



Yeovil Town Council

Town House
19 Union Street
Yeovil
Somerset
BA20 1PQ

Mayor: Cllr T Lock
Chief Executive / Town Clerk: Amanda Card BA (Hons), FCPFA, BSc (Open)
01935 382424, www.yeovil.gov.uk
town.clerk@yeovil.gov.uk

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Leisure and Environment Committee held on Monday 7th September 2026 at 7:00pm in the Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil BA21 1PQ and by video-conference using Zoom meeting software.

Present (in person): Cllrs K Gill (In the Chair); T Casey; A Kendall; J Lock; T Lock; K Parsons; A Soughton; and D Woan.

Present (virtually): Cllr A Richards (from 8:16pm).

Also Present (in person): Cllr A Wilkes (Abbey Manor South) and D Potten (co-opted, non-voting)

In Attendance (in person): A Card (Chief Executive/Town Clerk); and K Munday (Director of Leisure and Environment).

There was one member of the public present in person.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

7:00pm – the meeting commenced.

Due to the absence of the Chair, Cllr K Gill chaired the meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr D Woan be Vice Chair.

11/330 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies were received from Cllrs W Read (conflicting engagement); A Richards* (personal reasons); and R Spinner (conflicting engagement).

**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.

11/331 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr K Gill declared a personal interest in that he was an allotment holder.

11/332 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Committee approved as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th June 2026.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings of the Leisure and Environment Committee held on 8th June 2026 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

11/333 FEEDBACK FROM CO-OPTED NON-VOTING MEMBER

Concerns were raised regarding the adequacy of backflow prevention arrangements at allotment sites following correspondence from Wessex Water. It was reported that Wessex Water's records showed no evidence of appropriate backflow protection being installed at the sites in question and advised that allotment water supplies may require a higher level of protection than standard double check valves. Wessex Water proposed undertaking joint site inspections to assess compliance with water regulations, establish the current arrangements and identify any improvements that may be required.

The fairness of water charging arrangements across allotment sites was discussed, particularly in relation to plots with polytunnels, which often require higher levels of water usage due to the lack of natural rainfall reaching crops. Concerns were expressed that the current charging methodology may not accurately reflect individual consumption levels. Officers confirmed that water usage is monitored by site and agreed to review available consumption data to better understand usage patterns and inform any future consideration of changes to the charging arrangements.

The use of hosepipes and the impact of water leaks were also considered. Officers reminded members that hosepipes connected to mains supplies are not permitted under allotment rules and water regulations, and that warning letters are issued where reports are received, although enforcement can be challenging. Officers advised that water consumption data is monitored to identify abnormal usage and potential leaks, and that discussions are held with the water company regarding credits where losses can be evidenced. More frequent monitoring arrangements are being explored to assist with the earlier identification of issues.

Concerns were also raised regarding the number of vacant plots despite the existence of waiting lists. It was noted that prospective tenants can be selective about the sites they wish to occupy and may decline plots that require significant clearance or improvement works. Officers advised that work is ongoing to bring vacant plots back into a lettable condition.

A suggestion was also made that allotment judging should take place earlier in the growing season to better reflect plot condition and productivity.

The co-opted (non-voting) member concluded by expressing appreciation for the efforts of officers and staff in managing the allotment service and addressing the challenges facing the sites.

RESOLVED: to note the matters.

11/334 ALLOTMENT LETTING/AVAILABILITY REPORT

The Committee considered the Allotment Letting/Availability Report.

The Chief Executive/Town Clerk advised that annual allotment invoices would be issued in October, which is typically when some tenants choose to surrender their plots. As a result, vacancy numbers may temporarily increase and be reflected in the next report. However, officers noted that there is an active waiting list and expressed confidence that vacant plots could be reallocated and brought back into use as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/335 SERVICE UPDATE

The Committee considered the Service Update Report presented by the Director of Leisure and Environment

Members noted the significant challenges presented by the prolonged period of hot, dry weather, which had impacted frontline outdoor services and grounds maintenance operations. Officers reported that staff had adapted working arrangements to manage the conditions while maintaining service delivery. The Committee also noted ongoing issues relating to antisocial behaviour, particularly littering and the use of e-scooters, and welcomed the positive working relationship established with local PCSOs.

The Committee noted a number of successful initiatives and events delivered over the summer period, including play days, heritage activities, the allotment produce show, Festival of Sport and the relaunch of junior athletics. Members were advised that new LED floodlights had been installed at Yeovil Recreation Centre. There were also advised that dry ground conditions had temporarily restricted the use of sports pitches for competitive matches in line with guidance from national governing bodies.

Updates were provided on a range of parks, open spaces and environmental projects, including the award of Green Flag status to Sidney Gardens, the development of a wildfire action plan, biodiversity monitoring through the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas, and the ongoing preparation of management plans for council-owned sites. Members were advised that a dedicated open spaces website was also in development and would improve public access to information about facilities and sites across the council's portfolio.

The Committee noted progress at Milford Community Garden and Yeovil Country Park, including play area consultations, successful grant funding applications, volunteer-led improvements and the launch of a new orienteering course.

During discussion, members raised questions regarding management plans, rights of way, biodiversity information and future maintenance priorities.

The Committee placed on record its appreciation for the work of officers, volunteers and community groups whose efforts continue to enhance the district's parks, open spaces and recreational facilities.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/336 REPTILES AT YEOVIL RECREATION GROUND

Members were advised of two reptile-related incidents at Yeovil Recreation Centre involving a snake that was believed to be neither a grass snake nor a slow worm. Following an initial sighting, supported by a photograph, a member of staff was later bitten while carrying out maintenance work in the same area. As a precaution, measures were implemented immediately to protect both staff and visitors while further investigations were undertaken.

Officers reported that reptile surveys are being carried out in accordance with Natural England guidance by a qualified reptile surveyor. No further sightings have been recorded during ongoing monitoring, which will continue until reptiles enter hibernation and resume in the spring. Members noted that the presence of reptiles may reflect the success of habitat management and biodiversity improvements at the site. Any future actions are expected to focus on signage and risk management rather than restricting public access. Members were pleased to note that the member of staff involved had made a full recovery.

RESOLVED: to note the report

11/337 MOTION

Cllr K Gill introduced a motion seeking the adoption of sustainable land management practices, including reducing reliance on synthetic fertilisers, limiting pesticide use to where no viable alternative exists, maintaining peat-free practices, monitoring soil health, and promoting public awareness of the importance of healthy soils. In presenting the motion, he highlighted the role of healthy soil in supporting biodiversity, carbon storage, water retention and resilient landscapes, and described the proposal as a practical and responsible approach to environmental stewardship.

7:39pm – Cllr J Lock left the meeting.

During the debate, members expressed broad support for the objectives of the motion but raised concerns regarding the proposed timescales, costs and operational implications, particularly in relation to phasing out synthetic fertilisers. The Director of

Leisure and Environment advised that many of the proposed measures were already being implemented or developed, but that further assessment was required to understand the impact, feasibility and resource implications of replacing fertilisers.

7:41pm – Cllr J Lock returned to the meeting.

7:45pm – The co-opted (non-voting) member left the meeting and did not return.

Following discussion, the motion was amended so that, rather than committing to a phase-out, officers would prepare a report within 18 months examining the potential to phase out synthetic fertilisers, together with associated costs, impacts and alternative approaches.

RESOLVED: (1) to prepare a report, within 18 months, assessing the potential to phase out the use of all synthetic fertilisers and adopting organic alternatives, taking into account sustainability, responsibility and affordability; (2) to agree to use pesticides only as a last resort; (3) to agree to commit to peat-free compost; (4) to agree to establish soil health monitoring; and (5) to agree to provide public education on soil health.

11/338 BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE

The Committee reviewed the Month 4 budget monitoring report.

Members received the budget monitoring report and were advised of a correction relating to Section 106 funding. It was clarified that the Section 106 figure should be recorded as income rather than expenditure, resulting in a revised forecast underspend of £104,326, rather than the £68,702 shown in the report. Members noted that the Section 106 funding had been secured from Somerset Council for projects and improvements across council-managed sites by the Property and Projects Officer.

During discussion, members sought clarification on several budget variances, including contractor payments, utility costs and expenditure forecasts. Officers explained that some overspends related to approved works and equipment purchases, partly offset by external grant funding, while the allocation of utility costs between Yeovil Country Park and the café had not yet been fully apportioned. It was acknowledged that further work was required to refine budget profiling and improve the accuracy of forecasting as the Council gained more experience of managing the transferred assets and services. Officers agreed to review the issues raised and provide further clarification where required.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/339 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 11/340 to 11/342 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

8:07pm – The member of the public left the meeting and did not return.

**11/340 BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF YEOVIL IN BLOOM: A NEW
DIRECTION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT
(CONFIDENTIAL)**

The Committee considered a confidential report regarding the future delivery of the Yeovil in Bloom programme. Members were advised that, following a review of the programme following two years of management by Yeovil Town Council, officers had reviewed the effectiveness of the current model and were proposing the development of a more flexible, year-round environmental improvement programme tailored to local priorities. It was noted that the proposal was not driven by financial savings but by a desire to deliver greater environmental, biodiversity and community benefits, while reducing reliance on external judging criteria and the resource pressures associated with the current competition framework.

During discussion, members acknowledged the significant contribution and historical success of Yeovil in Bloom and expressed support for the proposed direction of travel. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to develop a locally focused programme that would promote environmental enhancement, community participation, biodiversity and civic pride throughout the year. Members emphasised the importance of effective communication and engagement with community groups, volunteers, schools and residents as the proposals develop.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; (2) to agree to the principles outlined in the report; and (3) to bring back to the next meeting, a detailed programme.

11/341 FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF YEOVIL CEMETERY (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Committee considered a confidential report regarding future management arrangements for Yeovil Cemetery. Members were advised of potential changes to the current management arrangements and discussed the possible implications for service delivery, governance and future operational responsibilities. It was noted that further information was required before any detailed proposals could be developed.

Members acknowledged the need to begin preparatory discussions and agreed that officers should continue to engage with the relevant parties to establish the implications of any changes and identify potential options for future service delivery. It was recognised that further consideration would be required once additional information became available.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the report; and (2) to agree to the recommendations as set out in the report.

**11/342 WATER PUMPS AT YEOVIL RECREATION CENTRE (COMMERCIAL
IN CONFIDENCE)**

The Committee received a verbal update regarding the failure of the water pumps serving the John O'Donnell Pavilion at Yeovil Recreation Centre. Members were advised that the pumps had failed unexpectedly, affecting the water supply to facilities within the building. Emergency measures had been implemented to restore service on a temporary basis and ensure continued operation of the site.

Members noted that a permanent solution was being investigated and that quotations for the required works were being obtained. It was anticipated that an urgent decision may be required in accordance with the Council's approved procedures once costs and options had been established.

RESOLVED: (1) to note the verbal update; and (2) to note the actions being taken to secure a permanent repair.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm.

Signed: (Chair)

Date: