



## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### COUNCIL SUMMONS

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE MEETING OF WELLS CITY COUNCIL, WHICH MEMBERS ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND, WILL BE HELD IN WELLS TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022 AT 7.00PM**

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

Steve Luck  
Town Clerk

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

21<sup>st</sup> July 2022

### AGENDA

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**  
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 MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2022**  
To be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.
- 4 MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
Public speaking time is normally restricted to 15 minutes in total, at the discretion of the Mayor.
- 5 PRESENTATION FROM WELLS FOOD BANK**
- 6 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
**Mayor's Diary**
  - (i) 29<sup>th</sup> July The Children's Band of the National Youth Brass Band, Wells Cathedral
  - (ii) 29<sup>th</sup> July Wells Art Contemporary, Wells Cathedral
  - (iii) 31<sup>st</sup> July Wells Tennis Club 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - (iv) 27<sup>th</sup> Aug Meet the Sikhs, Cathedral Green
  - (v) 29<sup>th</sup> Aug Wells Moat Boat Race
  - (vi) 18<sup>th</sup> Sept Commemoration of the Battle of Britain, St Peter & St Paul's Church, Shepton Mallet

- 7 FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE** (attached)  
To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July.
- 8 PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> July (to follow)
- 9 WELLS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE** (attached)
- 10 COUNCILLORS MONTHLY SURGERY**  
To receive an update from Cllrs J Browne and S Cursley.
- 11 NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM (NPT) NEWSLETTER**  
(attached by email)
- 12 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES**
  - (i) Citizens Advice Bureau - Cllr D Denis to provide an update (attached).
  - (ii) WCC Bus Link Group report from Cllr D Denis (attached).
  - (iii) Sustainable Wells report from Cllr D Denis (attached by email).
  - (iv) Wells & Mendip Museum Trustee Report from J Rust (attached).
- 13 TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS**  
To follow, if any received.
  - (i) County Councillors' report received 28/07/2022 (attached)
- 14 ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT**
- 15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
The next meeting of Wells City Council will be Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, 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.

#### **Circulation List:**

Town Clerk/RFO	Town Crier	Wells Chamber of Commerce
Town Clerk Assistant	WCC Internal Auditor	Wells Civic Society
Cemetery & Burial Officer	Wells Journal & Wells Voice	Wells Visitor Information
Outside Spaces Officer	Mendip District Council	The Bishop's Palace
Wells City Council members	District Councillors	Wells Cathedral
Serjeants-at-Mace	County Councillor	Wells Police Station
Mayor's Chaplain		

## **Progress report on the draft Wells Neighbourhood Plan to Wells City Council – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

1. At the meeting of the Council on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, the draft Wells Neighbourhood Plan together with the Wells Design Guide and Masterplan setting out options for development of the three sites allocated in the Local Plan for housing in Wells were all accepted as a basis for public consultation.
2. Discussions have taken place with Stuart Todd - consultant, Adrian I'Anson – Chair of the Steering Group and myself and Mendip District Council to make revisions to the Plan in response to an informal "Health Check" to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations. In addition, changes have been made to ensure that the draft Plan harmonises with the Wells Design Guide as regards view cones.
3. The revised draft Plan (as virtually completed) is attached to this report.
4. The associated documents:
  - Wells Design Guide
  - Masterplan (MNP on website)
  - Housing Needs Assessment and
  - Draft Summary Consultation Leaflet
  - Local Green Space Assessment
  - Local Heritage Assets Criteriaare set out in the Council's website. Printed copies of the draft Plan or any of these can be provided.
5. The main changes are as follows:
  - revision of policy H3 (Housing & Climate Change) to accommodate Mendip's new policy DP7 and encourage rather than require energy saving measures above and beyond current Building Regulations

- removal of policy H4 on Play Spaces to accommodate Mendip's forthcoming Greenspace Audit and Supplementary Planning Document which covers the same policy area
  - addition of a view cone from the top of Upper Milton Lane
  - adherence to 40 Local Green Spaces as listed in Appendix 4 to the Plan.
6. Assuming that the Plan is agreed, the public consultation will then proceed from the beginning of September to the end of October. Public meetings are proposed for the Rugby Club, Town Hall and Golf Club in October at 7 pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday the 14<sup>th</sup>.
7. Members are asked to read the documents with care. However, it is worth adding that the drafts will be offered to the public (and relevant public bodies) for consultation on the basis that they may change. After the consultation, there will follow a re-consideration of the draft Plan based on the comments received.
8. Following the consultation, an independent Examiner will check that the Plan complies with the appropriate regulations and it then goes to a public referendum. Assuming a positive response, the Plan is made and becomes a "material consideration" when plans for development within Wells are considered.
9. The Council is asked to approve the draft Plan as the subject of consultation as referred to above.

*Cllr Denise Denis* – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022

## **Citizens Advice Bureau- Councillor Denis' Report of Meeting with Iona Fitzgerald on 29 June 2022**

### **Historic Situation**

Wells CA Drop-in was open only 9 hours a week with queues forming and some service users turned away if not in time for that day. It did not meet needs of public who could not travel for reasons of cost, transport, mobility etc.

3 years ago -major funding cuts to £100K annual budget from Somerset County Council resulted in restructuring of staffing and services.

2 years ago- first lockdown necessitated emergency changes to model of service from Drop-in centres to phone calls and email contact. With further fine tuning, retraining staff, new equipment of laptops and phones from grants and donors, volunteers and staff could work from home.

Survey at end of 1<sup>st</sup> year to public and service users indicated this new approach was working well. Initial slight reduction in number of clients but soon returned to pre-pandemic levels. Generally, help between 3,500 and 4,000 individuals in Mendip per year.

### **Current Situation**

Somerset Advice Line is now a freephone number and serves as a first point of call for many service users (generally a call lasts around 30 minutes)

Call Backs- Advisers respond to referrals from Advice Line and 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Referrals (like Health Connections to ensure holistic and joined up service), and follow through on tasks, closely monitoring progress of referrals and actions

Benefit form filling and Appeals- 5 dedicated trained advisers

Face to Face- can be offered to people with disabilities but requires 2 advisers taken from the pool of phonenumber/call back/supervisors (as cannot work with client one to one in unattended workplace). Heavy drain on resources- as takes a back fill of other volunteers and only 1 client is helped as opposed to potential 5 on phonenumber.

CAM has had increased referrals and work in last 10 months due to assisting Somerset County Council in the roll out of the monies from the Household Support Fund from Central Government, as well as increase in help

for people affected by the cost of living crisis - administering Local Assistance Scheme (LAS) energy Top Up Grants and referrals to food banks.

### **Future Services**

Volunteers and advisers are confident that current service is meeting needs as it is more focussed on feedback and follow up and prevents a revolving door which often happened in past system. Recognition of the gap where people who do not have access to phones or computers.

Wells CC will host CAB phone booth in the Portway Annexe as a trial for other centres. This will be set up with a phone and laptop to be available to people lacking such facilities at home with clear menu of instructions to use phone or laptop for email.

Town Hall will be available for booking face to face meetings where required.

### **General Notes**

Housing Needs- useful to look at Homefinder Somerset: in 2021 only 333 applicants were successful in being homed in social housing in Mendip. An average of 88 separate bids are made for just one property! Highest demand is for 1 and 2 bed homes.

See: <https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/choice/uploads/Mendip.pdf>

and for further information:

<https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/choice/content.aspx?pageid=3001>

### **Cllr D Denis**

### **WCC Bus Link Group report**

Following the last full council meeting in July a small group of Wells City Councillors, Cllr Siggs, Cllr Butt Philip, myself and 2 residents have formed a new Bus Users Group.

**WBUG Aim:** to work towards a better bus offering leading to a maintained and improved service focused on Wells

#### **Strategies:**

- engage with bus users and non-users and surrounding parishes
- campaign to promote bus use
- work with other partners – First Bus and Somerset Bus Partnership

The next meeting for the Bus User Group will be Monday 8 August.

This group will be mentioned in the next edition of Wells Voice and we will be hoping to meet members of the public in Bus Week 3-11 September to hear your views.

#### **Most Recent News** from Wells Nub

The 173 route will be axed in the autumn, with First blaming severe bus driver shortages and the withdrawal of Covid funding by the government. There is also set to be a route change to the 172 (which previously ran between Wells and Bath, but currently serves Paulton to Bath), although details on this are currently not known, and the park and ride service between Odd Down and the RUH will also face the chop.

Councillor Denis 20/7/22

## **Wells and Mendip Museum Trustee Report**

The Museum has been moving ahead with its upgrading and improvement programme; the Maintenance Team have completed the loft insulation and have replaced incandescent with low-energy bulbs. Rooms on the top floor have been updated and modernised to provide space for our National Lottery-funded Search and Learn Project Manager, Victoria Northwood.

This project will contribute to the cultural and heritage life of local communities, and help us play our part in the city's business and tourism projects. The Gormley Education Days, run in conjunction with the Bishops Palace and Cathedral, are continuing to attract local schools.

The Museum welcomes the new City Archivist, Veronica Howe, and looks forward to liaising with Cllr Harvey Siggs, the new Lead Councillor for Archives and Civic Assets, and his deputy, Cllr Isa Von Mensenkampff.

We continue to be very grateful for the support of the City Council, but like all voluntary organisations a significant threat to our activities is the huge increase in running costs. In recent years the museum has taken steps to be more financially resilient, but the dual impact of fuel price rises and inflation jeopardises this.

Jenny Rust  
Wells City Council-nominated Trustee  
July 2022

Next time  
EDI  
Phillipa's mural  
accredited Mental Health First Aid training course  
Old Kitchen

**County Councillors' report to Wells City Council – July 2022**

**Council finances**

Inflation and other factors continue to put huge pressure on Somerset County Council's finances. The budget set by the previous administration in February is already significantly out of date. In February the forecasted budget gap was £28.6m for 2023/24. Now the Council is projecting a deficit of £44.5m for 2023/4. A Budget Working Group has been set up to start to develop the 2023/4 budget.

**New Chief Executive**

Somerset County Council's Chief Executive Pat Flaherty is leaving to become Chief Executive at LB Harrow. The County Council met last week in Yeovil (having previously met on the edge of Bridgwater and Oake, near Taunton) and agreed the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Duncan Sharkey. Duncan joins the County Council in the Autumn and will become Chief Executive of the new Somerset Council in April 2023.

Mr Sharkey has been Chief Executive of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead since 2019 and previously held senior roles at other unitary and district councils.

Paula Hewitt, SCC's Deputy Chief Executive will be Acting Chief Executive until Duncan arrives.

**Local government reorganisation**

Local Government Reorganisation continues to dominate the work of many of the County and District Councils' staff and much of the political leadership as we move towards 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 (Vesting Day – the day on which the County and District Councils will cease to exist and Somerset Council will come into existence).

Local Community Networks (LCNs) in particular are of interest to the City Council. We do not yet know how many LCNs there will be (and by extension we do not know which LCN Wells will be in), nor do we know what their powers and responsibilities will be or what budgets they will have.

A plan for how LCNs will be developed will be before the Local Government Reorganisation Implementation Board on 29<sup>th</sup> July. The new administration has set out a timetable for working out the details of LCNs including:

- Considering the role, geographies, governance and funding of LCNs – July 2022
- Refining the governance and financial modelling, linked to Medium Term Financial Planning - July - September 2022
- Engaging and consulting with City, Town and Parish Councils, and the public on geographies for LCNs – Autumn 2022
- Presenting a formal decision paper including a resourcing plan - November 2022

### **173 bus**

Reports (via the Mayor of the West of England) that First Bus intends to scrap the 173 Wells-Bath bus are of serious concern to many – this is the only bus serving East Wells, South Horrington, West Horrington, Binegar, Gurney Slade and Chilcompton and its loss would have a dramatic impact on all these communities. First Bus have not yet made their plans known to the County Council. We alerted the SCC Executive Lead Member and Associate Lead Member for Transport and Digital on Somerset County Council (Cllrs Mike Rigby and Mike Hewitson) both in person and in writing of the importance of this route.

We also wrote to the Managing Director of First West of England, but the company does not currently appear to be willing to engage with the local community or its representatives or to clarify their proposals for the future of this service.

The planned removal by the Government of the Bus Recovery Grant in October, means that more bus routes may well be under threat.

### **Ecological emergency**

Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> July declared an ecological emergency, proposed by Executive Lead Member for Environment, Cllr Sarah Dyke and seconded by Cllr Tessa Munt. This commits Somerset County Council to putting additional focus on protecting Somerset's natural environment and biodiversity.

### **Cost of living**

Full Council also declared a cost of living emergency, proposed by Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, Executive Lead Member for Communities and seconded by Cllr Nicola Clark, which commits Somerset County Council to working with organisations across Somerset to address the cost of living emergency.

### **Summer holiday support**

The Council is distributing just over £1.2m from the Household Support Fund to help fund food vouchers over the summer holidays for Somerset children eligible for Free School Meals.

Vouchers worth £10 per pupil each week of the holidays have been distributed by schools to eligible students.

### **Council Tax support**

The Council has launched a consultation on next year's Council Tax support scheme – which allows working age residents on low incomes to apply to pay a reduced rate of Council Tax (the scheme for pension-age applicants is set nationally). Currently each of the four district councils operates its own support scheme, with different rules and different levels of support. From April 2023 there will be a common scheme across Somerset.

The Council is proposing a maximum discount of 100% - at present the maximum discount for a Mendip resident is 80%.

The consultation is running and will be open until 19<sup>th</sup> September. The consultation can be accessed online and paper copies are available from Wells Library.

**Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt**  
**County Councillors for Wells**  
**27th July 2022**