



Local Community Network

Yeovil LCN Meeting notes
7.00pm Tuesday 23rd September 2025
The Davis Hall, West Camel

The planned agenda reflects the themes of **Young People's Wellbeing (linked to poverty/deprivation)** and **Community Safety: 'One Team' model** identified in our June AGM.

Attendees:

Amanda Card	Yeovil Town Council
Andrea Blaney	Chilthorne Domer PC
Beth Poole	Somerset Council (Acting Chair)
Charlotte Griffin	Somerset Council
Cllr Andy Soughton	Somerset Council / Yeovil Town Council
Cllr Peter Seib	Somerset Council / Brympton PC / SALC
Cllr Tony Lock	Somerset Council / Yeovil Town Council
Karl Gill	Yeovil Town Council
Kathy Miller-Hunt	West Camel Parish Council
Louise Allen	Spark Sisterhood
Rob Stickland	Yeovil Without PC
Sue Murrison	Closworth Parish Meeting

Virtual Attendees:

Cllr Andy Kendall	Somerset Council
Cllr Evie Potts-Jones	Somerset Council
Leona Drayton	Montacute PC
Paul Herbert	Brympton Parish Council

Apologies:

Anita Perry	West Coker PC
Cllr Faye Purbrick	Somerset Council
David Neal	West Coker PC
Jane Lawrence	West Camel PC
Mandy Forsey	Somerset Youth Justice Team
Natasha Rand	Somerset Connect / Yeovil Arts Space

Summary of key points of discussion and outcomes:

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

LCN Link Officer Beth Poole welcomed attendees to the meeting and received

apologies. Technical set-up issues were reported, and apologies extended to virtual attendees for any experience of poor audio quality. Housekeeping details were provided, including fire alarm procedures.

Items 2: Nominations for Chair / Vice-Chair

Nominations for Chair, Vice-Chair or to act as such for the meeting were invited. None received. LCN Link Officer Beth Poole acted as Chair for this meeting.

Item 3: The Octagon Theatre Project

Amanda Card, CEO/Town Clerk for Yeovil Town Council, presented on the proposed Octagon Theatre redevelopment, highlighting its previous high usage, regional importance, and economic benefits to Yeovil and Somerset.

The theatre closed in 2023 for clearance and invasive surveys, with the original £29M proposal later declared unviable by Somerset Council owing to its financial emergency. Yeovil Town Council agreed to adopt the project, with support from Somerset Council, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have maintained their original £10M financial commitment to it – reflecting its significance as a regional asset.

The £15M scaled-down project includes refurbishing the auditorium, creating a larger participatory studio, improving the café/bar, box office and customer facilities, (such as more toilets and wheelchair accessibility), improvements to front of house, stage house and backstage areas, and technical facilities that will be more attractive to larger acts and performers. Upon completion of the project, the facility will be devolved to Yeovil Town Council to manage since it already operates Westlands Entertainment Venue.

The Project includes £10M from DCMS, £3.75M from Yeovil Town Council (proposed via Public Works Loan borrowing), ticket levies, and additional fundraising and grants, such as from The Foyer Club and local development Section 106 contributions. The project timeline aims for planning permission by year-end, design finalisation and contractor appointment in 2026, construction through 2027-28, and reopening in 2028-29.

A consultation was held to gauge support for Yeovil Town's Council's borrowing among its parishioners (a prerequisite), and other parishes/towns are being approached for one-off contributions to reduce the loan burden in response to feedback that the project is supported but Yeovil Town parishioners feel it's unfair they should burden borrowing costs for an asset of wider community value.

Questions posed to Amanda addressed the distribution of user groups, outreach activities, funding breakdown, and the rationale for seeking contributions from other parishes and towns, including those in West Dorset.

Amanda signposted to their website for latest updates and information about the project: [Octagon Theatre | Yeovil Town Council](#). Also, [The Octagon Theatre: Update](#)

Item 4: Somerset Youth Justice Team

Apologies received from Mandy Forsey on behalf of the Somerset Youth Justice Team. Mandy sent a PowerPoint, which Beth presented, explaining out-of-court diversions, the multi-agency approach, and the importance of trauma-informed, child-first interventions.

Key risk factors for youth offending include lack of suitable education, trauma, neurodiversity, substance misuse, poverty, and social media influence. Recommendations to reduce youth offending included mentoring, new experiences (arts, sports), practical training, and greater youth inclusion and voice in community life.

Item 5: Louise Allen, Spark Sisterhood

Guest speaker Louise Allen of Spark Sisterhood shared personal experiences as an artist, educator, and someone who grew up in care, highlighting the transformative power of the arts in overcoming adversity and trauma. Louise's journey included forced adoption, foster care, and escaping abuse, ultimately finding stability and purpose through art education and by fostering children.

The vulnerabilities faced by young people in care, especially girls, was highlighted including exposure to exploitation, county lines, and lack of practical life skills. The Spark Sisterhood charity was founded to support girls from care backgrounds, focusing on practical guidance and pragmatic support.

It was emphasised that county lines crime affects all demographics, not just the stereotypical "poor" or "urban" youth. Both affluent and vulnerable children are targeted, and the issue is widespread and complex. Louise advocated for community responsibility and proactive support for all young people.

The disconnect between academic expectations and the needs of neurodiverse and traumatised youth was highlighted. Many young people are not suited to academic pathways and would benefit from practical, hands-on opportunities. Industry engagement showed that employers value honesty and reliability over academic qualifications, and there is a shortage of workers in sectors like construction.

The discussion stressed the importance of community, communication, and role models in supporting youth mental health. Activities like boxing and arts, as well as community spaces, play a vital role in building confidence and providing diversionary opportunities for young people.

Louise encouraged creative, multi-channel communication and outreach to engage young people and the wider community. The need for imaginative PR, accessible information, and collaboration between venues and organisations was emphasised. The session concluded with an activity inviting attendees to reflect on their vision for young people and share it as a slogan or statement.

Key Takeaways:

- Arts and community support are crucial for vulnerable youth.

- County lines and exploitation are pervasive issues requiring collective action.
- Practical skills, mentoring, and inclusive opportunities are needed.
- Communication and outreach must be imaginative and accessible.
- Community spaces and role models are essential for youth development

Item 6: Activity

'Improvement for Young People' t-shirt slogans

- Be: Positive, Polite, Proactive. Make things better for everyone! 😊
- Learn to Love Yourself
- Disconnect to Connect
- Talk is more fun than TikTok
- It's all Elon's fault!
- You're never alone. You don't need one phone. You need two.
- Be yourself, not a clone!
- Be yourself, think big
- Don't follow the crowd
- Make the future yours

Post-it note reflections

Key Reflection	Risk/Concern	Stand-out Opportunity
Promote positivity.	Too many & diverse efforts. Focus activity.	Communicate better (especially positive progress on projects).
Communicate.	Idle hands	Talk to schools.
Discovered a lot. The message hadn't reached me!	Lack of willingness to change.	Pride in the town.
Help those less fortunate.		

Item 7: Future Speakers

Not covered.

Item 8: Any other business

Several consultations relevant to the LCN area are currently underway, notably the 'Yeovil Town Centre Master Plan', which is open for comments and suggestions until 2nd November 2025. The plan includes proposals for regeneration, increased housing, and changes across four key sites, with Glover's Walk (the former bus station) already under demolition. All are encouraged to participate in the survey – whether residents or visitors to Yeovil – and the potential for the LCN to organise focused feedback through workshops was raised.

Additional consultations mentioned included the local transport plan (Somerset-wide), Sunday parking charges (impacting Yeovil and linked to local projects), and the local nature recovery strategy. The importance of cross-project awareness and coordination within the council was highlighted to avoid confusion and overlapping issues.

Concerns were raised about misinformation, lack of balanced communication regarding the master plan and other consultations, as well as poor coordination between content and timings of consultations. Suggestions included using public screens at the former bandstand in Middle Street, Yeovil to share accurate information and improving outreach through multi-channel communication (e.g., school newsletters, leaflets, audible formats). The need for clearer, more accessible information was emphasised, especially for neurodivergent individuals and those with limited time or capacity to read and understand often complex and lengthy documents.

Attendees expressed frustration that engagement with town and parish councils should have occurred earlier in the process. There was agreement that workshops, focus groups and better communication could help ensure more representative feedback and avoid skewed results due to misinformation or lack of participation.

Somerset Preparedness has sent a survey to all parishes to assess civil contingency planning for emergencies (e.g., floods, gas leaks, fires, pandemics). Attendees were encouraged to complete the survey and consider how prepared their communities are. The need for practical, thematic questions and asset planning (e.g., sandbag storage, emergency contacts) was discussed.

A local volunteer, Bernard (Ricky), was acknowledged for 14 years of service and celebrated on his 80th birthday. Volunteering was highlighted as beneficial for well-being and community support, with opportunities available through Somerset Council and other organisations.

The next LCN meeting dates are:

- 7:00pm Thursday 18th December 2025 – Jubilee Pavilion, West Coker
- 7:00pm Thursday 19th March 2026 – Tintinhull Village Hall
- 7:00pm Thursday 18th June 2026 (AGM) – venue to be confirmed

ACTIONS

Action	Action Owner(s)	Review Date
Consider one-off financial contributions and grant opportunities to support Yeovil Town Council in their bid to redevelop The Octagon Theatre and reduce the requirement for public works loan borrowing. Letter to parishes requesting financial support for the Octagon Theatre Project.pdf	All partners	18/12/2025
Promote the Octagon Theatre as a regional asset and highlight its outreach and community benefits, including its work with young people and to improve inclusion and wellbeing through creative arts.	Yeovil Town Council / All partners	
Advocate for improvements to communication strategies in public consultations and clearer, more accessible consultation materials to counter	LCN Link Officer / All partners via Somerset	17/10/2025

misinformation and encourage greater, more inclusive participation.	Council's Community Working Review	
Liaise with the 'Yeovil Town Centre Master Plan' Project Manager to explore opportunities to facilitate interim focus groups or workshops.	LCN Link Officer	26/10/2025
Consider inviting the Youth Council to future meetings, once elected, to ensure their voices are heard in local decision-making.	LCN Link Officer	Ongoing
Encourage all parishes to complete the Somerset Preparedness survey on civil contingency planning.	All partners	31/12/2025
Promote and share upcoming events and consultations.	All partners	Respective end dates