

CITY OF WELLS

CITY OF WELLS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2023

Minutes of Wells Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 8th March 2023 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Wells Town Hall.

ELECTORS PRESENT: WCC Cllrs: T Butt Philip, G Folkard, I Von Mensenkampff, D Orett, P Welch
Members of the public: C Price, C Simons, C Woodland (Town Clerk's Assistant), R Young

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllrs: S Cursley (Mayor), L Agabani, S Eden, T Pullin (Deputy Mayor)
1 member of the public

1. Apologies WCC Cllrs: D Denis, N Kennedy, S Powell, T Robbins
SCC Cllr: T Munt

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th March 2022
Minutes of last year's meeting were approved and signed by the Mayor.

3. The Mayor's Annual Report (Attached)
The Mayor presented his report and invited questions. No questions were received.

4. Chair of Committee Reports

i. Finance and Council Matters Committee

Chair, Cllr T Pullin presented the report (attached) and invited questions. C Simons referred to the Council's monthly financial report, specifically regard expenditure and income at the Portway Annexe.

-Was an income figure of £12,000.00 correct

-The expenditure breakdown of costs was not clear, e.g. including wages and loan repayments

-Was the Council aware VAT may need to be considered.

In response it was noted that wage costs are reported comprising all Council staff, and that a member of staff had been relocated from the Town Hall to the Portway Annexe in order to oversee the building and bookings in conjunction with their other role. Council staff all have input in the running of the building, it would be impossible to separate out wages as a separate cost.

There is currently a detailed report being undertaken by the Portway Manager which shows how income has been growing since the community building opened. This will be available shortly.

The Council have been in discussion re their VAT declaration at the last few Finance Committee meetings, and a consultation with experts will occur in the coming weeks, any changes will be reported and implemented after this.

ii. Outside Spaces and Estates Committee

Chair, Cllr L Agabani presented the report (attached) and invited questions. No questions were raised.

iii. Planning and Environment Committee

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Cllr L Agabani presented Chair Cllr D Denis' report (attached) and WCC Sustainability report (attached) and invited questions. No questions were raised.

iv. Staffing Committee

Chair Cllr T Robbins' report was read and no questions were raised.

v. Management Groups:

- Portway Annexe

Lead Cllr D Orett presented the report and invited questions.

She re-iterated to Mr Simons the response to his earlier questions and that the Council were very glad there was much positivity about the Portway Annexe in the community.

- Wells Recreation Ground Trust

Cllr L Agabani presented Cllr S Powell's report (attached), and invited questions.

It was noted the main issue at the moment with the Bishop's Barn was the need for specialist insurance as a Historical Monument once our current policy expires.

C Simons enquired if this was building insurance or public liability and it was explained the building and the recreation ground are currently adequately insured on both counts but that we would have to seek a new policy provider on renewal.

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

No questions were raised.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.25 pm.

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Mayor's Report to Wells City Council's Annual Parish Meeting 8th March 2023 Local government has a reputation for being dull. That has not been the case for Wells City Parish Council (WCPC) in the last 12 months.

As Mayor this has been a tumultuous year with over 200 engagements to date, including the following:

Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II

Death of Queen Elizabeth II

Reign of Charles II commences

Transfer of recreation ground and Bishops Barn to WCPC

Opening of Portway Annexe for use by the community

Retirement of the HM Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Annie Maw

Appointment of a new HM Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Mr Mohamed Saddiq

Appointment of Rt Revd Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

Retirement of the Dean of Wells Cathedral The Very Revd Dr John Davies

End of Mendip District Council – 31st March 2023

Start of the new unitary council new Somerset Council – 1st April 2023

Coronation of King Charles III – 6th May 2023

Key Events for WCPC

1. In a few weeks a major consolidation of local government will see Mendip District Council disappear. With the assets of the existing County Council and the four district councils being transferred to the new unitary authority on 1st April 2023. It is expected that in due course some assets and services will be devolved to WCPC.
2. The Wells City Parish Council owned Portway Annexe is a thriving centre for multiple community activities since opening in May 2022. The annexe has excelled at providing a Welcome Hub for the Ukrainian families living in the area.
3. The Neighbourhood Plan, which will give Wells some control over developers is almost complete. The Neighbourhood Plan has been approved by Full Council 12th December 2022. It is currently being prepared to be sent to Mendip District Council (MDC) with the Basic Conditions statement and will then be sent out for a consultation by MDC.

More detailed information will follow in the reports from our three committee chairs and two management groups. discussions.

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May I thank my fellow councillors, the Town Clerk, and the council staff for all their hard work in extremely challenging times.

Councillor Stewart Cursley Mayor of Wells 8th March 2023

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FINANCE AND COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE - Chaired by Cllr Tanys Pullin

This has been a very positive year for the Finance and Council Matters Committee.

The Finance and Council Matters Committee is one of the standing Committees of the Council. It meets once a month. It has a membership of 8 councillors, including a Chair and Vice-chair. These meetings are open to the public, although the Act of 1960, as amended, excludes the press and public, in order that confidential items can be discussed.

The function of the Finance and Council Matters Committee:

To exercise the 'Powers of the City Council' regarding: -

- Consideration and determination of all financial matters of the Council unless otherwise delegated, except those reserved by statute. (Finance and Council Matters Committee shall not have authority over the use of budgets assigned to other Committees.)
- This Committee deals with Governance review such as Finance Regulations, Standing Orders, Committee 'terms of reference' 'Schemes of Delegation'.
- Archives & Civic Assets, Unitary & Acquisitions, Staffing. There is now a separate stand-alone Committee for Staffing, which held its first meeting on the 12/1/23. Therefore, Staffing is no longer part of Finance.
- Governance documents; data protection procedures; key policies.
- The annual Budget and Precept.
- Management of the Council's expenditure and budgetary controls. Awarding grants. (Budgets assigned to other Committees shall not be used to award grants.)
- To consider cost implications of any major Council civic/ceremonial event.
- Use of assets and routine management of property, i.e. buildings, including public toilets (except where assigned to Outside Spaces and Estates Committee).

This year's main acquisition was the Bishop's Barn and the Recreation. Wells is very glad to have this historical building and will enjoy watching it come back to life. Talking of which, the Port way Annexe is going from strength to strength with rooms being rented on the increase and the Ukraine hub which is based at the Annexe has been a great success.

Local organisations (below) received grants in September 2022. Our Council has been happy to support such organisations and welcome future requests to help our community.

BLACK* artists on the move

GFM - local radio station for Glastonbury, Wells, Street Wells Community Network

Wells Lions Club

Wells Djembe Circle

Heads Up

Cllr Tanys Pullin 28/02/2023

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Outside Spaces and Estates Committee

Annual Parish Meeting Report

8th March 2023

Outside Spaces

The outside spaces team is now being led by Matt Johnson. Matt joined Wells City Council in May 2022. Time has been spent, moving the team to new headquarters. Where they have more space, in preparations for the anticipated increase in work load from the local government reorganisation.

Climate Emergency

The city council voted to put climate emergency back on the agenda. It has a lead and deputy lead councillor. There is also a working group tackling the challenges that we face.

Cemetery

Maintenance work continues in the cemetery. There are a number of trees that may need to be felled in the coming few months.

Portway Annexe

Portway Annexe has been one of this year's big successes. It has become an essential community asset. It is hosting a vast range of classes and activities. It is also the central hub for Ukrainian refugees in Wells and the surrounding area.

Recreation Ground

Wells City Council is now the trustees for the Recreation Ground Trust. A management group has been setup to establish a direction and management of the grounds and the Bishops Barn.

Cllr Louis Agabani

28/02/2023

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Planning and Environment Committee 2022

The committee has met monthly throughout the year and has had a quorum at each meeting. It welcomed Cllr Isa Von Mesenkampff and Cllr T Butt Philip to join the committee during the year as the original number of councillors was less than 8.

The decisions taken are recorded in the minutes and have always been sent to Mendip DC. There have been 3 delegated Authority Meetings where the timing of a planning application has needed a decision outside of the Committee's schedule. There has been one application that Wells CC sought guidance from Mendip on legal issues. Otherwise, we have noted that many of the decisions taken by Wells CC accord with Mendip, and where there has been an outcome that is not in line with our recommendations there has been no information relayed to Wells CC unless it is referred to Mendip Planning Board. As lead officer I have made several requests for improved communications between Mendip and Wells.

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan has been presented to the Planning Committee throughout the year in its' various stages of changes and consultations, and councillors from the Planning Committee have been supportive throughout. The Neighbourhood Plan has been approved by Full Council 12th December 2022. It is currently being prepared to be sent to Mendip District Council with the Basic Conditions statement and will then be sent out for a consultation by Mendip prior to being submitted to an independent examiner.

Cllr Denise Denis

28/2/23

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Climate Change Working Group Report 2023

Actions achieved since Last Annual Parish Meeting.

November 2022-Wells City Council accepted the Proposal to set up a Climate Change Working Party, to report to the Outside Spaces & Estates Committee as a fixed agenda item.

The Working Party has 4 councillors- D Denis, S Powell, S Eden, and I Von Mesenkampff, and 2 community members- M Milnes (Sustainable Wells) and J Mochrie(independent) The Aims for 2023-“ Winning Hearts and Minds”, with the objectives to run a survey to understand what the people of Wells feel is realistic and achievable in their own lives and arrange 3 public events to showcase ways to reduce carbon footprint and engage in debate.

Actions to date:

1. The Working Party has met 3 times
2. Wells CC Website has been updated- **Climate and Environment** is listed on the **About** page.
3. Survey draft trialled with 7 U3A Environment Group members and amendments have been made.
4. An online survey is now live on the Council's website - <https://wells.gov.uk/climate>
5. **Planning for Events in 2023.**
 - Paper- based Street survey to start 2 weeks commencing on March 13.
 - Campaign to inform Wells residents and businesses of the steps WCC is taking over next 12 months

Cllr Denise Denis

28/2/23

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Wells In Bloom 2022

There were 3 competitions in 2022 judged by a group of committed, knowledgeable and motivated volunteers. It was the first time the competitions had been run since the pandemic and most of the team were new to their roles and the competition, and have brought in fresh ideas. There were new categories for judging introduced- for sustainability and wildlife, and on the whole, this appears to have been well received.

The Schools Competition was a joint project with the Bishops Palace, which provided a judge for 2 days, and the venue for a very joyful and different award ceremony in the Undercroft after school on 30 June. Over 100 children and their parents or teachers attended.

The Private Gardens had 19 entrants, and 5 Commercial entries- the judging took place during the very hot weeks of July as did the allotments- which was extremely hot work for the judges and a little testing for the entrants to keep their plants in tip top condition- but they all did really well and we were able to see the outcomes on a very professional power point presentation at the Award Ceremony held at the Town Hall on 14 October. 80 people attended to receive their certificates and trophies and enjoy a ploughman's supper.

Based on the successes of 2022 the competitions are going to be offered again this year and the teams of volunteers are looking forward to taking part again.

Cllr Denise Denis

28/2/23

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Staffing Committee Report.

The Council decided to reform a standing Staffing Committee in January, the committee comprises of 6 Councillors, a Staff Representative and the Town Clerk.

The purpose of the committee is to assist the Town Clerk in staffing matters and set policy.

Wells City Council now have 21 staff a mixture of full and part time posts filling various roles in the Town hall, out in the City and at the Portway Annexe.

I am pleased to report no major issues have presented themselves, any minor problems have been dealt with by line management.

Our new Outside Spaces Officer is settling in well and bringing with him his own skills and working well with the staff.

In the last couple of years, the City Council staff have been faced with a fair number of issues related to Covid and its knock-on effect but dealt with them professionally and with good spirits.

As the City Council take on more assets and services the number of staff has increased and with local government reorganisation this is likely to continue.

I have always been a strong supporter of our staff and can see no reason for that to change.

Cllr Tony Robbins,

Staffing Chair

01/03/2023

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Update on **The Portway Annexe** for the Parish Council meeting on March 8th 2023

The Wells City Council owned Portway Annexe is a thriving centre for multiple community activities and continues to grow in its outreach since opening in May 2022.

The Annexe is manned full time and led by Manager Alex Westwood who, along with WCC Officers, has great vision for the facility.

A Portway Annexe Management Group has been convened and meets every 3 months. This comprises 2 WCC Officers, 4 WCC Councillors and two residents from the vicinity.

Facilities for hire include the well- equipped Music Centre with rehearsal space for creating all types of music, a 100 seated Hall, an art room, IT suite, AV Studio, rooms suitable for dance and exercise workshops, meeting rooms and a large colourful café for social gatherings such as children's parties.

The annexe has excelled at providing a Welcome Hub for the Ukrainian families living in the area where they can socialise, undertake language classes and gain all manner of support from the Charis funded part time Hub Manager assisted by WCN Ukraine.

A CAB access point has also been installed.

The stained-glass expert Edgar Philips is currently resident there.

Negotiations are also taking place for new courses to be run by Somerset Skills and Learning.

The Reception is manned 6 days a week and on numerous evenings.

Income from lettings this month will be in the region of £3,400. Hire charges are intentionally kept very reasonable so that it fulfils its intention of being an affordable community facility.

24 parking spaces also yield a considerable annual income (predicted £24,000)

Refurbishment of the building and grounds continue.

Continual updating of the heating system and reduction of heat output via roof installation is enabling the building to become more environmentally efficient.

Parking for users of the Portway Annex in the immediate residential area is limited but short term car parking at Tesco and Waitrose is available.

Please do contact Alex on 01749 673091 or comms@wells.gov.uk if you wish to make bookings.

Cllr Deborah Orrett.

Chair, Portway Annexe Management Group.

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Wells Recreation Ground Trust Management Group

Wells City Council took over ownership of the Bishop's Barn and Recreation Ground last summer. Since then a management has been set up with members of the public and 4 Councillors on the group. (Cllrs Agabani, Powell, Butt-Philip and Powell)

The Open Spaces team have been busy keeping the Recreation ground tidy. The Management group is hoping to host an open day in April/May for a public consultation and once the necessary health and safety checks have been put in place it hopes to open the Barn for public use.

The management group has been hosting regular public meetings in the town hall and hopes eventually to form a 'Friends of' group, so as to attract grants and get public involvement.

Cllr Powell 28-02-2023