

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2023 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: S Luck  
Assistant Town Clerk: C Woodland  
WCC Staff: C Hobbs  
Mace Bearer: C Price  
Somerset Cllr: T Munt  
Somerset Cllr: E Hobbs  
14 members of the public

**23/186/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Cllrs: D Denis, N Kennedy, H Siggs

**23/187/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**  
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.  
None declared.

**23/188/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**  
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

**23/189/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
Christine Costello spoke to Wells City Council of her concerns for the increased larger lorries using South Street delivering to Poundland. Her concerns are regarding the closeness of her house to the passing traffic. She requested that Wells City Council support her request to Somerset Council for the yellow lines to be extended so that larger vehicles don't have to negotiate parked cars on narrow sections of the road.

Ruth May Evans spoke to Wells City Council for her concerns regarding the lack of audible warning at the new pedestrian crossings in Wells. A Somerset Councillor explained afterwards that audible warnings are no longer on pedestrian crossings as there may be confusion when pedestrian crossings are in close proximity to one another and that the tactile button is a more reliable way to ensure that it is safe to cross.

Maureen Williams requested information on the bollards behind the Town Hall which have been missing for some time. She has concerns about accidents occurring with the increased traffic through Carlton Mews.

The Town Clerk reported that the bollards had been on order for some time but that there was a delay with the supplier.

**23/190/C PRESENTATION ON PROPER PAVEMENTS FOR WELLS**  
Theo van Hensbergen gave a presentation and outlined elements of the report that had been produced following the Wells Pavements Accessibility Survey. Theo explained that his motivation to improve pavements in Wells was driven by a neighbour who became ill and required a wheelchair. The report highlights design faults with dropped kerbs which

preclude people with mobility issues being able to get around Wells with ease as there is no accessible network of pavements.

Theo van Hensenberg would like Wells City Council to take the lead and form an action group along with blue badge users, Police and the Chamber of Commerce and present findings to Somerset Council. In his opinion there is a failure to understand the needs of disabled people and a lack of ambition to integrate disabled people into the City. The Office for National statistics shows that 24% of the population have a disability. Theo van Hensenberg challenged Councillors' knowledge on disability issues and equal access.

The report is available in the link below

[https://issuu.com/wellspavements/docs/wells\\_streets\\_accessibility\\_survey\\_2023\\_report](https://issuu.com/wellspavements/docs/wells_streets_accessibility_survey_2023_report)

Cllr L Agabani thanked Theo van Hensenberg for his presentation.

#### **23/191/C POLICE REPORT**

Police did not attend. A newsletter was received on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (attached) Cllr E W Hobbs (Wells and Rural LCN Chair) informed the meeting that the Police had been asked to present reports to LCN meeting. The Wells City Councillor representative will take information from reports back to Full council meetings.

Cllr S Powell reported that vehicles are driving down the path on Cathedral Green and asked that the Police be approached to stop this happening.

A brief discussion took place, that this seems to be happening as local businesses and Cathedral Staff are parking in the turning circle at the end of St Andrew's Road.

#### **23/192/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Invitation from the Mayor to join her, after the meeting, for Christmas refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour.

##### **Mayor's Diary**

- i 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan - Mayor's dresses exhibited, Wells Museum
- ii 12<sup>th</sup> Jan – Civic Award Ceremony, Wells Town Hall
- iii 13<sup>th</sup> Jan – Pauline Quirke Academy of Performing Arts Official Opening, Blue School
- iv 13<sup>th</sup> Jan – Catwalk Preview Show of Mayor's dresses, Wells Town Hall
- v 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan - Mayor's dresses exhibited, Wells Cathedral
- vi 9<sup>th</sup> Feb – Mayor's Charity Quiz, Wells Town Hall

#### **23/193/C SPECIAL STAFFING MEETING**

Cllr T Robbins presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. No questions received.

#### **23/194/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE**

Cllr S Powell presented the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023. No questions received.

#### **23/195/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr S Powell presented the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023. No questions received.

#### **23/196/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

Cllr S Cursley presented the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023. No questions received.

#### **23/197/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

No reports received.

**23/198/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS**  
A report was received from Cllr T Butt Philip (SC) on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (attached).

**23/199/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT**  
None received

**23/200/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 7pm**

**EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Note:**

If it is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence, it will be proposed by the Mayor that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended.

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

## **Item: 23/183/C Somerset Councillors' report to Wells City Council – November 2023**

### **Council Finances**

Somerset Council's Executive declared a financial emergency on 8<sup>th</sup> November and is taking a series of actions to close this year's budget gap, produce a balanced budget for 2024/5 and create a sustainable Somerset Council for the years ahead. More detail on this will be available in the coming weeks and months.

### **Asset and Service Devolution**

As promised, the Leader of the Council has written to all city, town and parish councils with a list of areas which Somerset Council may not be able to provide in the future to enable a discussion with city, town and parish council about which services they would be interested in taking on.

Additionally, the Council's "Asset and Service Devolution Framework" is due to come before the Executive in January – city, town and parish councils will be given an opportunity to comment on the draft framework in the coming weeks.

To help manage the process of asset and service devolution, the larger city, town and parish councils (including Wells) are to have dedicated points of contact with one of the Service Directors – in Wells' case this will be with Sarah Dowden (Service Director, Regulatory & Operational) supported by Jonathan Stevens (Head of Operations).

### **Local Community Networks**

The Wells & Rural LCN took place on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> November. This meeting was due to take place in Godney, but owing to flooding, was moved to Wells Town Hall.

In addition to an update on Somerset Council's finances. The LCN received a presentation from the Volunteer Network.

A suggestion was made that future meetings should all take place in Wells, however this was not met with support and meetings will continue to rotate around the area. We have requested that in future not all meetings take place on Thursdays.

No members of Wells City Council (other than Cllr Butt Philip) attended, and we would encourage any Wells City Councillors who are interested in attending the next meeting which is currently scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> February.

### **Traffic lights**

The Wells signal recovery project has been completed.

### **Buses**

Details of the tender for the 126 (Wells-Weston super Mare) are awaited, but we hope that the new service will commence in January, with the support of both Somerset Council and North Somerset Council.

### **Pavements**

Somerset Council has responded positively to Wells City Council's request to take over pavement maintenance. We expect the Town Clerk will update the meeting on progress.

### **Executive changes**

Cllrs Tessa Munt and Mike Rigby have announced their decisions to stand down as Executive Lead Member for Children, Families & Education, and Transport & Digital respectively at the end of 2023. An announcement about their replacements is expected later in the year.

**Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt**  
**Somerset Councillors for Wells**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**