

CITY OF WELLS

CITY OF WELLS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2018

Minutes of Wells Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 14th March 2018 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Wells Town Hall.

Present:

City & District Councillors: Cllrs: J North (The Mayor), J Osman, H Siggs, D Unwin

City Councillors: Cllrs: R Greenwell, C Price, D Swain, G Wilson,
Wride (Deputy Mayor)

Town Clerk: Mrs F White. County Cllr T Munt. 2 members of the public

Refreshments were served at the start of the evening.

1. Apologies

Cllrs: R Ayres, M Brandon, C Cox, A Gibson, N Kennedy, R MacKenzie, T Robbins.
RFO: Mr S Luck

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2017

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, approved, and signed by the Mayor.

3. The Mayor's Annual Report

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the annual parish meeting. It seems like only yesterday that we were last here hearing the speech from the 643rd Mayor Cllr Alison Gibson.

This year so far, I have attended over 140 engagements and upwards of 50 meetings, whether that be Council meetings or meetings with other organisations and bodies.

This does not include the two or three, drop in sessions per week with the Town Clerk. Thank you, Felicity for your support this year. We may not have seen eye to eye on everything, and we have certainly had some robust discussions. However, this has certainly resulted in us making better decisions together and led to some good team working.

No sooner had I been sworn in as Mayor, but a few days later we had the Manchester Arena bombing and one of my first engagements was at the Cathedral leading the city in a service of reflection to think of all those who were killed, to also to think of their families and all people who are affected by acts of violence.

We had a bye election where we welcomed Cllr Ayres to the Council and not long after, we sadly lost Cllr Chris Britton. A resulting co-option saw us welcome Cllr Richard Greenwell to our Council.

This has been a good year for Wells and my report looks not at what I have done on an individual basis, (this has already been reported in the weekly Mayors Diary) but more at a Community level and how key groups within Wells are now becoming "outward focusing". They are looking at how they can make a real difference to our City. I for one have found motivation throughout my mayoral year from becoming involved with and working with local organisations and groups.

It has seen us welcome our Twinning Town Bad Durkheim to the City and as a result the Burgermeister and his family joined us for Carnival. I was able to visit both Paray le Monial and Bad-Durkheim where I also met our other twin town Kloitzburg.

Twining is now very much going from strength to strength. Over the last year our twin towns have built up relationships with the Council and our local community. I know the chair of Twining is very keen to ensure we reciprocate and work with their communities.

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It's certainly something the Mayoress and I have worked very hard to do. In April the Mayor and a delegation from Fontanellato in Italy will visit us. We will look forward to welcoming them and showing them our City, its history and culture from the past present and future.

We will also host a delegation from Naumberg and look forward to welcoming them to our City and Cathedral.

We hold annually civic events such as Mayor Making, giving thanks to Bishop Bekynton for the water conduits, the act of remembrance at our parish church and this Sunday will be the Legal Service where the new High Sheriff will be installed.

Community has focused highly over the last year and with the Town Clerk, we have worked hard to raise the profile of the Council. This will become evident from the reports the chairs of the Council Committees will show.

As a Council during 2017/18 we have focused on how the council can be more outward looking and, be proactively exploring ways, in which it can enhance the service to the community.

At this point I would like to thank my fellow councillors for all the hard work they do for the City Council. Their time is given voluntarily, as there are no members' allowances at this council. The time they spend working on your behalf is given because they care about their City and your Community.

The City tourism forum is just one example of outward facing community work we undertake. Cllr Swain, I am sure, will expand on this very theme.

One example I do wish to give is how local residents came together to bid to become the City of Culture in 2021. Although we did not win, we punched well above our weight and certainly raised our City's profile.

I have also worked with and supported the Dean and Cathedral Chapter. The Cathedral is also become very outward looking and wants to engage and work with the local community.

The Dean as well as myself have already committed to working with Kirsty Harris on a day for Wells – Promoting Wells and the exciting programme of events that takes place on an annual basis.

There will be a new event this year and that will be the Wells Theatre Festival. Details have and will continue to be circulated.

I should also mention the Blue School and Cathedral School. Both seats of learning offering the highest standards of education giving our young people the very best start in their life.

We welcome the new head of the Blue School, Mark Woodlock and say good bye to retiring principal of the Cathedral schools Mrs Elizabeth Cairncross. New principal will be Alastair Tighe.

Next, I would like to say a big thank you to all of you who have supported and attended my charity events over the year.

Just in case you need a reminder they are the 1955 squadron, City of Wells Air Cadets - Supporting young people in Wells and across the area to better prepare them with life skills to better equip them to go out into the world and make a valuable contribution from the off.

Secondly Heads Up - Raising awareness of mental health. How many people do we know who suffer from mental health, anxiety, depression or dementia? Well Heads Up offers day respite for carers, and lets people affected by Mental Health go to a safe place where they can join in in activities such as; crafts, pottery, woodwork, music or just sit in a quiet environment. There is also a garden and I'm hoping this year there will be a man shed.

Both these organisations need help in raising funds for their work and the Mayoress and I have felt very privileged to have been able to help in a small way. So far, we are just over the £4,000 mark with four events still to run.

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The building blocks for community engagement within Wells and with our twin towns over the last year have been laid on strong foundations. I am sure those who follow me are already excited and enthused about carrying on the work and making sure these institutions remain strong and lasting for the community.

Let's all work to build upon the foundations we have put in place going forward for our City. Thank you

4. Reports from Chairmen of City Council Committees.

Planning Committee Chairman Cllr Wride (Deputy Mayor)

This committee meets twice monthly and deals with local planning applications and street parking restriction applications.

This past year has been quite busy with applications involving both businesses and residential properties within the City. The Committee maintains a very high standard of decision-making and are always pleased to see members of the public attend meetings and become actively involved in the process.

On several occasions I have attended Mendip District Planning Board to address the committee about local applications. One of my main concerns as Chair was to confirm that notice is taken of the views of this committee in any decision made by Mendip. I was reassured that our views as local consultees are fully taken into consideration when any decision is being made.

There have been several applications and agenda items involving the siting of Telefonica/Vodafone Mobile Telephone masts; all applications have been refused to date, though the most recent appeal has introduced a new site which would seem to be more suitable. This is currently on-going.

The recent Radon Gas concerns at the David Wilson site at Wookey Hole Road appears to have been resolved; clearing and initial construction is now underway at the Thales site. The neighbouring development, in the St. Cuthbert Out Parish, has now been passed; it is for 203 houses and a school, which I am reliably informed, will be built by within the next few years.

The Planning Committee has recently submitted the Wells City Council's responses to the Mendip District Local Plan Part 2. Our consultation comments were robust, practical, and detailed, particularly in relation to open spaces and parking in the City.

The Council has already recognised the extent of the Civic Society's preparatory work on the Wells Neighbourhood Plan – to which I must add my thanks – but in December 2016 full council decided that a group of councillors should take this matter forward. In line with national guidance and best practice, the City Council has suspended work on the Wells Neighbourhood Plan during the consultation phase of the District Local Plan. We now await the outcome of the requests that the City Council have made and as soon as Mendip District Council indicates what will be included in the Wells section of the Mendip Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan can be progressed as a matter of course. In the meantime, those selected Councillors have kept the framework for the Neighbourhood Plan under informal review; they have also attended training and information sessions, and are developing a network of relevant contacts in the community in readiness to move the project forward.

I have with Michael Johns of the Wells Chamber of Commerce, produced a detailed plan which has been accepted by Somerset County Council to alter the signage to display clearly where long and short stay parking is in the City and where coaches should be dropping passengers in the future. I have no timescale to report for when this project will be completed. I also have no further information on the situation of the double yellow lining of St. John Street, Welsford Avenue, Burcott/Balch Road or North Road/College Road. With regard to the latter, which I have been advised has been postponed; a site meeting with Somerset County Council Highways Department has been requested by Councillor Osman as soon as possible.

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I would like to end by thanking my fellow committee members for making the last year very interesting and at times very entertaining – I feel we have a committee of ‘all the talents’!

City Centre & Open Spaces Committee Chairman Cllr Gibson

Report presented by Vice-Chairman Cllr Colin Price

In the last year the committee has been busy, productive and proactive.

It has:-

- Erected and dismantled yet another colourful and festive Christmas light display, which received good feedback.

- The main purchases for this year (2018) have been made and are within budget.

- Been working closely with Ian Jeffries from Visit by Coach to ensure its visitors have a warm welcome when they arrive in the City.

- Wells in Bloom has continued to create colourful floral displays for all to enjoy.

- Continued to work with both MDC & SCC to deal with any minor works required.

- Working with MDC & Visit by Coach to improve the appearance of the Bus Station, we now have the go ahead permission and works will start soon.

- Purchased the old phone box on the Wookey Hole Road, negotiations are underway to get the box moved to the Market Place to house a defibrillator.

- Regular maintenance on allotments is undertaken by the Open Spaces Manager.

- Cemetery: -

Regular maintenance work undertaken throughout the year.

Memorial safety check has been completed and memorials made safe.

Committee is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of Wells Cemetery, giving the City probably the best Cemetery in the Mendip area.

- Morrison’s map board has been cleaned, updated with new locks and a map of the City is now being displayed in it.

- Have dealt with many enquiries for the public throughout the year.

- The Open Spaces Team, under the delegated authority from Somerset Highways look after various sites in the City including Mountery Road, Lovers Walk areas.

- Skateboard Park - challenging and difficult at times, but we do regular safety checks and clear rubbish from the area all the time.

- This year WCC have employed a “Lengthsman” who helps keep the City tidy.

Wells in Bloom:-

The Wells in Bloom has again been wonderfully led and inspired by Cllr Maureen Brandon, ably supported by her team of volunteers throughout the City. We always have very positive feedback from the public and from the many visitors to the City. Thanks go to the sponsors of the program and to the Open Spaces team who put in extra hours of their own time to help with the heavier work.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Chairman Cllr Robbins

Report presented by Vice-Chairman Cllr David Swain

As well as generally overseeing the Council’s finances, this Committee distributes the grants budget, of £11,000 this year, to a variety of local groups. A recent grant was

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£2,000 to 'Love Musgrove' towards a new MRI scanner at Musgrove Hospital, serving this area.

Regular grants are also given by the City Council to support the work of the Visitor Information Service at the Museum; Mendip Community Transport; and Mendip Citizens Advice Bureau.

The 'Changing Places' disability toilet facility, being installed at the Town Hall, has been underwritten with funds available in the public toilets budget.

City & Tourism Forum Chairman Cllr David Swain

The Council convenes this meeting as a way of working with key stakeholders across the City. It facilitates communication between groups and sharing information about events.

Today we heard that the City has been awarded Coach-Friendly status, directly arising from the work of the 'Visit by Coach' project. The City Council has negotiated permissions from Mendip District Council to enable the 'Meet and Greet' team of volunteers, run by the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, to operate in the bus station. The City Council is carrying out enhancement works putting in planters, benches and a shelter.

Cllr Swain thanked all the staff for all the additional work they put into these projects.

Archives and Civic Assets Committee Chairman Cllr Harvey Siggs

The Heritage Open Day continues to increase in popularity; the Council has agreed to make the whole of the Town Hall available for this event on an annual basis. The City Archivist ably oversees this and other exhibitions to the benefit of the City.

The Chairman thanked the Archivist for all her work and paid tribute to the team of enthusiastic volunteers who give so much time and effort to assist in caring for the City Archives at the museum.

The project to conserve the paintings at the Town Hall is under way; the next project is restoration of the set of 1830 chairs, in use in the Mayor's Parlour for public functions.

The Committee will undertake the Council's Civic review this year, looking at the civic protocol and procedures, to ensure historic continuity as much as possible.

A recent bid for memorabilia of Admiral Somerville (a former Freeman of the City), was unsuccessful, as the sale price far exceeded the Committee's budget.

The Mayor's robe is being treated by a local expert to keep it in current use, the Council is grateful for this assistance.

The Committee is considering future possible projects for the Town Hall: development of the Parkes room, and perhaps a clock on the front of the Town Hall.

5. Open Forum: an opportunity to discuss matters of interest to the community

No matters were raised by members of the public.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 6.37 pm.

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