



WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26th MARCH 2026 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on agendas: [Wells City Council](#) website

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: H Wilkins
RFO: C Woodland
Mace Bearer: C Price
WCC Staff: C Hobbs
Somerset Cllr for Wells and MP for Wells and Mendip Hills: T Munt
Somerset Council Mendip Hills: Cllr E Hobbs
7 Members of the public

26/39/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: J Edmonds

26/40/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None declared.

26/41/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 26TH FEBRUARY 2026

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

The Mayor paid respects to Ross Young whose funeral was held on 25th March. Ross was a dedicated volunteer and set up the Wells Tourism Ambassadors and was involved in many other local interest groups for the benefit of the city. The City Council expressed its sorrow at his loss and wished to convey condolences to Ross' family.

26/42/C ACTIONS FROM THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 26th FEBRUARY 2026

No actions

26/43/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

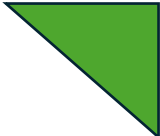
Bill Lloyd told the meeting of a strategy put together by a group, made up from heritage partners, called "Visit Wells" who aspire to build a resilient visitor economy in Wells. A managed tourist economy is considered to be required for the future to increase visitors and the length of their stays, to spend more money and to provide employment for young people of Wells. Previous bids for the City of culture award but were not successful. However a review of the scheme by the department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) now offers a Town of Culture bid of up to £3 million for successful applicants. All interested towns have been asked to put in an expression of interest (EOI). The closing date for expressions is 31.03.2026 and has been submitted on 23.03.2026. WCC does not need to be the accountable body, however is detailed in the Expression as such. If successful and asked to provide a full proposal, then further working group would be required to determine how to proceed.

Cllr D Denis asked about which stage the cultural director, referenced in the EOI would be appointed?

Bill Lloyd assured the meeting that this would happen if a bid was requested to be submitted.

Cllr I Von Mensenkampff asked why the bid had already been submitted?

Bill Lloyd informed the meeting that the bid had not been submitted and that it was an expression of interest at this stage.



Cllr D Orrett thanked the group for their work on the submission.

Peter Hopwood Chair of Somerset prostate Support Association, (SPSA) attended the meeting to give feedback on the recent Prostate testing events at Croscombe Village Hall last year and at the Town Hall in February 2026, for which WCC offered funding through its Community Grants scheme. Specific thanks was offered to the Town Hall team for their support within the event. In total across the two events, over 600 men were tested.

David Buxton spoke of his concerns for Keward stream. He has concerns that the stream is becoming blocked and will cause flooding in the future.

The Town Clerk confirmed that she is in regular contact with Mr Buxton, and she has engaged with local residents, environment agency and Somerset Rivers authority and will continue to do so.

Chris Simons made two points. The first was that attachments on the agenda are not always available which makes public participation difficult as they can't read documents in advance. Mr Simons also questioned the wording on the top of an agenda which he quoted "*Wells City Council has declared a climate emergency. Each agenda item must consider the impact on any policy and decision.* Given that Item 15 is being discussed at this meeting under tourism, I feel that you need to address the statement at the beginning and might consider agreeing with the Glasgow declaration which has a climate action on tourism, due to be implemented by 2030. I would like to think the discussion tonight on tourism will focus as you said on the environment.

The Mayor asked the Town Clerk to review the statement and make a recommendation to Council

Tom Brie a local Artist teacher and writer spoke of his educational courses and is running one called City of labyrinths at the end of May 2026. I would like if possible to do one in the Bishop's Barn. The event will hopefully bring people into the city and participate.

The Mayor asked Tom Brie to get in touch with the Town Clerk.

Ruth Ames-White spoke of the work that had gone into creating the Tree of Life Mosaic which was commenced in 2019 and then completed by volunteers in 2022. Since then a location has been researched for a suitable place to display it.

26/44/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Saturday 2nd May Civic Opening of May Fair 11am
Saturday 16th May Mayor Making Ceremony 4:30pm
Wednesday 3rd June Wells Recreation Ground Trust AGM

Mayor's Diary

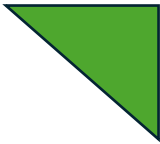
- i. 27th Mar Tour of Town Hall for Choristers from Wells Cathedral
- ii. 28th Mar Wells Little Theatre AGM
- iii. 12th Apr Bowling the first wood, Wells Bowls Club
- iv. 17th Apr Firewalk at Wells Cathedral in support of SWEDA
- v. 18th Apr Somerset Circle Ride, Wells Cathedral Green

26/45/C OUTSIDE SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr D Orrett presented the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2026
No questions received

26/46/C ESTATES COMMITTEE

Cllr H Siggs presented the minutes the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March 2026
Cllr D Denis asked two questions. The first question was retracted and the second question was in relation to the Market trading times. Cllr Denis has concerns as many people like to shop before 9am in the morning. The trading hours are stated as 9am to 3pm. Cllr Denis asked about procedures for partial closures as occurred on the 25th March 2026
The Mayor informed the meeting that these discussions can take place in Item 13



26/47/C STAFFING & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Cllr S Eden presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2026
No questions received

26/48/C FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr L Agabani presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2026
The Town Clerk confirmed that Cllr Folkard has requested a change to the minutes where it references that Cllr Folkard signed off the accounts when he was not present at the meeting. These amendments will be made.

Cllr D Denis asked about the underspend and if it will go into the general reserves, and will those reserves carry forward into the budgets for next year?

The Town Clerk confirmed that the value coming forward from the Finance Minutes will go into the general reserves and the remaining general reserves will have budget sum with associated cross-codes for 2026/2027 where there may be additional reserve funds.

26/49/C PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Cllr S Powell presented the minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2026
Cllr S Powell reported that the Rugby Club had been discussed.

26/50/C TREE OF LIFE CONSIDERATION

The Town Clerk informed the meeting the report was written at a time when there was one proposed location and that there may be other options. This discussion is to ensure the management liability is fit for purpose wherever the tree is located.

Cllr G Robbins supported the location of the wall of the Library on Union Street.

Cllr I Von Mensenkampff also supported the Library as a location and asked how much the maintenance was likely to be regarding insurance etc.

The Town Clerk reported that should the tree be located on the library wall that as a Somerset Council asset they would be expected to cover insurance liability. The Memorandum of understanding which is in draft form will clarify City Council liability. Ongoing management is likely to include a small amount of officer time with a regular check. Any running repairs and cleaning.

Cllr S Powell asked if costs are for artist time, should a repair be needed.

Cllr T Butt Philip spoke of his support for the location of the tree and mentioned that a need for public art is stated in the Neighbourhood Plan. There are several mosaics already in place in Wells which need very little in the way of management and give high value.

Cllr D Orrett informed the meeting that installation costs will not fall to WCC to finance.

The Mayor reported that following work by the Town Clerk in creating the Memorandum of understanding, that this will come back to Full Council as a proposal, following liaison with the Outside Space Committee.

VOTE: Cllrs voted unanimously to support the consideration.

26/51/C MARKET POLICY AND PROCEDURES ADOPTION

The Town Clerk noted the comments made earlier by Cllr D Denis regarding the start time and committee to ensuring that start times for the market were clear, but also remained manageable for on-site set up and health and safety.

Clarity was provided that only severe weather events forced closure of the markets.

The Town Clerk walked through the changes and new elements.

VOTE: Cllrs voted unanimously to support the consideration.


26/52/C HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY ADOPTION

Cllrs voted unanimously to adopt the Health and Safety Policy

26/53/C TOURISM – CITY OF CULTURE 2028 BID

The Mayor announced that the expression of interest had been submitted.

It was confirmed that the City council were eligible to apply, even as a city.



Cllr S Powell welcomed the bid and quoted the Neighbourhood plan on page 47 as saying WCC should welcome visitors. She expressed concern that the expression of interest had already been submitted having mentioned WCC several times and asked whether Project Factory are taking on the organisational responsibility

Cllr T Butt Philip had mixed feelings about the proposal. He noted his support but concern associated with any future development of a proposal, if invited. Noting that the value of the bid is significant that WCC have been mentioned as being supportive prior to tonight's meeting, which is incorrect as a decision has not yet been taken by the Council. It was discussed that a proposal was to be invited and subsequently submitted and that more significant governance would be required.

Cllr D Orrett reported that the deadline was very tight for the submission and that Bill Lloyd had been unable to attend the previous meeting due to the death of Cllr T Robbins, however, it was recognised that this evening's decision should have been sought before it was placed.

Cllr I Von Mensenkampff said that she thinks that WCC should be the accountable body for the purposes of transparency.

Cllr H Siggs said that he is aware of what can go wrong and endorses strong governance. He had issues with aspects of the document Item 3 where match funding is mentioned and then mentions that there is no definable budget. The commitment seems open ended regarding WCC staff and WCC finances, so clarification is needed.

Cllr G Folkard shared concerns raised by Cllr H Siggs and spoke of neighbouring Towns' bids

Cllr D Denis applauded the vision. Hoped they could proceed but shared concerns raised by Cllrs T Butt Philip and H Siggs. The cost may have an impact on the precept which is decision for us as a council and accountability and transparency should be sought from the outset not retrospectively.

Cllr D Orrett said there will be CIO there will be trustees, governance and scrutiny. WCC will be partner support.

The Mayor asked that Wells City Council take a vote in principal to support the Expression of Interest, but that any future application or progression return to council with a fully scoped appraisal before any further engagement or commitment takes place with DCPM..

VOTE: 11 voted to support the consideration, 1 voted against, 2 abstentions

26/54/C KNAPP HILL CATCHMENT UPDATE & PROPOSAL

Cllr D Denis proposes Wells City Council led a bid for funding from Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) as this will ensure the coordination between the various landowners and provide a better outcome for the full length of Tor Lane to serve our communities in the East of Wells. Cllr T Butt Philip thanked Cllr D Denis for the work on this proposal. Cllrs voted unanimously to adopt the proposal

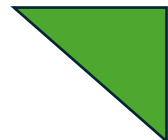
26/55/C CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Town Clerk explained the rationale for the changes in the schedule frequency for 2026-2027 to allow staff to get a greater amount of work done between meetings. Cllrs voted unanimously to adopt the Calendar of meetings.

26/56/C OUTSIDE BODIES – ALMSHOUSES TRUSTEE EXTENSION TO MAY 2027

The Town Clerk apologised that there was an inaccuracy as it had been referenced that Cllr D Denis was Trustee, when in fact that won't happen until May 2026. The Trustees are currently Cllrs S Powell and S Cursley. The proposal is to continue Cllr S Powell as trustee until May 2027. Cllr P Welch asked for clarification as he understood that he was also Trustee at the Almshouses

Cllrs voted unanimously to adopt the Trustee extension to May 2027.



26/57/C CIVIC GUIDE ADOPTION

The Town Clerk explained that since being circulated there had been recent changes following conversations with Councillors. The amendments were highlighted by the Town Clerk. Cllrs voted unanimously for the Civic guide adoption.

26/58/C NOMINATION TO AWARD THE HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE CITY AWARD

The Mayor proposed that the Nomination to Award the Honorary Freedom of the City be moved to the final item on the agenda

26/59/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr P Welch presented his report
No questions received

26/60/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS

No report received

26/61/C FORWARD PLAN

Full City Council Forward Plan	
Item	Proposed date for consideration
Youth Council Proposals	March 2026
Calendar of Meetings and Engagements	March 2026
Preparation for internal audit (Appropriation and Asset List)	March 2026
General Power of Competency	Every political cycle

26/62/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr D Denis reminded the meeting that there is an Act to Adapt workshop will take place on the 30th March 2026 in the Town Hall. The workshop is about growing your own vegetables and saving energy. There are notices on social media.

26/63/C NOMINATION TO AWARD THE HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE CITY AWARD

Council considered the nomination for Freedom of the City Award.
VOTE: 13 voted to support the consideration, 1 abstention.

The Town Clerk asked for nominations, volunteers to form a working group in line with due process. Cllrs D Denis, S Eden, S Cursley, T Kolizeras and T Butt Philip volunteered for the working group.

26/64/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be Thursday 23rd April 2026, 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