

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PORTWAY ANNEXE COMMITTEE ON WEDNESDAY 9TH JUNE 2021 AT 7.00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, S Briton (Chair), O Hartley (Deputy Mayor),
R Humphreys (Vice-Chair), T Leach, T Pullin

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
Facility & Administration Officer: K Westwood
WCC Cllr: N Kennedy, S Powell, J Rust
WCC Staff: S Glendinning
MDC Cllr: L Waters
PACG: I Robinson, N Fraser
3 members of the public

21/28PAC APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: J Osman, A l'Anson

21/29PAC DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 26th July 2012:

Councillors were asked whether they had any declarations of interest.

None declared

21/30PAC MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19TH MAY 2021

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, approved for signing with the following correction:

21/15PAC The Chair stated that MDC Cllr L Waters should of been included in Apologies for Absence.

21/31PAC MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Cllr Rust raised the following questions:

Business Plan Working Group –

- Can WCC claim VAT?
- There is no timeline, we have an idea of budget in the initial year with a projected 5 year cash flow with zero inflation, when will we see a completed Business Plan?

Refer to 21/32PAC

Portway Annexe Consultation Group -

- How do we ensure that only Wells precept payers respond?
- Will the precept payers of Wells be given an opportunity to express their views on whether they wish to purchase the Portway Annexe?
- Will they be given a realistic idea of potential costs?

Refer to 21/35PAC

Cllr Powell asked whether it was possible to itemise the precept cost per Council Tax Band in order to be open and honest. Cllr Agabani suggested this question be put to the Finance Committee.

Denise Denis asked whether the residents had been chosen for the Residents Working Group. S Briton confirmed this was yet to be carried out.

21/32PAC PURCHASE & PUBLIC WORKS LOAN UPDATE

The Town Clerk provided an update.

The Public Works Loan application is still at the approval stage with the Secretary of State. Once pre-approval given the loan application will be submitted to the public loans board. Once their approval is received, we then have 12 months to draw the money down or we lose the application.

The Solicitor has been contacted to request the up to date fire assessments and electric/gas certificates. We already have the asbestos report. The drainage report is still awaited.

Costs on insuring the building are being sought from our insurance company.

The Town Clerk answered Cllr Rust on whether WCC can claim VAT. WCC is VAT registered for all their activities. Each building is registered individually. A decision needs to be made by the Finance Committee, once all costs are known, on whether the Portway Annexe building will be VAT registered (in order to reclaim 20%). Once a decision is made it stands for 20 years.

Chris Simons asked if there was a penalty fee if WCC decide not to purchase the building within the 12 month draw down. The Town Clerk confirmed no costs would be incurred.

21/33PAC REPORT FROM RESIDENTS WORKING GROUP

Cllr Humphreys referred to her report previously circulated.

Brian Brooks and Denise Denis who live in the postcode area were present at the meeting.

Letters have been posted in the postcode areas to invite local residents to an informal discussion outside (socially distanced) within the grounds of the Portway Annexe on Sat 12th June, 2pm.

S Briton confirmed that the residents representatives will not be voting members of the Ctte but otherwise will be full members of the Ctte. If the local residents would rather not have representatives Cllr Humphreys will represent their views.

21/34PAC REPORT FROM COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

Cllr Agabani referred to his report previously submitted. No further questions were raised.

21/35PAC REPORT FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION WORKING GROUP

Cllr l'Anson had submitted a report prior to the meeting. In his absence, S Briton asked for any questions.

Next Meeting scheduled for this group on Fri 11th June. Drone footage will be available next week on the website. This will be followed by footage of the inside of the building.

A public consultation questionnaire is planned for Wells Voice which will be presented to Full Council in advance.

S Briton responded to Cllr Rusts questions:

- We can't ensure only precept payers respond, but we will be able to check addresses.
- Within the public consultation questionnaire the precept payers of Wells will be given an opportunity to express their views on the purchase of the Portway Annexe. The questionnaire would be put to Full Council for approval. The Town Clerk confirmed that legally WCC have agreed to purchase the Portway Annexe, 9 Councillors would need to submit a motion to Full Council for this decision to be re-considered within a six month period.
- This project is a first for WCC, every effort is being made to ensure potential costs, once known, are made clear to the public.

Chris Simons asked whether the questionnaire was for advisory purposes. S Briton replied that responses would be acted on. Ian Robinson advised the information from this process would need to be included and added to that obtained by the focus groups.

21/36PAC REPORT FROM BUSINESS PLAN WORKING GROUP

S Briton had circulated a report and two spreadsheets - expenditure with and without VAT. As mentioned earlier in 21/32PAC, the decision on whether the Portway Annexe will be VAT registered is to be referred to the Finance Committee.

Cllr Agabani volunteered to facilitate this working group going forward.

S Briton confirmed that WCC is not in a position to take bookings for the Portway Annexe as yet. However, she would encourage anyone who has a potential interest in using space in Portway Annexe to register this by contacting the Town Clerk, S Briton or Cllr Agabani.

There are two covenants on the building: 1) Building 2) Educational
Chris Simons asked whether we could check with the Solicitor, who could challenge WCC if the building usage is changed? The Town Clerk will check and report back.

21/37PAC DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITIES

To delegate authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to decide any urgent matters arising before the next meeting.
Agreed.

21/38PAC ANY OTHER MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

Cllr Agabani suggested learnings from this project should be shared with the Wells Recreation Ground Trust Project.

21/39PAC DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7:00 pm, Wednesday 7th July 2021

Minutes signed by The Chair: **Date:**