

## WELLS CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024 AT 6.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Cllrs: L Agabani (Deputy Mayor), J Browne (Mayor), T Butt Philip, S Cursley, D Denis, S Eden, S Powell, G Robbins, T Robbins, H Siggs, I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Town Clerk: S Luck  
Devolution Officer: H Wilkins  
Facilities & Projects Officer: L Wassell  
WCC Staff: C Hobbs  
Mace Bearer: Graham Woodland  
MP T Munt (Wells and Mendip Hills) / Somerset Unitary Councillor (Wells)  
N Barnett – Somerset Wildlife Trust  
3 Representatives from St John Ambulance  
2 members of the public

**24/127/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
Cllrs: G Folkard, N Kennedy, D Orrett, T Pullin

**24/128/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.

**24/129/C PRESENTATION BY NATALIE BARNETT, SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST, ACT TO ADAPT**  
Natalie explained the process for creating a Draft Climate Adaptation Plan. Workshops will take place to consider local climate risks. Wells Environment Week hosted a workshop. An additional workshop is planned at the Christmas Artisan Market and at the One World Fair. Funding is available for communities that take part. Climate adaptation is important due to wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. The adaption plan will benefit biodiversity and climate mitigation and therefore community health and wellbeing.  
Four key priorities in Wells are

1. Improving and increasing green spaces.
2. Reducing flooding risks
3. Promoting community driven climate action
4. Coordinating climate emergency plans.

Wells recognises that there is a need to act now rather than wait for national government to act. Funding is available. £1k from Somerset Rivers Authority and £35k from Somerset Prepared. People are encouraged to get involved.  
Cllr D Denis thanked N Barnett for her work with Wells Environment Network.

**24/130/C PRESENTATION BY ST JOHN AMBULANCE**  
St Johns Ambulance Cadet, Toby Duckenfield, spoke to the meeting about the benefits that he has gained from his 7-year involvement with St John Ambulance. Involvement helps gain confidence. St John Ambulance members attend events, give demonstrations, learn vital skills such as First Aid. Toby told of how gaining skills that could potentially save a life is very rewarding. Toby is also looking into establishing a Youth Network to sit alongside the WCN.

**24/131/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD ON THE 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024**  
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

- 24/132/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
No members of the public wished to speak.
- 24/133/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- Wells Remembrance Service and Parade, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November
  - Remembrance Day, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November, 11am, Conduit in Market Place
  - Wells City Charter Fair, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> until Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November
  - Wells City Carnival, Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November
- Mayor's Diary**
- i. 26<sup>th</sup> Oct Wells Classic Football Club AGM & Presentation, Deputy Mayor attending
  - ii. 28<sup>th</sup> Oct St Cuthbert (Out) Parish Council, Full Council meeting
  - iii. 7<sup>th</sup> Nov Founders Day, Wells Alms houses
- Mayor's Charity Concert, raising funds for 5<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> City of Wells Scouts, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2024, 7:30pm in Wells Town Hall.
- Cllr J Browne asked that Councillors attend Remembrance services taking place. Tickets are still available for the Mayor's Charity Concert.
- 24/134/C OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE (Outside Spaces, Wells in Bloom, Portway Annexe)**  
Cllr P Welch presented the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024  
Cllr D Denis mentioned that the date of the presentation mentioned in 24/84/OSE should be amended to Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October.
- 24/135/C STAFFING COMMITTEE**  
Cllr T Robbins presented the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
Cllr D Denis mentioned a typo error in 24/32/S and requested that the word "be" be amended to "been".
- 24/136/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE**  
Cllr S Cursley presented the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
Cllr D Denis asked that Staff have access to general health and safety training through LCN Highways. There is no cost to the training and is available to all Councillors.  
The Town Clerk agreed that training could take place.
- 24/137/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
Cllr D Denis presented the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> October  
No Questions received.
- 24/138/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**  
Cllr D Denis presented a report from Local Community Network Meeting 10/10/24 on behalf of Cllr P Welch  
Cllr T Butt Philip highlighted that there is merit in Wells City Council considering the types of projects it wishes to deliver with regard to Health and Wellbeing roles.
- 24/139/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS.**  
A written report was received via email on 25<sup>th</sup> October  
Cllr L Agabani asked with regard to Local Government Consultation, if Wells City Council is going to consult and submit an opinion and which committee should that go to.  
Cllr T Butt Philip suggested that it would be appropriate to go to Full Council.
- 24/140/C MOTION RELATING TO THE OUTSIDE SPACES AND ESTATES COMMITTEE**  
Motion submitted by Cllr T Butt Philip
- i. The Outside Spaces and Estates Committee should cease to alternate the subject of its monthly meetings between the Bishop's Barn and Recreation Ground one month and Outside Spaces, Wells in Bloom, Portway Annexe the other month, and instead be open to covering all items each month as appropriate.

- ii. That the minutes of the most recent meeting of that committee should be presented to the next meeting of that committee.
- iii. That at its next meeting, the committee shall elect a single Chair and a Vice Chair and that the Vice Chair shall, until the committee determines otherwise, have specific responsibility for matters related to the Bishop's Barn and Recreation Ground.

Cllr T Butt Philip proposed the motion.

A brief discussion took place that having trialled splitting the meetings into two sections, that it was felt that it wasn't effective. With the likelihood of the workload increasing, that the committee would be more effective if it reverted to the previous format.

Cllr H Siggs suggested that after devolution that there may need to be additional committees formed to deal with the workload.

Cllr J Browne invited for the proposal to be seconded.

Cllr P Welch seconded the proposal.

All Councillors voted in favour of the proposal.

#### **24/141/C PROPOSALS FROM CLLR G ROBBINS**

1. To host a Community Christmas gathering at Wells Town Hall on Christmas Eve. The hall is available and people have already offered to contribute/help.
2. To consider the room available by the Union Street toilet block as a location for the community fridge. It has parking, easy access and is central.

Cllr G Robbins spoke of her wish, along with Cllr J Browne, to host a community drop-in day at the Town Hall for Christmas snacks. The people attending will be targeted rather than open to everyone to ensure the support goes where it is needed. It won't be a children's event. The Town Hall Manager has committed to being in attendance to comply with health and safety regulations.

Cllr G Robbins gave a brief explanation on the plans for the Community Fridge.

Funding is available through grants and there have been consultations with established community fridges.

A discussion took place about the location. Cllr S Powell asked that all residents locally be consulted. Other sites have been explored and rejected. In the absence of another option for a location, there is a wish that plans proceed.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the toilet block asset has not yet been transferred to Wells City Council, but that work on the project can take place in the meantime.

#### **24/142/C DEVOLUTION OPTION APPROVAL**

H Wilkins gave a report on progress. Subject to the conversations of the working group meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October, there has been circulated an update paper. H Wilkins requested that there be a decision to agree to proceed in principle with devolution and complete the next areas of due diligence. Further options and appraisals will be presented to Finance and Council Matters Committee and then referred back to Full Council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024 in line with the budget setting process which takes place in December and January. H Wilkins drew attention to the assumptions in Section 3 in the original report and individual functions. Referenced grass cutting as it is an inter-dependent service.

Appendix A outlines the maximum expenditure but these financial figures are estimates. Following the working group meeting, a greater data insight and refinement in figures has been made available. The information was provided by the Outside Spaces Officer and Responsible Financial Officer, which demonstrate that financial costs will reduce.

Cllr L Agabani asked H Wilkins to clarify some aspects of the asset acquisition.

H Wilkins reported that each service is dependent but are at times inter dependent.

Devolution decisions on Markets needs to be made collectively with other Parish Councils in the area.

Cllr D Denis asked if taking on extra staffing, would there be a need for a member of staff or an agency to manage HR issues.

H Wilkins reassured that the management of growth and staffing structures are a constant consideration.

Cllr T Butt Philip suggested that negotiations continue on the basis that Wells City Council will accept the recommendations for which services Wells City Council would like to be devolved and that more discussions take place. Decisions should be made when there are more details about how the costs are justified. Further devolutions options should be considered, such as litter bins. Cllr T Butt Philip would like to view the public consultation responses.

H Wilkins will circulate the public consultation responses to all Councillors.

The Town Clerk reported that with regard to the litter bin contract, information has been received this week from Somerset. Discussions will continue to achieve the best financial and operational option for Wells City Council.

A lengthy discussion took place of the complications of devolution due to the constantly changing situation and that changes will continue for the foreseeable future. It was discussed that in principle the recommendations be approved, but that there should be an open mind to taking on further work.

H Wilkins drew Councillors' attention to Section 20 on the original report. Item 3 gave a list of services and Wells City Council Officer recommendation. No 8, 9, 10, 11 are items that Somerset Council are looking to include in the Highway's provision and won't be devolved services. These changes are in the update paper. H Wilkins acknowledged the request to change the wording on the update paper and make an amendment to the wording of "all services".

Cllr T Robbins proposed that the devolution work continue and when facts are established, it be presented firstly to Finance Committee and then to Full Council meeting.

Cllr J Browne (Mayor) invited Cllr S Cursley to put forward the proposal based on the amendments aforementioned on the update paper.

Cllr S Cursley proposed that:

1. Consider the information presented within the original paper dated 5<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and that of the update paper, dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 2024
2. Understand the public consultation responses and the ranking of services from the public responses that has been received and its part in the decision making of the Council
3. Agree further due diligence to be completed by relevant Officers of the Council
4. Agree for costed appraisals of these services to be presented to Finance and Council matters Committee in November for recommendation back to Full Council meeting 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024 for final decision, thus allowing budget setting decisions to be made by council meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

Cllr T Robbins seconded the proposal.

Cllr T Butt Philip proposed the following amendments to the above:

2. Note that public consultation responses and the ranking of services from the public response that has been received and its part in the decision making of the council, have been considered by the Devolution Officer and Devolution working group.
3. Agree further due diligence to be completed by relevant officers of the council for all services.
4. Recommendations to be presented back to Full Council meeting by 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

Cllr S Cursley proposed that the amendments be agreed.

Cllr T Robbins seconded the proposal.

All Councillors voted to approve the amended proposal.

The Town Clerk informed Councillors that the Devolution working group meetings have been changed to Thursday mornings at 9am at the Portway Annexe.

**24/143/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT**  
No matters were received

**24/144/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
The next meeting of Wells City Council will be **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November 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:** .....