyed thanks for her valued efforts and input into the committee as Chair.

Cllr Cursley presented the minutes and invited questions.

20/81C STAFFING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2020:

The Chairman presented the minutes and invited questions.

Cllr Rust questioned the apprenticeship scheme; how long would this be for and would there be a permanent position at the end?

The Town Clerk responded; the length of apprenticeship depends on the different types of apprenticeships and the skills involved, ranging from 1 - 3 years. A permanent job at the end of it would depend on the individual and availability within the council at the time.

20/82C MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2020:

The Chairman presented the minutes and invited questions.

Cllr Rust asked what the Loyalty League is. Cllr Agabani explained in detail.

20/83C MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meetings held on 30th July 2020, 3rd and 17th September 2020, 20th August 2020:

The Chairman announced that Cllr Briton is standing down from the committee and conveyed his thanks on behalf of the committee for her valued contribution.

The Chairman presented all four sets of minutes and invited questions.

20/84C CITY CENTRE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2020:

The Chairman presented the minutes and mentioned the new initiative, Wildlife Friendly City, which the committee approved at the last meeting. He invited questions.

Cllr Rust asked for a written proposal on the Wildlife Friendly City, including the Wildlife Friendly City logo. This had been sent to committee members but not non-members.

Cllr Parker requested that the logo be available to view on zoom. This was indeed carried out and Cllr Parker gave an overview. The written proposal will be available to view alongside the minutes on the council website and also all councillors will be sent a copy.

20/85C NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP

To receive report (attached)

Cllr l'Anson presented the report. The next NP Steering Group meeting is 13th October, and any councillors who are not on the Steering Group are welcome to join that meeting. The committee is working hard and hope to go out to consultation by the end of the year.

The Mayor thanked the committee for their hard work and the report was unanimously accepted.

20/86C LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION WORKING GROUP

To receive report (attached)

Cllr Curlsley presented the report. In relation to the point made by Mr Cooke, Cllr Cursley had been in touch with Cllr Reeves, SCO Chair*, and agreed that members of the group will be in regular contact with him. Business plans have been submitted to the local government. The group is awaiting two documents to be submitted i) business plans, and ii) devolution white paper.

Cllr Rust i) Request for Assets spread sheet - to be submitted once it has been reduced to showing Wells assets only. ii) Responsibilities of re recycling - this was a generic report and nothing has been discussed in detail with MDC.

The Mayor thanked the committee for their hard work agreed the best way forward is to continue negotiations with MDC and SCC. He stressed that that both he and the Town Clerk are in negotiations with MDC with regard the Recreation Ground Trust.

The report was unanimously accepted.

The Town Clerk will contact SCO to ask the question of WCC representation and report back.

* Cllr Wride pointed out that Cllr Jim Reeves is no longer the SCO Chair. It is now Cllr Marcel Hayden.

20/87C COVID 19 RECOVERY WORKING GROUP

To receive report. Cllr Hartley gave a verbal report. The group has met three times since the last council meeting. He thanked Cllr Humphreys for her hard work on Wells Welcomers Project and also the volunteers. More volunteers welcome. Thanks also went out to those who helped in getting the Loyalty League get off the ground. The next meeting is due to take place mid October.

The verbal report was unanimously accepted.

20/88C FORMAL ELECTION OF THE MAYOR FOR 2020-21

To take office from 10th October (Mayor Making):

Cllr Welch was nominated to be the next Mayor of Wells.

This was proposed by Cllr Osman, seconded and the election of Cllr Welch was confirmed.

Congratulations were conveyed to Cllr Welch who said a few words of thanks to those who voted for him. He looks forward to working with everybody in the future.

20/89C FORMAL ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR 2020-21

To take office from 10th October (Mayor Making):

Cllr Hartley was nominated to be the next Deputy Mayor of Wells.

This was proposed by Cllr Osman and councillors present voted unanimously for the election of Cllr Hartley.

Congratulations were conveyed to Cllr Hartley who said a few words of thanks to all present and congrats to Cllr Welch, whom he will support as best he can in his role as Deputy Mayor.

20/90C WRITTEN REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

No written reports received.

Cllr Linsdell - reported that Fairtrade has disbanded in Wells.

20/91C DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

This report was not received in time for the meeting. However, it is now attached for information (attached)

20/92C COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Verbal report was given by SCC Cllr Munt. However, a written report is due to be sent to the Town Clerk and this will duly be attached to the minutes when received.

20/93C WELLS CITY COUNCIL CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The WCC Calendar of Meetings was approved. The Town Clerk explained the process of how committees will be formalised on 15th October. He also confirmed that due to the Covid-19 restrictions there will not be a Remembrance parade on 8th November.

20/94C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

- i) Cllr Wride spoke of her concern over Town Hall storage being used to store wine. The Town Clerk explained that rent is charged for this space and is an agreement between the Town Hall Manager and Sante Wines who rents it. Cllr Wride has gone to the Monitoring Officer for advice and this case will be on the next Finance agenda.
- ii) Cllr Osman - Somerset Skills and Learning will be pulling out of the Portway Annexe building, owned by SCC. The lease has been terminated and ends in December. However, Cllr Osman proposes that WCC apply to MDC to register the building for community use. This proposal was seconded by Cllr l'Anson. Cllr Agabani suggested finding ways of raising funds. The Town Clerk is currently looking at options of supporting this project. Further to Cllr Agabani's amendment, this proposal was also seconded by Cllr l'Anson and was unanimously accepted.
- iii) The Town Clerk (in the absence of Cllr Kennedy) on behalf of the staff and councillors, wished to thank the Mayor for everything he has achieved during his role as Mayor. The Mayor responded with his thanks for all the support from staff and all the councillors. Both congratulated the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor and wished them every success in their future role.

EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Note: If it is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence it will be proposed by the Mayor that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended, excluding the press and public.

20/95C DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meetings of Wells City Council will be:

Saturday 10th October 2020, 11am, Mayor Making (restricted numbers)

Thursday 15th October, 7pm, Annual City Meeting