Meeting
Monday 05 October 2026
6pm, Old Mill Board Room

Minutes

Present: Jonathan Orchard, Mike Tucker, Tessa Munt, Bev Smith, Tom Wood

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1. Apologies
Michael Mcgrath, Lewis Dyer

2. Minutes from last meeting

Approved minutes

3. Chairs report – summary of activities since July 2026

<u>Representation/meetings attended:</u>

Somerset Chamber of Commerce, David Crew. We have been offered associate membership, and are in discussion to organise two events in Wells during 2027. One to be a members' dinner, possibly at The Swan Hotel or alternatively The Bishop's Table, the second to be an IT forum with speakers – I have already contacted and had agreement to take part FOC from long standing "super nerd" supplier & friend Peter Gradwell (13,000+ LinkedIn followers). Both events to be jointly organised and promoted by the chambers.

Visit Wells forum and steering group, 22/7/26, 9/9/26 also sub-groups "business representatives" and "Music City Wells" 14/9/26

Mogers Drewett Business Breakfast. Chris Winter gave an excellent short presentation about the aims and objectives of the “Visit Wells” initiative. 7/7/2026

BRO Forum, Hattie Winter & Cllr David Woan. The BRO forum disseminates information relevant to business groups across the county. 18/8/26

Sedgemoor Chamber of Commerce, Roger Smith. A meeting to explore the success of Sedgemoor Chamber over the last few years, and what Wells can learn. 29/7/26

Bishops Palace, Merryn Kidd + Tessa Munt + Bill Lloyd, update on Visit Wells initiatives and Wells Chamber intentions. 30/9/26

Kevin Newton. An informal meeting to gain information about plans for The Sherston Hotel.16/7/26

Mendip Times, Mark Adler. An informal meeting to encourage goodwill and inclusion of Chamber activities and events. 17/7/26

Gromedia, Marc Osborne. Review and refresh of Chamber website. 10/9/26

Wells City Council, Haylee Wilkins. Meeting at request of Haylee and Matthew Johnson (Outside Spaces Manager) to discuss Wells Christmas Market and “Better Town Centres” bid. Meeting also attended by Victoria Marshall. 2/10/26. Second meeting with Haylee to discuss cooperation of the council to promote the chamber scheduled for 9/10/26

Members/steering group

Met with Tom Wood to discuss golf event and promotional materials. With Bev Smith to discuss her continuation as secretary with the Chamber.

Brief catch ups with Mike Tucker, Robert Powell. Updates of member web profiles *in progress*.

Invitations to Give Golf a Try, promo leaflets and business cards delivered (mostly by hand) to all members. Telephone calls to several inactive members to encourage engagement.

New member recruitment initiatives

Kelly Knight, Sound Bath Experience. Prospective member

Clare Sully, Somerset Cllr and Croscombe resident

“Give Golf a Try”, distributed invites + Chamber promo to Bishopbrook area and High Street

“Palace Farm Field” parking issue. Created and promoted a petition in my own name, engaging with all Saturday market traders. Petition has well over 200 signatories.

What I have learned

Many of the businesses I talked to knew little or nothing about the Chamber. Building recruitment will take time! There is a marketing adage that it takes at least six “touches” before a new product of service hits the conscious decision making process. So work needed, consistently over months not weeks!

It was pretty gutting to see Lavinia Byrne on the front page of October Wells Voice (re: parking) rather than the Wells Chamber. I feel strongly that the Chamber must be early and vigorous when these sorts of issues arise. It felt like an opportunity lost (although 200+ signed the petition I organised in my own name). I don’t believe it is essential for the Chamber to have a unified/set opinion when these sorts of issues arise, we can offer the mechanism for the representation of a range of views.

Priorities for Autumn/Winter

OPEN but social events that ENGAGE opinion and perhaps have a theme for discussion, e.g.

Connectivity

A pedestrian friendly Wells

Parking (Somerset consultation closing date soon?)

4. Membership recruitment, acceleration and follow up

All current members are asked to support encouraging new members to join, business cards and new flyers are available to use.

Noted - membership is open to ex business people, that maybe retirees with and interest / skills in supporting business in Wells.

5. Chamber events November 2026 - AGM 2027 and beyond

The aim moving forward is to have steering groups 4 times and year with the rest being interesting events and discussions. Ideas include:

Meet Tessa at Blossoms

IT and connectivity

Tax implications and financial updates

Presence of police – Meet the team and outline how they can deal with shoplifting, antisocial behaviour etc

End of January – making Wells pedestrian friendly

Parking issues – 3 hour parking on union street for example

Tourist Tax

Discussions need to be timely to ensure we can be influential in decisions and the discussions productive.

Events will be a mix of morning and evening – Venues suggested included Undercroft at Bishops Palace, Blossoms.

Budget is a good time to look at finance – could be our November event, hold at Old Mill

AP = Judith to go ahead to organise events and meetings. Promote on Event Bright, pay £1 to ensure we know numbers

7. Steering group ideas & inspirations - discussion "finding a campaign theme"

What are the things we need to campaign about and create influence and presence.

Mobile phone signal! Much of East Wells has little or no mobile phone signal.

An ask for all members to bring some ideas to the table.

Let's get inspirational speakers.

8. Any other business

Christmas Market – Going to be a huge this year, 2 days. Do we want to do anything. Consensus was probably not quote the right place and time but a suggestion to go round the stalls – 12th and 13th December

9. Date of next meeting – 2nd November 5.45pm