



**WELLS CITY COUNCIL
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS
COMMITTEE, WHICH MEMBERS ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND,
WILL BE HELD AT WELLS TOWN HALL
ON THURSDAY 16TH JUNE 2022 AT 7:00PM**

Please note this meeting will be recorded for the purpose of minute-taking.

Steve Luck
Town Clerk/RFO

9th June 2022

Town Hall
Market Place
Wells BA5 2RB
01749 673091
e-mail: townclerk@wells.gov.uk

Committee Members:

Cllrs: J Browne, S Cursley (Mayor), G Folkard,
T Pullin (Chair), T Robbins, H Siggs,
I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

AGENDA

As the Wells City Council committee structure has not been approved by full council this committee will only be making recommendations.

Wells City Council has declared a climate emergency. Each agenda item must consider the impact on any policy and decision.

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 26th July 2012
- 3 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH MARCH 2022**
To accept the minutes of the previous meeting
- 4 MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**
Public speaking time is normally restricted to 15 minutes in total, at the discretion of the Chair
- 5 FINANCE**
 - i To receive the Finance Reports for May 2022
 - ii Bike 2 Work Scheme - to discuss

- 6 INTERNAL AUDIT 2021-22**
To receive and forward to Full Council the Internal Audit report for 2021-22 (attached)
- 7 EXTERNAL AUDIT 2021-22**
To receive the External Audit 2021-22 forms which will go to Full Council for signing this month (attached)
- 8 ARCHIVES AND CIVIC ASSETS**
To receive Annual Report from the retired Archivist, Dr Julia Wood (attached)
- 9 UNITARY AND ACQUISITIONS**
To receive an update from the Town Clerk
- 10 STAFFING**
To receive update from Lead Councillor T Robbins
- 11 ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**
- 12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm Thursday 14th July 2022**

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 property items can be discussed.

ITEM 6: INTERNAL AUDIT 2021-22



Mr S Luck
Town Clerk and RFO to the City Council
Town Hall
Wells
Somerset
BA5 2RB

23 May 2022

Dear Mr Luck,

Internal Audit of Wells City Council for the year ended 31st March 2022

In accordance with your instructions and acting in accordance with relevant requirements and regulations, we have carried out an internal audit of the accounting systems of Wells City Council for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Our audit was based on the requirements of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return – Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR). The audit included examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the Financial Statements.

Audit Opinion

In our opinion, the Financial Statements have been properly prepared in accordance with current guidelines and the Council's system of internal controls is, overall, adequate and effective.

However, we were unable to confirm the Council's compliance with Control Objective M (2020/21 Exercise of Public Rights Provision).

Exercise of Public Rights Provision

Whilst the Notice of Public Rights during the year 2020/21 correctly provided for the 30 working days available to inspect the accounts, the public rights period started prior to the date the AGAR was approved by the Council. The public rights period should not start until after the AGAR has been approved. Please ensure in future that the public rights period begins

Probusiness Ltd, Business Accountants and Advisers, St Lawrence Lodge, 37 Chamberlain Street, Wells, Somerset BA5 2PQ

T: 01749 677989 F: 01749 672651 E: mail@probusinessuk.com W: www.probusinessuk.com

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after the AGAR approval date. We have advised the Clerk about this, and also of the adjustments that will need to be made to Section 1 Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22 as a result of the above.

Recommendations to Council

We would like to make the following recommendations to the Council.

Approval of Payments

We would advise that the wording of the Minutes be changed to clearly show all payments have been approved by the Council. Currently, the Minute entries for this purpose state that 'the accounts...were proposed, seconded and approved'. In terms of the approval of expenses, we feel this wording could be stronger, and would recommend that the following be added; 'all expenses for [enter period] were approved by the Council'. This should include a reference to the corresponding summary document listing the relevant expenses. This will help provide a stronger audit trail documenting and confirming the Council's approval of payments.

Asset Register

We note the addition this year of the Portway Annexe to the Asset Register. However, we could not see a date alongside it listing when it was added to the Register. Further, the Asset Register is dated February 2021. This requires updating to reflect the Council's review of the Register in the year ending March 2022.

Treatment of Insurance Receipt

A no claims discount had initially been treated in the AGAR Accounting Statements under 'income'. However, this amount should be netted off against the original insurance expense, as the true cost to the authority should be shown on a net basis. We have brought this to the Clerk's attention and they have made the relevant adjustment to the Accounting Statements.



Publishing the Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR)

We could not find last year's AIAR on the authority's website. Although it is not compulsory to do so, it is recommended as best practice to publish this document on the Council's website. As per page 1 of the AGAR (*Publication Requirements*), this is to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties. We therefore recommend the Council publishes the Internal Audit Reports along with the other AGAR documents in future.

Once again, the above matters are not sufficient to affect our view that, overall, the Council has adequate controls and procedures in place.

We are pleased to be able to complete the Internal Audit section of the Annual Return, and return it duly signed.

Yours sincerely,

Probusiness

Probusiness Ltd.



WELLS CITY COUNCIL

WELLS CITY COUNCIL GENERAL AND FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENTS REVIEWED APRIL 2022. TOWN CLERK/RFO S LUCK,

1. FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK	CONTROL	Risk Level
Cash or Receipts misappropriated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Petty cash held by RFO, receipts issued. ➤ Cheques or cash received are held in a safe and banked promptly. ➤ All payments are received by electronic transfer wherever possible. 	L
Payments misappropriated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Payments agreed by Finance Committee, or by Officers as laid out in Financial Regulations and Committee delegation scheme. ➤ NO blank cheques are signed. ➤ Cheques are signed or electronic payments authorised, by Councillors and checked at Finance scrutiny meeting. ➤ BACS payment procedures revised and Financial Regulations updated February 2022 ➤ Expenses claims and overtime claims authorised by line managers. ➤ RFO is a bank signatory for management purposes only, not authorised to make cheque payments. ➤ Corporate debit/charge card account maximum £1,500 authorised for use by RFO and Senior Officers; to avoid staff having to make personal online payment for Council purchases. 	L
Loss of / insufficient Bank Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bank reserves are checked by the Finance committee at monthly scrutiny. ➤ Minimum 3 months' expenditure reserve provision in the annual budget. ➤ Reserves Policy and Investment Strategy approved by Council January 2022 	L
Financial management failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An annual budget is agreed before the Precept is set. ➤ Salaries, HMRC, NI and Pension payments are made monthly. ➤ VAT returns are made quarterly. ➤ Accounts are scrutinised monthly by Councillors. ➤ Bank statements and reconciliations checked monthly by Councillors. ➤ An independent Internal Auditor is appointed and carries out regular inspections. ➤ Controls and internal audit are reviewed annually. 	L
Council or personal, financial or other Liabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Council's insurance cover includes Fidelity Guarantee, Officials' Indemnity (Management Liability), Employers Liability, Public Liability. ➤ Insurance reviewed annually. Annual review meeting held with the provider prior to renewal. 	L
Material Assets lost/damaged	<p>Material assets are listed in the Asset Registers, valued and insured as appropriate and reviewed annually.</p> <p>Buildings Insurance for leased properties is included and then recharged to the leaseholder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Properties. - Civic Assets, robes and regalia. 	L

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Street furniture. - Open Spaces equipment. - Office equipment. 	
Short or long term loss of key staff members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The Council has reduced the risk of loss of the Clerk by having a management structure of 4 Officers who can cover duties as Proper Officer, with support from other staff. ➢ Management procedures ensure all staff roles have sufficient flexibility to reduce impact of temporary loss to a minimum. 	L
Loss of Electronic Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Electronic records are remotely 'cloud'-hosted; further backed up at a second, separate, remote site. Hard disc back-up copy is held locally. ➢ All key documents are also stored in paper copy; see next section 'Loss of Documents'. 	L/M
Loss of Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Title to all independent, freehold, properties, and long leases, have been registered with the Land Registry. Deeds are with the Council's solicitor; copies and other key documents are locked in the Town Clerk's office. ➢ Recent Council records are sorted; subject to the document retention policy they may be stored in the council office or in secure cells at the Town Hall. ➢ Archived material is on long-loan to Wells Museum in modern storage facility. ➢ Photographic records have been taken of historic charters and other key historic records; the original charters etc. are in the secure archive storage at Wells Museum. ➢ Separate retention, security and storage policies are in place at the Museum. 	L/M
Data Protection Regulations - compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The Council is aware of its duties as a controller and processor of personal data, under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018; training is on-going. The Council's schedule of data and appropriate related procedures is kept under review. 	M
Liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ All Councillors are informed of their responsibilities and have completed Registrations of Interests. ➢ Code of Conduct training has been made available to all councillors. ➢ The Council has insurance cover to include Fidelity Guarantee, Officials' Indemnity (Management Liability) and Employers' Liability. 	L/M

INSURANCE

The Council holds insurance covering the following risks:

Public Liability	Employers Liability	Legal Protection
Personal Accident	Business Travel	Money
Fidelity Guarantee	Property	Loss of revenue
Officials Indemnity	Libel and Slander	

See annual insurance schedule for details. Covers are checked in detail annually at a meeting with the provider, prior to renewal.

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2. INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROLS

RISK	CONTROL	RISK LEVEL
Monthly Accounts not completed	The RFO produces monthly accounts, detailing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconciliation of all the Council's bank accounts, including investment and petty cash accounts - Income and expenditure including payment of salaries - Income and expenditure against annual budget The regular check of bank statements and scrutiny of the accounts by Councillors is recorded on the signing schedule.	L
Authorisation of payments		
a. Salaries Inaccurate/unauthorised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Following annual staff appraisals, any increases above annual increment rises are approved by the Staffing Committee for inclusion in the Council's Budget. ➤ Annual salaries are notified to the RFO by Senior Officers. ➤ The Pay Roll is operated by the RFO and checked by another officer of the Council. ➤ Payments of salaries are made by BACS. See 2.b ➤ Payments of PAYE, N I, etc. are made by BACS. See 2.c 	L
b. BACS payments Inaccurate/unauthorised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Electronic transfer payments are checked by Councillors' presented to scrutiny by the RFO. 	L
c. Cheques Inaccurate/unauthorised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cheques are signed by two authorised Councillors who also examine the invoice and check the payment voucher. ➤ No Councillor or member of staff may authorise a payment to him/herself. 	L
Internal Audit Not completed/not compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Finance Committee appoints an independent Internal Auditor to act on behalf of the Council, having regard to the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, current legislation and NALC guidance on best practice. 	L
Annual Review Not completed/not compliant	Internal Financial Controls are reviewed annually in accordance with Standing Order 18: <i>The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>The accounting records and systems of internal control.</i> ii. <i>The assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council.</i> iii. <i>The work of the Internal Auditor and the receipt of regular reports from the Internal Auditor, which shall be required at least annually.</i> 	L

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3. OPEN SPACES: GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK	CONTROL	RISK LEVEL
Cemetery		
a. Memorial Safety	➤ Memorial testing is carried out annually by trained staff, and remedial action taken.	M
b. Inaccuracies	➤ Meticulous recording and mapping procedures are kept; with back-up copies.	M
c. Public safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All paths are kept clear and clean at all times. ➤ All grassed areas are kept mown and tidy. ➤ Vehicle routes and parking are clearly indicated. ➤ Funeral groups are advised and supported by staff. 	L/M
d. Theft / vandalism	➤ Security procedures, lights & alarms.	M
e. Vehicles/equipment	➤ Regular servicing and maintenance; drivers' licences checked; all appropriate insurances in place.	L
f. Claim against Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proper reporting and recording of inspections and of any Incidents. ➤ Council Insurance. 	M
Skate Park		
a. Accident / injury	➤ Regular inspection by trained staff.	H
b. Vandalism	➤ Annual inspection by independent provider.	H
c. Claim against Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proper reporting and recording of inspections and of any incidents. ➤ Council Insurance. 	M
Highways delegated functions/partnership working		
a. Accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provision of appropriate equipment and protective clothing to staff. ➤ Provision of appropriate training for staff. (Roadside Working; Chainsaw Use) 	M/H
b. Acting ultra-vires	➤ Works are carried out exercising the Council's Power of General Competence, in partnership with the relevant bodies. Written partnership agreements with Somerset County / Mendip District Council / other	L
c. Claim against Council	➤ Council's Insurer is kept informed of all functions.	M
Street Furniture		
a. Accident/injury	Litter Bins, Grit Bins, Seats, Notice Boards, Bollards, Signs, Cycle Racks, Wells in Bloom planters & poles. Operation of Speed Indicator Device. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Installed with agreement of SCC Highways ➤ Listed on asset register ➤ Regular inspections, recording and reporting. 	L
b. Vandalism	➤ Annual maintenance program carried out during winter.	M
c. Claim against Council	➤ Council Insurance.	M

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

4. PROPERTIES: GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK	CONTROL	RISK LEVEL
Loss of title	➤ Title to Council's freehold properties has been registered with the Land Registry.	L
Loss of rental income	➤ Council reserves; insurance cover.	M
Damage / destruction	➤ Buildings insurances; regular revaluation.	M
Town Hall - See separate risk assessments:		
a. Hirers – Indoor markets etc.	➤ Risk Assessment, controls and Insurances.	L
b. Fire risk assessment	➤ Security & Alarm	L
Business continuity in emergency	➤ <u>Business Continuity Plan</u> In the event that access to the Town Hall offices should be lost, temporary displacement would be to the office at the Cemetery Lodge. All functions can continue from there and via home-working. All records are with the Council's cloud-hosting provider. The provider has secure storage and separate secure back-up location.	L
Note:	➤ WCC has an agreement to provide emergency Business Continuity for MDC at Wells Town Hall (as possible)	L
Public Toilets		
a. Accident	➤ Cleaning and maintenance schedules.	M
b. Vandalism	➤ Locked at night or as advised.	M
c. Injury	➤ British Standards compliant equipment. ➤ Regular inspections and reporting.	M

5. EVENTS: GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Regular events are listed on the Council's Public Liability Insurance cover. Additional events are notified separately, in advance.

RISK	CONTROL	RISK LEVEL
Fun Fair		
a. Risks to public safety	➤ Land Use Licence (MDC)	M
b. Damage to property	➤ Operator's Agreement. ➤ Operator's Insurance. ➤ Risk Assessments May and November submitted to MDC with Road Closure applications.	L/M
Wells in Bloom	See separate Risk Assessment.	
Christmas Lights	See separate Risk Assessment.	
Civic Processions	See separate Risk Assessment.	
Other City Events	Risk assess as required.	

01/04/2022

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ITEM 7: EXTERNAL AUDIT 2021-22

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

We acknowledge as the members of:

WELLS CITY PARISH COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022, that:

	Agreed		*Yes* means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

and recorded as minute reference:

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

Clerk

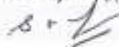
Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2021/22 for

WELLS CITY PARISH COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance	
	31 March 2021 £	31 March 2022 £		
1. Balances brought forward	93,176	122,422	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.	
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	571,361	652,622	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.	
3. (+) Total other receipts	232,671	871,948	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.	
4. (-) Staff costs	446,344	541,571	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.	
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	6,229	6,070	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).	
6. (-) All other payments	322,213	987,787	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).	
7. (=) Balances carried forward	122,422	111,564	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).	
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	110,470	80,565	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.	
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	13,094,267	13,684,267	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.	
10. Total borrowings	58,333	675,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).	
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	N/A	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
			X	N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2022 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

**CONFIRMATION OF THE DATES OF THE PERIOD FOR THE
EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS**

Name of smaller authority: WELLS CITY PARISH COUNCIL

County Area (local councils and parish meetings only): SOMERSET

On behalf of the smaller authority, I confirm that the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights are as follows:

Commencing on FRIDAY 1st JULY 2022

and ending on THURSDAY 11th AUGUST 2022

(Please enter the dates set by the smaller authority as appropriate which must be 30 working days (i.e. Monday – Friday only, and not Bank Holidays) inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July 2022 (i.e. Friday 1 July – Thursday 14 July).

We have suggested the following dates: Monday 13 June – Friday 22 July 2022. The latest possible dates that comply with the statutory requirements are Friday 1 July – Thursday 11 August 2022.)

Signed: 

Role: TOWN CLERK / RFO

This form is only for use by smaller authorities subject to a review:

Please submit this form to PKF Littlejohn LLP with the AGAR Form 3 and other requested documentation – this form is not for publication on your website.

ITEM 8: WELLS CITY ARCHIVES AT WELLS & MENDIP MUSEUM

ANNUAL REPORT, 4 April 2021 - 31 May 2022

Julia K. Wood, Archivist 31 May 2022



Summary

This has been the eleventh year of Wells City Archives at Wells & Mendip Museum. Much of the year was spent on catching up with the backlog which had accrued because of the coronavirus pandemic. After being on furlough, the Archivist returned to work in May 2021, and began moving towards restoring normal service. As ever, she values enormously the indispensable contribution made by volunteers and the help given by the Honorary Curator, David Walker. She is also indebted to the Town Clerk, Steve Luck, for his great assistance and support. The report covers fourteen months rather than the usual twelve months because it goes up to the Archivist's retirement.

The major achievements in the City Archives since April 2021 have been:

- Auditing the physical condition of key items in the historic collection and re-starting the rolling programme of conservation.
- Making headway with responding to the enquiries accrued during the pandemic.
- Re-instituting access for members of the public by re-opening the Archives Reading Room.
- Readying the first three online Archives databases for launch in June 2022, which will increase the accessibility of the City Archives.
- Continuing to develop the unique digital Archives resource entitled *ScraseBase*, a significant database of Wells property histories.
- Engaging with audiences and promoting the Archives through regular displays at the Town Hall, collaboration in a major exhibition and participation in outreach events.
- Getting former City Archivist Jean Imray's book "Wells Old Almshouse" into print.

1. Coronavirus and furlough and return to work

The impact of coronavirus has continued to be felt throughout the year. The Archivist (who has been solely a City Council employee since 1 July 2020) had been on furlough since November 2020. She started work again from home on 3 May 2021, and began going in to the Museum and Town Hall again from early June. Her key priorities on her return to work were checking the condition of the most significant items in the historic collection and beginning to catch up with the enormous backlog of Archives enquiries which had accumulated while she was on furlough. Essential aspects of caring for and managing the collection were attended to. Plans were also made so that the Archives could be safely re-opened to readers as soon as possible.

2. Enquiries

As well as the enquiries received during this year, more were outstanding from the previous year. Jonathan Chivers (volunteer Archives Assistant) and the Archivist made considerable progress on responding to all these enquiries, though there is still a backlog.

The statistics

- Between 4 April 2021 and 3 April 2022, 129 enquiries were received.
- Of the written enquiries, 28% concerned local history (for instance, Luddism in Wells), 18% family history (including Henry William Reakes, former Mayor of Wells), and 21% house or building history (including properties in Priory Road and Portway). 1% were mapping enquiries (such as one concerning the 1860 sewerage map), 16% were photographic queries (including a request for an image of the medieval City seal), and the final 16% were specialist in nature. The latter included advising on palaeography and on careers. The Archivist also advised on material for Project Factory's souvenir brochure for Wells to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of the Queen.

- Of the written enquiries, 73% were from members of the general public, 6% from councillors, 6% from academics or students, 4% from non-academics intending to publish, 4% from the media, and 7% from archivists and heritage professionals.
- Nearly all the written enquiries came from Britain, but there were also emails from the USA, Canada, Italy and the Netherlands.

3. Readers

On Government advice to prevent the spread of Covid-19, Wells City Archives was closed to the public on 17 March 2020, and it remained closed to readers until October 2021. The Archives Reading Room re-opened then on a limited basis to visits by members of the public, with protocols to ensure its safe operation. This followed considerable preparation (including Risk Assessments) to make it as safe as possible for volunteers and visitors. When the Reading Room first re-opened, guidelines included the wearing of masks, the advance ordering of all items, and special cleaning, seating and ventilation arrangements. There is still a waiting list of readers which has built up during the pandemic.

The statistics

- Between 4 April 2021 and 3 April 2022, there were 14 reader visits.
- Of the reader visits, 64% concerned local history and 36% house or building history. Readers researched subjects including Dr Claver Morris and Stoberry House.
- All the reader visits were by members of the general public.
- The majority of visitors came from Wells and the Mendip area, but three were from Worcester.

4. Heritage Open Days 2021

The City Archives did not participate in 2021 because of coronavirus and its ramifications. Nor was it possible for the Town Hall to be open for the event.

5. Exhibitions and displays

The Archivist created several displays at Wells Town Hall during the year. The subjects of these were the early history of the Portway Annexe; Nancy Dodd, who died in 2021 and was the first ever woman Freeman of the City of Wells; the Honorary Freedom of the City; and the Wells Branch of the British Legion and Councillor Norman Kennedy, who were the recipients of the two new Freedoms which were given in November 2021. The Archivist also gave the citation for the British Legion at the ceremony and put on a special exhibition which included several historic artefacts, some of which were kindly loaned by the Museum (such as a Comrades of the Great War lapel badge, dating from 1917-21). Her most recent "Archivist's Choice" display in the Town Hall vestibule shows three Archives photos of ARP volunteers, many of whose names were identified by Jack Paul, from whose collection they come.

The City Archives is delighted to be a partner in the major photographic exhibition “The Changing Shops of Wells in Photographs”, which opened at the Museum on 16 April 2022 and will run until 6 June. The collaborative partnership also includes the Museum, Project Factory, Somerset Film and Wells Civic Society. The display uses photographs of the main shopping areas of Wells, taken from the Phillips Collection held by the Museum, the Patrick Brown collection held by the City Archives (showing the buildings in the 1970s and 1980s), and the Millennium photographs commissioned by Wells Civic Society. In the future, the collection will be used in outreach learning through the museum’s Learning Officer with schools, residential homes, history groups and researchers.



The City Archivist displaying documents to the Richard III Society.
Photo © Helena Smith

In May 2021, Archives volunteer David Mather carried out palaeographical transcription of 17th-century City Archives documents for Jon Jefferies for the “Monmouth in Wells” exhibition he is preparing.

6. Talks, tours and other outreach events

In March 2022, the Archivist gave a talk about the Honorary Freedom of the City of Wells to the Wells Branch of the Royal British Legion. Peter Trueman, Archives volunteer, then gave a talk about the history of the building on South Street which is now the Venue Club but which was for a long time the British Legion. Much of his research was based on a cache of historical documents which he had unearthed in the City Archives. In April 2022, the Archivist talked to Mendip Postcard Club on “Highlights of Eleven Years as Wells City Archivist”.

The Archivist led one tour of the City Archives during the year and Jonathan Chivers another. And on 20 November 2021, the Archivist displayed two medieval charters and the Convocation Book dating from 1450-1553 at a meeting of the Wells branch of the Richard III Society. Members’ response to seeing these documents was very enthusiastic.

The City Archives has continued to participate in the Wells and Transatlantic Slavery Project Working Group spearheaded by the Cathedral’s Chancellor, and volunteer David Mather has carried out research for this. In response to an invitation to contribute a piece to Wells Heritage Partners’ brochure about the city (“Heritage Wells”, published in July 2021), the Archivist voluntarily wrote the section on “The Water of Wells”. When she retired, the editor of the *Wells Voice* invited her to write an article about the highlights of her time as City Archivist. This will hopefully help publicise the Archives.

7. Local history publications

During the year, two more local history books were published by Wells & Mendip Museum, and the Archivist helped with both of these, particularly the second. Furthermore, much of the research for them was carried out in the City Archives. The first book, published in June 2021, was Sarah Villiers’ and Joe White’s “Traditional Manufactories and Plant Nurseries of Wells”.

The second book was Jean Imray's "Wells Old Almshouse". Jean, the first Wells City Archivist, spent many years researching this detailed book, which is the first ever history of this important institution. At the time of her death in 2015, she was close to completing it. A number of her former friends and colleagues felt it would be a fitting tribute to her to ensure that the work was published. Accordingly, three of them edited the book. One of these three was the City Archivist, who voluntarily sourced illustrations, carried out the copy editing and formatting, and saw it into print. She also organised a book launch on 2 February 2022, which was hosted by the City of Wells Almshouses. The book was released in two formats. There were a limited number of printed deposit copies plus a PDF release (downloadable for free from the Museum's website). The printed copies were funded largely by the former Wells Local History Workshop (in which Jean played an active role), along with Wells City Council and Wells & Mendip Museum. The book makes extensive reference to sources held by the City Archives, and it also includes images of City Archives documents and photographs. This all helps promote the Archives collection.



The launch of the book "Wells Old Almshouse". Charles Cain, the Chair of the Trustees of the Almshouses, is holding the printed copy which has just been presented to the Almshouses.

Photo by Kevin Westwood, © Wells City Council Archives

8. Wells & Mendip Museum's "Search and Learn" Heritage Lottery Project

The Museum announced in September 2021 that its "Search & Learn" project had been awarded £194,600 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the addition of this to a generous legacy from Jean Imray, former Wells City Archivist, made this exciting project possible. The present Archivist had played a significant role in the development of the project and the City Archives will have an essential role as a venue for the research needed for many aspects of this project.

In order to enable Victoria Northwood, the Museum's Project Manager for "Search & Learn", to spread the word about the project, the Archivist organised a meeting of the Mid Somerset Archivists and Curators Group. This took place at the Museum on 21 April 2022. She invited Victoria to talk about the project. In addition, Reverend Dr Rob James, the Chancellor of Wells Cathedral, talked about the Cathedral's Vicars Close project, and Museum Trustee Clare Blackmore showed the attendees around the "Changing Shops" photographic exhibition.

9. Strong Room security measures and Security Policy

Security measures have been kept under review.

10. Conservation and preservation issues

Jonathan Chivers has been checking weekly on the environmental conditions in the Strong Room and making the necessary adjustments. During the year, Wells Museum invested in a new dehumidifier, which is contributing considerably to achieving the appropriate temperature and humidity in which to store the City Archives. The outcome of the Archivist's audit of the physical condition of the most important items in the historic collection on her return to the Museum in June 2021 was reassuring. She also arranged a consultation visit by conservation specialist Helena Jaeschke. Wells City Council has agreed a five-year budget to continue the rolling plan of conservation work. The Archivist is extremely grateful to Lead Councillor for the Archives, Jenny Rust, for her role in this. The first item since the pandemic began has been delivered to the conservator.

11. Donations

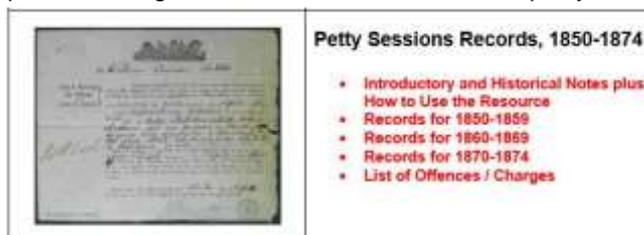
Significant donations of documents and photos received during the year include collections relating to Wells in Bloom, Wells City Band and Wells Central School.

12. Accessioning, cataloguing and listing

Huge progress has been made with the accessioning and cataloguing backlogs.

13. Archives development and accessibility

Launch of databases. The first three of the free searchable Archives databases will be launched via the Museum's website in June 2022. These are a database of Sacrament Certificates dating from 1689 to 1765; Wells Petty Sessions court papers covering 1850 to 1874; and a Wells Property Index dating from 1860 (which accompanied the City of Wells Sewerage Plan and appears complete with map images). The databases will be available as downloadable PDFs and will increase the accessibility of the City Archives. The Archivist's thanks go to Joe White, Museum Trustee, who is, at the time of writing, adding them to the Museum's website.



ScraseBase. Development work has continued on another major digital Archives resource, namely ScraseBase. This is an enormous database of Wells property histories, as researched and generously shared by historian Tony Scrase. He, the Archivist and stalwart Archives volunteer Austin Little are presently working on the final version of the database. The next stage will be to prepare it for release online for free consultation by members of the public. Many of the sources for this database are contained in the City Archives.

Petty Sessions database (1822-1899). The indefatigable Austin Little has continued adding to the database the details covering the final eight years of this rare Victorian collection. The next stage will be to make the entire nineteenth-century run of Wells Petty Sessions data freely available online.

The Patrick Brown Slide Collection. Volunteer Alan Pringle has continued a listing which identifies the Wells properties which Patrick photographed.

Oral History. Volunteer David Mather has transferred Archives oral history interviews which were stored on cassette to digital files.

14. Wells City Archives website project

Unfortunately, the dedicated searchable City Archives website which the City Council's Archives Committee agreed to fund in February 2019 (using Epexio) still remains on hold, pending review of the Council's overall website strategy and provision. The plan is to release on this website both the Archives catalogue and the various online Archives databases. Given the long delay, three of the databases have been released via the Museum's website as downloadable PDFs. They are searchable, but functionality is limited, so this is only a temporary measure.

15. Volunteers

The Archivist is immensely grateful to the dedicated Archives volunteers for their generous contribution of time, effort and expertise. Without their commitment and vast contribution, many of the Archives' achievements would not have been possible, especially the databases. Her particular thanks go to Austin Little, database guru extraordinaire, to Peter Trueman for his unfailing and wide-ranging assistance, and to Jonathan Chivers, who has been her Archives Assistant for over seven years and has been ever helpful, reliable and willing to turn his hand to anything.

16. Future targets and Archivist's retirement

Because of the present Archivist's retirement, targets for 2022-23 will be set by the new Wells City Archivist, Veronica Howe.

On a personal note, I am extremely proud to have been Wells City Archivist for the last eleven years and have hugely enjoyed it. It has been a privilege to work with such a unique and significant collection as Wells City Archives and to meet and work with so many lovely people. And I am honoured that Wells City Council made a retirement presentation to me at their meeting on 28 April 2022.



Mayor Cllr Philip Welch making a retirement presentation to Julia Wood, Wells City Archivist.

Photo by Kevin Westwood, © Wells City Council Archives

Julia Wood, Wells City Archivist