

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE WELLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 19th DECEMBER 2024 AT 7.00PM

Written reports can be viewed on the Agendas

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Cllrs: L Agabani (Deputy Mayor), J Browne (Mayor), S Cursley, D Denis, S Eden, G Folkard, D Orrett, S Powell, G Robbins T Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
RFO: C Woodland
Devolution Officer: H Wilkins
Mace Bearer: G Woodland
SC Cllr and MP for Wells and Mendip Hills T Munt
12 members of the public

24/160/C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllrs T Butt Philip, N Kennedy, T Pullin and H Siggs

24/161/C DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022.
As a Somerset Cllr, Cllr T Robbins declared a prejudicial interest in items 8 (ii) and 13.

24/162/C MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL HELD ON 28TH NOVEMBER 2024
Minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

24/163/C MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Wells Sport Club President Mike McGrath spoke about Wells Sports Club and its contribution to the local community, and the desire for their lease to be considered as part of the devolution discussions being held between Somerset Council (SC) and Wells City Council (WCC).
Colin Price reiterated the value of Wells Sports Club and all that they do.
The Devolution Officer confirmed the Sports Club was on the table for discussion with Somerset in hopefully the near future. Cllr D Orrett confirmed she is the Council's representative for the Sports Club and would be in contact with Mr McGrath to support and attend meetings.

24/164/C MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
Invitation from the Mayor and her Consort to join them after this meeting for Christmas refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour.

Mayor's Diary

- i. 20th Dec Carols by Candlelight, Wells Cathedral
- ii. 21st Dec Christmas Indoor Market with Scouts, Wells Town Hall
- iii. 23rd Dec Christmas Carol Service, St Cuthbert's Church
- iv. 24th Dec Community Christmas Eve Gathering, Wells Town Hall
- v. 24th Dec Carol Service, Wells Cathedral
- vi. 25th Dec Christmas Morning Service, Wells Cathedral
- vii. 11th Jan Wells SOUP!, Wells Cathedral
- viii. 16th Jan Women of Business Network in Wells, Bishops Eye
- ix. 19th Jan Twinning Murder Mystery, Wells Town Hall

Cllr P Welch read a thank you from the Leader of Wells Youth Club for the Mayor's support, attending a session and joining in.
Cllr G Robbins reminded all present that any donations towards the Community Christmas Eve gathering would be gratefully received.

24/165/C PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr D Denis presented the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2024. She informed the meeting that contact had been made with SC Planning (East) regarding any S106 money and its allocation in Wells, specifically with priority to:

Active Travel

Pedestrians

Play and recreation

Affordable living

Parking

The Town Clerk asked if Planning Committee meeting on the 23rd January 2025 could be moved to a 6pm start.

24/166/C FINANCE & COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Cllr S Cursley presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2024

Cllr Folkard asked the question when the working group proposed by Cllr H Siggs would be brought to the Committee, the Town Clerk said this would be next year, once the proposal had been officially received.

24/167/C ANNUAL BUDGET

Following recent correspondence from SC, the Town Clerk and Devolution Officer confirmed that the devolution of assets would only be considered by Somerset as a package to include devolution of services.

Recommendations from Finance & Council Matters Committee:

i. To agree the annual base budget for 2025-26, an increase of £114,850.00

The motion was proposed by Cllr S Cursley and seconded by Cllr T Robbins.

Those in favour included Cllrs L Agabani, J Browne, S Eden, G Folkard, D Orrett, G Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff and P Welch.

Those against were Cllrs D Denis and S Powell.

ii. To agree the devolution budget for 2025-26, an increase of £428,923 including the base budget.

The motion was proposed by Cllr S Cursley and seconded by Cllr G Folkard.

Those in favour included Cllrs L Agabani, J Browne, S Eden, D Orrett, G Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff and P Welch.

Those against were Cllrs D Denis and S Powell.

Cllr D Denis spoke to the meeting to say she was not against devolution itself but felt that this decision needed more time and WCC have been pressured and uniformed by SC into a decision. The burden is unfair on the electorate of Wells.

Cllr S Powell concurred.

iii. To agree the precept for 2025-26 of £1,603,433.00

The motion was proposed by Cllr S Cursley and seconded by Cllr G Folkard.

Those in favour included Cllrs L Agabani, J Browne, S Eden, G Folkard, D Orrett, G Robbins, I Von Mensenkampff and P Welch.

Those against were Cllrs D Denis and S Powell.

It was mentioned that there should be a six month review on the coming year to assess the situation.

24/168/C TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS/TRUSTEES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr P Welch presented the report for the Connect Centre.

Cllr S Eden reported that the Accessible Wells Working Group met on the 12th December. They had discussed focussing on quick wins, such as drop kerbs, altering the time the loading bays become free in the evenings, and imposing a 20mph zone. The next meeting is on the 5th February 2025.

Cllr G Robbins mentioned the Wells Accessibility website being worked on in conjunction with Bath Spa University should be live in the new year.

24/169/C TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM SOMERSET COUNCILLORS
The Town Clerk received correspondence from SC Cllr T Butt Philip that an end of year report will be forthcoming, and SC Cllr and MP T Munt agreed this would be the case.

24/170/C ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS OF REPORT
Cllr I Von Mensenkampff addressed the Council regarding the importance of a Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding training, citing a recent confrontation and email she had received that were threatening in nature. The Town Clerk confirmed a Policy had been drawn up and was awaiting inclusion on a Council Agenda in the new year, it will be brought for approval at January's meeting.
Cllr D Orrett expressed support for Cllr I Von Mensenkampff.
Cllr L Agabani reiterated training for all is necessary.

24/171/C DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The next meeting of Wells City Council will be Thursday 30th January 2025, 7pm

24/172/C EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC
Note: If it is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence it will be proposed by the Chairman that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended, excluding the press and public, in order that confidential items can be discussed.

24/173/C Cllr T Robbins left the room along with all members of the public (no press were present)

DEVOLUTION OF ASSETS
A confidential property matter was discussed, as recommended by the Finance Committee meeting.

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