

## WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 31 JANUARY 2024

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HALL, WELLINGTON ON MONDAY 31 JANUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Barr (Mayor)  
Councillors Z Barr, C Booth, K Canham, J Cole, A Govier, C Govier, J Lloyd, M McGuffie, and S Pringle-Kosikowsky.

**In attendance:** David Farrow – Town Clerk  
Alice Kendall – Deputy Town Clerk  
Ten members of the public  
One member of the press

#### 460 TO OFFER WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed all those present.

#### 461 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO APPROVE THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies were received from Councillors M Lithgow, J Thorne and K Wheatley.

#### 462 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C Govier declared a prejudicial interest in item 6 (SLA – Citizens Advice) as she is an employee of the organisation.

All Councillors present noted an interest in item 7ii – Councillor Allowances.

#### 463 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Planning and Town Council meetings held on 8 January 2024.

#### 464 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

As the meeting had been preceded by a Public Forum, none of the members of public present wished to speak.

#### 465 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT – CITIZENS ADVICE

The current agreement with Citizens Advice is set to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March. In preparation for this review, information and an updated request had been circulated to Councillors by e-mail in advance of the meeting.

**RESOLVED** to enter into a new 3 year Service Level Agreement in the amount of £5,600 per annum commencing on 1 April 2024.

#### 466 BUDGET 2024/25

##### (i) Costs of services and assets previously delivered by Somerset Council

The Council considered a paper circulated with the agenda which set out the services and assets Somerset Council has indicated it will cease to provide or charge for in 2024/5 and 2025/6. Councillors discussed each item at length and referred to public feedback to inform the following decisions;

## WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 31 JANUARY 2024

**Public Toilets** – **RESOLVED** to take responsibility for the management of the North Street carpark and Wellington Park Toilets from 1 April 2024 with an expenditure budget of £22,000.

**Planting in Wellington Park** – **RESOLVED** to budget a £20,000 contribution to enable Somerset Council to plant bedding plants in Wellington Park in 24/25.

**Security of Wellington Park** – **RESOLVED** to include a £5,000 budget to fund ongoing security arrangements for Wellington Park.

**Town Centre Hanging Basket and Planters** – **RESOLVED** to set a £15,000 budget for the provision of and maintenance for hanging baskets and planters.

**Play Equipment** – The clerk explained that, although open spaces would not be transferred until 25/26, Somerset Council would be suspending their current programme of phased replacement. Somerset Council had indicated that the cost of the items due for renewal in 24/25 was in the region of £10,500.

It was proposed and seconded that a £20,000 budget line for replacement and responsive maintenance. The majority voted against so the motion was not carried.

It was noted that the items within Somerset Council's programme may not yet require replacement and their current state of repair will be inspected. Given that Councillor Booth had reported a broken item in Humphreys Road Play area, it was **RESOLVED** to budget £10,500 for responsive maintenance or replacement for items within play areas owned by Somerset Council.

**CCTV** – **RESOLVED** to set an initial budget of £25,000 to enable funding of CCTV in the town.

**Minor Highways Functions** – after some discussion, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) that an additional Community Warden role be created,
- (ii) that, using the existing Community Service and Priorities budget, an initial allocation of £2,500 be set to assess what works may be required on minor highways matters, and
- (iii) that a £5,000 line be added to the budget for maintenance of Bus Shelters.

During the Highways discussion, Councillors Z Barr and M McGuffie left the meeting. Councillor McGuffie returned before the vote was held. Councillor Z Barr did not return.

**School Crossing Patrol at St John's** – **RESOLVED** to meet the £690 contribution to the patrol using the existing Community Safety budget line.

**Street Cleaning** – the position of the street cleaning provision was noted.

**Provision for 25/26** – the report circulated set out several open spaces that Somerset Council have indicated they will be looking to devolve in 2025/26.

**RESOLVED** that the Council is prepared to take on the ownership and responsibility for management of these facilities/green spaces to enable planning and budgeting to take place during 2024/5 in preparation for 2025/6.

## WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 31 JANUARY 2024

**RESOLVED** to create a new full time post for Open Spaces Manager to be appointed as soon as possible after 1 April 2024 to carry out the preparation works required as well as other Council initiatives.

**RESOLVED** to set a payment into reserves of £135,000 to enable the purchase of equipment etc. so that management can commence on 1 April 2025. It was noted that if this fund is not spent as expected, any surplus can be transferred back into the general fund once the financial year nears completion.

### **Additional Staffing Requirements**

Having noted that one additional Community Warden and Open Spaces Manager post had been approved earlier in the meeting, it was **RESOLVED**;

- (i) to extend the current Community Warden role to Full Time (37 hours),
- (ii) to create a role of Project Assistant to recognise the work carried out by an existing member of staff, and
- (iii) that a new role of part time receptionist be created to enable point ii.

The budgeted costs required for these roles being £135,386.

Given that the work, and subsequent budgets, of the Council will be increasing dramatically; It was further **RESOLVED** to add a contingency budget of £35,000 to enable further review of the current staffing structure and possible re-grading as appropriate.

**ICT – RESOLVED** to allocate a £4,000 budget for the provision of IT required for additional staff members etc. It was noted that the report set out use of contingencies already accounted for in the main budget for additional digital licences etc.

At this juncture, it was noted that time was approaching 9pm. It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing order 3x to allow the meeting to continue. Councillor C Booth gave his apologies and left the meeting. A 15 minute comfort break was held and the meeting re-commenced at 9.10pm.

### **(ii) Councillor Allowances**

Having considered the report of the Somerset Council Parish Town and City Independent Remuneration Panel, it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor allowances remain at £350 for 2024/25.

It was further **RESOLVED** that the Mayor continue to receive an additional allowance of £550.50.

### **(iii) General Budget**

The updated draft budget and reserve report for 24/25 was circulated with the agenda.

It was proposed and seconded that the Grants line be increased to £20,000. There were three votes in favour, four against and one abstention. The motion was not carried.

**RESOLVED** that the grants budget remain at £15,000.

**WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 31 JANUARY 2024**

With regard to the Service Level Agreement line, the Clerk had circulated a paper following an informal meeting with Reminiscence Learning at which some Councillors were present. He reported that they were seeking a total of £13,000 additional funding to their current Service Level Agreement of £12,000.

It was proposed and seconded, that £8,000 be added to the SLA budget for the proposed new project. The majority voted against, and the motion was not carried.

**RESOLVED** to add £5,000 to the SLA budget to fund an existing project that had been subject to cuts elsewhere. The detail and review of agreement to be delegated to the Finance Committee.

**RESOLVED** to reduce the balance of the Capital Projects line by £10,000 and transferring the amount back into the General Fund.

**RESOLVED** to not carry forward the unspent budget for Co-Working Space in 23-24 into an earmarked reserve but to rename the line 'Kings Arms' and reduce the amount to £18,000 to meet the already committed funding of rent and utilities for that project.

**RESOLVED** to set the budget as amended. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the income budget is £65,010 and the expenditure budget is £976,302.50.

**467 Precept 2024/25**

**RESOLVED** to set the general reserve amount at £200,000 to inform the precept figure.

Having considered the balance of General Reserves, Earmarked Reserves, funds already held, budgeted payments and income; it was **RESOLVED** to set the Precept at £945,392.

**STANDING DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**Members of Somerset Council:**

Councillor Andrew Govier  
Councillor Marcus Barr  
Councillor Ross Henley

**Director of the Somerset Association of Local Councils**

Councillor Janet Lloyd

Mayor  
Councillor Marcus Barr .....