

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

**PRESENT:** Cllrs: L Agabani, J Browne (Mayor), S Cursley (Chair),  
I Von Mensenkampff

**IN ATTENDANCE:** RFO: C Woodland  
Devolution Officer: H Wilkins  
WCC Cllrs: D Denis, S Powell  
WCC Staff: S Glendinning  
2 members of public

**24/78/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Cllr: G Folkard, T Robbins, H Siggs, T Pullin  
Town Clerk: S Luck

**24/79/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

Cllr Agabani declared a prejudicial interest in 24/83/FCM, Project Factory Grant Application.

**24/80/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024**

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**24/81/FCM MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Emma Lefevre, Project Factory and Claire Chettoe, Wells Community Network attended the meeting to provide a short presentation and answer questions in support of their respective community grant applications.

Both left the meeting after their presentations.

**24/82/FCM FINANCE**

The RFO, presented the draft Finance Reports for July and August 2024 and answered questions.

Cllr Powell asked if the finance committee had provision for the tree works that have been recommended in the tree condition assessment report. The RFO and Devolution Officer confirmed this will be built into the next budget in line with the number of trees that would be supported through Devolution. The RFO referenced that works of the trees in question have already been partly completed.

Cllr Von Mensenkampff asked for clarification on the City Maps costs/income. The RFO explained there had been some problems with the machines over the summer, they were now up and running and income would be shown in the September accounts. It was also questioned why toilet costs were reduced. The RFO explained Union Street toilets, having been transferred from Somerset Council, are shown in a separate entry within the accounts.

Cllr Agabani questioned why there was no income shown for events in the Bishop's Barn that had taken place. The RFO confirmed it would appear in the September accounts. Cllr Agabani also asked for an update on Youth Provision. £15,000 had been agreed of which half has been given and to date there has been no feedback. The RFO agreed to look into and report back.

Cllr Denis stated that funds set aside for Climate Emergency had been agreed to be used for Portway Annexe and Town Hall for energy saving improvements. This had been brought to the Outside Spaces Committee and been agreed as a motion. A request had been made for improvements to windows at the Portway Annexe, no progress has yet been made to date. The RFO agreed to look into this and report back.

Cllr Agabani asked for an update on Valentine's Coffee in the Recreation Ground. The RFO confirmed the trial period has proved successful and an official contract is being drawn up.

The accounts and expenses for July and August 2024 were approved by the committee.

#### **24/83/FCM GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Cllr Agabani left the room whilst this first grant application was discussed.

- Project Factory CIC, Wells Lantern Parade  
£500 was unanimously agreed.

Cllr Agabani returned to the room.

- Wells Community Network  
£500 was unanimously agreed.

#### **24/84/FCM TOWN HALL CCTV**

The RFO explained the Town Hall Manager, Andy Allen, had obtained four quotes. It was agreed unanimously for Andy to proceed with his preferred supplier.

#### **24/85/FCM BUDGET 2025-26**

The RFO explained the first draft budget for 2025-26 would be brought to the October meeting for member's input.

#### **24/86/FCM UNITARY DEVOLUTION**

The Devolution Officer gave an overview of the current status. Together with the RFO, a far more detailed budget will be prepared for the next financial year using existing software. A communication strategy using Wells Voice, direct mail outs, Social Media and the Wells City Council website is being formed and will be shared with all members once agreed by the working group. The Public Devolution meeting is scheduled for Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September and the working group have been determining the process of the evening. It is now known the first transfer of services from Somerset Council, which is likely to be playparks, will not be until 9<sup>th</sup> October. Members drop in sessions have been arranged. Dates for these have been communicated separately and all members are invited to attend. The purpose of the drop ins, is to look at future strategy of the services possibly being devolved. Please inform the Devolution Officer of which session you would like to attend. It was made specifically clear that members can attend one or all of the sessions if they wish.

#### **24/87/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT**

Cllr Denis stated that in the last AGM a resident had asked for a more detailed financial breakdown of the Portway Annexe, including staff costs. This has to date not been actioned. The RFO explained this was in hand and would be produced.

Cllr Agabani raised the following:

- He requested for the 'Protocol for Councillors and Staff' document to be reviewed now, before the official review date in May 2025.
- The Flag policy had not been followed correctly for the PRIDE event in July.

- Whilst forming next year's budget, provision should be made for volunteers. As we take on more assets/services from Somerset Council and staffing levels are stretched, volunteers should be encouraged to help as is seen in other local councils.

**24/88/FCM    DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Note:** It is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence, it was proposed by the Chair that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended to allow a private report.

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