

WELLS CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 4TH JULY 2024 AT 7:00PM IN WELLS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs: D Denis, S Eden, D Orrett (Chair), S Powell, P Welch

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: S Luck
WCC Staff: S Glendinning
4 members of the public

24/42/OSE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cllr: T Butt Philip, G Robbins, N Kennedy

24/43/OSE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022
None received.

24/44/OSE MATTERS ARISING FROM THE OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2ND MAY 2024 (Outside Spaces, Wells in Bloom, Portway Annexe)

24/35/OSE – Cllr Denis confirmed the member of public had been updated.

24/39/OSE – Cllr Powell asked whether any further action had been taken on Chapter 8 training. The Town Clerk advised no action had yet been taken.

24/40/OSE – Cllrs Denis and Orrett had thanked Ian, IDVerde employee for his consistent hard work within the City.

24/45/OSE MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Three individuals attended the meeting to speak on item 24/48/OSE Bus Station Planters. A member of the public had written to WCC to highlight the potential risk to their children if in the location of bee friendly planting. The children use the bus station during the week to travel to their place of education. The council has a legal obligation to assess the risk and as a result the Devolution Officer, Haylee Wilkins, had produced a Risk Assessment. Cllr Denis had subsequently made a counter proposal. Both documents were circulated to the committee prior to the meeting.

Paul Somers who is part of U3a Environment Studies Group addressed the committee in support of wildflower/bee friendly planting at the bus station and in the future, other sites within the City. The reasons for supporting were:

- i. Pollinators (bees, moths, butterflies, beetles, hoverflies) are important as they are relied upon for a lot of our crops and research has shown they are in decline (bio-abundance).
- ii. Most bees are not a risk, they are unlikely to sting.
- iii. Humans waiting in the bus station are likely to be uplifted by the sight of flowers/insects and individuals have a personal responsibility to act in their own interest i.e. they are able to take alternative routes to avoid the planters.

Adrian l'Anson had been a Wells Ambassador spending a lot of time at the Bus Station welcoming visitors. Prior to the meeting he had also consulted an experienced local bee keeper. He made the following points from the Devolution Officer report:

- i. Page 2, 'Whilst there is no case law to draw from on this subject, it is widely known.....'. How do we know it's 'widely known'.
- ii. Page 2, 'where footfall is required to go directly past the planter's locations...' Buses are parked some way from the planters, so can be avoided.

Mr l'Anson stated that Cllr Denis' recommendation to retain the bee friendly planting should be commended.

Maddy Milnes from Sustainable Wells, Tor Hill Lane Project spoke. She explained it is great Wells have a Climate Emergency Group which focuses on preserving bio-diversity so to remove the bee friendly plants would be a step back on progress, in her opinion. A balanced approach is needed to safeguard anyone using the bus station, but she was also firmly in support of the bee friendly planting remaining.

Nigel Fraser, Wells Rocks, then spoke on a different topic. The music studio used by his group at the Portway Annexe is next to the Main Road. He asked for the current windows to be upgraded to double glazing to improve the acoustics/sound/energy efficiency. He suggested contacting local glazing companies to ask if they would sponsor WCC and help with the upgrade. The Town Clerk explained it would be down to the council to consider this proposal. Cllr Denis stated that funds were in reserve from the Climate Emergency allocation and this could be put to this use.

Item BUS STATION PLANTERS was agreed to be moved forward on the agenda and discussed next, in order for the members of public present to listen and then depart from the meeting. Minutes are recorded below in 24/48/OSE.

24/46/OSE SKATEBOARD PARK

A report (attached) had been circulated by the Skatepark group. The Town Clerk raised a concern over the plan to remove the ancient hedge that borders Lovers Walk and he will be communicating this to the group. Cllr Denis raised a concern over the level of money that is still to be obtained for the project. Currently £80,000 raised out of a target of £500,000. The Town Clerk confirmed WCC had agreed a capped amount of £15,000 to be released when works commence.

24/47/OSE OUTSIDE SPACES

The Town Clerk gave an update:

- The Outside Spaces Team have two staff vacancies.
- A request has been made for a dog bin (£300 each) on Glastonbury Road by the bus stop, we are unable to take any action as the IDVerde contract is coming to an end and they will not add any extra bin emptying. This will be actioned when under our own control.
- A broken bin will be replaced on the pathway by the Old Mendip Hospital cemetery.

24/48/OSE BUS STATION PLANTERS

- Risk Assessment
The Town Clerk explained the planters were originally built in the bus station with wide edges to allow for extra seating. The member of public who had raised the risk had been invited to attend the meeting, but had chosen not to. The person feels it to be an unnecessary risk for their children (who are highly allergic to bee stings) to have the plants in the bus station. Somerset Council currently own the land, they have also been contacted. The Devolution Officer was asked to provide a risk assessment and the recommendation from this is to replace the plants with succulents in line with the councils standardised planting scheme, which would be hard wearing and remove the bee sting risk.
- Response to Risk Assessment
Cllr Powell advised WCC voted for a Climate Emergency Motion in 2019. Part of this is to encourage pollinating insects to survive by planting pollinator friendly plants. Somerset Council has a Pollinator Action Plan 2018–28 which states 'Somerset County Council will seek to protect and increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat and manage its greenspace to provide greater

benefits for pollinators'. The full plan can be seen on their website. Cllr Powell stated WCC has taken one small step towards this goal at the bus station. Other local town and parish councils have pollinator planters: Street, Shepton Mallet and Frome. Cllr Powell pointed out that alternative routes to the buses could be taken to avoid the planters and she was also in support of Cllr Denis' proposal to retain the bee friendly planting.

Cllr Denis stated that there were 75 deaths recorded due to bee stings in the United States last year and none recorded in Wells. The fear is understood, but there are alternative routes into the bus station allowing individuals to avoid the planters. Cllr Denis stated we have to balance our responsibility under the National Policy, Somerset Policy and our Neighbourhood Plan to maintain our future environmental needs.

The Chair referred to the recommendations in the Risk Assessment produced by the Devolution Officer, Haylee Wilkins and asked the Committee to:

- acknowledge the risk assessment completed by the Council. This was noted.
- Vote for Option 2a: 'to replace the plants with succulents in line with the councils standardised planting scheme, which would be hard wearing and remove the bee sting risk'. The committee all abstained from voting.

The Chair asked the committee to vote on the counter proposal made by Cllr Denis. This was to leave the planters with their existing bee friendly planting and to adopt a change to Option 5 in the Risk Assessment to be amended to read: 'Where complaints and concerns are raised, they will be responded to with an explanation of the Council's obligations to biodiversity under National, and Local Regulations and Guidance and will be accompanied by a Disability Access Policy'.

- This proposal was voted on: 4 members voted in favour, 1 member abstained.

All members of the public left the meeting.

24/49/OSE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- i. Proposal – Leave it Longer Campaign - WCC supports Somerset Council's Leave it Longer Campaign by putting the link on WCC Website under Climate and Environment and on the WCC Facebook page. Proposer, Cllr D Denis Secunder Cllr S Powell.

A vote took place. All committee members present voted in favour.

24/50/OSE WELLS IN BLOOM

- i. WIB Report (attached). Cllr Denis advised the Award Event for the Schools at the Bishop's Palace had gone very well. The next event for allotments and gardens will take place at the Town Hall on 4th October.
- ii. Proposal – Create a volunteer group of gardeners with supervisor who has had Chapter 8 training to look after the planters at the Bus Station with a dedicated budget to replenish the plants when required. The emphasis should be on sustainability, pollinator friendly plants and resilience to wide changes in weather. Proposer Cllr D Denis, Secunder Cllr S Powell

The Town Clerk advised there was currently no insurance in place to cover volunteers. A WCC staff member appointed as volunteer co-ordinator would also be required. No vote on the proposal was taken. The matter will be referred to the Staffing Committee.

- iii. Proposal – Bishop’s Barn Sensory Garden – Raised Beds or Planter as the triangle border will not be functional this year. Herbs e.g. Curry Plant, Rosemary, lavender, etc? Proposer Cllr D Denis, Seconder Cllr S Powell

This will be discussed at the next Outside Spaces (Rec Ground & Bishop’s Barn) meeting in September.

24/51/OSE ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

Cllr Denis reiterated that the budget reserve for Climate Emergency could be reallocated to buildings and considered for the improvements needed on windows in the music room at the Portway Annexe.
Wen Ecoweek. Cllr Denis confirmed dates and information have been communicated to councillors and it is hoped all will give the programme and participants their full support.

The Chair requested it be noted that any emails sent should be carefully thought through and considered, so that they do not cause any offence. Councillors and Officers should be measured when using language at committee meetings.

24/52/OSE DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm Thursday 5th September 2024 (Recreation Ground & Bishop’s Barn)

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 property report.

Minutes signed by The Chair:

Date:

24/46/OSE – Skateboard Park

Update from the skatepark group

The skatepark project is an exciting and ambitious project. It's a transformative initiative for our community using a large and underutilised piece of land.

This project is backed by a dedicated team of professionals, an enthusiastic community of riders, supportive council members, local businesses, and the broader community, all committed to making this vision a reality. We have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to create a facility that will serve our community for generations. The proposed skatepark will not only provide a valuable recreational space for the youth of Wells but also attract skatepark tourism, which has seen significant growth particularly since skateboarding was included in the Olympics and added to the GCSE sports curriculum in Wales and Ireland. It is anticipated that England will soon follow suit.

After thorough discussions with the project group and our partners at Maverick, we have set a target of £500,000 for the skatepark. This investment will create an exceptional space designed for all skill levels, drawing visitors and families to our city and contributing to the local economy.

A consultation survey has been distributed promoted primarily at the users of the skatepark to ensure Wells has the best design for our needs. After just one week we have already had over 150 responses the majority of those were in the 11 – 15 category, followed by 30+ indicating we are reaching the right audience and we have a large population of older riders in the city. This is important as it has been shown that attracting older riders has a significant impact on reducing antisocial behaviour.

The first of the design focus groups meetings was held at the town hall 3 July 2024 where we digested the results of the survey so far and discussed potential design taking into consideration the land layout and the needs and wants of the users.

Planning and access were also discussed and we will arrange further talks with the council in due course to talk about the access to the park long term.

We may deal with the access as a separate planning application but linked to the community development and for value for money use a civils contractor for the access and landscaping. Maverick will create an access plan to work from and will design and build the skatepark.

A tree survey has been requested along the access route to the park and we discussed options for landscaping the area as a whole to make it more open, feel more desirable and feel safer.

Approx Timescale

First Design concept for feedback – August 24

Final drawings which will go into planning – October 24

Planning – Nov/Dec 24

Possible to build park Spring / Summer 2026

We have already secured over £80,000 for the Wells Skatepark Project. Based on our discussions with Maverick, we believe that a total target of £500,000 is both realistic and attainable, given the substantial benefits this project will bring to Wells.

We need your continued support with the project's development:

This includes exploring ways to improve the public pathway running alongside the proposed skatepark and what it will look like after development

Financial Contribution, we request the Council confirm a financial contribution to the project. Such a commitment would demonstrate strong support to potential funders and the wider community, significantly boosting our fundraising efforts.

Your support is crucial to the success of this transformative project, which promises to be a significant asset to Wells for generations to come.

wellsskatepark@gmail.com

24/50/OSE - Wells In Bloom Report 6.7.24

Competitions 2024

Private Gardens Entries- 21, Commercial Entries- 4, Communities Entries- 4
Preschool and Primary School Entries- 11, Allotment Entries- 18

The Judging has taken place over the last 2 weeks, and the Award Event for the Schools took place at the Bishop's Palace on 4 July- verbal report at meeting. There were 2 new Shields (Denise Environment Award Shield and Thomas Learning Through Gardening Award Shield) presented by Cllr J Browne, Mayor, along with the certificates, and vouchers (sponsored by WCC and Brownes Garden Centre).

The next WIB Awards event will be held on 4 October.

Bee Friendly Signs-still awaiting to be affixed to planters once the risk assessment has been decided. All 11 schools taking part in the competition were given one for entering and all the schools have entered nature friendly entries which are encouraging pollinators.

24/49/OSE - Climate Emergency Working Group

The budget reserve from 2023 remains unspent but the Wen Ecoweek+ has £1000 budget. Should this be taken from 2023 reserves or from 2024 budget- both total £10k?

The members of the working group remain the same as last year- Cllrs – Denis, Powell, Orrett, Folkard, Robbins, and members of outside organisations- Maddy Milnes and James Mochrie.

The main focus for 2024 is working to put on Wen Ecoweek+ which was launched 25.6.24. Website contains the information for the programme and participants and Wen hope that all councillors will support it by spreading the word. Stewards are being provided by the Lions.

Cllr Denise Denis 26.6.24