

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2024 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Cllrs: L Agabani (Deputy Mayor), J Browne (Mayor), S Cursley, S Eden, D Orrett, S Powell, T Robbins, H Siggs, P Welch

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: S Luck  
RFO: C Woodland  
Devolution Officer: H Wilkins  
Mayor's Consort: W Nuttall  
WCC Staff: S Glendinning  
Mace Bearer: G Woodland  
Somerset Cllr: T Munt (Wells)  
3 members of the public

#### **24/70/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

WCC Cllr: T Butt Philip, D Denis, G Folkard, N Kennedy, T Pullin, G Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff

The Mayor thanked those Councillors who were present and requested every effort should be made to attend Full Council meetings and Civic Events.

#### **24/71/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.  
None declared

#### **24/72/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 25TH APRIL 2024**

Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

#### **24/73/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Richard Hanks spoke on behalf of a group of people who are visually impaired and finding the new traffic lights in Wells very difficult to use. There is no longer a beep to indicate when safe to cross. Instead they are required to press a button which then oscillates. The RNIB have been in contact with Somerset Council to express their disapproval. It was agreed for SCC Cllr T Munt to liaise with Mr Hanks separate from the meeting.

Fergus Brown a local Civil Enforcement Officer expressed his disappointment on behalf of a colleague. An incident had taken place involving a WCC Cllr which was felt to be unacceptable. The Town Clerk agreed to follow this up outside of the meeting under the Council Code of Conduct.

Nigel Clarke from the Carnival Committee attended the meeting to thank WCC for the recent community grant they had received. This had been used to provide vital training for marshalls.

#### **24/74/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

##### **Mayor's Diary**

- i 18<sup>th</sup> May 2024, 650<sup>th</sup> Wells Mayor Making Ceremony, 5pm, Wells Town Hall
- ii 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Mendip Vintage & Classic Tour, Cathedral Green
- iii 26<sup>th</sup> May, Wells Festival of Running, Market Place
- iv 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024, Bath Mayor Making Ceremony, Bath Abbey & The Guildhall
- v 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024, D-Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Horrington Primary School
- vi 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024, Installation of new Dean, Wells Cathedral
- vii 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024, Wells Royal British Legion Summer concert, St Cuthbert's Church
- viii 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024, Installation of Canon Precentor, Wells Cathedral

## **24/75/C TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES AND TO ELECT COMMITTEE CHAIR'S**

### Committees

It was proposed by Cllr T Robbins and seconded by Cllr Cursley for the following members to serve on each committee. The proposal was agreed by all present.

It was requested by the Town Clerk to vote on the position of Chair of Finance. Cllr Cursley, was proposed by Cllr Siggs and seconded by Cllr T Robbins. This was agreed by all those present from the Finance & Council Matters Committee.

All other committee chairs will be voted on at their first scheduled meeting.

- i. Finance & Council Matters – Cllrs: L Agabani, J Browne (Mayor), S Cursley (Chair), G Folkard, T Pullin, T Robbins, H Siggs, I Von Mensenkampff
- ii. Outside Spaces & Estates – Cllrs: T Butt Philip, D Denis, S Eden, N Kennedy, D Orrett, S Powell, G Robbins, P Welch
- iii. Planning & Environment – Cllrs: L Agabani, S Cursley, D Denis, G Folkard, D Orrett, S Powell, G Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff
- iv. Staffing – Cllrs: L Agabani, S Eden, G Folkard, T Robbins, H Siggs, P Welch

### Management Group

- i. Portway Annexe – Cllrs: S Cursley, D Denis, S Eden, D Orrett

## **24/76/C TO APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BODIES**

The following representatives were agreed to represent these community groups. Cllr Eden advised the Police & Community Together (PACT) group was not currently meeting. The Town Clerk agreed to contact the local police. Cllr T Robbins agreed to replace the newly appointed Mayor on the Wells Twinning Association.

POLICE & COMMUNITY TOGETHER (PACT)	Cllr S Eden
SOMERSET ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SALC)	Cllr H Siggs
DISTRICT HEALTH & WELL-BEING BOARD	Cllr I Von Mensenkampff
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & TOURISM	Cllr L Agabani
WELLS TWINNING ASSOCIATION	Cllr T Robbins
WELLS SPORTS CLUBS	Cllr D Orrett, Cllr S Powell
CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB) Management Committee	Cllr D Denis
WELLS CARNIVAL COMMITTEE	Cllr T Robbins, Cllr H Siggs
CONNECT CENTRE	Cllr P Welch
SUSTAINABLE WELLS	Cllr D Denis, Cllr G Robbins
SOMERSET COUNCIL LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORK	Cllr P Welch, Cllr L Agabani
SOMERSET BUS PARTNERSHIP	Cllr D Denis
WELLS HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP (for WRGT)	Cllr S Powell

MENDIP COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION	Cllr T Butt Philip
CITY OF WELLS ALMSHOUSES TRUSTEES <i>The Mayor, plus 2 Trustees nominated by Council for 4-year term; do not have to be Council members</i>	<b><u>TRUSTEES</u></b> Cllr J Browne (The Mayor) (1) Cllr S Powell (2) Cllr S Cursley
WELLS MUSEUM TRUSTEE	Cllr G Robbins

**24/77/C TO APPROVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS AND OTHER MATTERS**

Annual Reviews To resolve that the Finance and Council Matters Committee shall ensure the following are reviewed for presentation to Council during the year:

- i Standing Orders
- ii Financial Regulations and related matters
- iii Committees' terms of reference and related matters

Annual reviews required under Standing Order 5j

Cllr Siggs proposed to approve the arrangements for review of the above documents. Cllr T Robbins seconded. The meeting voted unanimously for the proposal.

**24/78/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE**

Cllr J Browne presented the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024

No questions were asked.

Cllr Welch thanked the committee for what had been achieved over the last year under the chair of the Mayor (Cllr Browne).

**24/79/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE**

Cllr S Cursley presented the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024

No questions were asked.

The Mayor congratulated Cllr Cursley on being re-elected as Chair.

**24/80/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

In the absence of Cllr D Denis (Chair), Cllr S Powell presented the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Cllr Siggs asked for it to be noted that the planning application relating to The Old Post Office be supported by SCC Cllrs. This was agreed by Cllr Butt Philip and SCC Cllr Munt.

**24/81/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

Cllr Welch had circulated his report (attached) from the latest LCN meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 in Godney. There were no further questions.

**24/82/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS**

Somerset Cllrs Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt had circulated their report (attached) prior to the meeting there were no questions asked.

**24/83/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT**

Cllr Powell asked whether Cllr Welch would remain as our representative at LCN meetings. This was confirmed.

**24/84/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024, 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.

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

**Minutes: 24/82/C**

**Report from the Wells and Rural LCN meeting in Godney Village Hall on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

A series of angry residents criticised Avon and Somerset Constabulary for failing to prevent or control a series of raves in Stockhill Woods and fields near the Harptree villages.

Councillor Edric Hobbs, the chair, had invited a police sergeant to the LCN meeting to respond to the residents who complained bitterly about the noise from the raves, the disruption and the litter left, which include evidence of drug use.

“The problem is getting worse,” said one resident who lives near the woods.

Another who runs a holiday cottage business told of guests phoning her at 3am to complain bitterly about the noise keeping them awake and then putting a damning post about the holiday cottages on a travel website.

A farmer from East Harptree said: “We locals are absolutely fed up” and asked why the police don’t confiscate the ravers’ sound system.

The sergeant replied asking how two PCSOs could safely carry this heavy equipment away from an angry crowd of ravers.

The police’s problem was that they did not have enough officers to close down a rave and arrest large numbers of ravers, and as soon as they accessed the ravers phone networks they were closed and the burner phones binned.

However, the sergeant promised to establish a better line of communication with residents and gave some of them his mobile number.

The Active Travel Working Group reported:

1. The group meets informally and involves ramblers, cyclists, horse riders, bus users, etc.
2. Their priority work has been assessing storm damage to paths and finding appropriate remedial action.
3. They are also taking examining the necessary improvements to the Strawberry Line through Wells mentioned in the Wells Neighbourhood Plan, plus links to neighbouring communities.
4. Longer term aspirations for new and improved paths in the longer term.
5. Finding the money for these projects. Section 106 agreements and grants were possible sources of funds.

The main Highways and Traffic Working Group reported:

1. There were lots of complaints from residents, in particular about potholes.
2. Somerset Highways responded that their budgets and staff had been cut.
3. A Man With A Van who would fix potholes could be offered to parishes by Somerset Highways at a cost of £50,000 a year.
4. The working group would like more early warnings of roadworks and closures. They were also concerned that emergency phone numbers were not being displayed at roadworks.
5. The ongoing problems of raised paving causing accidents in Wells was raised.

**Councillor Philip Welch**

**Somerset Councillors' report to Wells City Council – May 2024**

Somerset Council has been in existence in its current form for just over a year. To mark this, the administration has prepared a list of “first year achievements”. This is a very informative list, which highlights the fact that whilst the financial situation has dominated much of the work over the past few months, there have been other significant achievements. That document is submitted alongside this report (copy sent to WCC Cllrs via email).

**Annual General Meeting**

At the second Annual General Meeting of Somerset Council, Cllr Mike Best (Crewkerne) and Cllr Lee Baker (Taunton North) were re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council respectively. Cllr Bill Revans remains Leader of the Council and the rest of the Executive remains unchanged. Minor changes have been made to committee appointments across the council. Following the resignation of Cllr Alex Wiltshire (Liberal Democrat), Cllr Rob Reed (Liberal Democrat) was elected in a by-election to represent Mendip South. Cllr Reed takes up Cllr Wiltshire seat on the Area East Planning Committee – Cllrs Nick Cottle and Edric Hobbs remain as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.

**Transformation**

The Council's voluntary redundancy program – part of a suite of interventions intended to reduce the Council's wage bill by £40m has seen 201 applications for voluntary redundancy granted (out of 372). These redundancies should reduce the budget by £8.204m in 2025/6 – leaving £27.158m yet to be found.

The Council is currently undertaking an internal consultation on the tier 2-3 (Executive Director and Service Director) restructuring – this envisages a reduction from seven to four Executive Directors and reducing the number of Service Directors from 22 to 15. Consultation on the restructuring of the Council below this level will start in June/July. It is intended that this restructuring will reduce the number of tiers within Somerset Council to six, from Chief Executive (tier 1) to front-line staff (tier six).

It is important to note that voluntary and compulsory redundancies are not the only areas of search for this £40m saving – deleting vacant posts and reducing spend on agency staff are also key areas where savings are envisaged.

Further work continues to drive efficiencies within the organisation via both innovation and devolution/partnership working.

**Glastonbury Road roadworks**

Work by Wales and West Utilities to replace the gas pipes across the city continues. Recent work on Glastonbury Road has been disruptive. It had been planned that the next phase of this work would involve turning the section of Glastonbury Road immediately off the Tincknell's roundabout one way (heading in to Wells only) from 28<sup>th</sup> May – 16<sup>th</sup> June. Following serious concerns about the impact of this approach (not least given it's overlap with exam season) this work has been postponed. We will be meeting with Somerset Council officers next week to seek greater clarity on the rationale for undertaking this work in this way and the possible alternatives and/or mitigations.

**Roadworks under temporary traffic lights**

Frustratingly, work continues to need to be done under temporary traffic lights in a number of areas around the city. Whenever this is happening the permit number for the work and the emergency contact number must be clearly displayed (in case anything goes wrong, e.g. the lights fail). If the lights do fail please report them via the emergency phone number displayed on site. Please also report these incidents to us. Please also report any incidents where the correct information is not displayed (especially live incidents).

**Theo Butt Philip and Tessa Munt**  
**Somerset Councillors for Wells**

**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024**