

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2024 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, S Cursley (Chair), G Folkard, I Von Mensenkampff, H Siggs

IN ATTENDANCE: RFO: C Woodland
Devolution Officer: H Wilkins
WCC Staff: C Hobbs
Town Clerk: S Luck
Cllr S Powell

24/89/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllr: J Browne (Mayor), T Pullin, T Robbins

24/90/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022.
None received

24/91/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 2024

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

24/92/FCM MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

24/93/FCM FINANCE

C Woodland (RFO) presented the draft Finance reports for September 2024 and answered questions on the following items from Councillors

- i. Public consultation process for Devolution and budget allocation line.
- ii. Contributions to Specsavers for staff who work with Computer screens
- iii. Staff vacancies – The increase in salaries costs was explained. There have been increases in staff positions which were unforeseen.
- iv. Grants – The timescale for the take up of grants was discussed. It was agreed that all pre-budgeted grants must be applied for.
- v. Staff training – Training of the Cemetery Manager is ongoing. First Aid training and Chapter 8 courses are booked. Staff upskilling is taking place in preparation for after devolution.
- vi. There is progress taking place in the lease of the Old Post Office, now that planning application has been determined.
- vii. Public toilets – Expenditure is increased due to inheritance of water bills at the Bus Station toilets.
- viii. Street Furniture – Expenditure has been made by the Outside Spaces manager of new bollards and signage.
- ix. Portway Annexe car park – There are three car parking vacancies which are advertised. One space was filled this week.
- x. Youth provision – A report has been requested. The Town Clerk reported that YMCA will provide a written report. Cllr P Welch has written an article in the Wells Voice.
- xi. Cllr G Folkard requested a forecast for the year end. C Woodland confirmed that there would be a forecast provided at the meeting of 14th November 2024
- xii. Finances for elections – Any funds not used will carry over to the next year.
- xiii. Unspent monies – Non ring-fenced funds will pass into the general budget balance.

24/94/FCM PORTWAY ANNEXE

H Wilkins explained on behalf of L Wassell (Facilities and Project Manager) that quotes for fixed wire testing of the building had been researched. The quotes were for the cost of the test.

24/95/FCM TOWN HALL

The Town Clerk reported that quotes for replacement windows had been researched. There are funds in the Climate budget, however the quote received is above the figure in the allocated budget. Work will therefore require prioritising. Measures to prevent heat loss elsewhere can be carried out by Wells City Council staff. Committee requested that consideration be made to all quotes and buildings before proceeding.

24/96/FCM BUDGET 2025-26

Documents provided to committee by C Woodland (RFO) in order to discuss budget timelines after consideration of public consultation on devolution. C Woodland presented the draft document and explained that figures will change as staff numbers increase and the costs that are associated with it.

A number of assumptions have been made, which will be further calculated and refined following devolution decision making.

C Woodland will email the document to Councillors in a spreadsheet format alongside explanation of assumptions and seek questions.

24/97/FCM UNITARY DEVOLUTION

H Wilkins (Devolution Officer) reported that conversations regarding Assets continue with Somerset Unitary Authority. The public consultation process has been completed. 40 people attended the Devolution meeting on the 26th September 2024 and to date 106 proformas have been received. A key decision from Somerset is due on the 19th October following which a report paper will be submitted to Full Council Meeting on the 24th October 2024. H Wilkins (Devolution Officer) informed that as the process continues that there is the expectation that extra meetings will be scheduled and that meetings with one agenda item.

Member engagement sessions were helpful. "Quick wins" were discussed and H Wilkins will circulate to all members in due course.

A discussion took place about the schedule and the process for budget setting at Somerset Council in relation to the setting of precepts at Parish level.

Cllr G Folkard requested that reports were an "Executive summary" due to the amount of information being circulated.

24/98/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

None received.

24/99/FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 14th November 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: