

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH MARCH 2025 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: H Wilkins
RFO: C Woodland
WCC Cllrs: T Butt Philip, D Denis, S Powell, P Welch
WCC Staff: S Glendinning
10 Members of Public

25/22/FCM APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllr: I Von Mensenkampff

25/23/FCM DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr Agabani declared a personal interest with Somerset Prostate Support Association.

Cllr T Robbins declared a personal interest with Wells City Band.

Both these groups were attending the meeting to provide a presentation and apply for a community grant.

25/24/FCM MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2025

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

25/18/FCM The RFO explained the internal audit will take place on 11th April 2025.

25/25/FCM MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr Chris Simons had sent in three questions to the committee prior to the meeting to which the Town Clerk provided a written response.

1. Mr Simons has estimated that the cost of running the Portway Annexe for the year is £172,000, income £83,000. Running at a loss of £90,000 per year. It is now in its third year of opening, are members aware of the situation?

The Town Clerk explained as mentioned at the Annual Parish Council Meeting, further work is underway to review management and administration costs across all council budget lines including Portway Annexe. The Council is also progressing work associated with income generation and management of assets, which will be reported to the appropriate committee at the appropriate time.

2. Through devolution, Wells City Council are taking over the running of the markets. There is no business plan, the deduced profits are £164,000. Originally VAT was included in the income figures, we now know this is not the case.

The Town Clerk explained that a strategy has already been endorsed through Finance and Council Matters Committee and Full City Council which looks to ensure stability of the service whilst looking to review within the first year, opportunities for the future and further strategies and operational

practices. The Town Clerk also advised that following further advice, she was now able to confirm that the financial details associated with the market were not including VAT, as open-air markets are not subject to VAT.

3. The interest earned on the trust fund of £520,000 for the management and improvement of the Bishop's Barn, is being transferred back into general reserves. Mr Simons expressed concern that this was not allowing the fund to grow.

The Town Clerk agreed to review the management of the fund moving forward.

Cllr Denis questioned the income and expenditure figures in the current financial statement as we approach the end of the financial year. The RFO explained there were large income payments still to be received.

All community groups provided a presentation to support their community grant application. Details in 25/28/FCM.

25/26/FCM FINANCE

C Woodland (RFO) presented the draft Finance reports for February 2025. There were no questions raised.

25/27/FCM YMCA FUNDING REQUEST

The Town Clerk updated the committee and advised a formal request had been received to extend the Service Level Agreement with the YMCA and provide the allocated £15,000 for the next financial year.

It was proposed by Cllr T Robbins, seconded by Cllr Agabani and unanimously agreed for the Town Clerk to take this forward.

25/28/FCM GRANT APPLICATIONS

Each of the following groups provided a presentation in support of their community grant application, the following was agreed:

- i. Citizens Advice Somerset
£488 was agreed by all members.
- ii. Wells City Band
After discussion, £500 was suggested to be paid out of the climate budget as the grant was for thermal curtains in the Portway Annexe, thereby improving the heat retention in the room. Five members agreed, two members abstained from voting, the proposal was carried.
- iii. Somerset Prostate Support Association
£500 was agreed by all members.
- iv. Sounds Joyful CIC
£219.60 was agreed by all members.
- v. Wells Theatre Festival
£500 was agreed by all members.

25/29/FCM PARTNERSHIP WORKING BETWEEN WELLS COMMUNITY NETWORK & WELLS CITY COUNCIL

A paper from Lisa Wassell, Facilities Officer had been circulated prior to the meeting, asking for a review to be taken of the partnership between Wells Community Network and Wells City Council to provide the Wells Welcome Hub. This partnership is due to end in July 2025. It was agreed for the review to take place and for the findings to be reported back to the Finance Committee.

25/30/FCM DEVOLUTION

The Town Clerk explained there was no further update for this meeting.

25/31/FCM ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

The Town Clerk raised a health & safety issue in two of the public toilet blocks where there is no sanitary provision. It would be £5,200 to put this in place. All members agreed for the Town Clerk to take this forward.

25/32/FCM DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 10th April 2025

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: