

Yeovil Town Council

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Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Policy, Resources & Finance Committee 26th March 2024 at 7.00pm held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software; and in the Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil BA20 1PQ.

Present (in person): Cllrs G Oakes (Chair); K Gill; E Hopkins; A Kendall; J Lowey; E Potts-Jones; W Read; A Richards; and R Spinner.

In Attendance (in person): Cllr A Soughton (Yeovil Westlands Ward); Cllr A Wilkes (Abbey Manor South Ward); Cllr D Woan (Yeovil College Ward); A Card (Town Clerk); S Freemantle (Deputy Town Clerk); and Adam Dyer (Leader of Yeovil Community Church).

In Attendance (virtual): Cllrs T Lock (Yeovil Lyde Ward) and H Stonier (Yeovil Westlands Ward).

There was ten members of the public present in person, one member of the public present virtually and one members of the press present virtually.

7:00 pm - Public Comment

The Chair welcomed Ruth White (who had recently been elected into the Yeovil Westlands Ward) to the meeting.

A member of the public asked if there was any progress in keeping the hyper acute stroke unit (HASU) in Yeovil. The Chair confirmed that the Council has written to the Secretary of State asking her to use her power to call in the decision to close the unit. A response has yet to be given.

A member of the public asked if there was an update on the Octagon Theatre, specifically for the following: the decision on the grant application for £10 million from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport; why loan payments for the Town Council borrowing £3.75 million had not been factored into the precept and the consultation process; and when the Octagon Theatre would re-open. The Chair confirmed that no formal notification had yet been received regarding the £10 million grant. He confirmed that investigations on the appropriate consultation methodology would need to be carried out, and the precept does not reflect the loan repayment due to a loan not yet being agreed, and will be built into future precepts as/if appropriate. The opening had not yet been confirmed as it was dependent on whether the grant was received.

A member of the public raised the issue of the closure of the bus station toilets and waiting room on 31st March 2024. He stated that the bus station was a very important transport hub and asked if the Town Council would be taking over the cleaning of the facilities. The Chair indicated that there was an item on the agenda for discussion.

Cllr A Wilkes read out e-mails from two residents in Yeovil who highlighted concerns about the proposed closure of the facilities at Yeovil Bus Station.

7:20pm – the meeting commenced.

11/180 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies were received from Cllrs T Casey (work commitments); S Lowery (unwell) and R Stickland (conflicting engagement).

RESOLVED: to accept the apologies with the reasons given.

11/181 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J Lowery – declared a personal interest in item 11/191 Devolution and Organisation Working Party due to her daughter being an employee of Westlands Entertainment Venue.

Cllr A Kendall declared a personal interest in the following items: 11/183 Yeovil4Families as he is involved with hosting refugees; 11/184 Grants (Ron Homer at Yeovil Bowls Club) as he is a member of the Squash and Bowls Club; 11/185 Feedback from Grant – Yeovil Tennis Club as he represents Somerset Council for the Management at Johnson Park; and 11/195 Beacon Lighting Event for D-Day Commemoration due to being a member of the Royal British Legion.

There were no other declarations at this time.

11/182 MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2024.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 16th January 2024.

11/183 YEOVIL4FAMILIES

The Committee considered the correspondence which had been referred to this meeting from the Town Council meeting held on 30th January 2024. Adam Dyer, the Leader at Yeovil Community Church was present to add further information.

He provided background information on the Yeovil Community Church and the extensive services that they provided such as youth work, supporting the homeless, elderly and those with mental health issues. He stated that the Yeovil Community Church was a vital community hub .

The Yeovil4Families programme supported over 200 families with complex issues with a number of those families being referred by Social Care. The financial commitment that the

former South Somerset District Council had made, had now been withdrawn due to the financial emergency at Somerset Council. This has meant that the programme has had to become innovative and the service delivery remodelled. However, there was still a large budget shortfall. He stated that grant applications had been submitted to the National Lottery and other organisations.

Several Councillors spoke in support of the work that was carried out by Yeovil Community Church. It was suggested that the best method of support would be through a Service Level Agreement rather than a grant.

The Committee asked the Town Clerk for a suggested amount. The Town Clerk suggested between £20,000 and £25,000 per annum for 3 years but that she would need to review the figures and work with Yeovil Community Church to formulate a proposal.

RESOLVED: (1) to agree in principle a Service Level Agreement with Yeovil Community Church; and (2) that the Town Clerk work with the Leader at Yeovil Community Church to formulate a proposal for discussion at the next meeting of Town Council*.

**Since this resolution, it has been established that due to time constraints that providing this proposal for the next meeting of Town Council is not achievable. Therefore, a special meeting of Policy, Resources and Finance Committee will be called in April 2024 to discuss this matter further.*

7:50pm – Adam Dyer, the Leader of Yeovil Community Church left the meeting and did not

11/184 APPLICATION FOR GRANT AID

Members considered the grant applications from both Somerset Bus Partnership for £2,500; and Ron Homer – Yeovil Bowls Club for £1,000.

At the previous meeting, it was felt that additional information was required for the Somerset Bus Partnership application. The Town Clerk indicated that she was satisfied with the additional information that had been provided. The representative from Somerset Bus Partnership told the committee that they were an independent organisation and neither First Bus nor Somerset Council are part of the partnership. The role of the partnership is to talk to the various stakeholders to promote the bus services within Somerset. The Somerset Bus Partnership is a group of volunteers.

Some Councillors were concerned about spending public money which would financially benefit First Bus.

There was some support from some of the Councillors.

RESOLVED: (1) that £750 be awarded to Somerset Bus Partnership as a contribution towards the costs of printing leaflets, timetables and stickers (*voting: 7 for, 2 abstentions*); and (2) that £1,000 be awarded to Ron Homer – Yeovil Bowls Club as a contribution towards funding a trip to Bowls Disabled World Championships in South Africa (*voting: 8 for, 1 abstention*).

11/185 FEEDBACK FROM GRANT – YEOVIL TENNIS CLUB

Members considered the feedback received from Yeovil Tennis Club who were the recipients of an award of £1,000 for a contribution towards new floodlights.

RESOLVED: to note the feedback.

11/186 BALANCE SHEET

Members considered the Balance Sheet as at 29th February 2024.

RESOLVED: to approve the Balance Sheet as at 29th February 2024.

11/187 BANK RECONCILIATION

Members considered the formal bank reconciliation as at 29th February 2024.

RESOLVED: to approve the formal bank reconciliation as at 29th February 2024.

11/188 FINANCIAL STATEMENT – DECEMBER 2023 / JANUARY 2024

Members considered the financial statement for the months of December 2023 and January 2024.

RESOLVED: to approve the financial statement for the months of December 2023 and January 2024.

11/189 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 29th FEBRUARY 2024 (MONTH 1 – 11)

The Committee considered the budget report prepared by the Town Clerk. She highlighted that there is a projected underspend of £40,959 which equates to 3.2% of the budget.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

8:28pm – Cllr A Wilkes left the meeting.

8:29pm – Cllr A Wilkes returned to the meeting.

11/190 CCLA – INCREASE INVESTMENT

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding increasing the investment with the CCLA.

A Councillor raised an issue regarding the amount of money being raised through the precept. He questioned how the Council had a lot of money at this time to be able to increase the amount in this fund from £25,000 to £500,000. He did not believe that the Council should be raising money through council tax to invest.

The Chair commented that the precept was raised to allow the Council to provide the services that due to circumstances that Somerset Council were no longer able to provide.

The Town Clerk stated that the reserves and balances held supported a risk assessment. She highlighted that some of the money was sat in Earmarked Reserves which were set aside for specific reasons and obligations yet to pass. The Town Clerk suggested that a report be brought to a future meeting of this Committee which indicated the split of the money held between Earmarked Reserves and General Unallocated Funds.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to increase the investment in the CCLA fund by £475,000 to £500,000.

11/191 DEVOLUTION AND ORGANISATION WORKING PARTY

The Town Clerk introduced the Terms of Reference of this working party which outlined the role, purpose and aims and objectives. The Working Party consisted of the Chairs of the Committees as well as the Mayor.

She stated that since 12th February 2024, the Devolution and Organisation Working Party had held three very long meetings discussing a range of items, and the notes provided are very comprehensive, with recommendations being made to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee.

The Chair commented that the Working Party are now considering play areas/open spaces and play parks.

Following a comment from a Councillor regarding the political balance of the Working Party, the Chair stated that working parties were exempt from political balance but that it was reasonable to ask the Devolution and Organisation Working Party to consider if it wishes to have additional members.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the Terms of Reference and notes of each of the three meetings held (12th February 2024, 26th February 2024 and 14 March 2024); and (2) to ask Devolution and Organisation Working Party to consider if it wishes to have additional members .

8:47pm – Cllr E Hopkins left the meeting.

8:50pm – Cllr E Hopkins returned to the meeting.

11/192 LEGAL SUPPORT FOR DEVOLUTION

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding the legal support for devolution.

The report focussed on two elements. Firstly, the urgent decision to appoint Porter Dodson to act on behalf of Yeovil Town Council, and secondly, to nominate 2 Councillors to be signatories on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Clerk did stress that decisions would have to be made by the appropriate Committees but sometimes quick, urgent decisions would need to be made. The Town Clerk also recommended that Councillors should not approach Porter Dodson direct with any queries, as this would be chargeable.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the decision made to appoint Porter Dodson (in accordance with Standing Orders, paragraph 4 (d) (xiv) 'Urgent Business'); (2) to nominate Cllr A Soughton

and Cllr A Kendall to sign the acceptance of terms on behalf of the Council, and that these 2 councillors continue to be signatories going forward; and (3) to agree that all questions should go via the Town Clerk and that Councillors should not contact Porter Dodson direct.

11/193 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding the Annual Town Meeting.

The Chair felt it was appropriate to split the annual Town Meeting from the Annual Meeting of the Town Council to enable the public opportunity to find out more about the achievements of the past year and plans for the coming year. There would also be opportunity for public to ask questions.

Date	Time	Venue	Meeting
17 th April 2024	7:00pm	Westlands Entertainment Venue	Annual Town Meeting
7 th May 2024	7:00pm	The Baptist Church	Annual Meeting of the Town Council
14 th May 2024	7:30pm	Yeovil Town Council	Annual Meeting of the Town Council (Reconvened)

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to agree to split the Annual Town Meeting from the Annual Meeting of the Council; (3) to agree to hold the Annual Town Meeting at Westlands Entertainment Venue at 7pm on Wednesday 17th April 2024, at a cost of £540; and (4) to agree the agenda items as indicated in the proposal (shown within the report).

9:00pm – Cllr E Potts-Jones left the meeting and did not return.

9:00pm – the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break

9:06pm – the meeting was reconvened

11/194 PHOTO ID BADGES

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to agree that the Council purchase a photo ID badge machine; and (3) to purchase the IDP Smart 31 at £899.

11/195 BEACON LIGHTING EVENT FOR D-DAY COMMEMORATION

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (SF).

A Councillor sought clarification on the use of the terminology “budget”. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the figure of £3,000 was a quote. The same Councillor questioned what was included within the £3,000 mentioned in the report. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that they would be providing the entertainment throughout the afternoon and evening in St Johns Churchyard, the relevant licenses, risk assessments, staffing, communication and advertising the event and no further cost was anticipated other than the cost of the purchase of a beacon.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to agree to fund (at £3,000) the Beacon Lighting Event for the D-Day Commemoration; and (3) to agree to purchase a moveable temporary beacon at £500.

11/196 BUS STATION PUBLIC TOILETS

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (HF).

The Chair stressed that Somerset Council were closing these toilets and that Yeovil Town Council continue to operate and manage the public toilets at both Petters Way and Peter Street and that the Council had no intention of shutting these facilities.

The Town Clerk read a statement out on behalf of Cllr T Casey.

The “Community Toilet Grant” was brought to the attention of the Committee. The Chair stated that the Council should write to Somerset Council for them to investigate this grant.

The Chair suggested a “Friends of the Bus Station waiting room”.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) that Yeovil Town Council does not take on the responsibility of the public toilets and the waiting room at Yeovil Bus Station; (3) to agree to the issuing of the statement as set out in the report; and (4) that the Council write a letter to Somerset Council for them to investigate the “Community Toilet Grant”.

9:31pm – The member of the public who had joined virtually left the meeting and did not return.

11/197 CCTV

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (HF).

A Committee member stated that this item was debated extensively at the latest meeting of the Buildings and Civic Matters Committee.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) that Yeovil Town Council enters in a service level agreement with Somerset Council for a 3-year period as detailed within the report and make a maximum contribution of £81,150 per year to the collective CCTV system.

9:33pm – A member of the public left the meeting and did not return.

Public Comment

A member of the public suggested that if the Bus Station toilets were closed, that appropriate signage be put in place to direct users to the nearest toilet.

A member of the public spoke further about the HASU. He commented that the consultation was not as honest and transparent as it should have been. He believed that the chances of the Secretary of State calling in the decision was remote. He stated that the Town Council should consider whether they should fund a judicial review.

9:41pm – The remaining member of the public and the members of press left the meeting and did not return.

11/198 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity of the remaining agenda items would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s3

11/199 STRUCTURE (STAFF IN CONFIDENCE)

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk gave a presentation. Debate was held over the proposals.

10:11pm – Cllr A Soughton left the meeting and did not return.

10:13pm – Cllr A Kendall left the meeting and did not return.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to agree the Committee Structure; (3) to agree the Staffing Structure; (4) to defer the issue regarding the Town Clerk; (5) to note that the post of Director of Culture, Events & Promotions post is ring-fenced to the Arts and Entertainment Venue Manager who will be transferred from Somerset Council to Yeovil Town Council in accordance with TUPE regulations; (6) To agree that the recruitment process for a Director of Leisure and Environment commence; (7) to agree that the recruitment process for a Deputy RFO commence; and (8) to agree to holding off the recruitment process for any further Director, until the requirements of those posts have been assessed.

11/200 STAFFING HOLIDAY PAY (STAFFING IN CONFIDENCE)

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding staffing matters.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to agree to the proposal within the report.

The meeting closed at 10:21 pm.

Signed: (Chair) Date