



Yeovil Town Council

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Mayor: Cllr T Lock
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Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Culture Committee held on Tuesday 15th September 2026 at 7.00pm in the Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil BA20 1PQ; and by video-conference using Zoom meeting software.

Present (in person): Cllrs D Woan (Chair); K Gill; J Lowery; T Lock; G Oakes; K Parsons; E Potts-Jones; and W Read.

In Attendance (in person): Cllr A Soughton; Cllr K Hussain; A Card (Chief Executive/Town Clerk); A Burgan (Director of Culture); T McKay (Events Officer); Zoe Li (Director of Yeovil Art Space) and N Rand (Director of Yeovil Art Space).

Present (virtually): Cllr A Richards (from 7:02pm).

There was one member of the press present virtually and one member of the public present in person.

Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

7.00 pm – Meeting Commenced

11/240 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 (family commitments); and A Richards* (personal reasons).

**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.

11/241 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J Lowery declared a personal interest in agenda item 11/254 - Yeovil Literary Festival, as her daughter is employed by Westlands Entertainment Venue, where the festival is held.

Members received a presentation from representatives of Yeovil Art Space outlining progress on the two-year Yeovil Reimagine cultural regeneration programme.

The presentation explained that the programme originated from community consultation work undertaken in 2024 regarding the future use of the former Glovers Walk site. Feedback from residents highlighted priorities including green spaces, independent businesses, community hubs and a sustainable town centre. This informed the development of the Yeovil Reimagine project, funded through the Arts Council England Place Partnership Fund.

Members were advised that the programme aims to use culture and creativity as a driver for regeneration, economic recovery and community development. The project will focus on temporary use of the former Glovers Walk site, with activities designed to animate the space, encourage community participation and test new ideas for future town centre development.

The presenters emphasised that the programme is based on co-creation with residents, businesses, community organisations and public sector partners. More than 30 stakeholder organisations are involved, supported through a governance structure including an Art Action Group, Yeovil Town Board and Yeovil Community Connectors Alliance.

An update was provided on the appointment of four commissioned artists who are currently undertaking research and community engagement work before submitting proposals later in the year. Activity on site is expected to take place between October and April.

Members also heard about associated initiatives including a Creative Community Pilot focused on wellbeing, early intervention and community resilience; a Business and Culture Forum aimed at strengthening links between local businesses and the cultural sector; development of the Explore Yeovil website to promote events, activities and positive news stories about the town; and partnership work with Yeovil College to provide creative and enterprise opportunities for students.

During questions, members discussed potential challenges, partnership working and the role of the Town Council. The presenters highlighted the importance of communication, collaboration and promoting positive messages about Yeovil. Suggestions were made regarding event promotion, community engagement and involvement of twinning towns in future cultural events.

Members welcomed the project, recognised the significance of securing external funding for Yeovil, and expressed support for the programme's aims of enhancing community pride, cultural opportunities and the future regeneration of the town.

RESOLVED: to note the update.

7:44pm – Zoe Li, Natasha Rand and the member of the public left the meeting and did not return.

11/250 BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE

Members considered the budget monitoring update for Month 4 (April 2026 – July 2026).

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/251 MAYOR'S REGALIA

Members considered the report on the condition of the Mayor's Pendant and possible replacement options. The matter arose following concerns raised in November about the fragility of the current Mayor's Pendant and the risk of permanent damage if it continued to be used.

The report outlined quotations obtained from three suppliers. Only one supplier had provided a practical proposal and cost for producing a replica pendant. The initial recommendation was to commission a replica pendant for ceremonial use and place the original pendant on display to preserve it.

During discussion, members expressed a range of views regarding the future of the Mayor's Pendant. Concerns were raised about the need to protect the historic original from further damage, with some members suggesting that it should be withdrawn from regular use and preserved as part of the town's heritage collection. Members also questioned whether consideration should extend beyond the pendant itself to include the condition of the Mayor's Chain, which was considered by some to be fragile and potentially in need of refurbishment. There was agreement that any replica should accurately reflect the detail, craftsmanship and historic significance of the original pendant, particularly the civic symbols and town crest. Members also explored the possibility of commissioning a completely new or modernised design rather than a direct replica and discussed the use of a temporary replacement while a long-term solution is developed.

Members recognised the importance of the regalia as a historic civic asset and acknowledged both the heritage value of the original pendant and the practical need for the Mayor to continue wearing regalia at civic engagements.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to investigate whether a temporary replacement pendant could be produced using 3D printing technology, including discussions with the Yeovil College; (3) if (2) was not feasible, to obtain further information from the preferred supplier on timescales for producing a replica pendant; (4) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive/Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, to commission an interim replacement if appropriate timescales are confirmed; (5) to undertake further research into alternative pendant and regalia designs from other civic authorities and suppliers; (6) to bring back options for members to consider the longer-term future of the Mayor's regalia, including whether to commission a replica of the existing pendant or pursue a redesigned civic

pendant incorporating Yeovil's historic identity; and (7) to preserve the original pendant as a heritage asset and consider its eventual display for public viewing.

11/252 CIVIC GUIDE

The Committee considered the report of Administration Officer and the updated Civic Guide.

It was noted that the guidance relating to the wearing of civic robes required revision, as the Mayor does not wear robes at the Christmas Lights Switch On.

Clarification was also sought regarding the Deputy Mayor's chain of office and badge, with officers agreeing to investigate the current arrangements and update the guide accordingly.

Members discussed the wording in the guide which described the Mayor as the representative of the Crown within the town. It was acknowledged that, constitutionally, the Lord-Lieutenant is the Sovereign's representative within the county. However, it was also recognised that civic convention often refers to the Mayor as representing the Crown in a ceremonial capacity within the town. The Chief Executive/Town Clerk advised that the wording could be refined to state "The Mayor is the Civic Head and First Citizen of Yeovil and, in a civic and ceremonial capacity, represents the Crown within the Town".

Further discussion took place regarding the role and terminology of the Mayor's Consort or Mayoress. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that the guide remains inclusive and does not prescribe arrangements based on gender. Officers confirmed that the document allows the Mayor to appoint a spouse, partner, family member, fellow councillor or friend to act as Consort or Mayoress, according to personal preference. It was also confirmed that the term "escort" had been removed from the guide and that the document was intended to reflect an inclusive approach.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to approve the Civic Guide subject to the amendments detailed above; and (3) to recommend to Executive the Civic Guide for adoption.

11/253 SOUTH SOMERSET HERITAGE COLLECTION PROJECT UPDATE

The Director of Culture provided an update on the project and advised that, since the report had been published, confirmation had been received from the South West Heritage Trust that it was willing to lead the procurement process for appointing consultants. As a result, all necessary documentation was now ready and the project was prepared to proceed, pending confirmation from the Trust of the date for launching the tender process.

Members were informed that this delay would require the project timetable to be revised, with key milestones expected to move back by approximately three weeks. However, officers indicated that opportunities would be explored to recover some time once consultants had been appointed, with the aim of still presenting findings and a final report early in the new year. It was emphasised that sufficient time must be allowed for research,

public consultation and engagement with stakeholders, and that these stages should not be rushed. There was an intention to provide a revised project timetable in due course.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/254 YEOVIL LITERARY FESTIVAL

The Director of Culture presented an update on the forthcoming Yeovil Literary Festival, highlighting its success and significance as a major cultural event for the town. Members were informed that approximately 8,600 people attended festival events the previous year. While the programme for the forthcoming festival had been slightly consolidated, the Director of Culture remained confident that a strong and varied programme had been assembled for October.

During discussion, a member advised that they were already exploring potential sponsorship opportunities for future festivals through links with fostering organisations and an author connected with fostering work. The Director of Culture welcomed the early interest and indicated a willingness to discuss arrangements for future events.

Another member reported positive feedback from members of the public, who had expressed appreciation that this year's programme was more focused on authors and literary content rather than celebrity appearances.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/255 COUNTRY WEST FEST

The Committee received a verbal update on Country West Fest. Members were advised that the Working Party had met and agreed in principle that Country West Fest 2 should proceed. However, further work was required to assess a range of new opportunities, including three potential venue options and enhancements aimed at improving the event's success and financial viability.

A further Working Party meeting would be held before the next Culture Committee meeting, after which a detailed proposal and recommendation would be presented.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the verbal update; and (2) that a detailed proposal be brought back to the next meeting.

11/256 UPDATE ON ACTIONS AGREED – LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF THE TRIANGLE AND ASSOCIATED TOWN CENTRE ASSETS

The Committee received an update from the Chief Executive/Town Clerk on discussions with Somerset Council regarding the potential transfer and local management of the Triangle and associated town centre assets. Officers advised that initial discussions had commenced; however, clarification was still being sought regarding the associated costs and financial responsibilities, as the information provided to date had not been sufficiently clear.

Members were informed that further work was ongoing to assess the opportunities, costs and responsibilities connected with any potential transfer. It was noted that a further report would be brought back to the Committee once the necessary information had been obtained from Somerset Council, enabling Members to consider the matter fully and make any future decisions.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to note the progress being made by officers in evaluating the potential transfer and management of the Triangle and associated town centre assets.

11/257 BLUE PLAQUE TRAIL – APP CREATION UPDATE

The Committee considered a report from the Events Officer on progress with the Blue Plaque Trail App. Members were advised that the written content for the app had largely been completed and that the platform would allow the inclusion of photographs, audio content and interactive features, enabling a high-quality visitor experience. To support the project, quotations had been obtained for updated photography of the plaques and associated locations.

Discussion focused on the condition of several blue plaques. Members noted that some plaques had weathered over time, but considered that restoration should be assessed on a case-by-case basis rather than delaying development of the app. It was agreed that the priority should be to proceed with the app, using new photography where appropriate, while undertaking an audit of the plaques to identify any future refurbishment requirements and associated costs.

The Committee also received an update on the proposed Land Speed Record plaque and was advised that a manufacturer had been identified and that the necessary approvals were being progressed. Subject to completion of the required documentation, the official unveiling was anticipated to take place on 28th October 2026.

RESOLVED: (1) that the update on the Blue Plaque Trail App be noted; (2) that the development of the App proceed, including the commissioning of updated photography; and (3) that an audit of the condition of the Blue Plaques be undertaken and a report on any refurbishment requirements and associated costs be brought back to a future meeting for consideration.

11/258 SUPER SATURDAY UPDATE

The Committee received an update on preparations for Super Saturday. The Events Officer advised that arrangements were largely complete and the event was ready to proceed. While one organisation had withdrawn due to staffing difficulties, all other participants had confirmed their attendance and the programme was now finalised. Members were informed that activities would be spread across the town and would make use of the new meanwhile-use space.

The Committee noted that plans to relocate activities to a single area at the lower end of the town had not been feasible this year and that St John's would continue to be used. However, this approach may be reviewed for future events. Members also noted details of a litter-picking initiative linked to the event, which would take place between 3pm and 4pm and were encouraged to support it.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/259 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON EVENT

The Committee considered a report on plans for the Christmas Lights Switch-On event. Members were advised that the current budget of £8,000 was increasingly restrictive, with a significant proportion already committed to staging, audio and visual services. The Events Officer outlined aspirations to enhance and expand the event through additional attractions, including market stalls, fairground rides, extended entertainment and the possible introduction of a pyrotechnic display to create a more memorable switch-on experience.

Members were informed that indicative costs of approximately £4,000 would be required to provide a suitable pyrotechnic display within the town centre environment. It was noted that the event programme would continue to include live entertainment and was expected to run from 3.00pm to 8.00pm.

Following discussion, members expressed support for enhancing the event and increasing its appeal as a free community attraction.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to support an increase in the Christmas Lights Switch-On event budget from £8,000 to £12,000; and (3) to recommend to Executive that the event budget be increased by an additional £4,000 to be funded from contingencies for 2026/27 and built into the base budget for future years.

The meeting closed at 8:48pm.

Signed: (Chair)

Date: