



Yeovil Town Council

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Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday 29th September 2026 at 7.00pm held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software; and in the Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil BA20 1PQ.

Present (in person): Cllrs A Soughton (Chair); K Gill; T Lock; G Oakes; K Parsons; W Read; A Richards; R Stickland; H Stonier; and D Woan.

In Attendance (in person): A Card (Chief Executive/Town Clerk); and J Pang (Deputy Responsible Finance Officer).

In Attendance (virtual): Cllr J Snell (*from 7.38pm*).

There was one member of the public present in person.

Public Comment

Steve Haigh, Station Manager at Radio Ninesprings spoke regarding his grant application regarding funding towards a Small Scale Digital Audio Broadcaster.

Concerns were raised that cannot currently reach a wider audience, including the military community at Yeovilton, without a Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) licence. The proposal would create up to 15 additional channels, including opportunities to support emerging local artists, broadcast YTFC match commentary, and provide training and work experience for young people interested in radio and broadcasting. The project requires £8,000, of which £2,500 has been secured from Somerset Community Foundation. Applications have also been made to Yeovil Without Parish Council and Brympton Parish Council, with a contribution of £1,000 suggested from each council.

There was no other public comment.

7:04pm – the meeting commenced.

11/407 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies for absence received from Cllr. T Casey (work commitments)

RESOLVED: to accept the apologies with the reasons given.

11/408 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr R Stickland declared a personal interest regarding the grants as he is Chair of Yeovil Without Parish Council but stated he does not have an active role within grants.

Cllr K Parsons also declared an interest regarding grants due to her work at Brympton Parish Council but clarified she too does not have an active role regarding grants.

11/409 MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 23rd June 2026.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 23rd June 2026 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

11/410 GRANTS

Radio Ninesprings: £1,000 towards a small-scale DAB broadcasting project to expand local digital radio services overall, with funding contributing towards purchase and installation of DAB transmitter and associated equipment at Huish Park. If granted, Radio Ninesprings will be able to provide improved digital broadcasts and wider community access to local radio with funding provided from the council's remaining 26/27 grant fund of £6,690.

Members debated application.

RESOLVED: to grant £1,000 to Radio Ninesprings towards purchase and installation of DAB transmitter and associated equipment at Huish Park.

7:12pm – A member of the public and the Deputy Responsible Finance Officer left the meeting.

7:13pm – Deputy Responsible Finance Officer returned to the meeting.

11/411 APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS

The Committee was recommended to note the payments made by Yeovil Town Council for the following periods:

- 1st June 2026 – 30th June 2026 and
- 1st July 2026 – 31st July 2026

RESOLVED: to approve the payments made by Yeovil Town Council as detailed above.

11/412 BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE

Members were invited to consider the budget monitoring update for the following period:

- 1st April 2026 – 31st July 2026

The Chief Executive/ Town Clerk presented the budget monitoring report to provide the Council's financial position as of the 31st of March 2027 based on performance of Council up to the 31st July 2026. Current forecast suggests an overall ___ of £93,822 which affects 2.61% of the net budget requirement. Several variances are listed within the report, including staff vacancies and reducing expenditure within the Executive budget as the Culture Committee's budget predict overspend as a result of the Phase Two payment to Somerset Council for the Octagon Theatre Redevelopment project, with funding provided from

reserves. Going forward, the council will provide an additional column to show movement to and from reserves, ensuring a clearer picture of the budget.

The general fund balances are forecast to increase by approx.£1.13M, equating to four months of expenditure.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/413 BANK RECONCILIATION

Members were invited to consider the formal bank reconciliation report as at 31st July 2026.

RESOLVED: to approve the formal bank reconciliation as at 31st July 2026.

11/414 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY 2025/26

During 25/26, the Council received £332,402 in income and expended £5,902.79 towards the Octagon Theatre Redevelopment Project. All available Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds have now been utilised, leaving a nil balance year-end. The report confirms compliance with the statutory reporting requirements, under Regulation 62A.

There were concerns regarding the potential requirement to repay unspent CIL funds to developers, which was clarified by reference to monitoring arrangements and spending deadlines. Officers confirmed that arrangements were in place to ensure that CIL funds were identified, monitored and allocated appropriately so that funds would not lapse. Members also discussed the relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and CIL receipts, noting that adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan could increase the proportion of CIL retained by the Council from 15% to 25% in the future.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to approve the Community Infrastructure Levy return for 25/26 for the publication and submission to the Section 151 Officer at Somerset Council in accordance with Regulation 62A of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations.

11/415 HMRC MILEAGE INCREASE

Members were asked to adopt the revised HMRC mileage allowance increase based on report provided by Chief Executive/ Town Clerk, which increased from 45p per mile to 55p per mile on the 6th April 2026 and is the first increase since 2011. The financial impact on the council, as estimated by previous mileage claims, is approximately £673 per annum.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note the increase in the HMIC approved mileage rate from 45 to 55p per mile for the first 10,000 business miles per tax year; and (3) to approve the adoption of the revised HMRC Mileage Rate for all authorised business travel claims would affect from 6th April 2026.

11/416 PWLB BORROWING APPROVAL FOR THE OCTAGON THEATRE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Members were invited to consider the report of Chief Executive/Town Clerk regarding the PWLB Borrowing Approval.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note that borrowing approval has been granted for a PWLB loan of up to £2.7 million towards the Council's contribution to the Octagon Theatre redevelopment project; (3) to note that officers are progressing arrangements for the

drawdown of the loan, subject to project cashflow requirements; and (4) to note that the final interest rate and annual repayment costs will not be confirmed until the loan is drawn down.

11/417 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

The policy consolidates recruitment procedures into a single document covering workforce planning, recruitment on merit, equality and diversity, safeguarding, DBS checks, references, conflicts of interest and pre-employment checks. It also formally incorporates the council's commitment under the Armed Forces Covenant, including guaranteed interviews for veterans meeting the essential criteria.

It was noted that it was important that all policies should be reviewed frequently so that they remained up to date with any changes in legislation and Council practices.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note that the draft Recruitment and Selection Policy was considered by the Staffing Committee on 17th July 2026; and (3) to approve and the adopt the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

11/418 RESERVE FORCES AND CADET FORCES ADULT VOLUNTEER POLICY

The policy delivers on commitments made when the council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in July. Provisions include up to 10 working days paid special leave each year for Reservist training and Cadet Force Adult Volunteer activities. Additionally, it establishes arrangements for mobilisation and returns to work, seeking to ensure that employees are not disadvantaged due to military service. Engagement is made with all members of staff to query if they are part of a forces family and is recorded to make sure ample support is provided when necessary.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note that the draft Reserve and Cadet Forces Adult Volunteer Policy was considered by the Staffing Committee on 17th July 2026; and (3) to approve and adopt the Reserve and Cadet Forces Adult Volunteer Policy.

11/419 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The policy establishes a corporate framework governing both official and personal social media use where council matters are concerned and includes provisions regarding political neutrality, confidentiality, data protection, moderation of comments, use of AI, photography and safeguarding and expectations placed on both councillors and officers when discussing council business online.

Councillors debated whether the policy should explicitly state the importance of maintaining of embargoed and/or confidential and commercially sensitive information, particularly with agendas or information within email correspondence. A suggestion was made that 6.3 should read "Councillors must not: Publish confidential or exempt information (including but not limited to confidential agenda items and any information shared confidentially whether written or verbally).

RESOLVED: to approve and adopt the Social Media Policy subject to the change to 6.3 as described above.

7:38pm – Cllr J Snell joined the meeting virtually.

11/420 WHATSAPP AND TEAMS MESSAGING PROTOCOL

The report arises from concerns that arose during the consideration of an employee grievance where work-related WhatsApp groups were being used in a formal governance framework. The protocol establishes Microsoft Teams as the Council's primary business comms platform and introduces controls for WhatsApp use, including approval processes, management site, record keeping requirements and a register of all approved work-related groups. The significance of the protocol was stressed particularly for members of staff who do not have access to a Microsoft Teams email due to not needing one. However, it was noted that WhatsApp groups are required in certain contexts, such as shift changes on Café sites or sickness at short notice. The proposal puts forward that the council have oversight of all groups that are operating and the ability to assess if WhatsApp serves as a necessary function.

RESOLVED: to approve and adopt the Whatsapp and Teams Messaging Protocol.

11/421 COUNCILLOR - OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

The report presents new governance protocol designed to clarify the respective roles of both councillors and officers, with a key element relating to dealing with councillor's access to information which confirms that requests must be relevant, proportionate and supported by a genuine need-to-know. The protocol additionally addresses confidentiality, management of excessive requests, professional conduct, social media and the required mechanisms to resolve any concerns.

RESOLVED: to support and recommend to full council to adopt the Councillor – Officer Relations Protocol.

11/422 DATA PROTECTION POLICY

The policy has been developed due to the Councils AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability) review, during which the Council was unable to provide positive assurance against the new governance assertion relating to IT and Data compliance. The policy establishes arrangements for data protection, subject access requests, data breaching, information sharing and record keeping, strengthening the council's compliance with UK GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and the Data Act 2018.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to approve and adopt the Data Protection Policy.

11/423 IT POLICY

The policy also forms improvements required by the council arising from the AGAR review and introduces requirements relating to cyber security, passwords, multi-factor authentication, management of council devices and information security. Additionally, the policy also requires using only their official email account for council business.

Members queried whether policies were finalised until the official review date, as this is not a precedent set for other policies. It was advised that all policies will be reviewed by the council every five years, subject to changes in legislation or working practices.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to approve and adopt the IT Policy.

11/424 CASH HANDLING POLICY

The policy formalises cash handling policies with the aim of providing a clear framework for the receipt, storage, transportation, reconciliation and banking of cash, whilst also supporting the Responsible Finance Officer's responsibility for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and complements the Council's Financial Regulations and associated financial procedures. The purpose of the policy is to ensure staff have a framework to hand and to refer to.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to approve and adopt the Cash Handling Policy.

11/425 POTENTIAL PARISH BOUNDRY REVIEW

Members were invited to consider the report of the Chief Executive/Town Clerk regarding the Keyford Development, presented in the June Town Council. Correspondence from East Coker Parish Council was approved by Somerset Council and the development is comprised of approximately 800 dwellings.

The Executive Committee considered if there was current merit to explore a governance review, a boundary change and the potential to increase Council tax base and generate additional annual income at an estimate of £150,000 and £250,000.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note the correspondence received from East Coker Parish Council; (3) that at this time, there is no merit in undertaking further exploratory discussions with East Coker Parish Council and Somerset Council regarding a potential Community Governance Review.

11/426 CONFIDENTIAL SESSION ATTENDANCE AND REMOTE PARTICIPATION REVIEW

Members considered the Chief Executive/Town Clerk's report on attendance and remote participation during confidential sessions.

The report reviewed arrangements introduced in November 2024 that permitted councillors attending remotely to participate in confidential sessions, provided they used headphones and kept their cameras on. Although no breaches had been identified, the Council could not independently verify the environment from which remote participants joined. Members asked to consider requiring councillors to attend in person to participate in excluded or exempt business.

Members supported this proposal, citing the need to protect the integrity of voting and confidential discussions. Concerns were raised about relying solely on assurances from remote participants, particularly given advances in artificial intelligence that could make it difficult to verify whether an individual was genuinely present. Other members emphasised the importance of trust between councillors and noted that meetings had been conducted remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic without a specific confidentiality policy. It was also noted that the proposed arrangements were intended to safeguard the Council and relevant commercial interests where a remote participant's circumstances could not be independently verified.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to agree that attendance in person shall be required for Councillors wishing to participate in confidential business; (3) to agree that Councillors attending a meeting remotely shall not be permitted to participate in any item considered in confidential session where the press and public have been excluded from a meeting or part

of a meeting and must leave the remote meeting before the commercial item is taken; and (4) to agree these arrangements be reviewed should government legislation come forward permitting or requiring alternative arrangements for remote attendance to local authority meetings.

11/427 RECOMENDATION FROM THE CULTURE COMMITTEE – CIVIC GUIDE

Members were invited to consider the recommendation from the Culture Committee regarding the adoption of the Civic Guide.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to adopt the Civic Guide.

11/428 RECOMMENDATION FROM CULTURE COMMITTEE – INCREASE IN CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON BUDGET

Members were invited to consider the recommendation from the Culture Committee regarding a request to increase the Christmas Lights switch on budget.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to agree the Christmas Lights Switch On event budget be increased to £12,000 and that the additional £4,000 be funded from contingencies in 26/27 and be built into the base budget for future years.

11/429 LEARNING MANAGEMENT PLATFORM FOR COUNCILLOR AND OFFICER TRAINING

Following the approval of several policies, members noted the need to communicate them effectively to staff and councillors. The platform would record attendance, offer interactive learning and quizzes, and evidence awareness of Council policies and procedures.

A potential provider had supplied indicative information, with implementation estimated at 60 days and annual costs of £15,000–£20,000. Members supported progressing promptly rather than delaying consideration until November.

The Chief Executive/Town Clerk requested delegated authority, in consultation with the Chair, to undertake procurement through approved government channels.

Members asked whether training would be mandatory because of the risk of poor attendance. The Chief Executive/Town Clerk clarified that some courses, including financial training, would be compulsory for councillors involved in decision-making.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note the benefits of introducing a learning platform for Councillor and Officer training; (3) to note officers have met with a learning management platform provider and have obtained indicative information regarding functionality, implementation and costs; (4) to note the anticipated cost of providing access to all Councillors and employees is in the region of £15,000 - £20,000 per annum; (4) to note implementation is expected to take approximately 60 days from appointment of a provider; and (5) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive/Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Executive, to undertake the necessary procurement process in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and appoint the most advantageous learning management platform provider.

8:17pm – Cllr A Richards left the meeting and did not return.

8:18pm - Cllr J Snell left the meeting and did not return.

11/430 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity of agenda item 11/431 would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s3

11/431 NJC PAY AWARD (CONFIDENTIAL)

Members considered the Chief Executive/Town Clerk's report regarding the implications of the 2026 NJC Pay Award.

Members discussed the report and its potential impact on the Council's pay structure. The matter was referred to the Staffing Committee for consideration, including a financial analysis to inform future decision-making; with a further report to be brought forward to a future meeting of the Executive.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to note recommendations 2 to 5 within the report; and (3) that the matter be referred to the Staffing Committee for consideration, including a financial analysis to inform future decision-making; with a further report to be brought forward to a future meeting of the Executive.

The meeting closed at 8:28pm.

Signed: (Chair) Date