



**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 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 AT 7:00PM**

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

Steve Luck  
Town Clerk/RFO

7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

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

Committee Members:

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

**AGENDA**

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 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.
- 3 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024**  
To approve and sign 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**  
To receive the draft Finance reports for October 2024.
- 6 BUDGET 2025-26**  
To receive council draft budget.

## **7 UNITARY DEVOLUTION**

To agree recommendations from Devolution Working Group:

- i To proceed to scope 3 team model for further financial scoping precept and loan impacts
- ii Proceed with the devolution of market service to Wells City Council, subject to further diligence and reporting to the Devolution Working Group as referenced within the Terms of Reference and Delegated Authority from Finance & Council Matters Committee
- iii Endorse in principle a market fee structure as set out by the Devolution Working Group (attached)
- iv Endorse in principle any profit made by the market in its first year will be reinvested to improve the physical infrastructure of the weekly markets and in readiness for future Christmas and other events

## **8 ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

## **9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

### **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 items can be discussed.



# Wells City Council

<b>Author</b>	Haylee Wilkins
<b>Presented By (if different)</b>	Steve Luck/Haylee Wilkins
<b>Subject</b>	Market Service - Devolution
<b>Date of report</b>	06 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
<b>For consideration at</b>	Finance and Council Matters Committee
<b>Date of consideration</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2024

## **Introduction**

Following previous reports to Finance and Council Matters Committee and to the Devolution Working Group, this report looks to seek decision of the committee to proceed with the devolution of the markets provision, from Somerset Council to Wells City Council.

The markets provision operates on Wednesday and Saturdays, and the devolution agenda looks to support the transfer of the market in its entirety, as well as the raised area of land to the front of the Town Hall.

It is not expected that TUPE terms and conditions would apply to the current Somerset staff, as the markets provision will be devolved to all Town/Parish Councils within the previous Mendip District Council boundary, and therefore the split of functions would not see an adequate volume of the role devolve to any one council.

Equally, it has been supported by all other Town/Parish councils, that all associated infrastructure, such as gazebos, weights, stalls etc. would devolve to WCC, and no other Town/Parish has a use for them post devolving.

## **Finance**

There is no expected fee to Somerset Council for the market provision, with the exception of legal costs, which are being defined.

The market figures provided by Somerset Council reference an annual income of £233,600.00 for Wells markets combined. With current revenue spend of £69,628, which comprises the set up and pack down of the market, currently managed through contract, as well as staffing costs associated with the operational running of the market.

Whilst additional information has been requested regarding the specific profit and loss of both markets to allow further and more specific analysis, this has yet to be provided. As such, at this time, it can be deduced that the market makes a profit of £163,972.00 per annum. However, there has been no management of the infrastructure, or incentives applied for the sustainability or growth of the offering, which it would be prudent to apply.

## **Operational Readiness**

In order to manage the stability of the function from the day of transfer (1<sup>st</sup> April 2025), it would be prudent to apply a strategy provision in readiness. The strategy outlined in Appendix A provides a two-year position of WCC, which should be supported by local policies determining specific elements such as trader pack, weather policy, balance of trade act applications etc. The application

of a stabilising strategy, allows WCC to look to develop within that period, a longer-term strategy for the growth and development of the service, alongside other elements such as events within the city. The strategy has been derived from review of the current Somerset Markets Strategy 2020-2025, and looks to ensure that there is limited to no change on day one.

Equally, it will be essential for WCC to set fees and charges associated with the market provision for the 2025-26 period, and in advance of the budget setting process, it is suggested that fees be set in line with the details in Appendix B. As with all fees and charges, this would be ratified through Full City Council budget decisions in January 2025.

Lastly, it will be essential for the Council to secure a positive, engaging and collaborative officer to support the market provision, and work with other officers of the council to look to grow and develop the solution over time. Should Council agree to the devolution of the market, the transfer date is expected to be 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, with that in mind, it will be essential to commence recruitment for an officer no later than 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025, in order to ensure that they can commence their role on or before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

**Officer Recommendation:**

It is recommended to the devolution working group to recommend the following to the Finance and Council Matters Committee:

1. Proceed with the devolution of the markets service to Wells City Council, subject to further due diligence and reporting to the Devolution Working Group, as referenced with the terms of reference and delegated authority from the Finance and Council Matters Committee.
2. Endorse in principle the fee structure as set out to the Devolution Working Group (attached).
3. Endorse in principle, any profit made by the market in its first year will be reinvested to improve the physical infrastructure, of the weekly markets and in readiness for future Christmas and other event markets.

### **Item 7 iii**

As agreed by the Devolution Working Group, the proposed fees for consideration ensures that the market function is operating in a stable environment for the forthcoming year, assuming the final decision of council is to proceed with the devolution of the service to Wells City Council.

The below sets out the current fee structure for Somerset Council, with the proposed fees for 2025-26 for the market provision if operated by Wells City Council.

Following considerable debate at the Working Group, there was a desire to offer incentives of some type to market traders in order to ensure that the transition could be negotiated smoothly, also to recognise the possible risk of further decline of the market for a number of reasons. Whilst there are many mechanisms that could be applied to incentivise the service, most require benchmarking and wider financial and strategy reviews. As such, the immediate offer of “kipper” rents in the months of January and February 2026 is suggested, offering support to the traders whilst not risking the council’s financial effectiveness of delivering the service.

Applying this decision at this point allows WCC to commit to a 12-month period of charge to traders, whilst still offering an informed incentive. This would also allow the council to use the first year of trading to further develop a strategy for markets and wider events and possible income drivers.

#### **Somerset 2024-25 Fees and Charges:**

Christmas Market Pitch	£76.90
Christmas Market Chalet	£179.42
Wednesday Pitch Fee – Stall (per 2.5m)	£38.45
Wednesday Pitch Fee – Gazebo (3x3)	£38.45
Saturday Pitch Fee – Stall (per 2.5m)	£38.45
Saturday Pitch Fee – Gazebo (3x3)	£41.01

#### **Proposed WCC 2025-26 Fees and Charges:**

Christmas Market Pitch	£76.90	<b>Kipper rent Jan/Feb 26</b>
Christmas Market Chalet	£179.42	
Wednesday Pitch Fee – Stall (per 2.5m)	£38.45	£19.20
Wednesday Pitch Fee – Gazebo (3x3)	£38.45	£19.20
Saturday Pitch Fee – Stall (per 2.5m)	£38.45	£19.20
Saturday Pitch Fee – Gazebo (3x3)	£41.01	£20.50