



Yeovil Town Council

Town House
19 Union Street
Yeovil
Somerset
BA20 1PQ

Leisure and Environment Committee

Leisure and Environment Committee

Monday 8th September 2025

7:00pm

Hybrid Meeting:

**Face-to-face at Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil
BA20 1PQ; and virtual using Zoom meeting software**

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact
town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Card'.

Amanda Card, Chief Executive / Town Clerk
2 September 2025

This information is also available on our website: www.yeovil.gov.uk

Members of Yeovil Town Council are summoned to attend:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jade Cabell | Wes Read (<i>Ex-Officio</i>) |
| Tareth Casey | Andy Soughton |
| Karl Gill | Roy Spinner |
| Andy Kendall | Adrian Wilkes |
| Jamie Lock (Vice Chair) | Dave Woan |
| Tony Lock (<i>Ex-Officio</i>) | |

Dave Potten – Co-opted (non-voting) Member

Public Comments at meetings (held via Zoom)

Members of the public may attend the meeting either physically or via zoom.

If you would like to join the meeting via zoom, please e-mail ytic@yeovil.gov.uk by 9:00am on Monday 8th September 2025. Instructions will be sent to you to view the meeting.

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. 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 Chairman who will instruct those taking a recording or filming to cease doing so while they speak.

A G E N D A

Public Comment (15 Minutes)

11/274. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

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

11/275. 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).

11/276. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 7th July 2025.

11/277. FEEDBACK FROM YEOVIL ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION BY THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL

To receive any feedback via Cllr Spinner.

11/278. FEEDBACK FROM CO-OPTED NON-VOTING MEMBER

To consider a verbal update.

11/279. ALLOTMENT LETTING/AVAILABILITY REPORT

To consider the report by the Deputy Town Clerk attached at page 5 (correct at time of publishing of this agenda).

11/280. ALLOTMENT RENT REVIEW

To consider the report by the Town Clerk – to follow

11/281. BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE MONTH 4 (APRIL 2025 – JULY 2025)

To consider the Budget Monitor Update Month 4 (April 2025 – July 2025) - to follow

11/282. GRANT APPLICATION FOR EXTERNAL FUNDING

Further information to follow

11/283. DEVOLUTION TRANCHE 2 UPDATE REPORT AND STAFFING REQUEST

To consider the report by the Director of Leisure and Environment attached at pages 6 to 10.

| Site Name | Plots on site | Vacant Plots | Let Plots | Percentage of let plots |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Elizabeth flats | 25 | 7 | 18 | 72% |
| Goar Knap | 42 | 4 | 38 | 90% |
| Hillcrest | 9 | 0 | 9 | 100% |
| Larkhill | 30 | 1 | 29 | 97% |
| Milford Dip | 41 | 1 | 41 | 100% |
| Monksdale | 19 | 1 | 18 | 95% |
| Newtown | 34 | 0 | 34 | 100% |
| Rustywell | 23 | 0 | 23 | 100% |
| St Georges | 28 | 1 | 27 | 96% |
| Sunningdale | 56 | 4 | 52 | 93% |
| Turners Barn Lane | 24 | 0 | 24 | 100% |
| | | | | |
| Totals - | 331 | 19 | 313 | 95% |

Note -

Highlighted plots have been offered out to potential tenants

38 new tenants joined the allotment sites from March 2025 to August 2025

36 people on the waiting list, with 22.22% first choice for Larkhill

11/283 DEVOLUTION TRANCHE 2 UPDATE REPORT AND STAFFING REQUEST

Introduction

On the 1st August 2024 tranche 1 of the Devolution program took place when the facilities at Yeovil Country Park and Yeovil Recreation Centre transferred to Yeovil Town Council under an interim Licence to Occupy. The freehold transfer of the land is anticipated to take place in 2026. Tranche 2 of the Devolution program took place on June 9th 2025 when all open spaces across the town, play areas and the In Bloom program transferred under a Management Agreement. This report gives an update on the current work across the new facilities and services.

In Bloom

St John' Churchyard was successfully planted and the hanging baskets put up across the town centre. We continue to receive compliments about the displays in town, particularly St John's. Judging day for our south west town entry was on Wednesday 9th July and the judges were taken on a comprehensive tour of civic and community sites concluding at Yeovil Country Park. Our team focussed on community endeavours, access to nature and climate resilience in planting and planning. The judging culminated in a community picnic at Ninesprings where all the It's Your Neighbourhood entries were invited to send a representative of their group and display information about their project. Able 2 Achieve provided a scything demo and the Community Ranger helped people learn the art of Hapa Zome. The judging had to be extended to include Friday 12th July to visit all the IYNs that had entered this year, as there wasn't time on judging day.

The outcome of the entry will be heard on Wednesday 8th October at an event in Torquay.

Consideration is still be given to the steering group for In Bloom and the existing South Somerset Environment Forum seems a great mix of interested people to ask to fulfil that function. Discussions are ongoing.

Somerset Council have contracted our Estates team to water the town centre tubs that were installed as part of the Refresh program. They have been added to the Gardener's rounds.

Open Spaces

The Estates team continues to refine its management of the open spaces and play areas. Public comments are positive despite litter remaining an issue throughout the peak summer season.

As autumn approaches winter works are being planned. It's a key time of year when we can manage trees, hedges and deal with a lot of the issues that allotment holders and site users and residents have mentioned since our takeover in June. New management approaches will be implemented that support management for wildlife like laying hedges and not just cutting them, where it is appropriate.

The Estates Manager has submitted a £2,000 grant application to the Branching Out Fund managed by Tree Council for an edible hedge at Birchfield Park.

The Parks Engagement Officer continues to visit communities and groups and make links; many communities already have very active groups like Birchfield and Westfield.

A new volunteer team will launch on September 18th in Sidney Gardens. Working alongside the Gardener and Friends of Group, monthly sessions will provide gardening capacity for the team and help start to restore the heritage beds of Sidney Gardens. If successful further groups will be launched across the town's spaces.

Officers have been working across directorates to procure software that will enable effective management of the Council's significant tree stock and broad range of assets. Discussions with companies have revealed that software can also be used to manage play inspections, regular building inspections and grass cutting rounds. The team have seen demonstrations for a range of products at various scales and affordability, some packages are designed for large unitary councils, and the costs reflect this. The Director of Infrastructure Property and Assets and the Director of Leisure and Environment are progressing procurement of an appropriate asset management software solution and will report the outcome to committee in due course. It is hoped that the new system will provide a tree inspection, play inspection, open space inspection, facilities management inspections and asset register for Yeovil Town Council.

The summer included a number of challenges with a few unauthorized encampments at Howard Road, Yeovil Recreation Centre and Milford Park – contractors are pricing to install new bunds, fencing and bollards to prevent future incursions including better security at Yew Tree Park. These unavoidable costs will be absorbed by the site budgets but will negatively impact other proposed works in the financial year.

Open Space Management Plans and Vision

The Estates Manager continues to write draft management plans for all sites, these set out the current and future management and bring in resident aspirations for the sites. Ward members will receive copies of draft plans for comment in the coming months. The following is part of the current draft Vision that Members are asked to comment upon –

Our Vision for Parks and Open Spaces

“Yeovil Town Council manages award winning open spaces that deliver for people and nature. Park communities feel connected to their open spaces and enjoy visiting and participating in events and volunteering opportunities. Open spaces provide new spaces for nature, from pollinator corridors to native hedgerows and protected veteran trees. Overall, these well managed open spaces provide a connected landscape across Yeovil with greater permeability for people and wildlife, supporting active travel and wellbeing.”

Yeovil Town Council have created multi-disciplinary Estates Team with the aim of managing the Open Spaces for the following:

- **Amenity Value;** The open spaces of Yeovil are used for a variety of amenity activities: from dog walking and sports to play and wellbeing. The Estates Team aim to ensure that the open spaces are safe, well maintained and attractive to use to ensure that these activities can flourish.
- **Promote Habitats, Biodiversity and Access to Nature;** The Estates Team aims to manage, develop and maintain open spaces to promote nature and increase biodiversity. This will be done through enhancing what is already there and by creating new habitats. Appropriate sites will be considered for Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status. LNRs are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally and they are created for people and wildlife. They offer people opportunities to study or learn about nature, or simply to enjoy it.
- **Community Engagement:** The Estates Team aims to engage communities local to the open spaces and the wider Yeovil community. This will help inform local users about the open spaces, providing a better understanding of the sites and their natural and historic environment. Engagement activities will also ensure that local spaces deliver for the local communities in terms of provision and access. Community engagement will also encourage people to volunteer with the Estates Team and gain a sense of ownership of their open spaces. New Friends of Groups will support park activities and help submit funding bids for local projects. Regular local consultation events will take place to understand the views of open space communities and new event programs developed as a response to consultation outputs, often in partnership with other local organisations and groups.
- **Building Climate Resilience;** the Estates team will ensure that resilience and adaptation is considered in all its planning: from re- shaping floral displays for In Bloom to designing tree planting schemes and managing invasive species control. The team will engage with wider Somerset scale planning for active travel, green infrastructure and the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Nature Recovery Network maps.

Allotments

The Estates team are preparing for the winter work program at allotments.

The Estates team, primarily the Parks Engagement Officer, have also been working with the Town House team to consider policies and practices for the future and the split of roles between the practical Estates team and administrative management and oversight by the Town House. A number of issues have been identified that the team will resolve together in a phased approach liaising with the tenant representatives throughout.

The Parks Engagement Officer has met with all tenant representatives now and many allotment holders and the first event hosted to bring tenants together was a Harvest Picnic at Yeovil Recreation Centre at the end of August. The Officer has also established a relationship with Brimsmore Garden Centre to progress benefits for allotment holders.

Play

The team have carried out various repair works and a significant amount of reactive repairs due to anti-social behaviour through the summer months.

A part time play inspector TUPE'd from Somerset Council on Monday 1st September. This brings capacity for weekly inspections, but not practical works.

The weekly and quarterly inspections of sites are on-going, and the annual inspections were completed in the week commencing 25th August. Reports are anticipated soon. Throughout the week of the inspections several high and medium risk hazards were reported to the Estates team by the inspector all of which were actioned on the same day and involved closing some play features.

There are significant concerns about the quality and standard of repair on some equipment and features in a number of play areas; including Milford and Preston Park. Depending on the outcome of the annual inspections a prioritised list of repairs will be drafted so the team can focus attention on the priority areas. Some features may have to be removed and not replaced if budget will not allow. The lack of investment across a number of years has in part caused this current maintenance issue.

The most cost cost-effective way to repair and improve spaces is to have another member of staff. This report therefore requests the creation of a new Trainee Estates Officer role so they can be trained in all elements of grounds maintenance, play inspection and play maintenance.

The Estates team have already received approaches from local parish councils about paying for play services and so the Estates team are confident that this could become chargeable service in the future if Council wished to pursue that route

Request for Staffing

Request to increase the size of the Estates team to ensure they can complete works across – Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Country Park, Westlands and In Bloom.

Proposal for a trainee in grounds maintenance with a specialism in play infrastructure to build resilience in the team and enable succession planning. The trainee role would start at the bottom of salary and gain increments as qualifications secured.

Apprenticeships do not exist in this particular field and so this role is proposed on a trainee basis instead – the Estates team do have the inhouse skills to support a training program in grounds maintenance and play infrastructure.

Proposing that the trainee role starts at salary spine point 7, starting at trainee wage £26,403, rising to £28,598 after 6 years and upon completion of the play inspection and maintenance qualifications.

Current cost of a full time SP7 role with on costs is £35,501.32, to provide budget to cover the costs of this new role it is proposed to vire the grounds maintenance costs from the Yeovil Country Park budget (£16,400), Allotments budget (£13,800) and Sunningdale Doorstep Green budget (£7,000) lines which are currently used to pay contractors, to instead fund a new member of the Estates Team to complete the work inhouse.

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED**:

- 1) to note the report;
- 2) to comment on the Draft Vision for Parks and Open Spaces; and
- 3) to delegate to the Chief Executive /Town Clerk and Staffing Committee confirmation to employ a new Trainee Estates Officer.

***(Katy Munday, Director for Leisure and Environment -
katy.munday@yeovil.gov.uk)***