



Yeovil Town Council

Town House
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Mayor : Cllr A Kendall
Town Clerk : Amanda Card *FCPFA, PSLCC, BA (Hons), BSc (Open)*
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Minutes of the meeting of YEOVIL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING held on Wednesday 17th April 2024 at 7.00pm Westlands Entertainment Venue, Westbourne Close, Yeovil.

Present: Cllrs A Kendall (Chair and Mayor); B Boyton; T Casey, K Gill; E Hopkins; K Hussain; T Lock; J Lowery; S Lowery; G Oakes; E Potts-Jones; W Read; A Richards; J Snell; A Soughton; R White; A Wilkes and D Woan.

In Attendance: A Card (Town Clerk); H Ferdinand (Deputy Town Clerk); S Freemantle (Deputy Town Clerk); L Ryder (Assistant Town Clerk); N Gage (Finance Officer) and D Creighton (Receptionist).

There were 32 members of the public and members of the press present.

7:00 pm - The meeting commenced.

The Mayor of Yeovil, Cllr A Kendall welcomed everyone to the Yeovil Annual Town Meeting.

1 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 E Hopkins (conflicting engagement); J Cabell (work commitment); J Lock (personal reasons); R Spinner (personal reasons); R Stickland (conflicting engagement) and H Stonier (conflicting engagement).

RESOLVED: to accept the apologies with the reasons given.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS YEOVIL ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the previous Yeovil Annual Town meeting held on 2nd May 2023.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous Yeovil Annual Town meeting held on 2nd May 2023 be signed as correct record.

3 ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE PAST YEAR, INCLUDING YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT

Yeovil Town Council - Cllr A Kendall (Mayor of Yeovil)

The Mayor of Yeovil, Cllr A Kendall presented some of the highlights from the Annual Report. He reported that the Council had met on ten occasions throughout the year. He stated that Council agreed the Annual Governance and the Accounting Statements for the financial year in June. He spoke of the Somerset Bus Partnership and highlighted that Council had received a presentation regarding Yeovil in Bloom. He told of the Council agreeing the precept at the January meeting and explained that the increase was due to the devolution of assets and services from Somerset Council. He talked about the letter sent to the Secretary of State to call in the decision regarding the Integrated Care Board to centralise stroke services to Taunton.

Planning Committee – Cllr E Potts-Jones (Chair)

Cllr E Potts-Jones explained the process and remit of the Planning Committee. She spoke of planning as an opportunity to repair and improve buildings and areas, enhance sustainability and using the depth of local knowledge. She also mentioned caring about our history and heritage and caring about Yeovil and the people who live within. She spoke of how a simple adaption to a dwelling could make a huge difference to a family's life. She reminded people that Yeovil Town Council were consultees and not decision makers. She thanked the Clerks of the meeting for their knowledge and the smooth running of the meetings. She highlighted the planning application in detail for Yeovil District Hospital.

Ground and General Maintenance Committee – Cllr A Richard (Vice Chair)

Cllr A Richards explained that Yeovil Town Council were responsible for 16 play areas and a number of open spaces across Yeovil. Somerset Council manage these areas on behalf of Yeovil Town Council via a Service Level Agreement. He also spoke of the financial support that the Town Council give to Yeovil Country Park. He stated that Yeovil Town Council managed almost 350 allotments over 11 sites in Yeovil. He advertised that there were some currently available for letting.

Promotions and Activities Committee – Cllr S Lowery (Chair)

Cllr S Lowery spoke of Yeovil Celebrate Event that the Committee had made a 2-day event following the previous years one day event. The event was a great success with people of all ages enjoying themselves with plenty of things to do. She thanked the officers and the Councillors for their involvement in the event. She stated that over 8,000 people attended over the course of the weekend. She mentioned Super Saturday which increased footfall in the town centre by over 23% on the previous year of 14,000. There were various acts and entertainment across the town centre. Eat: Festival came to Yeovil for a Spring event and a Christmas event, again increasing footfall in the town centre. Yeovil in Bloom makes the town look lovely with its floral display. This year Yeovil won a number of awards in the RHS South West in Bloom competition. Yeovil is now in the National Competition next season. She congratulated all involved. She introduced the new town crier – David Recardo who would be

hosting his first town criers competition this year. Yeovil Town Council financially contributed to the Yeovil Together Event, and a service level agreement has been put in place with Yeovil Arts Space.

Buildings and Civic Matters Committee – Cllr K Gill (Vice Chair)

Cllr K Gill stated that the number of defibrillators for which Yeovil Town Council were guardians had now increased to 13, they have now been accessed 40 times. Four police surgeries had been held with Councillors. He explained the appointment of two Community Ambassador roles and how they would be working with Yeovil Crime Reduction Team. Following the financial emergency at Somerset Council, CCTV was at risk. The Committee will continue to contribute towards the operation of CCTV. The notice boards in Yeovil had been replaced. He commented on the successful Remembrance Sunday event. He thanked the Officers for their reports to the Committee.

Policy, Resources and Finance Committee – Cllr G Oakes (Chair)

Cllr G Oakes referred to the report of the Committee which had previously been circulated. He highlighted the financial support that Yeovil Town Council had given to Youth Service provision in Yeovil which was delivered by YMCA Brunel and St Peters Community Church. He commented that the Youth Workers were making a real difference to young people's lives. He spoke on the scale of the decisions made by the Committee including that of working in partnership to save the Octagon Theatre. He spoke of the services that the Council were safeguarding following Somerset Council's financial emergency: Yeovil Recreation Centre, Yeovil Country Park, South Somerset Heritage Collection; the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue.

4 THE YEAR AHEAD

Cllr G Oakes told the meeting that the next twelve months would be historic for this Council. The devolution of services already agreed, the transfer of staff via TUPE and the Octagon Theatre project would make this the busiest year in the Council's history since it was formed in 1982. He said that the Council and the people of Yeovil needed to look to the future, to complete the devolution process and to support the refreshed town centre. He said that there is a need to consider what the people of Yeovil want and need, which will involve new ideas which will make everyone proud of their town. He was grateful for the five years he has led the Council and his term of office was to come to an end. He updated the meeting on the Octagon Project. Firstly, Somerset Council has to establish the project as part of the Capital Build Programme and a paper was taken to Somerset Council's Scrutiny Committee to start this process. The next step is that it will go to Somerset Council's Executive on 8th May and from there to Somerset Council's Full Council. Somerset Council have gone out to tender to seek an architect/designer for the scheme and there will be a quick turnaround. Somerset Council have met with the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) directly after the Somerset Council Scrutiny Committee meeting. At that meeting DCMS confirmed the timetable for the award of any grant and that was as follows:

- September/October 2024 – submission of revised (more mature) Outline Business Case, including indicative build costs (from the architects/Quantity Surveyor)
- February/March 2025 – submission of Final Business Case to include full costs and all detail required.

This timetable is a change from the previous expectations. DCMS will not confirm funding until after the receipt of the Final Business Case and so realistically confirmation of any grant funding can not be expected until March/April 2025. DCMS are clear that until this point no assumptions should be made regarding funding although Somerset Council continue to deliver all that is required at the various stages and DCMS continue to be supportive of and enthusiastic about the project. Cllr G Oakes stated as an equal partner in this project, Yeovil Town Council will do whatever it can to speed the project up.

5 ADDRESS BY COUNCILLOR ANDY KENDALL – MAYOR OF YEOVIL TOWN

The Mayor of Yeovil, Councillor Andy Kendall, thanked Westlands Entertainment Venue for the use of the ballroom.

Cllr A Kendall believed that the main aim of the Mayoral engagements was to meet the young, old and diverse people of Yeovil. He spoke of the many varied engagements that he carried out.

Cllr A Kendall spoke openly about his time that he was unable to carry out any Mayoral duties due to his stroke, and he thanked the Deputy Mayor – Cllr E Hopkins for stepping in and covering a number of engagements.

6 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There was opportunity for the members of public to ask questions.

The first speaker made a statement regarding respect from all those present at meeting and that all should refrain from speaking when others are speaking.

The second speaker referred to a statement made by the Octagon Theatre Programme Manager at Somerset Council that the Octagon Theatre costs less to keep the Octagon Theatre closed than the subsidy provided when the Octagon Theatre was open. He spoke about how the Octagon Theatre will be funded and questioned what assurances could be given to Yeovil residents that they will not be burdened with the cost of any overspend on the refurbishment and the ongoing annual subsidy costs if the Octagon Theatre continues to run at a loss. He asked a second question regarding Yeovil Town Council requesting the Health Secretary to call-in the NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board's plan to close Yeovil Hospital's Hyper Acute Stroke Unit. He want to know, what further action the Town Council would take to protect the future emergency stroke treatment of Yeovil residents, if the Secretary of State decided to ignore or reject a call-in. Cllr G Oakes thanked the speaker for his questions. He stated that the Octagon Theatre project was an equal project between Yeovil Town Council and Somerset Council, although the project is being led by Somerset Council. He stated that it was in the interest of both Council's that the project came in on budget. Cllr G Oakes expected a reducing subsidy to be replaced by profit in the future. In terms of the second question, he confirmed that a response had not yet been received by the Secretary of State. He had been led to believe that the Quicksilver Community Group are considering a judicial review should the decision not be called in and he wished them luck.

The Town Clerk read a question out which had been submitted. The question asked a number of questions regarding Councillors who sat on both Yeovil Town Council and Somerset Council, those Councillors who did not live in the parish of Yeovil, sharing the costs of services with other local parish councils, about the measures taken to protect those who could not afford tax increases. Cllr G Oakes gave an answer to each of these questions, and answers would be given to this member of the public in writing.

A final question was asked by a member of the press. He enquired about what would happen if the £10 million was not received from DCMS. Cllr G Oakes stated that he did not know, but there would be a need to work with other Councils to open the Octagon Theatre. He did state that there would be issues, but the Octagon Theatre would need to be saved.

Cllr G Oakes thanked the Town Clerk and the team for the challenges that they have faced over the time he had been leader. He thanked them for the support they had given him.

The meeting closed at 7:50 pm.

Signed:

Date: