

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22nd MAY 2025 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani (Mayor), J Browne, T Butt Philip, S Cursley, D Denis (Deputy Mayor), S Eden, D Orrett, S Powell, G Robbins, T Robbins, H Siggs, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: H Wilkins
RFO: C Woodland
Mace Bearer: C Price
WCC Staff: C Hobbs
MP for Wells and Mendip Hills/ Somerset Cllr for Wells: T Munt
4 members of the public
A Vallis: Member of the Press

25/71/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: G Folkard, T Kolizeras, I Von Mensenkampff

25/72/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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 item 12 on the agenda

25/73/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 24th APRIL 2025

Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

25/74/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Chair of the Wells Civic Society congratulated The Mayor on his appointment.

C Simons asked for clarification on the following points

- i. At Full Council of 24th April 2025 it was minuted that there would be an update of the Bishop's Barn at this meeting but that it's not on this meeting's agenda.
- ii. Clarification of figures in the Financial Accounts re PAYE and NI
- iii. With regard to Item 12 that the closure of the bus stop in Sadler Street may not be a successful traffic calming measure and that the scheme be given wider consideration in case one improvement impacts negatively on another

The Town Clerk reported that there had been a delay with regard to the WRGT and that it would be included in the agenda for the next Full Council Meeting.

25/75/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor's Diary

- i. 25th May Wells Festival of Running
- ii. 3rd Jun Meeting with the Dean, Dean's Lodging
- iii. 4th Jun Swan Hotel Reopening
- iv. 4th Jun Street Parish Council's Community Awards & Investiture Ceremony – Deputy Mayor attending
- v. 7th Jun Bath Civic Procession and Mayor Ceremony
- vi. 8th Jun Twinning BBQ, Wells Museum
- vii. 14th Jun Act to Adapt Launch, Wells Town Hall
- viii. 17th Jun Wells Refugees Awareness Day, Wells Cathedral Education Room
- ix. 18th Jun Opening of Bubwith Chapel, Almshouses

25/76/C STAFFING COMMITTEE

Cllr T Robbins presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2025

No questions received

25/77/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Cllr S Cursley presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2025
No questions were received but Cllr D Denis asked that all Draft minutes be sent to all members of the committee prior to being finalised.

25/78/C THANK YOU TO OUTGOING TOWN CLERK

Official thank you from Wells City Council to Mr Stephen Luck
Cllr L Agabani (Mayor) led Wells City Councillors in congratulating Stephen (Retiring Town Clerk) for 28 years with Wells City Council in a variety of roles prior to becoming Town Clerk and for his support of the new Mayors and for his consistent hard work for Wells City Council. A presentation of flowers and an engraved vase was made to Stephen.

25/79/C TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO SERIVE ON THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES AND TO ELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

• Finance Committee

Cllrs: S Cursley, T Butt Philip, T Robbins, H Siggs, P Welch took committee positions.
Cllr H Siggs nominated Cllr T Robbins as Chair. Seconded by Cllr S Cursley.
There were no other nominations

• Staffing & Personnel Committee

Cllrs: J Browne, D Denis, S Eden, T Robbins, D Orrett took committee positions.
Cllr D Denis nominated S Eden for the position of Chair. Seconded by Cllr J Browne. There were no other nominations.

• Planning Advisory Committee

Cllrs: L Agabani, D Denis, S Powell, G Robbins took committee positions.
Cllr D Denis nominated S Powell for the position of Chair. Seconded by Cllr G Robbins.
There were no other nominations

• Estates Committee

Cllrs: T Butt Philip, S Cursley, D Orrett, G Robbins, H Siggs, P Welch took committee positions.
Cllr S Cursley nominated Cllr H Siggs for the position of Chair. Seconded by Cllr T Robbins.
There were no other nominations.

• Civic and Archives Committee

Cllrs: D Denis, S Eden, D Orrett, T Robbins, H Siggs took committee positions.
Cllr D Denis nominated herself for the position of Chair. Seconded by Cllr S Eden.
There were no other nominations.

• Outside Spaces Committee.

Cllrs: D Denis, S Eden, T Butt Philip, D Orrett, S Powell G Robbins took committee positions.
Cllr S Powell nominated Cllr D Orrett for the position of Chair. Seconded by Cllr S Eden.
There were no other nominations

25/80/C CALENDAR OF MEETINGS & ENGAGEMENTS

Cllr H Siggs that Full Council meetings would be more appropriately scheduled for the fourth Thursday of the month.
Cllr D Denis concurred with Cllr H Siggs regarding the scheduling and suggested that Planning Committee might meet fortnightly.
Cllr D Orrett enquired whether two meetings being held on one night might be too onerous.
The Town Clerk pledged to take another look at the schedule to accommodate the suggestions made.

25/81/C TO CONSIDER FINANCIAL POLICIES

To consider and approve financial policies presented to Finance and Council Matters

- Financial Regulations
- Investment Policy
- Debt Recovery Policy

C Woodland (RFO) reported that these three items have been recommended following the latest Internal Audit.

Following a brief explanation from C Woodland of the debt collection strategy, the meeting voted unanimously to include the above policies.

25/82/C TO CONSIDER THE TRAFFIC PROPOSALS PRESENTED BY THE OUTSIDE SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr L Agabani presented the traffic proposals but explained that the work completed so far is a first step to improving traffic management in Wells.

Cllr T Butt Philip questioned the rationale of some details of the traffic proposals which are also mentioned in the local Plan and neighbourhood plan and is concerned that the proposals are not coordinated. The re siting of the bus stop and removal of blue badge parking from loading bays are proposals that he does not support.

Cllr S Eden reported that she and the Town Clerk met with G Warren from Somerset Council regarding issues that have been highlighted by the Accessible Wells group. The removal of blue badge parking from loading bays was one an issue included in the talks and suggested that the groups work together to help with a holistic approach.

The Town Clerk reiterated that she has drafted a report for the first Outside Spaces Committee where Highways and traffic implications work will be undertaken.

Cllr D Denis spoke of her disapproval regarding moving of the bus stop and of her concerns regarding loading bays being blocked by cars parked and the implications for delivery drivers and spoke of her support for more dedicated blue badge parking. Cllr D Denis asked that Somerset Unitary Authority give Wells a bigger priority when it comes to active travel funding.

25/83/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES.

Cllr D Denis reported that four Councillors from Wells City Council and four from St Cuthbert Out Parish Council had met on the 21st May 2025. Meetings will be every eight weeks to discuss matters that affect mutual matters between the two Parishes. Cllr D Denis thanks St Cuthbert Out for organising the VE80 day. (Minutes attached)

25/84/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS

Cllr T Butt Philip submitted the report 22/05/2025 (Report attached)

Cllr D Denis asked that Wells City Council write to the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust in support of the reopening of the Maternity Unit at Yeovil which has recently closed for a 6 month period. This request was supported by Cllr T Butt Philip.

Cllr L Agabani (Mayor) asked about for more information about the Chair of Somerset Council's visit to Ukraine. Cllr T Butt Philip replied that it was to foster better relationships. Cllr Welch spoke of his support of the visit.

25/85/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr D Denis spoke of her concerns for the closure of South Street car park and of her concerns for the alternative parking for residents and Tourists. Cllr T Robbins concurred that there has been a lack of understanding of the car parking needs of the people of Wells and might other car parking options nearby may have been more suitable.

25/86/C FORWARD PLAN

As referenced on the Agenda for the Councillors to note

25/87/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be 26th June 2025, 7pm

EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

Minutes signed by The Mayor: **Date:**

**WELLS CITY COUNCIL – ST CUTHBERT (OUT) PARISH
COUNCIL
MUTUAL INTEREST GROUP**

MEETING NOTES

21st May 2025

Present: Cllrs D Denis, D Orrett, H Siggs (WCC) T Hathway, S Johns, J Zorab (SCO PC)

Apologies: Cllr S Powell

Clerk: L Pool

Administration

Amendment: the presentation for the Rugby Club development was provided by Stonewater, not Gleeson as previous meeting notes mentioned.

The group's name should not include 'working': simply, Mutual Interest Group

Both Devolution and Planning are to be standing items on future agendas

Points arising from previous meeting (19 March 2025)

Planning: it was noted that the 40% affordable housing demand was already included in WCC Local Plan. A letter of support for the Gladman Appeal (site west of Priory Fields, Wookey Hole Road/Haybridge) was pending from the next Planning Meeting.

Youth provision: both councils were aware that the YMCA had begun a scoping survey. No action, other than to encourage residents to participate.

Active Travel: Somerset Council had identified land around Clements Close & Sheldon Drive that is to be devolved to WCC but there were some peculiarities around their continued ownership of other strips.

Park Wood: latest communication from Savills was that the felling licence was provided by the Forestry Commission and replanting was due for 2030, following grant applications. Tessa Munt MP was compiling a dossier on various felling works around the city.

Devolution: WCC has agreed to grass-cutting in certain new areas. Somerset Council require continued ownership of areas with visibility splays. The arrangement was likely to be confusing to residents.

Agenda items:

1 **Wells Eco Week:** SCO are to provide details of plans for the parish for the WEN website asap. There was a proposal that Saturday 18th October could be an Active Travel Day, with multiple activities supporting and promoting active travel: it would be an excellent collaboration activity between the two councils and the LCN Active Travel Working Group. Cllr Denis was to talk to SCO Environment Working group at their next meeting.

2 SCO clerk to liaise with Reece Coulson for website input

3 Tony Hathway to request Active Travel Day be on the next LCN agenda

1 **Wells Joint Burial Committee:** arrangements require fresh ratifying by WCC to be more formal. It is subject to some historic quirks and cannot be disbanded because of joint ownership between WCC & SCO PC. Haylee Wilkins is working through terms and conditions of developer's S106 agreement, particularly regarding the use of part of the cemetery space as a works depot during construction. The S106 agreement therefore is not yet signed off.

2 Haylee to report findings from document scrutiny.

1. **Park Wood update:** Tessa Munt MP had been able to establish that Forestry Commission permission for felling had been given in 2023, but the extent of permissions was unclear. There was some nature mitigation included in the permissions for badgers and bats. The document relating to the above confirmed to exist by Tessa Munt would be of interest.

1. **Planning:** areas of interest such as prospective housing developments in the West and east of Wells- impacts on Green Gap and impacts on Wells Infrastructure. Agreed

S106 monies for the Elm Close to remain on the radar as legal terms are being reviewed. All agreed it is important to work together to ensure the monies are retained by the councils for the purpose requested- cemetery and community interest.

□ Clerks will notify each other's council when invited as consultees to new planning application, particularly the Elm Close 'Kingfisher Common' application: 'red flag'

1. **Volunteer activities:** Lots of interest but insurance obstacles. Both councils support progress for **volunteer** activities eg litter picking and water pollution testing if insurance and H/S can be met.

- Lisa to scrutinise insurance policy for volunteer cover & discuss with Haylee

- Lisa to present possible Disclaimer form to SCO Full Council

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6. Youth Provision: YMCA scoping survey underway. Cllr Zorab mentioned the JustGiving fundraiser for the skate park, used by both parish young people (and maybe some older ones!).

- Both clerks to promote the survey and fundraiser to respective communities

1 **The Britannia Inn:** SCOP recognised value for residents on East side of Wells. Share offer is still live. An update on the fundraising progress would be useful

2 Lisa to ask EWCBS for an update

1 **Active travel/MUP-** for 2 crossings on Priory Rd and Tucker St- both Councils would like a letter from Councils to Somerset to request commitment to enhance Active Travel in Wells.

2 Clerks to provide letters to respective councils

Meeting closed, 8.30pm