

Yeovil Crematorium & Cemetery Committee



Minutes of the meeting of Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Committee held on Tuesday 19th December 2023 at 6:00pm at Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil.

Present:

Nicola Clark	Somerset Council
Tony Lock	Somerset Council
Colin Rose	Yeovil Without Parish Council
Ashley Richards	Yeovil Town Council
Rob Stickland	Yeovil Without Parish Council

In Attendance:

Barbara Appleby	Yeovil Without Parish Council Clerk
Amanda Card	Yeovil Town Council Clerk/Clerk to the Committee
Chris Evans	Head of Finance Business Partnering, Somerset Council (until 7:26pm)
Paul Maltravers	Lead Specialist – Finance, Somerset Council (until 7:26pm)
John Ranger	Specialist Operations Manager –Somerset Council

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

6:02pm - the meeting commenced.

(1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs G Oakes, J Snell and Clive Wakely.

RESOLVED: to accept the apologies

(2) DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made at this time.

Councillor	Reason	Interest
Cllr N Clark	Member of: Somerset Council	Personal
Cllr T Lock Cllr G Oakes Cllr J Snell	Member of: Somerset Council Yeovil Town Council	Personal
Cllr R Stickland	Member of: Yeovil Town Council Yeovil Without Parish Council	Personal
Cllr A Richards Cllr L Watts	Member of: Yeovil Town Council	Personal
Cllr V Burt Cllr C Rose	Member of: Yeovil Without Parish Council	Personal

(3) MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Committee held on 12th July 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

(4) CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24 (MONTH 1 – 6)

The Head of Finance Business Partnering – Somerset Council updated the Committee with the situation regarding the transitioning and restructure of the Finance Team at Somerset Council. The Committee were informed that the Lead Finance Specialist – Somerset Council would be leaving Somerset Council in the new year.

The Committee considered the Budget Report 2023/24 for Month 1 – 6, which was introduced by Lead Finance Specialist –Somerset Council. As at the end of September 2023 the cemetery is predicted to have an end of year underspend of just under £10k, and the crematorium an end of year underspend of just under £177k. However, a word of caution was given as to the impact of coding errors within the new financial system. An updated position will be presented once the errors have been identified and resolved.

The capital expenditure for the refurbishment and development of the crematorium will be reported separately to the board that deals specifically with this project. The Lead Finance Specialist –Somerset Council was aware that the board has not yet met since the new authority had come into being.

A representative from Yeovil Without Parish Council questioned the procedures and plans for approving costs since Yeovil Without Parish Council now hold their share of the reserves for the Crematorium. The Lead Finance Specialist stated that the meeting will happen although he does not know when and he will find out who the lead person is from the operational perspective. This is to be reported directly back to Yeovil Without Parish Council. It was agreed that the communication needed to be improved and that everyone understood how the governance works and a list of officers' responsibilities.

The Clerk to the Committee raised concerns of the statutory timeframes for both Yeovil Town Council and Yeovil Without Parish Councils in terms of the Annual Return. She reminded the Committee of the difficulties in receiving the end of year figures for 2022/23 from Somerset Council which resulted in both Councils having to delay their Council meetings to sign off the Annual Return.

RESOLVED: (1) that an updated position be presented once the errors regarding the coding within the financial system be resolved; (2) to report back to Yeovil Without Parish Council on the plans and procedures for approving costs and to identify the lead person from the operational perspective as soon as possible; (3) that a meeting be held between key finance officers at Somerset Council, the Clerk of Yeovil Town Council and the Clerk of Yeovil Without Parish Council to discuss the timeframes and requirements; (4) to note the Budget Report 2023/24 for Month 1 – 6.

(5) CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM BUDGET 2024/25

The Committee considered the Cemetery and Crematorium Budget from the Lead Finance Specialist – Somerset Council.

The budget for the Cemetery for 2024/25 has increased by £2,407 to £101,027 and the Crematorium decreased by £77,555 to a net surplus of £322,005.

A query was raised regarding the rate of interest that had been applied to the share of reserves for the Crematorium that Yeovil Without Parish Council now hold, and also why interest had not been applied to all reserves. A query was also raised regarding the CAMEO costs and how this had been accounted for. It appears that costs have gone through a year after the service. The Lead Finance Specialist – Somerset Council will forward a response to both these questions to Yeovil Without Parish Council.

It was also felt that £46,900 was a significant amount to be put on a miscellaneous expenditure and should be identified to what it was allocated for. The explanation given by the Finance Specialist was that the account codes have been rationalised through the implementation of the new system. He will investigate whether the codes could be reinstated.

The representative from Yeovil Without Parish Council also questioned whether a budget could be put in for a contingency for emergency expenditure.

The Clerk to the Committee highlighted that the budget was a draft budget and that she was concerned with the timeframes with returning the budget figures for the next meeting of this Committee to be held on 10th January 2024. This would mean that the final budget would need to be submitted by 4th January 2024 which would not allow a lot of time for altering the budget.

6:58pm – Cllr A Richards left the meeting

The Lead Finance Specialist agreed that the timeframes were tight. The Clerk to the Committee suggested that rather than hold the Committee meeting on 10th January 2024, that the decision to agree the amendments to the draft budget could be delegated to both the Clerk of Yeovil Town Council and the Clerk of Yeovil Without Parish Council in consultation with the Chair of this Committee. This would mean that the figures would be more accurate and would fit into the budget setting timetable for both Yeovil Town Council and Yeovil Without Parish Council. The figures would be required by 15th January 2024.

6:59pm – Cllr A Richards returned to the meeting

RESOLVED: (1) that the Finance Specialist provide a response to Yeovil Without Parish Council relating to the rate of interest applied to reserves and why interest has not been applied to the Cremator Replacement Reserve Fund; (2) that the Finance Specialist provide a response to Yeovil Without Parish Council relating to CAMEO costs; (3) that the Finance Specialist investigate whether the codes for as mentioned above be reinstated; (4) that the Lead Finance Specialist investigate whether a contingency line could be put in to the budget for emergency expenditure; and (5) that the final budget be submitted to the Clerk to this Committee by 15th January 2024 and to delegate the decision to agree the amendments of the draft budget to both the Clerk of Yeovil Town Council and the Clerk of Yeovil Without Parish Council in consultation with the Chair of this Committee.

(6) SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH SOMERSET COUNCIL

The Committee discussed the Service Level Agreement with Somerset Council.

The Clerk to Yeovil Without Parish Council felt that the service standards were not met during 2022/23 with the delay of the financial information required to complete the Annual Return. She enquired whether there was any recompense. The Lead Finance Specialist said he would look into this.

The Clerk to the Committee felt that the document needed to be more specific and list the expectations of both parties as well as what needed to be done should there be shortfall in expectation. She felt that it currently was not a document that could resolve any issue should it arrive. Also, due to the turnover of staff at Somerset Council, the document needed to be more robust.

Questions were raised about how the costs were ascertained. It was felt that a review of the costs was required and this compared to the actual costs for the purposes of transparency. The Town Clerk did offer words of caution that the actual costs could be higher than the budget.

RESOLVED: (1) to agree in principle the SLA and budget (to be signed off when (2) is completed; (2) that the SLA needed to be reviewed; (3) that an exercise be carried out to measure actual costs against budget; and (4) that the Committee be refunded the difference between actual costs against budget (though they recognise that the cost may be higher, in which case, the Committee may be asked to pay the difference).

7:26pm - The Lead Finance Specialist and the Head of Finance Business Partnering left the meeting and did not return.

(7) CREMATORIUM UPDATE

The Specialist Operation Manager at Somerset Council presented his report.

RESOLVED: to note the report..

(8) YEOVIL CEMETERY UPDATE

The Specialist Operation Manager at Somerset Council presented his report.

He spoke of the kerbs sets and gardens within the lawned areas of the Cemetery and the cost of mowing. A councillor asked what the current policy stated. It was not known whether there was a policy. The Clerk to the Committee advised that it was the power of the Committee to amend any policy if there was already one, or to make a policy.

The Boundary wall complaint was discussed. It needed to be confirmed officially that the boundary wall belongs to Yeovil Cemetery.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to put on a future agenda, an item to discuss a policy on kerb sets and gardens within the lawned area; and (3) that the Specialist Operation Manager review the title deeds at Town House regarding ownership of the Boundary wall, and should it belong to the Cemetery, to seek quotes to resolve the issue.

(9) CEMETERY LAND

The Committee discussed the land.

The Specialist Operation Manager spoke of the approach that had been made to him regarding Quaker land.

A Councillor referred to the Church of England land and an approach should be made to the diocese.

Another Councillor said that an approach should be made to Cllr R Wyke at Somerset Council to ascertain whether there was any Somerset Council land available that would be suitable for burial purposes.

RESOLVED: (1) that the Specialist Operation Manager follow up on the Quaker land; (2) that the Specialist Operation Manager follow up with the Church of England; (3) that Cllr N Clark make contact with Cllr R Wyke at Somerset Council to arrange an appointment to meet with Cllr N Clark, the Clerk to Yeovil Town Council, the Clerk to Yeovil Without Parish Council and the Specialist Operation Manager to discuss requirements. .

(10) FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED: to agree the Forward Plan with April meeting date being brought forward to 13th March 2024 and the inclusion of Cemetery Land update and an update for Finance Services from Somerset Council.

(11) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

7:55pm – The meeting closed.

Signed: (Chair)

Date: