



Yeovil Town Council

Annual Report 2023/24

Amanda Card
Town Clerk

17th April 2024

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1 Members of Yeovil Town Council – 2023/24

Andy Kendall –Mayor of Yeovil Town

Emma Jayne-Hopkins – Deputy Mayor of Yeovil Town

Barry Boyton

Jade Cabell

Tareth Casey

Kayleigh Fieldsend (from 27th July 2023)

Nigel Gage (until 21st January 2024)

Karl Gill

Kaysar Hussain

Tony Lock

Pauline Lock (until 1st June 2023)

Jamie Lock

Jane Lowery

Sarah Lowery

Graham Oakes

Evie Potts-Jones

Wes Read

Ashley Richards

Jeny Snell

Andy Soughton

Roy Spinner

Rob Stickland

Helen Stonier

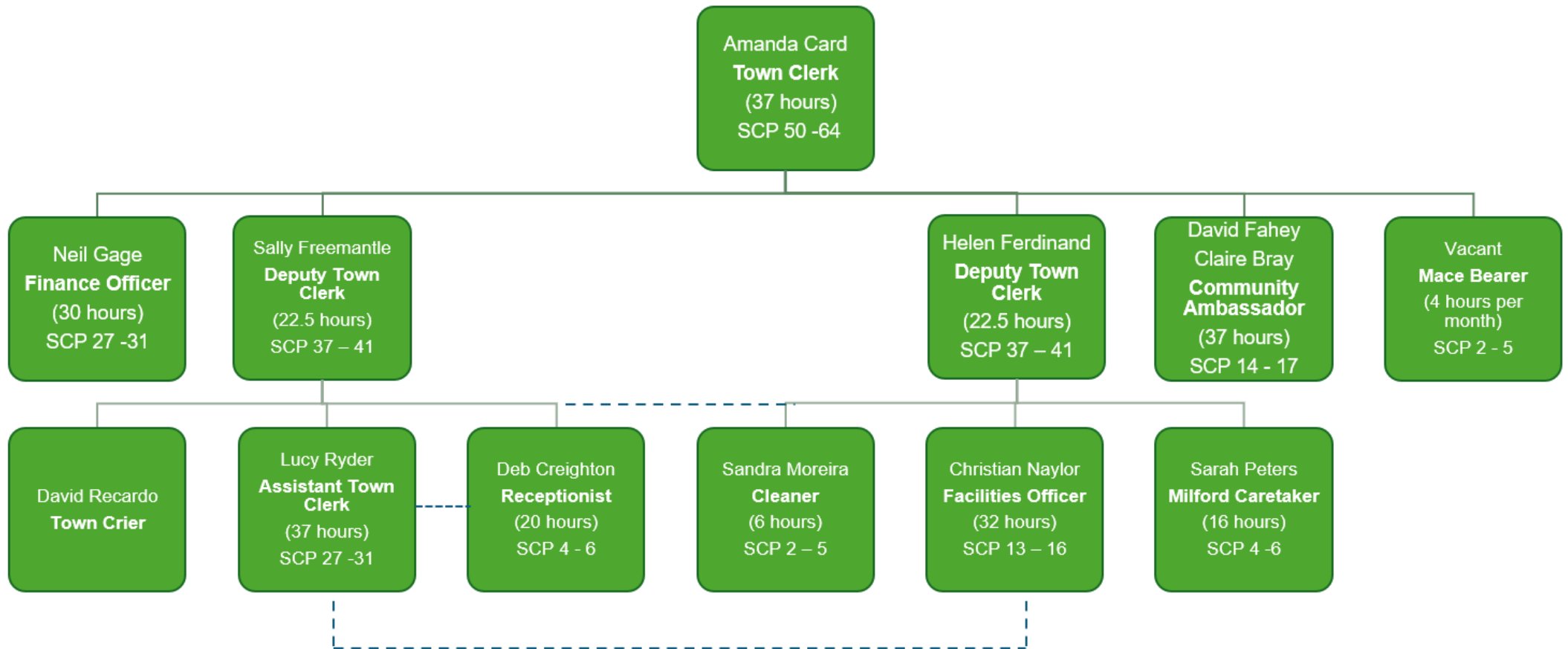
Liam Watts (until 17th October 2023)

Ruth White (from 2nd April 2024)

Adrian Wilkes (from 8th January 2024)

Dave Woan

2 Team Structure



3 Yeovil Town Council

- The Council met on ten occasions during the year. These were face to face meetings with the ability to join virtually.
- In May, we held our Annual Town Council meeting to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The meeting was reconvened later that month, where we appointed members to serve on the various Committees to the Town Council as well as outside the outside bodies on which the Council is represented. We also elected our Chair and Vice Chair on these Committees.
- At the June meeting, the Council approved the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements for the financial year 2022/23

Yeovil Town Council appointed a representative and a substitute to the Local Community Network (LCN).

- At the September meeting, a representative from Somerset Bus Partnership spoke about “Catch the Bus month”, an initiative to encourage more people to use buses.
- The October meeting was held at Westlands Entertainment Venue. At this meeting a motion to work in partnership and financially support the Octagon Theatre was discussed. We heard from Somerset Council that funding of £10million had been secured from the Department Of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS)¹. The Council agreed in principle to financially support the Theatre via a Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) loan. The Town Clerk explained the process that that the Town Council need to follow to apply for a loan from PWLB.
- In November, the Council were informed of the conclusion of the external auditors regarding the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23. It was their opinion was that the AGAR had been completed in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matter had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.
- In December, we received a presentation from the Environmental Services Manager from Somerset Council and the Chair of Yeovil in Bloom. It focused on the judging process for the regional “In Bloom” competition, and the approach of Yeovil in Bloom.

¹ *Since this meeting, and the announcement of Somerset Council's emergency, the nature of the project has changed. We are still awaiting confirmation whether the £10million will be awarded for the revised project*

The draft budget for 2023/24 was noted and further consideration would be given to the setting of the 2023/24 precept pending final notification from Somerset Council of the tax base and the Crematorium and Cemetery Committee final budget.

- At our January meeting, we considered the setting of the 2024/25 budget. We decided to approve the Town Council's precept as £2,5737,412, which resulted in an increase on a Band D charge of £130.69 per year (or £2.50 per week) and increase from £145.13 to £275.82. The Council agreed to take on the responsibility for a number of services that Somerset Council were no longer able to provide due to their financial emergency.

Also at this meeting, the Risk Strategy and Risk Assessment for 2024/25 for Yeovil Town Council was approved and adopted.

- In March, the Town Council received an update about the Devolution of Assets and Services update.

It also considered a motion regarding the decision of the Integrated Care Board to centralise stroke service in Taunton. The Council agreed to oppose the decision to reduce stroke services in Yeovil and called upon the Secretary of State to call in the decision.

- At the April meeting, both the Mayor Elect or Deputy Mayor Elect were decided.

Cllr Andy Kendall, Chair of Yeovil Town Council

4 Planning Committee

The Planning Committee met on 11 occasions during the 2023/24 year.

Numerous applications have continued to be submitted throughout the year and passed to the Town Council for comment. As well as the standard 'full' and 'outline' applications, other proposals for advertisements, works to listed buildings, works to protected trees, and proposed changes of use to land and buildings have also been considered. The Town Council is a consultee in the planning application process and Somerset Council, as the Local Planning Authority, takes the final decision. The final decisions taken by the Local Planning Authority are reported back to the Committee.

There continues to be a wide variety of proposed development to be considered by the Committee. As always, numerous minor domestic extensions have been dealt with (which need to be considered carefully in terms of their potential impact on the occupiers of neighbouring properties and the street scene), as well as larger scale residential and commercial developments which can have a significant impact on the Town as a whole.

The redevelopment of the **Yeovil College Site** proposes a once in a generation development of the college campus to provide significant improvement to the facilities whilst also improving the highways arrangements for the site (application 23/00513/FUL). Whilst concerns were raised about the impact of the proposals on neighbouring properties and protected trees, the significant benefits of the proposal for Yeovil, designated as a 'strategically significant town' in the Local Plan, were recognised and the application was finally approved in August 2023 by Somerset Council. The Town Council's Planning Committee participated in the process by supporting the application but raising some significant issues.

There have also been a few significant planning applications relating to improvements at **Yeovil District Hospital** during the past year. Firstly, a proposal for a three-storey diagnostic and outpatient facility (23/02238/FUL) providing x-ray, ultrasound, endoscopy, MRI, CT outpatient consultation and audiology testing, as well as staff facilities. Secondly, a proposal for an extension to the main hospital building to provide a new orthopaedic ward (23/02438/FUL), and thirdly, a modular clinic complex with consultation rooms (24/00579/FUL). A further application (23/02276/FUL) for improvements to pedestrian safety for hospital users and to ease congestion on internal access roads was also proposed. All applications were supported by the Committee as they provide much needed facilities that will allow the hospital to deal with increased demand. The applications have been approved by Somerset Council and construction work is underway.

A proposal for the provision of a **large LED screen** (5.1m wide x 2.9m high) in a key

position at the Triangle in Middle Street was put forward by Somerset Council and considered by this Committee in May 2023 (applications 23/00860/R3C & 23/00861/ADV). It is envisaged that it would be used to broadcast key events, and to display static advertising. The scheme forms part of a wide package of initiatives targeted at enhancing the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre. Councillors and the public attending the meeting had a variety, and at times conflicting views, but the Committee agreed to support the applications to lift the economic viability of the town and encourage new businesses and visitors into the town to allow Yeovil to prosper.

There has been a notable upturn in the number of applications and 'prior approvals' submitted in Yeovil for the conversion of properties into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), and others proposing the sub-division of properties for residential units. Some examples during the past year include:

- 1 Market Street - the conversion of offices for 3 apartments, and new dwelling (22/03199/FUL & 22/03200/LBC)
- 66 Middle Street (The Real China) – various applications proposing residential accommodation from 5 apartments to an HMO for 17 apartments.
- Glenthorne House, 38 Princes Street – conversion of solicitors' offices to 6 apartments (23/03037/FUL & 23/03038/LBC)
- 1 Higher Kingston – conversion from hostel to 11 bedsits (23/00904/FUL)
- The Close, Church Path – conversion to provide an HMO with 15 bedrooms (23/01391/FUL)
- 73 Sherborne Road – conversion of house to an HMO with 7 bedrooms (23/01999/FUL)
- 23-25 High Street (Denners) – conversion and extension to provide commercial floorspace and 27 residential units (23/02345/FUL)
- 33 The Avenue – conversion of commercial premises to provide 8 flats (23/02879/P3MA & 23/02880/P3MA)

Each application is considered on its own merits by the Committee and concerns raised when appropriate and necessary. In particular, parking is an issue that has been raised with the increase of these types of developments with limited or no parking provision, and the Council has recently requested that Somerset Council investigate the issue.

Whilst the vast majority of planning applications are approved, a small number are refused each year, and by raising concerns the Town Council plays a role in supporting the Local Planning Authority in providing a case to resist inappropriate and unacceptable development when necessary.

Evie Potts-Jones, Chair of Planning Committee

5 Grounds and General Maintenance Committee

The Committee met on six occasions during the year.

Play Areas

The Committee manages 16 play areas across Yeovil and receives regular reports regarding inspection and maintenance.

Partnership working with Somerset Council continues in line with the 5-year investment plan of improvement to the Town's play and youth facilities. Following the upgrade of provision of equipment at Milford and Yew Tree skate parks opening events took place at both locations which were well attended. The new facilities are well designed and proving very popular, being used by skaters of all ages.

School Holiday Activities

The free Open Access Holiday Activities Programme unfortunately came to an end as the partnership funding for the service from Somerset Council was withdrawn. This initiative was highly successful and the number of people attending the activities at three locations in the Town increased annually. In recognition of the community value of this service, Yeovil Town Council will address this in future plans, so whilst there is a pause in this provision at present, there will be further opportunities as soon as it is practical to provide them.

Allotments

The Council's pro-active and flexible approach to allotment management continues to help achieve a thriving allotment community, and the active promotion of vacant allotments, including a targeted publicity drive has improved the level of allotment lettings across the Town's 11 allotment sites with over 90% of allotments let throughout the year. The varied benefits of allotment gardening are explained in the publicity of the vacancies which includes advertising on Facebook, in the press and posters in the community. Residents outside as well as within the parish of Yeovil are currently eligible to have the opportunity to take a tenancy of a Yeovil Town Council allotment.

Each allotment site is encouraged to have a nominated Tenants' Representative. These representatives feedback allotment issues to the Town Council which have been raised by their fellow tenants and where necessary they are forwarded to the Committee for their consideration.

The income raised from allotment rents helps to meet the costs of maintaining the Town's allotment sites, and any annual rent increase means that the budgeted income represents an acceptable percentage of the overall costs, whilst also continuing to

ensure a fair and sustainable approach to their future provision. A mains water charge re-charges the cost of mains water used by tenants on a site-by-site basis. This means that tenants pay for the water actually used, whilst encouraging more environmentally friendly ways of collecting and recycling rainwater thereby reducing the dependency on mains water. This approach is in line with the Council's values of raising awareness of environmental issues, improving the quality of the environment and encouraging an environmentally friendly ethos in line with the Climate Control Policy.

A member of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee has been appointed as a representative on the Yeovil Allotment Association meeting to improve two-way communication between the association members and the Town Council. An Allotment Maintenance Working Party continues to review the Allotment Tenancy agreements in line with Town Council policies and legislation and assists in addressing relevant issues.

Maintenance and repair took place on the pathways at Elizabeth Flats Allotment site and an audit of trees took place across all sites. Yeovil Town Council continues to contract a local company for general allotment site maintenance which has proven to be extremely efficient.

The hard work of the allotment tenants does not go unnoticed, and appreciation is rewarded for those whose outstanding efforts impress the most. The Best Kept Allotment Competition is judged every year and the winner and runner up of each of the eight categories were awarded prizes at a presentation evening in October. The judges all agreed that the general standard of the allotment plots continues to improve and the vibrant community spirit is apparent on the allotment sites.

Greenspace Areas

The Committee has continued to fund the maintenance of an extensive number of areas of amenity and open spaces in the Town – including Yeovil's Green Flag Award winning Country Park. This ensures that local communities have ongoing access to public areas of green space close to where they live. Organised monitoring and review arrangements have taken place to identify issues affecting open spaces across the Town.

The Committee is supportive of the Countryside team's (Somerset Council) ongoing work at Yeovil Country Park. The team, including volunteers, reaches out to a wide variety of community groups and their work has been vital, especially as the significance of greenspace has become so precious for wellbeing and continues to provide a place where people can socialise in the fresh air. The Ninesprings Café, Education and Information Centre, which the Town Council helped to fund, is an invaluable resource, both in terms of an excellent facility for communication and marketing, and a lovely meeting point for social and educational purposes.

A close working relationship with Somerset Council has continued throughout the year. A Service Level Agreement serves as a foundation document for services currently and will form a basis for progressing future initiatives.

Royston Spinner, Chair of the Grounds and General Maintenance Committee

6 Promotions and Activities Committee

The Committee met on six occasions during the year.

Super Saturday

Super Saturday took place in the town centre in September and was a very busy and successful event. Due to some of the town being inaccessible, the focus of the event was in St John's Churchyard and The Quedam. Feedback about the day was positive and footfall was up 23% on the previous year at 14,000. One of the shops reported that it had been their busiest trading day since before covid and the live stream from Facebook had 50 viewers at one time.

The event included two performances of Pirate Taxi by Pirates of the Carabina and three performances of Out of the Deep Blue by Autin Dance Theatre (collaboration with Octagon Theatre/Somerset Council) as well as eat:festivals, circus skills, stilt walker, walkabout act, buskfest, local community stalls and traditional fair stalls.

Eat: Festival

During this municipal year, three events had been commissioned by eat:festivals:

- Spring Event
- Supporting Super Saturday
- Christmas eat:festival

Due to the positive feedback following each of the eat:festival events, the Town Council has agreed dates for 2024 and 2025. Comments included that the events were well organised, the atmosphere was good and those who attended had an enjoyable time. Footfall figures for the town centre were excellent on each of the dates that eat:festivals were in Yeovil, and the organisation worked hard to provide a positive experience in spite of difficulties caused by restricted access to parts of the town.

Yeovil Celebrates!

The "Yeovil Celebrates!" event held on 27th and 28th May was a huge success and Yeovil Town Council is very grateful to all the businesses and organisations who made the event possible.

The feedback received was extremely positive. The team were commended on a very well organised event from the perspective of participants and visitors. Emails were received congratulating the Town Council on a brilliant community weekend with some requesting the opportunity to attend a future event and requests that it takes place annually.

Over 8,000 people came through the gates over the two days. Security stringently monitored capacity and regulated attendance to ensure the safety of all. The security team's role was also to check bags for prohibited items and some confiscations were made, however there was little resistance to this process as it was explained that the safety of everyone was paramount.

Yeovil in Bloom

The results of the RHS South West in Bloom Competition this year were:

- Yeovil won Gold!
- Winner of Category (St Bridget Cup)
- Best Portfolio
- The Most Meritorious Entry
- All IYNs (It's Your Neighbourhood Awards) were awarded 5 stars or 4 stars
- Hospital – Community Champion Award

As overall winner of the category, Yeovil will be entered into the national competition in the forthcoming season.

The Yeovil in Bloom gardening competition had been judged, including front and back gardens; and shop fronts. An awards ceremony was held at Milford Hall in October which was very well attended.

The town and St John's Churchyard looked lovely with all the floral displays.

Christmas Lights

Due to Yeovil Refresh the Christmas Light displays were reduced for Christmas. The Light Switch on was organised and managed by Love Yeovil in The Quedam and included performances by local choirs and musicians, providing a lovely festive atmosphere and a brilliant start to Christmas shopping in the town. The event was very well attended and received.

The Lighting Scheme for 2023 was due to be changed with the tender process commencing in January. However, in light of the Yeovil Refresh work and the anticipation that the work would not be complete in time for the Light Switch on event in November 2023, as well as the difficulties in producing a specification, it was agreed to extend the current lighting scheme for another year.

Town Crier

Our longstanding Town Crier retired last year and we have been successful in recruiting a new Town Crier who will be hosting his first Town Crier's competition in April.

The Town Crier's competition invites Town Criers from all over the country to test their vocal chords. The competition will commence with an opening cry from Yeovil's Town Crier and then each Town Crier will compete in two heats. Prizes will be awarded for the overall winner, runners-up, best dressed crier, best dressed escort and best dressed couple.

Yeovil Together

The Council financially supported the Yeovil Together Event. It was an extraordinarily successful day, with the public taking part in activities that the various communities provided including culturally diverse food, live music, performances and dance, family friendly culturally creative workshops and well-being activities.

Yeovil Art Space

The Committee agreed a Service Level Agreement with Yeovil Art Space with the aim of achieving the following aspects:

- creativity as a social tool for making impact;
- connecting the public/community through creativity and development of change;
- outreach to audiences with hard hitting messages; and
- adding value to existing events

The core funding provides more than just resource to achieve these aspects, but also serves as accreditation by the Town Council to support Yeovil Art Space in applications and funding bids for valuable projects such as "The Story of Yeovil" and the aspiration to bring Arts, Culture and Heritage awareness to the town and make it accessible to the wider community. Collaboration with the community is hugely important in the process and Yeovil Art Space had been working extremely hard to connect with as many agencies and community groups as possible to ensure that the projects delivered meet the correct needs and fit in with the wider strategy for Yeovil. The strong relationships created will be developed alongside the projects which will take advantage of the opportunities presented during the transition of the town centre and services provided by the Town Council.

Sarah Lowery, Chair of the Promotions and Activities Committee

7 Buildings and Civic Matters Committee

The Committee met on six occasions during the year.

Defibrillators

The Council is now the guardian of 13 defibrillators in the parish of Yeovil:

1. Nationwide Yeovil Branch, Middle Street (available 24/7)
2. The Acorn Café, Church Street (available 24/7)
3. Ninesprings Café, Brunswick Street (Yeovil Country Park) (available 24/7)
4. St Andrew's Scout Group, Preston Grove (available 24/7)
5. St Peter's Community Centre, Westfield (available 24/7)
6. Dunelm, Quedam Shopping Centre (available 24/7)
7. Birchfield Community Centre, Birchfield (available 24/7)
8. The Quicksilver Mail, Hendford Hill (available 24/7)
9. Milford Hall, Milford Park (available 24/7)
10. Town House, Union Street (limited availability – office hours).
11. Holy Trinity Community Centre (available 24/7)
12. Southville Elim Church (available 24/7)
13. Maltravers House, Petters Way (available 24/7)

The Town Council register the defibrillators with the Circuit: <https://www.thecircuit.uk> (which indicates when the defibrillator has been used or when it needs attention) and HeartSafe: <https://www.heartsafe.org.uk/aed-locations/> (which indicates where registered defibrillators are located).

The defibrillators have been accessed a total of 40 times since September 2021.

Police

We heard about the changes in the Neighbourhood team: Neighbourhood Inspector Rachel Clark and Neighbourhood Sergeant Dan Crawford (who was replaced in January 2024 by Neighbourhood Sergeant Josh Rutter). They attended four meetings and explained the issues in Yeovil. They were working hard to ensure that there was police visibility within the Town Centre. All issues should be reported (if it is an emergency then use 999 and non-emergency 101 or online), as the data highlights the priorities and where to direct resources.

Yeovil Crime Reduction Team

Gareth Williams, the Co-ordinator from Yeovil Crime Reduction Team attended a meeting and explained the remit of his organisation. He explained that they were a self-funded

organisation. They operate Shop Watch, Pub Watch, Radio link and dealt with issues within the Town Centre, working very closely with Bridgwater CCTV.

CCTV in Yeovil

In response to the financial emergency declared by Somerset Council and the proposal to cease the Council run monitoring service across Somerset, this Committee considered funding the CCTV in Yeovil. This would be in conjunction with the other participating Town Councils in Somerset. The Committee endorsed a Service Level Agreement for a 3-year period with a maximum contribution of £81,150 per year to the collective CCTV system.

Community Ambassadors

The Committee discussed the need for Community Ambassadors for Yeovil Town Centre. This initiative was to make both visitors to the town centre and businesses within the town centre feel safer. Two Community Ambassadors have now been appointed. The day-to-day management of these posts will be carried out by Yeovil Crime Reduction Team via a Service Level Agreement.

Toilets

The Town Council continue to maintain the toilets at Petters Way and Peter Street. Somerset Council had withdrawn the toilet facilities at Yeovil Bus Station due to the financial emergency. The Town Council had made the difficult decision not to take over the running of these facilities based on high costs.

Town House

The gas boilers in the Town House were replaced and a single new and more efficient gas boiler with a control system (which would zone Town House at different temperatures giving more control of the whole heating system) was installed. This should result in greater efficiency and lower costs. The issue relating to the external wall was also rectified.

Milford Hall

The cost of electricity continues to cause concern. A thorough investigation was carried out and it was identified that energy consumption remains stable and it is the cost per unit. Solar Panels are being considered for Milford Hall but is deferred until a financial viability study is carried out for Milford Hall. Cavity wall insulation was installed.

Hall charges were reviewed and agreed, with charges increases in the region of 35%. They will be reviewed again in September 2024.

Work continues to advertise the Hall to the public in order to increase the number of bookings and maximise the revenue for the Hall.

Notice Boards

A condition audit was carried out on all Town Council notice boards in the parish. New notice boards have since been installed. Unfortunately, the notice board at Monmouth Hall was vandalised but has since been repaired.

The notice board at Town House is also due to be replaced. This has been sponsored by Leonardo. It was felt that the current location created safety issues both in terms of obstructing views on exit of the car park, but also concealed some anti-social activities. The proposed location is on the on black railing on the car park facing out onto South Street. The Council has applied for advertisement consent.

Fingerpost Restoration

The poor condition of the fingerpost on Dorchester Road (which falls in the parish of Yeovil) was considered. Somerset Council had confirmed that they were no longer responsible for maintaining fingerposts and that it was now the responsibility of the parish council. It was confirmed by South West Heritage Trust that this is the only finger post in Yeovil. The fingerpost was restored and positive feedback has been received.

Remembrance Sunday

The Remembrance Sunday parade and service in 2023 was very successful. The Town Council had to apply for a Road Obstruction Order for a Special Event. Marshalls and stewards were contracted to assist in the event. Positive feedback was received from the public stating that the event felt safer. The Town Council worked with a local sound company to provide sound equipment and technical assistance. A plan B was in place should the work carried out in the Borough as part of Yeovil Refresh not be completed in time for Remembrance Sunday, fortunately this was not needed.

Mace Bearer

Our Mace Bearer resigned during the year for personal reasons. The Committee thanked the outgoing Mace Bearer for all he had done for the Council. We will begin a recruitment process as soon as possible.

Official Image of HM King Charles III

We are now in receipt of the official image of HM King Charles III.

Parking Issues in Yeovil

The Committee considered a petition regarding parking at Wyndham Court in Newton Road and letters from the public regarding parking allocations for new developments in Yeovil.

The Committee agreed to request that Somerset Council carry out an investigation into the parking issues and also carry out a review of the Parking Strategy.

Millenium Clock Time Capsule

The presence of a time capsule in the base of the Millenium Clock was highlighted to the Committee, and a concern raised that the knowledge of its presence might be forgotten over time. Information was collected about the time capsule and a new page dedicated to the Millenium Clock and the time capsule has been added to the 'Yeovil's Virtual Museum' website.

Cllr Rob Stickland, Chair of Buildings and Civic Matters Committee

8 Policy, Resources and Finance Committee

The Committee met on six occasions during the year.

Grants and Service Level Agreements

The Policy, Resources and Finance Committee considered four grant applications in accordance with our Small Grant Assistance to Local Organisation policy and made awards for £2,750 to 3 local organisations/individuals.

Organisation	Purpose of Grant Application	Amount awarded
Yeovil Tennis Club	A contribution towards new floodlights	£1,000
Somerset Bus Partnership	Contribution towards the costs of printing leaflets, timetables and stickers	£750
Ron Homer – Yeovil Bowls Club	Contribution towards funding a trip to Bowls Disabled World Championship in South Africa	£1,000

The Committee agreed in principle, a Service Level Agreement with Yeovil Community Church for their Yeovil4Families provision. Details will be discussed fully by this Committee once further information has been received.

The Service Level Agreement with The Octagon Theatre towards the provision of the annual Octagon Theatre School that caters for young people between the ages of 7 and 16 years old continues with the value of £1,000.

Policies

The Policy, Resources and Finance Committee have agreed that unless a change was required due to legal requirements, recommended changes in practices or change in internal operations, that policies would not need to be reviewed every year. They agreed that those policies that were either new or had a major policy revision would be reviewed one year after its effective date, and thereafter no less that every five years.

The following policies were approved and adopted:

Policy	New	Reviewed
Dignity, Equality and Diversity at Work Policy		✓
Risk Strategy and Risk Assessment		✓
Training and Development Policy		✓

The Policy, Resources and Finance Committee have agreed that unless a change was required due to legal requirements, recommended changes in practices or change in internal operations, that policies would not need to be reviewed every year. They agreed that those policies that were either new or had a major policy revision would be reviewed one year after its effective date, and thereafter no less that every five years.

Youth Services in Yeovil

The partnership between the YMCA Brunel Group and Yeovil Town Council continues to deliver a successful Youth Provision in Yeovil. This includes the running of two youth clubs in Yeovil - Milford Hall and Yeovil Recreation Centre as well as a detached and outreach service.

The Committee also agreed a proposal from YMCA Brunel Group to establish a Youth Council.

In November 2022, Yeovil Town Council entered into a 3-year Service Level Agreement which financially supported St Peter's Community Church for youth services in the Westfield area of Yeovil, including a weekly open access youth drop-in, detached youth work and one-to-one engagement with young people. This has proven to be a successful initiative.

Statement of Accounts and Revenue Budget Outturn Report for 2022/23

The Statement of Accounts and Revenue Budget Outturn Report for 2022/23 were approved. There was an underspend of £66,903 for 2021/22 (£178,482 for 2021/22). As at 31st March 2023, the earmarked reserves (reserves set aside for specific purposes) totalled £410,482 (compared to £331,502 as at 31st March 2022) and the unallocated general fund balance was £848,112 (compared to £860,189 as at 31st March 2022).

Treasury Management

The Committee appointed Arlingclose Ltd for a 3-year period to provide Treasury Management Services. The Council will produce an investment strategy and policy statement.

Devolution of Assets and Services

Since November 2023, the Council have been having discussions regarding the devolution of assets and services necessitated as a response to Somerset Council declaring a financial emergency. As a result, over the financial year 2024/25 Yeovil Town Council will be responsible for the following services: Yeovil Country Park and cafe; Yeovil Recreation Centre and café; Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue; and the South Somerset Heritage Collection. Follow-up discussions are being

held regarding further devolution of assets and services. A Devolution and Organisation Working Party has been formed which makes recommendations to this Committee.

The Town Council have appointed Porter Dodson to act on behalf of Yeovil Town Council and provide advice regarding the transfer of assets and the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE)

Staff

I would like to thank Officers on behalf of all the Councillors for their work over the past year and recognise that all the staff have worked very hard to keep the Council functioning during these times of significant change.

Cllr Graham Oakes, Chair of Policy, Resources and Finance Committee