

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24TH JUNE 2021 AT 7.00PM

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani, S Briton, J Browne, S Cursley, R Humphreys, A l'Anson, N Kennedy, S Powell, T Pullin, J Rust, P Welch (Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk/RFO: S Luck
WCC Staff: C Hobbs, A Westwood, K Westwood, Mace Bearer M Goody
Cllr T Munt (County Councillor), Cllr T Ronan (Mendip District Council)
13 Members of public

21/100/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM MEMBERS

Cllrs: O Hartley, S Johns

21/101/C DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 27th July 2012:
None received.

21/102/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 27TH MAY 2021

Cllr Rust noted that an item from 21/89/C had not been included on the Agenda and was informed that it had been included as Agenda item 14.
Cllr Agabani proposed it be added as Item 14a. Seconded Cllr Powell. Motion carried.
Cllr Briton enquired about the application for funding on Item 21/92/C. Cllr l'Anson responded that there had been no update on the application.

21/103/C PRESENTATIONS

Bus Back Better

Mr Peter Travis (Co-Chair of Somerset Bus Partnership) said that this initiative has a Green agenda and that £3 million has been invested nationally to encourage people back onto buses and to improve the network of routes with better facilities, Real Time Information, upgraded Bus Stations and shelters. Peter Travis was suggesting that Wells City Council could be proactive with any changes made rather than leave it to the county council to determine. There was a suggestion that a route to Castle Cary would be beneficial to the area and that the potholes in the Bus Station were a problem and that Cllr Ronan of Mendip District Council was aware and would be bringing up this issue at the next relevant meeting.

Wells Civic Society

Mrs Chris Winter thanked Cllr Munt for her work on Parking signs. The presentation explained that the visual clutter of signage in Wells was detrimental to the visual appeal of the City as many were inconsistent in design, no longer relevant and fly-posted. A request was made for an audit of all signage to take place by Wells City Council which the Civic Society will assist with in partnership with Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council.

Police Report

PCSO Bev Searle was unable to attend to present the report but sent through the month's statistics which were read out by Cllr Welch (Mayor):

The crime figures for Wells City are below. These seem to be normal for the time of year. Police are slowly increasing their commitments to organisations and groups within the City centre as lockdown rules ease further but this also presents with increased demand for their services generally. They continue to provide a high visible presence on foot, bicycle and by car.

Criminal Damage	3
Weapons	1
Public Order	7
Robbery	1
Theft	4
Violence against person	10
Miscellaneous	2

21/104/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- Mr Chris Simons enquired about financial details in Item 9 and 9a. Town Clerk, S Luck, confirmed the figures on the Accounts are correct and that the Pandemic has affected businesses and their ability to pay rents, etc. Also, the Secretary of State requested that the item be added to the agenda at the earliest opportunity. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Council is in a financial position to continue with the loan application.
- A member of the public asked if there was an Acquisitions Committee on Wells City Council. Cllr Welch (Mayor) confirmed that there is but no meeting had taken place in recent weeks.

21/105/C MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor’s Diary

1. 1st July – Symphony Orchestra Concert, Wells Cathedral School
2. 11th July – Open afternoon at St Cuthbert’s Church
3. 17th July – Starting the Classic and Historic Motor Club Rally at the Bath & West Showground. This is a fundraiser for the Mayor’s Charity
4. 18th July – Tortoise and Hare Ride. Deputy Mayor attending Wells Football Club to select the best bike and present awards
5. 24th July – Wells Community Day. There will be two stalls. One for the Mayor’s Charity and the other run by Wells City Councillors.
6. A total of £1,355 was raised for the Mayor’s Charity at an Open Garden in Coxley House, Coxley. The Mayor thanked Cllrs Pullin and l’Anson for supporting the event.

21/106/C MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2021. The Chair presented the minutes and asked for questions. None received.

21/107/C AUDIT FOR YEAR 2020-2021 (see attached)

- Receive and note the report from the Council’s Internal Auditor
- To approve and sign the Annual Governance statements for the year 2020-2021
- To approve and sign the Annual Statement of Accounts for the year 2020-2021

Town Clerk, S Luck – No matters to report with the Internal Audit.

Proposed Cllr Cursley, seconded Cllr Briton. The motion was carried.

21/107/Ca 9A. PURCHASE OF THE PORTWAY ANNEXE BY WELLS CITY COUNCIL

Town Clerk, S Luck – Confirmation was required from the Secretary of State’s department that Wells City Council were happy to proceed with the purchase and wished to continue with the Public Works Loan as set out in the agenda.

Cllr Rust – Requested to see the response from the Secretary of State before making a decision and requested the financial information the loan is based.

Cllr Briton responded that the Council will be voting on figures based on the current business plan of December 2020.

1. Proposal to agree the purchase of Portway Annexe - Proposed Cllr Cursley, seconded Cllr Briton, motion carried.

2. Proposal to seek approval from Secretary of State for Housing for the Public Works Loan as figures set out in the agenda - Proposed Cllr Cursley, seconded Cllr Kennedy. The motion was carried.

21/108/C MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meetings held on 3rd and 17th June 2021. The Chair presented the minutes and asked for questions.

Cllr Briton said discussion took place about a proposed development named Armchair Field in St Cuthbert Out and requested that discussions could take place with Wells City Council as well as St Cuthbert Out as there was strong feeling collectively among residents on that side of Wells.

Cllr l'Anson agreed that Cllr Briton made a valid point.

Cllr Rust enquired if the Town Clerk had received an update from Mendip District Council about non-compliance of Pavement licences
Town Clerk, S Luck – Confirmed that this would be followed up.

21/109/C MINUTES OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2021. The Vice-Chair presented the minutes and asked for questions. None received

Interviews for Sustainability Officer will take place on 3rd July 2021

21/110/C . MINUTES OF THE PORTWAY ANNEXE COMMITTEE

- i. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2021.
- ii. To receive the Consultation Report. (Attached)

Cllr Rust enquired re 21/36/PAC regarding the legal progress of Covenants.

Cllr Briton replied that this would be followed up with our solicitors.

Cllr l'Anson gave a report on the progress of the Working Party. He informed the meeting that there will be an article in the next edition of the Wells Voice as well as an Open Day on 31st July between 10am-4pm.

A video had been produced showing the interior and exterior of the building and this was available on the Council website.

Cllr Rust – Requested confirmation that it would be the latest information that would be included in the Wells Voice and not that of a week ago.

Cllr l'Anson confirmed.

21/111/C MINUTES OF THE WELLS RECREATION GROUND TRUST COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2021.

Cllr P Welch (Mayor) reported that the Committee are waiting for the Charity Commission to transfer the Trust from Mendip District Council to Wells City Council.
Town Clerk, S Luck – Confirmed that this was not likely to happen before September 2021

Cllr Rust – Informed the meeting of a report sent to all Councillors named Heritage Lottery Reliance Report which may be beneficial for all to read.

21/112/C COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

Cllr Rust – Proposed a motion that any Councillor be permitted to attend any Working Group. Seconded by Cllr l'Anson. A recorded vote took place.

Votes for the proposal – Cllrs l'Anson, Rust, Browne, Powell.

Votes against the proposal – Cllrs Agabani, Pullin, Kennedy, Humphreys, Cursley

The Town Clerk, S Luck, suggested members consider a review of the Scheme of Delegation and the structure of all Committees and Working Parties. The review will take place with all councillors at a meeting in August with a view to take effect from September 2021.

Cllr Browne suggested introducing a system that gave a better division of labour to reduce vacancies on committees.

Cllr Rust proposed that there be a review. Cllr Kennedy seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Cllr Welch (Mayor) – The Wells Almshouses have requested that a Councillor may wish to join the Trust. Sarah Briton offered to discuss this with Cllr Welch (Mayor).

21/113/C AWARDS WORKING GROUP

Cllr Browne said that the City of Wells Awards planned for October are on budget, but explained that if Covid rules on Social Distancing are still in place, the event will be deferred.

21/114/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

None received.

21/115/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Munt (County Council) – Requested that the Civic Society also review the obsolete poles in the signage audit.

Received the Economic and Community Infrastructure report. This can be shared with Councillors. It contains updates on Registrars, Highways, etc. This report is available on the Wells City Council website.

Climate Emergency Fund stands at £500,000 but there are strict conditions. County Council will be contacting the organisations that have made applications.

Cllr Briton asked that the Report be available to the public.

Town Clerk, S Luck agreed that it will be included on the Council website.

Cllr Ronan (Mendip District Council) – Apologised for lack of written report but that due to timings of the Wells City Council meetings being at the end of the month, MDC will in future formulate their report earlier to accommodate.

Unitary Poll – The Stronger Somerset poll won. In Mendip 68.9% of those who voted preferred Stronger Somerset's proposals as opposed to One Somerset.

Somerset Waste Partnership – Shortage of HGV drivers have affected service. MDC gets daily updates

Business grants – Applications required by 30th June. Details available on the Mendip District Council website.

21/116/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllr l'Anson thanked Peter Travis for his presentation and suggested that Wells City Council be proactive with the challenges mentioned in the report.

The Town Clerk thanked the Council staff for their help with the sound system at this meeting.

New Councillors were invited to speak to the Mace-bearer about their Civic robes.

21/117/C

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be at **7pm on Thursday 22nd July 2021**

Minutes signed by The Mayor:

Date: