



# Yeovil Town Council

Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ

Yeovil Town Council

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## Yeovil Town Council – Extraordinary Meeting

Wednesday 1st October 2025

7:30pm

Westlands Entertainment Venue, Westbourne  
Close, Yeovil, BA20 2DD

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For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact  
[town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk).

Cllr Tony Lock, Chair  
25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

*Called in accordance with:*

*Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, Part II, Paragraph 9(1)*

This information is also available on our website: [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)

**Members of Yeovil Town Council are summoned to attend:**

Tony Lock – Mayor of Yeovil Town

Wes Read – Deputy Mayor of Yeovil Town

Barry Boyton

Evie Potts-Jones

Jade Cabell

Ashley Richards

Tareth Casey

Jeny Snell

Karl Gill

Andy Soughton

Emma-Jayne Hopkins

Roy Spinner

Kaysar Hussain

Rob Stickland

Justice Jimba

Helen Stonier

Andy Kendall

Ruth White

Jamie Lock

Adrian Wilkes

Jane Lowery

Dave Woan

Graham Oakes

## **Equality Act 2010**

The general public sector equality duty places an obligation on a wide range of public bodies (including town and parish councils) in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The protected characteristics are:

Age	Race
Disability	Religion or Belief
Gender Reassignment	Sex
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Sexual Orientation
Pregnancy and Maternity	

## **Recording of Council Meetings**

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 allows both the public and press to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings (including on social media).

Any member of the public wishing to record or film proceedings must let the Chairman of the meeting know prior to, or at the start of, the meeting and the recording must be overt (i.e. clearly visible to anyone at the meeting), but non-disruptive. Please refer to our Policy on audio/visual recording and photography at Council meetings at [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk). This permission does not extend to private meetings or parts of meetings which are not open to the public.

Members of the public exercising their right to speak during the time allocated for Public Comment who do not wish to be recorded or filmed, need to inform the Chair who will instruct those taking a recording or filming to cease doing so while they speak.

## **A G E N D A**

### **Public Comment**

#### **11/279    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN**

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

#### **11/280    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).

#### **11/281    OCTAGON THEATRE PROJECT BORROWING APPROVAL**

To consider the report of the Chief Executive / Town Clerk regarding the Octagon Theatre Project Borrowing Approval as attached at pages 5 to 13.

## **11/281    OCTAGON THEATRE PROJECT BORROWING APPROVAL**

### **Background**

At its Special Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, the Town Council resolved that: *“This Council seeks the opportunity to work in partnership with Somerset Council to ensure the future of the Octagon Theatre project which will enhance culture and arts within Yeovil and Somerset. The Council wish to financially support the plans outlined by Somerset Council (originally agreed by South Somerset District Council) and ensure that it progresses in accordance with the support of the people of Yeovil and Somerset as a whole”.*

Subsequently, at the Full Council Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024, following Somerset Council's declaration of a financial emergency, Yeovil Town Council formally agreed to assume responsibility for several local services, including the Octagon Theatre.

As part of the ongoing discussions with Somerset Council regarding the devolution of assets, Yeovil Town Council agreed to take ownership of the Octagon Theatre upon completion of the redevelopment project. In support of this initiative, the Town Council has committed, in principle, £3.75 million in funding.

The project is currently being delivered by Somerset Council, in partnership with Yeovil Town Council. Upon its completion, ownership of the Octagon Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council, who will operate the venue as a sister site to the Westlands Entertainment Venue, which is already successfully managed by the Town Council.

### **Financial Implications and Funding for the Octagon Theatre Project**

The total project is budgeted to cost around £15 million, funded by:

Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000
Ticket Levy – Existing Funding generated by users of the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000,000</b>

As part of the asset transfer process, Yeovil Town Council would be required to pay Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) of up to £214,500 in order to take ownership of the Octagon Theatre. This brings the Council's total financial commitment to the project to £3,964,500.

This commitment will be funded through a combination of:

- £639,500 from existing reserves; and
- £3.325 million through borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb).

Based on an interest rate of approximately 5.8% (as of 29 July 2025), borrowing £3.325 million over a 20-year term would result in an estimated annual repayment of £283,063, covering both principal and interest.

The annual repayment will be funded as follows:

- £173,000 from a ticket levy, which will be paid directly by users of the theatre; and
- £110,063 through an increase in the Town Council's precept.

This would result in a 3.3% increase in the precept, equivalent to approximately £11.60 per year (or 22 pence per week) for a Band D property.

The impact on the various Council tax bands is indicated in the table below:

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Increase per year	7.73	9.02	10.31	11.60	14.18	16.76	19.33	23.20
Increase per week	0.15	0.17	0.20	0.22	0.27	0.32	0.37	0.44

It is important to note that 85.3% of dwellings in the parish of Yeovil fall below Band D.

### Scope of the project

The redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre represents a significant investment in the cultural infrastructure of Yeovil and the wider Somerset area. The project aims to secure the future of the theatre for generations to come through a comprehensive programme of refurbishment, renewal, and expansion. Key elements of the project include:

- Auditorium Refurbishment:

The main auditorium will undergo a full refurbishment, including new seating, carpets, and layout improvements. These upgrades will preserve the theatre's renowned legroom, comfort, and excellent sightlines, while maintaining its intimate atmosphere.

- Participatory Studio:

A brand-new Participatory Studio will become the permanent home of the Octagon Academy. This flexible space will support a wide range of classes and workshops in dance, drama, music, theatre, and visual arts. It will also provide a dedicated space for the theatre's popular choirs, community dance and theatre groups, and arts and crafts sessions.

- Enhanced Café Bar:

A significantly improved Café Bar will offer food and drink throughout the day, providing a welcoming space for both theatre patrons and the wider public to enjoy and relax.

- Front of House and Customer Facilities

Customer facilities will be substantially improved, including a major increase in the number and accessibility of toilets. This will include:

- Toilets on each level of the venue
- Gender-neutral toilet options
- Additional accessible toilets
- A Changing Places facility to meet the needs of those with complex disabilities

- Accessibility Improvements

The redevelopment will ensure full accessibility throughout the venue. Enhancements include:

- Lift access to all floors
- Accessible toilets and showers both front-of-house and backstage
- Improved circulation for audiences, performers, and staff

- Backstage & Technical Enhancements:

Substantial improvements to the stage house and backstage areas will support more ambitious and technically demanding productions. Key upgrades include:

- Raising the stage house roof to accommodate a double-purchase counterweight flying system that will mean the theatre will be able to fly stage cloths out and support more technically challenging productions
- Installation of a backstage crossover, enhancing performer movement and production flexibility

- Sustainability & Environmental Impact:

The redevelopment will incorporate sustainability measures aimed at reducing the venue's carbon footprint. Upgrades will also modernise staff and guest facilities, improving overall operational efficiency and enhancing the visitor experience.

## **Public Consultation Activities**

A comprehensive public consultation programme was undertaken to ensure wide awareness and engagement with the proposed redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre and the associated borrowing application.

A dedicated website page was established to provide ongoing updates about the Octagon Theatre project and the associated borrowing approval process <https://www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre> (attached at Appendices pages 3 to 6). Throughout the consultation period, a pop-up notification appeared to all users visiting

the Yeovil Town Council website, directing them to the consultation materials (attached at Appendices page 2). This included an extended 28-page brochure (attached at Appendices pages 8 to 21) and some consultation frequently asked questions (attached at Appendices pages 22 to 27). The Octagon Theatre website [www.octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://www.octagon-theatre.co.uk) was also updated with detailed information on the proposals and consultation.

A letter was sent to every household on the electoral register (attached at Appendices pages 28 to 30) with a copy of an 8-page brochure (attached at Appendices pages 31 to 35). A reminder letter was also issued mid-way through the consultation period to encourage additional responses (attached at Appendices pages 36 to 37). Each letter had a hard copy of the consultation survey, with both a link and a QR code for completing the consultation survey (attached at Appendices page 38). The consultation formally launched on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2025 with a deadline of 23:59pm 21<sup>st</sup> September 2025.

There was local press/media coverage of the project. A press release announcing the consultation was circulated to local media outlets (attached at Appendices pages 39 to 42). Coverage included BBC Radio Somerset and Radio Ninesprings. The local free newspaper - Yeovil Press covered the consultation and project on the front page of the Edition 84/September 2025, with further content on pages 8 and 9 (attached at Appendices pages 43 to 45) and a 12-page pull out feature (attached at Appendices pages 46 to 57).

Yeovil Town Council held two open events (Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025 2pm – 4pm and Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 6pm – 8pm). At both events Councillors and Officers were present to answer questions and discuss the project. Attendees could view consultation display boards (attached at Appendices pages 58 to 74) as well as take away both the 8-page brochure and 24-page brochure. There was also opportunity for those who attended to complete or take away the consultation survey.

Yeovil Town Council actively used its Facebook page to promote the consultation and share updates (<https://www.facebook.com/YeovilTownCouncil>).

A video presentation was produced by the Council's Director of Culture, Events & Promotions, explaining the scope of the redevelopment and the funding proposal. This was shared on Facebook and at the consultation events.

### **Approaching Other Councils for Financial Support**

Yeovil Town Council has taken steps to engage with neighbouring town and parish councils regarding financial support for the redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre, recognising the significant cultural and economic benefit the venue brings to the wider Somerset community. Towns and parish councils have been engaged since early 2024 regarding the future of the Octagon Theatre, as part of the broader devolution programme.

A formal letter requesting financial support was sent to 25 other town and parish councils (attached at Appendices, pages 75–77), with further communications planned.



So far:

- Yeovil Without Parish Council has pledged a capital contribution of £70,000, to be payable once the construction phase is underway. While the direct value of this contribution is £70,000, it will also reduce the total amount that Yeovil Town Council needs to borrow. This reduction in borrowing leads to an estimated saving of £49,184 in interest payments, resulting in a total impact of £119,184 over the 20-year term. This equates to savings of approximately £0.63 per Band D property per year over 20 years.
- Brympton Parish Council expressed support in principle and invited representatives from Yeovil Town Council to attend an upcoming meeting to provide further information and discuss a potential contribution.
- Ilminster Town Council has also invited representatives from Yeovil Town Council to attend a future meeting to present further details of the project and funding proposal.
- Huish Episcopi Parish Council and Langport Town Council have both encouraged Yeovil Town Council to submit applications for small grant funding, indicating local recognition of the project's wider benefit.
- East Coker Parish Council confirmed they are unable to offer financial support at this time due to their own significant capital investment in a Pavilion Modernisation Project, which is placing considerable strain on their current financial resources. Despite this, the Council acknowledged the value and impact of the Octagon Theatre on the broader community.
- Any additional information relating to financial support will be fed back at the meeting.

If there are any confirmed amounts prior to the submission of the PWLB application, then the amount that the Council applies to borrow will be reduced accordingly.

If further support is received after the submission of the PWLB application, the amount drawn down will be adjusted to reflect that support.

### **Consultation Survey**

The consultation survey was developed in line with official guidance, adhering to the recommended template and prescribed question set. It consisted of two key questions aimed at gauging public support for the proposed borrowing to fund the redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre.

The questions were:

1. Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000?
2. Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting

in borrowing of £3,325,000, if it includes a Council tax precept increase of 3.3% (equivalent to £110,062.69) for the purpose of the loan repayments?

Respondents needed to indicate “Yes” or “No” for each question.

### Collation of Consultation Survey Results

Respondents were able to complete the consultation survey either by submitting a paper copy or through the online survey platform.

Paper responses could be returned to any of the following locations:

- Town House
- Westlands Entertainment Venue
- Yeovil Country Park
- Yeovil Recreation Centre

All paper responses were manually input and collated into a central spreadsheet by the Yeovil Town Council Finance Team.

Online responses were automatically recorded and compiled via the secure survey platform.

To ensure the integrity of the results, each submission was cross-referenced against the electoral register to verify that the respondent resided within the parish of Yeovil. Responses from individuals living outside the parish were excluded from the final analysis.

This verification and data collation process was managed in full by the Finance Team.

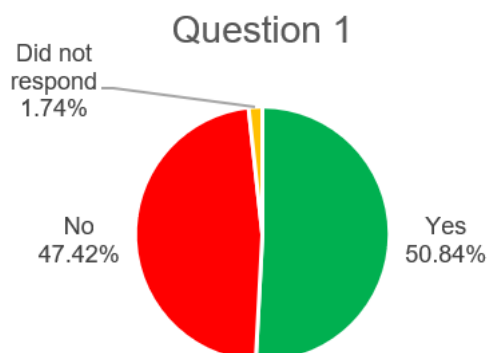
### Survey Results

As of 27 August 2025, there were 22,848 registered electors within the parish of Yeovil. Yeovil Town Council received a total of 3,393 valid consultation responses, resulting in a response rate of 14.85%.

This figure reflects responses that were verified as being from individuals on the Yeovil electoral register. Responses from outside the parish were excluded from the final count.

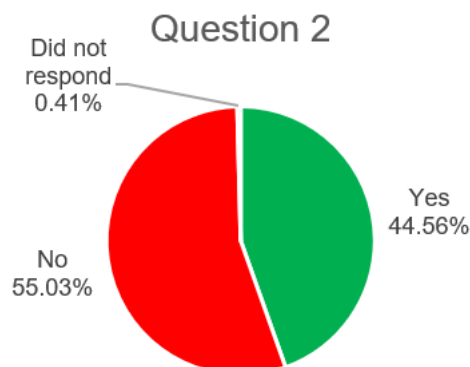
Question 1: Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000?

Yes	1,725	50.84%
No	1,609	47.42%
Did not respond	59	1.74%
Total	3,393	100.00%



**Question 2:** Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000, if it includes a Council tax precept increase of 3.3% (equivalent to £110,062.69) for the purpose of the loan repayments?

Yes	1,512	44.56%
No	1,867	55.03%
Did not respond	14	0.41%
Total	3,393	100.00%



### Next Steps and Consideration of Borrowing Approval

Yeovil Town Council must now consider whether the results of the consultation demonstrate sufficient public support for the proposed borrowing, as outlined in the survey responses.

Based on this assessment, the Council will determine whether to formally proceed with an application to the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for borrowing approval via the PWLB.

Should the Council resolve to proceed and the application is approved, Yeovil Town Council will have a 12-month window in which to draw down the loan.

### Timing Considerations for Loan Application and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Grant

The DCMS grant funding process requires the submission of both an Outline Business Case and a Full Business Case. The timetable for these submissions is set by DCMS.

- The Outline Business Case is currently scheduled for submission in mid-October 2025.
- The Full Business Case submission has been delayed and is now expected in November/December 2026, having slipped from its original timetable of May 2026. It is important to note that this delay does not impact the programme and dates shared as part of the consultation which remains scheduled to open in the financial year 2028/29.

Given the requirement that loans approved by the PWLB must be drawn down within 12 months of approval, the timing of the loan application is critical.

Yeovil Town Council will require the formal outcome of the DCMS grant application before drawing down the PWLB loan to ensure the project is fully funded and deliverable.

If the Council proceeds with the loan application as originally planned in mid-October 2025, and the application is approved by late November 2025 or early December

2025, this would mean the loan must be drawn down by late November 2026 or early December 2026.

However, this timeline would likely precede the formal outcome of the DCMS grant, creating a risk that the Council could be required to draw down the loan before confirming the availability of key grant funding.

As such, careful consideration will need to be given to the timing of the loan application to align with the DCMS grant timetable and mitigate financial risk.

### **Advice on PWLB Application Timing and Budget Planning**

Advice has been sought regarding the optimal timing for submitting Yeovil Town Council's application to the PWLB, considering the revised timetable for the DCMS grant process and the need to manage financial risk.

It has been recommended that the Council delay submission of the PWLB application to a date between January and April 2026. This approach allows the Council to:

- Ensure the consultation remains sufficiently recent to support the borrowing application,
- Align more closely with the anticipated timeline for the Full Business Case and DCMS grant decision, and
- Avoid the risk of the loan approval expiring before confirmation of grant funding.

In line with this revised timeline, it is suggested that:

- A provision be included in the 2026/27 budget for the Octagon Theatre Project and potential PWLB borrowing later in the financial year, and
- A larger budget allocation be projected for 2027/28, reflecting the expected capital expenditure and operational impacts once the project progresses.

### **Recommendation on PWLB Loan Application and Financial Planning**

Considering the advice received and the project timelines, it is recommended that Yeovil Town Council submit the PWLB application in January 2026 - April 2026.

In the event that the loan is drawn down during 2026/27 (during the months of January 2027 – March 2027), that any costs of both principal and interest repayment be funded by ticket levy. It is likely that any costs that the Council will be obligated to pay or make provision for during the financial year 2026/27 will be no more than one-quarter of the annual repayment.

It is further recommended that the precept be increased in the 2027/28 financial year to accommodate the ongoing repayment obligations.

Council is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- 1) to note the report;
- 2) to decide whether to proceed with the loan process;

- 3) if (2) is agreed, to resolve to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to apply for the Public Works Loan Board loan of £3,325,000\* over the borrowing term of 20 years for the contribution towards the Octagon Theatre Project. The annual loan repayments will come to approximately £283,063;

*\*The loan application amount will be for £3,325,000, subject to reduction by any one-off financial contributions secured from other town and parish councils.*

- 4) if (2) is agreed, to resolve that it is also intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayments by 3.3% which is the equivalent of an additional £110,063 per year;
- 5) if (3) and (4) are resolved, to agree to submit the Public Works Loan Board loan application in January 2026 - April 2026 for £3,325,000\*;

*\*The loan application amount will be for £3,325,000, subject to reduction by any one-off financial contributions secured from other town and parish councils.*

- 6) if (5) is resolved, to agree to make provision in 2026/27 budget loan repayment that may fall due should the loan be drawn down during that financial year; and
- 7) if (5) is resolved, to agree to increase the precept in the 2027/28 financial year to fully accommodate the ongoing repayment obligations.

*It is likely that recommendations (3) and (4) will be subject to a named vote. If this is the case, each Councillor must respond: For, Against or Abstain.*

**(Amanda Card, Chief Executive , Town Clerk – 01935 382424 or  
town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk)**