



# Yeovil Town Council

Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ

Mayor: Cllr A Kendall, Town Clerk: Amanda Card BA (Hons), FCPFA, BSc (Open)  
Tel: 01935 382424, Website : [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)  
E-mail: [town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk)

**Minutes of the meeting of Yeovil Town Council held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7:30pm held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software; and in the Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil BA20 1PQ.**

**Present:** Cllrs A Kendall (in the chair); B Boyton; J Cabell; T Casey; K Fieldsend; K Gill; K Hussain; E Hopkins; T Lock; J Lock; S Lowery; J Lowery; G Oakes; E Potts-Jones; A Richards; A Soughton; R Spinner; R Stickland; H Stonier and D Woan.

**In Attendance (in person):** A Card (Town Clerk); H Ferdinand (Deputy Town Clerk); and Rev D Crouch.

**In Attendance (virtually):** A Wilkes (Abbey Manor South Ward); L Ryder (Assistant Town Clerk).

There were 12 members of the public present in person. There were 28 members of the public and 2 members of the press present virtually.

## **Public Comment**

Rev D Crouch gave his reflections.

A minute's silence was held for Cllr D Ruddle who had sadly died. Cllr Ruddle had been an active councillor for South Somerset District Council and was a councillor of Somerset Council at the time of his passing.

A petition was submitted by residents of Wyndham Court regarding car parking. It was agreed to delegate this matter to the Buildings and Civic Matters Committee to be discussed at their next meeting.

The next speaker was the Chair of Somerset Athletics Association and Yeovil Olympiads. He spoke on behalf of the members of his club, all Somerset track and field athletes and for thousands of athletes from all over the southwest. He spoke of the petition which had over 14,000 signatures to save Yeovil Recreation Centre as it was at risk of closing. He also referred to the usage by the local schools and colleges. He stated that Somerset Athletics Association and Yeovil Olympiads would like the opportunity to work with the Town Council to maximise the potential of the facilities.

The following speaker was the Club Secretary of Yeovil and Sherborne Hockey Club. She spoke of the benefits of the club and the facilities at Yeovil Recreation Centre. She said that the club would work closely with the Town Council to identify the best ways going forward to assist.

The speaker represented the Quicksilver Community Group. He spoke of the devolution of services which the Council would be later discussing. He pointed out that the report in the agenda did not break down the costs of each of the 5 services listed. He asked if residents would get a detailed written breakdown of the extra anticipated costs. He asked what contingency was in place if the Octagon Theatre revamp costed more than currently forecast. He also asked if neighbouring parish councils would be asked for a contribution towards these services. Cllr Oakes responded. He stated that conversations had been taking place with Somerset Council for a number of weeks and that some of those conversations had to be kept confidential due to not only commercial sensitivity, but also because it related to people's jobs.

Cllr A Wilkes stated that he had been asked to read out a statement on behalf of an allotment holder at Milford Dip Allotments. Cllr R Spinner highlighted that a response had been sent to Cllr A Wilkes so there was no value in reading the statement at the meeting.

7:59 pm *The meeting commenced.*

**11/136      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN**

Council to receive apologies for absence and consider the reasons given. *LGA 1972 s85(1)*

Apologies were received from Cllrs W Read (conflicting engagement); J Snell (unwell); and A Wilkes (unwell)\*.

*\*Legislation requires that Councillors need to be physically present at the meeting to be shown as present. If a Councillor is unable to attend in person but can attend virtually, then apologies for absence should be given.*

**RESOLVED:** to accept the apologies with the reasons given.

**11/137      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any requests from members for Dispensations that accord with Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e). (NB this does not preclude any later declarations).

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Reason</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Cllr A Kendall Cllr T Lock Cllr G Oakes Cllr E Potts-Jones Cllr W Read Cllr J Snell Cllr A Soughton	Member of:  Somerset Council	Personal

Cllr S Lowery declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 11/143 – Budget 2024/25 in that she was an employee of the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue.

Cllr J Lowery declared a personal interest in agenda item 11/143 – Budget 2024/25 in that her daughter was an employee of the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue.

Cllr T Casey declared a personal interest in agenda item 11/143 – Budget 2024/25 in that he was a member of the Friends of Yeovil Country Park.

**11/138        MINUTES OF PREVIOUS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the previous Town Council Meetings held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the previous Town Council Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be agreed.

**11/139        MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR'S RECENT AND FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**RESOLVED:** to note the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's recent and forthcoming appointments and engagements.

**11/140        CORRESPONDENCE**

The Town Clerk read an email from the Leader of Yeovil Community Church.

At this point, Cllr H Stonier declared a personal interest in that she was an employee of Yeovil Community Church, and Cllr B Boyton declared a personal interest due to him attending their services.

The email highlighted that the funding of £386,000 for Yeovil4Families had been cut entirely by Somerset Council. The programme had been running for over 12 years and there had been some outstanding results. He spoke of the various groups that benefited from the range of services that is delivered from the Gateway. He asked to discuss with Yeovil Town Council about ways in which they could support or fund the programme.

**RESOLVED:** to delegate this matter to the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee and invite the Leader of Yeovil Community Church to give a presentation at the next meeting.

**11/141        REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEETINGS**

**Planning Committee – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023/22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**

Presented by Cllr Evie Potts-Jones. An update of planning applications was given to Council. There were no questions.

## **Promotions and Activities Committee – 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Presented by Cllr Evie Potts-Jones. The Committee had received an update from Yeovil Art Space. The Lantern Parade and Wassail event ran by Yeovil Country Park with Love Yeovil, Yeovil Art Space and Yeovil Town Council will take place on 15<sup>th</sup> February at Penn Hill. Cllr E Potts-Jones spoke of the two Super Saturdays (6<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> September). A summary of Martyn's Law was also given at this meeting. There were no questions.

Cllr S Lowery, as Chair of this Committee read the following statement regarding Yeovil Celebrates what was scheduled to be held at Yeovil Recreation Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2024:

*“In light of the financial emergency declared by Somerset Council, the Town Council have taken the very difficult decision to postpone Yeovil Celebrates 2024.*

*The event was due to take place at Yeovil Recreation Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2024.*

*Yeovil Town Council will be focusing its resources on supporting Somerset Council to protect services. We are exploring these opportunities. More information on this will be available very soon.*

*We would like to thank the community and businesses who have supported this event. We thank the wider community in advance for their understanding of this decision.”*

At this point Cllr T Lock proposed that the line in the budget for Yeovil Celebrates be replaced as “New Initiative Budget”, with a footnote saying, “For use towards assisting and helping to save services for Yeovil Residents affected by Somerset Council’s declared financial emergency”. The Town Clerk clarified that this was not to be confused with the budget line New Initiatives within the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee. This replacement budget for Yeovil Celebrates has been earmarked to protect services. Discussion was held regarding this proposal.

## **Grounds and General Maintenance Committee – 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Presented by Cllr Royston Spinner. He reported that 95% of allotments were let. There were no questions.

## **Buildings and Civic Matters Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Presented by Cllr Rob Stickland. An update was given on defibrillators, notice boards, and fingerpost restoration. There were no further questions

## **Policy, Resources and Finance Committee – 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024**

Presented by Cllr Graham Oakes. He spoke of the Youth Work that was in place and funded by Yeovil Town Council. He informed the Council that the Youth Council would be started again. He stated that many of the items that were discussed were on the Town Council agenda. There were no questions.

**RESOLVED:** (1) that the minutes of the above Committees be noted together with any resolutions and recommendations contained therein to be ratified; and (2) that that the line in

the budget for Yeovil Celebrates be replaced as “New Initiative Budget”, with a footnote saying, “For use towards assisting and helping to save services for Yeovil Residents affected by Somerset Council’s declared financial emergency”. (*Voting: 19 for; 1 against.*)

## **11/142 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

Members who represent the Town Council on Outside Bodies were invited to take the opportunity to report on any matters of interest.

- Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (minutes previously circulated). Cllr A Richards gave a summary of the meeting.

The following Outside Bodies seeks another representative from Yeovil Town Council:

- Woborns Almshouse (meets quarterly during the day)
- Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Committee (meets quarterly in the evening)
- Yeovil Recreation Charity (meets quarterly in the evening)

Anyone who is interested in representing the Council on these Outside Bodies should notify the Town Clerk.

There were no other reports from representatives on Outside Bodies.

**RESOLVED:** to note the reports given.

*8:33pm Cllr S Lowery left the room.*

## **11/143 BUDGET 2024/25**

Cllr G Oakes thanked the members of the public present and those who had joined virtually for attending the meeting. The Services that the Town Council may save were those that local people value, enjoy and need. He reported that the Leader of Somerset Council had written to the Town Council in November explaining the situation and asking for Yeovil Town Council to help protect local services. Officers of both Somerset Council and Yeovil Town Council have been working together over recent weeks. He stated that Yeovil Town Council now had enough information to set a budget allowing for taking over various services. He noted that rules around confidentiality had limited what could be shared with the public. He stated that any services transferred to the Town Council would come with staff under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment rights). This means that staff will keep their jobs and Yeovil Town Council would retain their knowledge and experience in running the services. He explained that the devolution of services had been split into two parts, and the consideration in the budget was for the first tranche – Yeovil Country Park, Yeovil Recreation Centre, Octagon Theatre, Westlands Entertainment Venue and the South Somerset Heritage Collection. Cllr Oakes recognised the fast pace of the work required to complete the assessment of the first tranche. The second tranche would have more time for consideration and he recommended the reinstatement of the “5-year Corporate Plan Working Party” to deal with devolution issues and the restructuring of Yeovil Town Council. He acknowledged that

the funding of any services transferred from Somerset Council would be financed via Council Tax.

The Town Clerk stated that whilst she could not go into the detail of the figures regarding devolution, she could give the headline figures.

<b>Devolution of Services:</b>	
Yeovil Recreation Centre (including café)	£240,787
Yeovil Country Park (including café)	£138,136
South Somerset Heritage Collection	£49,144
Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue	£573,300
<b>Total Service Devolution</b>	<b>£1,001,367</b>

A question was raised as to whether the assets of the services would be transferred with the services. The Town Clerk verified that she had been talking to colleagues at Somerset Council and she had strongly put forward that if Yeovil Town Council were to take on the running of services, then they would be expecting to have the assets transferred with the service. This would be a very long process. The Asset Management Group at Somerset Council would be meeting in mid-February to consider the transfer of those respective assets. This would be to discuss the detail of those transfers of assets. She confirmed that the Westlands Entertainment Venue was leased currently to Somerset Council and that the novation of the lease would have to take place.

She confirmed that as part of the conversation she had been having with Somerset Council, there were 3 ransom strips which adjoined Yeovil Town Council land – these were at Goldcroft former allotments, access to Yeovil Ski Centre and a storage facility at Monmouth Hall. The Town Clerk confirmed that she had been informed that very day, that the 3 ransom strips have been agreed in principle subject to the agreement of detailed terms (yet to be confirmed).

Concerns were raised by Cllr T Casey that there had been little time to review the information. He went on to re-iterate that the £75,000 budget for Yeovil Celebrates should not be kept in the budget as there were healthy reserves. He stated that the Town Council should not be charging tax payers for services and events that are not happening. He also stated that Yeovil Town Council should be approaching surrounding parishes for funding as they will also be using the services. He raised concerns regarding the Octagon Theatre. He highlighted that there was not a breakdown of the overall subsidies for Westlands Entertainment Venue and the Octagon which suggested that the subsidy for the Octagon remains the same as for previous years. He questioned why the figure had not reduced given the facility had not been open, and should therefore cost less to maintain. He drew attention to the figure of £174,000 highlighted by Somerset Council as a saving for 2024/25 for continued temporary closure of the Octagon Theatre. Cllr T Casey raised concerns about the recharge of cost from Somerset Council of £133,000 for Open Spaces which he believed Somerset Council would no longer be delivering. Whilst no answer was provided at the meeting, the Town Clerk has since provided a written answer to Cllr T Casey.

The summary of the response is as follows. *At the meeting, the Town Clerk had stated that it was not possible to split the costs between the two venues. This was because many of the*

*elements of service which were ran at the Octagon Theatre have been continued at Westlands Entertainment Venue. In addition, many of the staff work across both the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue. The budget of £573,300 also includes a sum for back-office functions and contingency. In terms of the recharge for £133,000 for Open Spaces, Yeovil Town Council have a Service Level Agreement with Somerset Council for the open spaces for which it is responsible. Yeovil Town Council have made no decision to cut this service.*

The Leader of the Council, Cllr G Oakes stated that he will be asking to meet with the Chairs of the surrounding parishes to discuss them contributing to the services Yeovil Town Council will be running.

At this point, Cllr R Stickland declared an interest due to being the Chair of Yeovil Without Parish Council. He mentioned that any conversations that Yeovil Town Council have with Yeovil Without Parish Council, the Vice Chair would be participating.

A question was raised regarding the level of reserves the Town Council would have to hold. The Town Clerk stated that Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. However, there is no specified minimum level of reserves that an authority should hold and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer to advise the Council about the level of reserves and to ensure that there are procedures for their establishment and use. Figures banded around are approximately 25% - 75% of the precept but that good practice would be to adopt a risk-based approach. She stated that the services currently provided are fairly low risk as they have been carried out for a number of years. Towns and Parish Councillors are not subject to demonstrating to the external auditor financial sustainability but she expressed a need for the Council to have a reserves policy that considers the risks and is supported by rationale to satisfy the internal auditor. The Town Clerk highlighted that there were earmarked reserves which had been set aside for specific uses but that it was in the power of Town Council to move those reserves should they see fit to do so.

The Town Clerk highlighted that whilst she was confident with the figures that she had produced, they are based on figures that have been provided by a third party which she was unable to validate. She had spoken to Service Leads at Somerset Council for a real insight about the services including risks associated with the service and also the budget.

A question was raised regarding taking on services from tranche 2 of devolution and whether the service take on would have to wait until the following financial year (2025/26) or whether the services could start part way through 2024/25. The Town Clerk clarified that the Town Council would not necessarily have to wait until budget setting for 2025/26 as there are reserves in place that could cover costs for part of the year.

The Town Clerk stated that if the Town Council agreed to take on the additional services as listed, that it would be an excellent opportunity to look at the services that it currently provides for efficiency and effectiveness. Some of the services that the Council may take over had many cross overs and the expertise from the devolution of services could be used.

It was proposed by Cllr G Oakes and seconded by Cllr R Stickland that:

- (1) to agree in principle to take over the services defined within the agenda (Yeovil Country Park, Yeovil Recreation Centre, Octagon Theatre, Westlands and the South Somerset Heritage Collection) and that the dates and details to be worked on;
- (2) to agree the budget including the amount for devolution should (1) be agreed.
- (3) to reinstate the 5-year Corporate Plan Working Party.

Cllr T Casey requested for a named votes for each of the proposals.

**RESOLVED:** (1) to agree in principle to take over the services defined within the agenda (Yeovil Country Park, Yeovil Recreation Centre, Octagon Theatre, Westlands and the South Somerset Heritage Collection) and that the dates and details to be worked on (*voting: for – unanimous*)\*<sup>1</sup>; (2) to approve Yeovil Town Council’s budget and precept for 2034/25 at £2,537,412 (*voting: 18 for; and 1 against*) \*<sup>2</sup>; and (3) to reinstate the 5-year Corporate Plan Working Party (*voting: for – unanimous*)\*<sup>3</sup>.

\*<sup>1</sup> For (Cllrs A Kendall; E Hopkins; B Boyton; J Cabell; T Casey; K Fieldsend; K Gill; K Hussain; T Lock; J Lock; J Lowery; G Oakes; E Potts-Jones; A Richards; A Soughton; R Spinner; R Stickland; H Stonier; and D Woan).

\*<sup>2</sup> For (Cllrs A Kendall; E Hopkins; B Boyton; J Cabell; K Fieldsend; K Gill; K Hussain; T Lock; J Lock; J Lowery; G Oakes; E Potts-Jones; A Richards; A Soughton; R Spinner; R Stickland; H Stonier; and D Woan); Against (Cllr T Casey)

\*<sup>3</sup> For (Cllrs A Kendall; E Hopkins; B Boyton; J Cabell; T Casey; K Fieldsend; K Gill; K Hussain; T Lock; J Lock; J Lowery; G Oakes; E Potts-Jones; A Richards; A Soughton; R Spinner; R Stickland; H Stonier; and D Woan).

9:17pm Cllr S Lowery returned to the meeting.

#### **11/144 RISK STRATEGY 2024/25**

Members considered the Risk Strategy and Risk Assessment for 2024/25 which had been recommended by the Policy, Resources and Finance Committee. The Town Clerk stated that any changes from 2023/24 that had been highlighted. She had added another section to include “Devolution of Assets and Services”. This included the transfer of both assets and services, and also the transfer of staff.

**RESOLVED:** to approve and adopt the Risk Strategy and Risk Assessment for 2024/25.

*(voting: unanimous)*

#### **11/145 FORWARD PLAN**

**RESOLVED:** to approve the forward plan as detailed within the agenda.

#### **Public Comment**

The Club Secretary of Yeovil and Sherborne Hockey Club thanked the Council on both their behalf and the Yeovil Olympiads for their support. She offered the opinion that the positive message needed to be communicated with the public with the solutions being put forward.

A member of the public raised his concerns regarding the Octagon Theatre.



Cllr K Gill asked for it to be noted that the staff be thanked for their hard work regarding the devolution of assets and services.

A member of the public asked the Council about what they felt about the downgrading of the Hyper-Acute Stroke Unit at Yeovil District Hospital.

*Meeting closed at 9:34 pm.*

Signed:

Date: