



Yeovil Town Council



Greenfingers



Chairman's Welcome

Dear Allotment Tenant

I am very heartened to see how many people are really enjoying growing and cultivating their own vegetables, fruit and flowers. Thanks to the very warm and wet weather we had in July this year, I was particularly impressed with the variety and quality of the allotment produce this year.

I was fortunate to be one of the people shaking hands and handing out awards at the Best Kept Allotment Awards presentations on 12 September. We had glorious weather and lots of people turned out to hear Yeovil Town Band and celebrate the excellent achievements of all our talented allotment holders.

Keep up the good work!

Finally, I should like to wish you and your families all the very best for Christmas and the New Year. Let's hope that the weather conditions are favourable in 2010 and that you have the best growing season ever.

Best wishes
Alan Smith, Chairman of Grounds & General Maintenance Committee

Tenant Representatives

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Paul Saunders	07788 437061	Monksdale	
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Goar Knap		Newtown	
Dave Cunningham	412173	Jean Rigdon	424728
Hillcrest		Rustywell	
Ernie Evans	428665	Mike Collins	429931
Larkhill		St Georges	
Bob Ridout	424148	Jon Trevett	424412
Milford Dip		Sunningdale	
Manny Roper	472163	Chris Parsons	479868

We are still looking for a tenant representative for Turners Barn Lane allotment site - please ring 01935 382424 if you are interested in taking on this role.

The Real vs. Artificial Christmas Tree Debate



*“Jazz up your
Christmas
leftovers”*

There are important steps we can take to choose sustainable Christmas trees so as to minimize the damage to the environment, especially in light of the importance of maintaining our global tree canopy.

The first and most significant question is that of a natural tree or a plastic one. Through simple mathematics, we know that literally dozens of natural trees are left alive if you choose to have an artificial tree. So, this alternative to natural trees is better if you can reuse it for many years.

If you are compelled to use the real thing, aim for an organic tree. Unlike organic food, which focuses mostly on the lack of pesticides, organic/sustainable Christmas trees are grown in diverse forests, rather than the other way which often takes wooded areas with a variety of tree species growing on them and flattens them in favour of growing a single type of tree. While better for the air than chopping down trees and never replacing them, this method of growing Christmas trees in the absence of all other

species, known as a monoculture, is hard on the environment.

Christmas trees which are allowed to grow and thrive in the forest perform an important role in the environment, just like other trees. They provide shade. They fertilize the soil. They retain water and deflect wind and rain-born erosion. The list of benefits to the environment goes on. That’s why organic/sustainable Christmas trees are so important and why one should consider investing the effort in finding an outlet that sells them.

Turkey and Mango Curry

Christmas recipe serves: 4
Preparation time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 15 minutes
Calories per serving: 640
Not suitable for freezing.

Onion, 175 g (6 oz)
Green pepper, 125 g (4 oz)
Garlic clove, 1
Turkey, cooked 225 g (8 oz)
Mango, 1 fresh or mango pieces 400 g (14 oz)
Oil, 30 ml (2 tbsp)
Lemon grass, chopped 15 ml (1 tbsp)
Green Thai Curry Paste or Mild Indian curry paste, 20 ml (4 tsp)

Coconut milk, 450 ml (15 fl oz)
Salt and pepper
Double cream, 30 ml (2 tbsp)
Coriander (optional), chopped fresh 45 ml (3 tbsp)

Make strips of turkey, chopped and deseeded pepper, peeled and crushed garlic, peeled and chopped onion.

Make chunks of mango flesh having peeled and removed the stone. If using tinned, remove the liquid.

Combine lemon grass, green pepper, onion, gar-

lic and add to heated oil. Stir whilst cooking for about 5 minutes. Put in curry paste and continue for a couple more minutes.

Add the coconut milk and heat to boiling point, simmering for about five minutes. Throw in the mango and cooked turkey, add salt and pepper to taste and boil for about two minutes.

Prior to serving, add double cream (or low fat creme fraiche) and garnish with fresh coriander.



Seasonal Gardening Tips

Harvest

Usually December means hard frosts and it's time to harvest winter cabbages and cauliflowers. Sticking with the brassicas, the Brussels sprouts should be starting. You are allowed to eat them on other days as well as Christmas day!

Leeks should be about ready, just take what you need and leave the rest to stand until required. Leeks are much better harvested from the garden as they are required but in severe weather this can be difficult, so you can lift a few and heel them in on well dug ground, this will not freeze solid.

The carrots should come up for storage now if they haven't already, store either in peat or sand or even a traditional clamp.

Lift celery, parsnips and swedes although parsnips and swedes are very hardy and may be left if the ground is not needed. You can always cover them with fleece or straw to help stop the ground freezing them in.

Jerusalem artichokes will be available and you can start on Salsify and Scor-

zonera. Salsify is often called the 'vegetable oyster' and properly cooked is a wonderful vegetable.

It's worth checking any vegetables you have in store and removing anything that has started to rot before it spreads. Potatoes especially need to be checked and watch out for slugs that have emerged from a potato to go and damage another one.

Other crops you may have for harvest:

Perpetual spinach, celeriac, chicory (non-forcing and forcing varieties), endive, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, winter radish, spinach, turnips.

General Jobs in the Garden

Digging can continue, when weather allows. Particularly with clay soils, digging when the soil is wet and sticky can do more harm than good. It's also more hard work.

As with October & November, as ground becomes vacant, you can dig it over and spread manure over the surface. Leave the soil roughly dug in large clumps and the worms will break these up as they get

the manure. The freezing and thawing of water in the soil will cause the soil to break up finely so becoming easier to handle in the spring.

Winter is a good time to undertake double digging, incorporating manure into the bottom of the trench and deepening your topsoil.

Stake any young trees and tall brassicas to prevent wind rock damaging them by loosening the soil around their roots.

Ensure compost bins are covered to prevent excess rain leaching the nutrients and to keep some of the heat of decomposition in.





“Remember to net your brassicas to prevent pigeons feasting”

Sowing, Planting and Cultivating

You can still plant your garlic cloves now. They actually benefit from a period of cold, which prompts growth later. They don't like to sit in water, so if your soil is heavy and holds water, try dibbing a hole with an old spade handle or suchlike. Put about an inch of sand into the base and plant the clove on top, filling above with fine compost. This ensures good drainage and stops rotting.

Remember the pigeons will be on the look out for food, so net your brassicas to keep them away. It's worth removing any yellow leaves from your winter brassicas. They are doing no good and encourage diseases such as botrytis.

Onions sown just after Christmas will make excellent plants and bulbs, benefiting from the longer

growing period. Sow them in seed boxes in the greenhouse, or you can use cold frames if they can be kept frost free. Remember that cold frames can heat upto unacceptable levels in a little winter sun so particular attention must be given to ventilation.

Fruit
You can plant bare rooted fruit trees and bushes in December and prune apple and pear trees. Cut down canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries which have finished fruiting and burn to prevent fungal diseases spreading.

Now is a good time to plant rhubarb crowns which will benefit from being left out to be frosted before planting.

Check any young trees are well supported with stakes

and ties. Stakes can tend to work loose, which means they won't be doing their job of preventing wind rock loosening the roots.

You can prune your apple and pear trees now.

In the greenhouse
Successional sowings of winter salads can continue. Ventilate on warmer days to prevent moulds getting established.

Seed Order
December is the traditional month to go through the seed catalogues, decide what you want to grow and make a list. Then realise you'll need 10 times the room to plant everything you want to grow!

with acknowledgement to www.allotment.org.uk



Soil Analysis

Soil analyses. Autumn is a good time to check soil pH (potential hydrogen). This is measured on a scale of 1 to 14 with 7 being regarded as neutral, although in gardening terms

6.5 will support most plants. Below 7 is acid and above alkaline. If you want the best out of your garden send soil samples away for professional analysis for both pH and

nutrient content or utilise a kit or meter readily available from garden centres and DIY stores.

Try and keep things tidy to avoid providing winter homes for pests waiting for the spring.

Take hardwood cuttings of soft fruit. Gooseberries, red, white and black currants, worcesterberries, jostaberries and vines can all be propagated by cuttings inserted in the open ground now. Choose sturdy well ripened shoots of this year's growth cutting them just below a bud and trimming to just above a bud. For black currants take them about 8-10 inches (200-250 mm) long, 12-15

inches (300-380 mm) for the other fruits. Insert them into the soil to about half their length. It is customary to grow all except blackcurrants on a short stem - so remove the buds from the lower part of the cutting. All the buds should be left on blackcurrant cuttings.

Leaf fall should be well underway and to recap on October & November's advice: The leaves will start to fall very shortly and these are a valuable resource. Prepare for them by building a leaf mould cage. Very simple to

do, you just drive four stakes into the ground and staple chicken netting around to make the cage. Pile in the leaves and leave them alone for a year. You will find the pile reduces by two thirds at least, so keep filling the bin as more leaves fall. If you have one those marvellous garden vacuum mulchers that suck up leaves and chop them, you will find the leaves rot down much more quickly.



“Leaves make fantastic manure. Why not make your own leaf mould cage”

Websites for the green fingered

[Www.growveg.com](http://www.growveg.com)

Helps plan garden/vegetable patch by mapping out how much space required for different plants etc.

[Www.blotanical.com](http://www.blotanical.com)

Gardening blogs worldwide with over 200 in UK.

[Www.guerillagardening.org](http://www.guerillagardening.org)

Rallying point for guerrilla gardeners - nature lovers who tend to neglected public spaces.

“Enlist” online to help “fight the filth with fork and flowers”

[Www.rareplants.co.uk](http://www.rareplants.co.uk)

Collection of unusual plants and bulbs, all available to buy online.

[Www.landshare.channel4.com](http://www.landshare.channel4.com)

Matching landowners with would-be allotment holders. More than 40,000 have signed up so far.



Allotment Maintenance and Improvement Works



“For 2010/11 the Town Council has increased its annual budget for allotment maintenance works”

The Grounds and General Maintenance Committee recently considered a number of issues relating to the quality and timing of allotment maintenance works. This followed on from a meeting with the contractor at which it had become clear that the biggest concern of tenants was the irregularity of work undertaken.

Although the contractor had been delivering the required levels of grass cutting work, the intervals *between* cuts on one particular site had varied from 15 to 43 days and, in light of this inconsistency, the Committee have agreed that in future all regular allotment maintenance work will take place

during the first full week of each of the eight months included in the maintenance schedule (March to October inclusive).

To ensure that proper account is taken of extreme weather conditions, the Committee agreed that in exceptional circumstances, this arrangement may be varied – but only with the Town Council’s express consent. In such circumstances, the relevant tenant site representatives would be informed.

The Committee have further agreed to monitor and review the effectiveness of the revised arrangements and, in the event that the new arrangements prove

to be unsatisfactory, other options for delivering this work will be considered.

For 2010/11, the Town Council has increased its annual budget for allotment maintenance works from £10,000 to £10,200 and has set aside £5,410 for water provision, water mains refurbishments and fencing repairs. This overall provision of £15,610 includes £3,060 allocated for non-corporate allotment maintenance works – such as skip hire – which is allocated to each site according to the proportion of let plots on each site, and spent in full consultation with the tenant representatives.

Water Refurbishment Works



As part of the Town Council’s commitment to maintaining an adequate supply of water on all allotment sites for tenants, the Council has developed an ongoing programme of refurbishment works. This ensures that the infrastructure is kept in good condition, and minimises the chances of water

loss through leakage.

In recent years, improvement works have been carried out at Sunningdale, Newtown and St George’s Allotment Sites, and on each occasion the opportunity has also been taken, where practicable, to increase the number of taps on each site.

Plans are in hand for improvement works to be carried out next at Hillcrest Allotment Site, in consultation with the site tenant representative, and the intention is to carry out these works ahead of the water supply being turned back on in April next year.

Banish muscular tensions from your gardening

With the most active gardening months over, many of us may have experienced muscle tension, tightness or even pain after a stint of gardening.

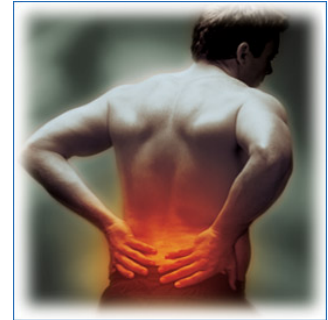
Muscle tension is initiated by a muscular response that if main-

tained over a prolonged period can become a habit and causes the muscles to stay in a state of partial contraction, often unconscious in manner.

Lots of tasks in the garden are repetitive by nature and provoke

sustained muscle activation increasing muscular tension and discomfort.

These activities usually compromise our posture and involve prolonged periods hunched over digging, sowing or weeding.



Prepare your body for the garden

Standing (ideally in front of a mirror) with your abdominal muscles gently drawn in throughout and good postural alignment, repeat the following exercises 8-10 times each:

Shoulder Lifts - inhale through the nose, slowly lift the shoulders, exhale through the mouth, slide the shoulders down to a count of three;

Shoulder Circles - inhale through the nose, lifting the shoulders, exhale through the

mouth and circulate them backwards slowly with control; Wrist/Ankle circulates - rotate joints 6-8 times each way;

Chest Stretch - keeping shoulders down, hold hands behind back, squeeze shoulder blades together feeling stretch across chest and front of shoulders. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Repeat twice.

Side Bends - keeping pelvis and lower body still, bend from the waist to the side, slid-

ing arm down leg. Keep shoulders down and look forwards.

Spine Stretch - starting with feet 3/4" from wall, bottom, shoulders against wall, small gap between lower back and wall. Gently roll spine down away from wall keeping abdominals pulled in all the time and back curved. Slowly roll spine back up against wall to starting position.

"It only takes a few minutes to do but may save you years of pain"

How to avoid muscle stiffness



Allowing time to warm up before gardening will prepare the body; get the circulation going with a brisk walk, followed by joint mobility exercises and stretches.

Varying your gardening activity, and your posture, every hour, ensures you change the active muscle

groups and reduce the risk of developing post gardening muscle stiffness.

Pace yourself and listen to your body.

Be posture conscious all the time, remember to draw in your deep abdominal muscles whenever you are doing any activity

which involves bending over, pushing or stretching - this will help stabilize your trunk muscles and protect your back.

Salsify Gratin

Serves 4

1 tbsp butter for greasing
 450g (1lb) salsify scrubbed
 Juice of half a lemon
 Salt and black pepper
 450g (1lb) spinach or curly kale, washed and chopped
 150ml (5fl oz) stock
 300ml (10fl oz) single cream

Preheat the oven to 170c/gas mark 3/325F

Grease inside of the gratin dish with butter
 Squeeze lemon juice into some water to

prevent salsify browning

Peel the salsify, cut into 5cm (2 inch) lengths and drop the pieces into the water
 Bring a pan of salted water to the boil.

Place the drained salsify into pot and cook for 10 minutes, until just tender.
 Drain.

Meanwhile put the greens in a large pan with just the water left after washing, and cook for about 3 minutes, or until wilted.

Put the stock, cream and seasoning in a small pan and heat gently to simmering point, stirring.

Arrange the greens and salsify in the greased gratin dish. Pour mixture and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour until brown.

If you wish, add grated cheese to the top before baking.



“Pace yourself and listen to your body”

Get your timing right!

Well here we are at the end of another year - already! and its turning into a rather nasty and soggy end at that. Not at all conducive to getting onto the allotment and carrying out all those wonderful horticultural jobs that we see done on gardeners world, by those celebrity gardeners who never seem to get thorns in their hands, hurt their backs or get dirty. Instead, if you're much like me, you'll wander down to the plot, look at the soil, think "I'll do more good than harm if I go on that" and wander home to find something else to do instead - walk the dog or go fishing in my case.

It does at times seem like the world has gone off track, not sure if it's global warming or wishful thinking, but winters don't seem to be the same as they used to; you know the sort, dry and cold with a good frost to break down the clods to a fine tilth. Instead they all seem to be warm & wet - nice for a cup of tea but no good for an allotment! However, all is not lost and if you cast your mind back you'll see that the dry cold weather we long for does appear, just later into the year than previously - how many hard frosts have we had in

March or April? A fair few I seem to remember. As for earlier this year, snow! Unheard of and took a bit of explaining for our scientific friends and their stories of warmer winters.

There is a point to these seemingly meaningless rambles, and its this - timing! Timing is everything.

A bit of work at the right time will improve things dramatically, whereas work done at the 'wrong' time (when conditions are bad) can cause a real mess which takes more time and effort to put right!

So when is the right time to get onto the plot - when the weather is dry and the soil doesn't stick to everything like treacle (or 'clag it all up' as they say up north) Of course when we're digging or clearing ground, some soil will attach itself to us and our tools, and that's all well and good, so stay and get cracking! But when the soil starts to make your tools weigh double, then it's time to retreat and come back another day, safe in the knowledge that its the right thing to do.

So what can we fill this time with? Well my advice is to find a comfortable chair, get yourself a fine soothing drink, pos-

sibly something nice to nibble, a pen & paper and you're ready to begin.

Why not list out what you've grown over the year - types of plant & varieties, if you can remember, and consider how they did - were they excellent? a total non starter? or somewhere in between? Did they get eaten? Were they cooked and made a huge - disappointment! (rather like my potatoes this year) Did your friend / neighbour grow something that you preferred?

When you've done the looking back at the year, now's the time to plan for the coming season! What do you wish you'd grown? Do you fancy growing something that you've never tried before? (always a pleasure I think - Squash this year for me) Do you fancy growing 'different' plants - purple carrots for instance? Or entering some of your fine produce for a show? How about growing more fruit? the list is endless, but is the foundation for a successful season.

Then it's Christmas and the 'what do you want?' questions - or if not try 'What shall I treat myself to?', this is a fine time for another drink or piece of cake, while we

consider new tools, good books or if we're really spoilt, maybe a glasshouse or compost bin that can be the envy of your neighbours! Take your time and enjoy the planning - its almost as good as the real thing.

When the weather does finally come round, get out & have a good tidy up - get rid of those left over bits & bobs, make sure you get some good organic matter into the soil (and don't be shy with it!) and get the area dug & prepared - as mark my words, the frosts will come, your soil will love you for it, and next season really will be - just as good as we always think it's going to be!

Above all, get out there, have some fun, take your time, enjoy the day and have a really, really, happy Christmas - you deserve it!

With grateful thanks to Chris Cooper, SSDC for his contribution

Compost your organic waste to make rich compost for your garden and allotment

Did you know that over a third of the waste produced from our households is organic waste and can be composted at home in the garden?

Composting is nature's way of recycling and involves the break down of organic waste to make fertile humus. During the process a variety of organisms act on the waste including bacteria, fungi and invertebrates such as

worms, slugs, mites and springtails.

One of the most important advantages of composting organic waste is that it diverts this waste from landfill. In a landfill site there isn't any air so organic waste will rot in anaerobic conditions producing methane, a strong greenhouse gas. In our compost bins and heaps the composting process is aerobic allowing carbon dioxide to be produced instead of

methane.

Next month, the Grounds & General Maintenance Committee will be receiving a presentation from a representative of the Somerset Waste Action Programme, who has been asked to outline ways by which communal and/or individual composting could be further encouraged, on all the Town's allotment sites.

"Composting organic waste diverts from the land fill"

Getting the right composting mixture

In order for your compost bin to work correctly it needs equal quantities of 'greens' and 'browns'. 'Greens' are items high in nitrogen and moisture such as grass cuttings, fruit and vegetable peelings and cut flowers. 'Browns' are items high in carbon and are often very dry. 'Brown' items include shredded paper, news-

paper, cardboard, sticks, autumn leaves, hair and sawdust. 'Browns' will add fibre, carbon and most importantly will provide structure within your pile allowing air pockets to remain. The aim is to have 50% 'greens' and 50% 'browns' within your bin or pile. If your bin begins to

smell and the contents looks compacted and wet, it is a good indication that the mixture is too high in nitrogen and anaerobic conditions have set in. To solve this problem simply add more 'browns' to the mix and use a fork to turn the contents to allow more air into the mixture.

Green Waste



Brown waste



Compost cone



Life in the compost heap

Your compost bin or pile will be supporting an astonishing amount of life!

If the right conditions exist colonies of bacteria can double every hour. There could be a hundred thousand million bacteria for every teaspoon of compost! As the bacteria increase in number and continue to respire and consume, they convert the energy stored in the composting matter into heat. Respiring bacteria are the main source of heat within your heap. Bacteria are most active within the freshly added material at the top of your pile.

As the heap cools, it becomes a magnet for all kinds of fauna including slugs, snails, millipedes, ants, spiders and springtails. Predatory beetles will find

larvae and smaller creatures, while frogs, toads, slow worms and grass snakes will also move in, in search of somewhere warm! Birds will visit your compost bin or heap to collect insects and larvae and you may be lucky enough to have bats visiting at night.

Here's a closer look at a few more unusual creatures hiding in your bin or heap:

Springtail: These are tiny whitish-grey crea-

tures, no more than 6mm long. They have six abdominal segments with the last segment forming a tail like appendage called the furcula. The furcula can be folded beneath its body and held under tension. When released this spring like appendage snaps against the ground, catapulting the springtail through the air! feed on minute nematode worms, mites, larvae, flies and small earthworms. Even with their venom gland they pose no harm to humans! This process takes as little as 18 milliseconds!

They play an important role as decomposers, feeding on fungi and decaying plant matter. They are also dependant on damp conditions making your compost bin or pile their ideal habitat.

Pseudoscorpion: Also called false scorpions or book scorpions. These creatures are arachnids, only 2-8mm in length with 8 legs. They seize victims with their front pincers called pedipalps and use a small venom gland to immobilise prey.

The wiggly world of worms!

Worms are amazing creatures, helping to transform our organic waste into fine crumbly compost for the garden. There are many types of worms. In your compost bin you will find brandling or tiger worms near the top where the fresh organic waste is and earthworms within finished

compost.

Here are some interesting facts about worms!

They do not have eyes but have light and touch sensitive organs.

They require humid conditions as they breathe through their skins.

They lay cocoons with each one containing 3-5 worms.


They can live up to 10 years.

Composting worms can eat half their body weight of food every day.

Many creatures feed on worms including snakes, birds, moles, toads, beetles and

centipedes.

With thanks to Helen Manning and the Somerset Waste Action Programme for their contribution



Yeovil Town Council comprises 24 elected members each representing one of four areas of the Town. These areas are known as Wards. This arrangement makes sure that we have truly *local* government in Yeovil.

Your Councillors are:

Yeovil Central Ward

J Vincent Chainey	118 Hendford Hill, Yeovil. BA20 2RF	Tel 706410
John Cruddas	150 Ilchester Road, Yeovil. BA21 3BW	Tel 478049
Clive Davis	17 Park View, Montacute. TA15 6XW	Tel 07890 411374
Peter Gubbins	1 Holywell Hollow, Halves Lane, East Coker, BA22 9NF	Tel 862062
Stephen Hawker	104 Goldcroft, Yeovil. BA21 4DE	Tel 477049
Andrew Kendall	41 Coronation Avenue, Yeovil. BA21 3DZ	Tel 421792

Yeovil East Ward

Philip Chandler	48 Southville, Yeovil. BA21 4JB	Tel 415082
Tony Fife	11 Wentworth Road, Yeovil. BA21 5JX	Tel 424022
Pete Goodman	54 Bedford Road, Yeovil. BA21 5QU	Tel 424549
John Hann	11 Plantagenet Chase, Yeovil. BA20 2PP	Tel 476935
Tony Lock	71 St Michael's Road, Yeovil. BA21 5AH	Tel 700061
David Recardo	83 Lyde Road, Yeovil. BA21 5DH	Tel 411099

Yeovil South Ward

Bridget Dollard	81 Rowan Way, Yeovil. BA20 2NS	Tel 421657
John Grana	36 Wellington Flats, Yeovil. BA20 1TX	Tel 414997
Dave Greene	75 Magna Close, Yeovil. BA21 5RS	Tel 414243
Simon Hester	65 St George's Avenue, Yeovil. BA21 4QY	Tel 813619
Tom Parsley	15 Crofton Park, Yeovil. BA21 4EA	Tel 848740
Alan Smith	63 Roping Road, Yeovil. BA21 4BE	Tel 479957

Yeovil West Ward

Julian Freke	30 Coronation Avenue, Yeovil. BA21 3DY	Tel 425442
Dave Gooding	1 Walrond Court, Ilminster. TA19 0HN	Tel 01460 54132
Ruth Kendall	52 Larkhill Road, Yeovil. BA21 3HD	Tel 471441
Ian Martin	63A Preston Road, Yeovil. BA20 2B	Tel 426367
Pat Martin	63A Preston Road, Yeovil. BA20 2BW	Tel 426367
Wes Read	Wellcombe House, 94 Ilchester Road, Yeovil. BA21 3BL	Tel 426722

All Town Councillors are elected for a period of 4 years. The next Town Council elections will be in May 2011.

The Town Council's team of staff is led by Alan Tawse – Town Clerk. The Assistant Town Clerk is Sarah Hunt.