



*Okehampton Town Council*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017



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## **Mayor's Report for the Annual Town Assembly - Cllr Jan Goffey**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> May I was very honoured to become Town Mayor of Okehampton. However, on the afternoon of my investiture, I opened a letter... Dear Mayor, it said ... Your town looks like Beirut, what are you going to do about it?

So that was the first thing to sort out ...

In May, I attended eleven events in three weeks! Ranging from Mayor Choosings elsewhere to awards presentations and a Civic Service.

Then on 12<sup>th</sup> June, we had Q90, our birthday Celebration for Her Majesty, not without drama. The joys of planning outdoor festivities on the edge of Dartmoor. But it was great fun and everyone enjoyed it and I thank everyone who helped in so many ways!

June was also the month of our Civic Service and mercifully, it stayed dry!

July saw the Rotary Devon Youth Games with teams entered from all over Devon and Cornwall. This was a hugely prestigious event for Okehampton and OCRA did us proud and I understand the same venue will be used again this summer.

July also saw the much anticipated re- opening of The White Hart, a splendid town centre building now restored to its former glory! I just wish we could see somebody tackle the Plume of Feathers and that would make such a difference to the town centre.

August saw amongst many other events the Agricultural show and again the weather was fine! The end of the month the French invaded, but in a friendly fashion, our twinning visitors from Craon enjoyed another fine weekend here. Next August will be the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our twinning and the Mayor of Okehampton will be warmly welcomed!

September was fairly quiet, I remember especially the production of All The Fine Young Men, a story of the lads from Lewtrenchard Manor who went off to fight in WW1. There were many songs from that era incorporated and one of the actors (as it happens the Chair of Sticklepath Parish Council) gazed at me, flung his arm in my direction and heartily sang The Old Grey Mare, she ain't what she used to be... the audience roared with laughter!

The Mayor's October Diary records 18 events including the first meeting about the closing of the hospital beds.

The closure of the Okement Surgery at the hospital a few months before I became Mayor was followed by the moving of the Minor Injuries Unit from the hospital to reduced hours at the Medical Centre. But taking these away from the Hospital site meant reducing our points score thus partially leading to the decision we heard in March ...to close our inpatient beds. The Hospital is an ongoing battle.

So this year has been dominated by two things ...the Hospital and the Railway!

I started my year by welcoming the First Sunday Rover Train of the Season and now we have the news that Okehampton is definitely part of the New Devon Metro which must mean that we will get a daily service to Exeter... thanks again to the hard work of the Destination Okehampton team and the newly formed OkeRail.

All in all, I think we have moved forwards on many fronts this year and I hope to see the town continue to grow and welcome new businesses and new ventures to keep this community vibrant and welcoming.

### **Parks and Open Spaces Committee - Cllr Christine Marsh (Chairman)**

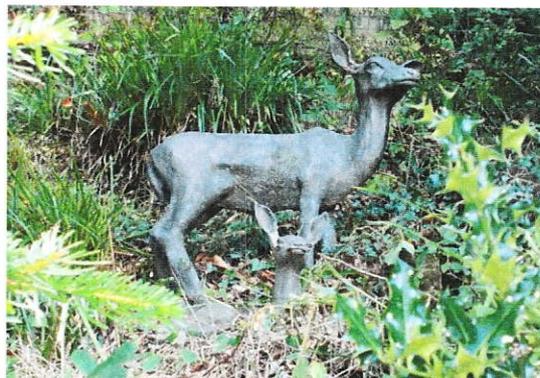
As we all know Simmons Park is one of the biggest assets that Okehampton has. It can be divided into two parts: the formal garden area and the recreation side. This is owned and maintained by Okehampton Town Council for the benefit of all to use and enjoy.

Last year the Devon Youth Games were held in Okehampton for the second time. They will also take place again this year in Okehampton because all the events can be held in the one area. A huge boost for the town. The success of this is partly because of the recreation facilities in the East Okement Valley and our land forms part of this. We have a close working relationship with the College and OCRA and through this we are able to deliver a wide range of activities.

We are in the process of negotiating with West Devon Borough Council to take back ownership of some areas of land. One area being Old Town Park which was the original town park and forming part of the Castle grounds. The other areas are Fairplace Gardens, the confluence area behind Lidl, a piece of land at West Bridge and the Market Street toilet block. We will not be paying for the land but maintenance will impact on our future budgets.

Our two members of staff who work in the park maintain the new cemetery. They also oversee the wellbeing of other areas: for example the bed of heathers at the Waitrose roundabout and seating area by Northfield/Crediton Road.

The future will see the installation of CCTV cameras in the park. This will help to ensure a continued safe area for people to enjoy. With the continued restraints placed on the larger councils it will place even greater pressure on our council to make sure our town is a place to be proud of and visitors will want to come to.



## Planning Committee - Cllr Tony Leech (Chairman)

The Okehampton Town Council's Planning Committee does cover quite a few issues throughout the year. Each month, **as a consultee only**, we review any new planning applications that are relevant to the town, and with the Core Strategy in place, any of the larger projects that are now coming forward in the Stockley Hamlets to the east of the town. Each and every application has to be looked at individually, and we have a 'crib sheet' available for all members to use that shows us what we can and cannot comment on. We also have to base our final conclusions on **Planning Policy only**, and not as a kneejerk reaction to comments from others.

As consultees, we send our thoughts and recommendations to the WDBC Planning Department, **who are the main Planning Authority for our area**, and they include our thoughts in their final reports. The Officers (under delegated powers) or the WDBC Planning Committee will then make the final decisions. Should they decline an application; the Applicant can then take it to appeal. This is where an independent Inspector looks at the case from both sides and makes his/ her decision. This is final and binding with no further appeal from either side. That is why we all have to make sure that all our ducks are in row, and that we have only followed the policies as they stand now otherwise any developer worth his/her salt, will pull us apart and do whatever they want, wherever they want. We, as Town Councillors, also have to be very careful what we say and how we say it when it comes to planning applications. It is very easy to put our own personal views forward, but if they can be misconstrued, then developers can say that we have 'pre-determined an application', and under these circumstances, the developer may get planning permission by default, so it is imperative that we keep our council, and as I have said earlier, look at each and every application on its own merit and within all the policies that we have available to us.

**The future:** We, as a Council, are also looking towards the future. We are at this time working with WDBC officers on the Joint Local Plan (JLP) which will include, West Devon Borough Council, South Hams District Council and Plymouth City Council. The Council has already looked at and commented on two drafts of the JLP, and we are about to receive the final draft.

The Town and the Hamlets Parish Councils are also working on a Neighbourhood Plan, (NP) which will be what the residents want as far as land uses are concerned. This includes sports and recreational areas plus parks and green spaces, and once the NP has gone through all the procedures required, it will work fully alongside the JLP on all planning issues in the future.

### Councillors Attendance at Meetings 2016/17

Councillors	Full Council (10)	P & R Committee (11)	Planning Committee (14)	Parks Committee (6)	Property Committee (5)	Total	Possible Attendance	Percentage %
Cllr Mrs J Carpenter	9	x	x	6	3	18	21	86
Cllr T Cummings	4	4	2	X	x	10	35	29
Cllr Mrs V Cushing	10	11	14	X	x	35	35	100
Cllr Mrs J Goffey	10	11	13	5	4	43	46	93
Cllr Miss C Holt	10	x	x	6	5	21	21	100
Cllr Dr M Ireland	10	x	13	4	x	27	30	90
Cllr A Leech	10	11	14	6	5	46	46	100
Cllr Mrs C Marsh	9	10	5	6	5	35	46	76
Cllr R Rush	7	x	10	4	x	21	30	70
Cllr B Stephens	7	10	9	3	5	34	46	74
Cllr B Tolley	9	7	x	5	x	21	27	78
Cllr P Vachon	10	11	x	x	5	26	26	100
Cllr D Weekes	10	8	7	2	5	32	46	70
Cllr Mrs J Yelland	10	11	4 x	2 x	4	31	32	97

## What is Okehampton Town Council responsible for?

Okehampton Town Council is a third tier local council after the county and borough levels of local government. A town council, rather like a parish council, is therefore limited by legislation on what it is permitted to do. For example, services such as household waste disposal, housing matters, highway, road and pavement maintenance, street parking and traffic regulation, education and health are provided by higher local authority levels whilst in planning, the town council is a consultee in much the same way as a resident is and has no overriding influence on the outcome of a planning authority decision.

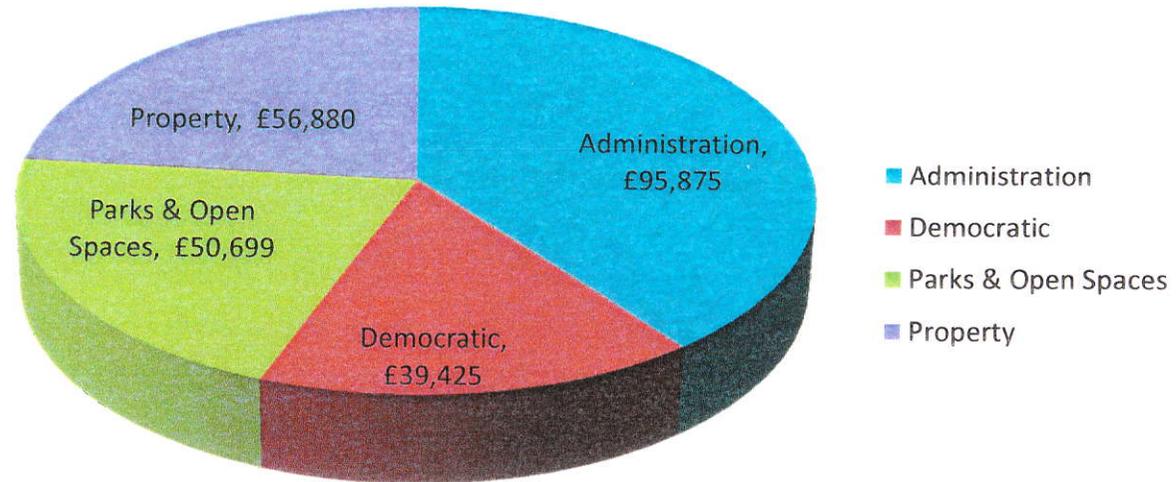
However, Okehampton Town Council has the statutory power to raise a precept to pay for the discretionary services which they do provide or to which they contribute. As the Town Council provides a range of social and recreational amenities, the key properties which they own and must maintain are the Town Hall itself, Charter Hall and the fabric of the linked buildings, Simmons Park with associated play areas and car park, the skate park and BMX track and the new cemetery adjoining the older cemetery area. The Council also employ the staff needed to undertake the statutory obligations conferred on the 'Responsible Financial Officer' and the 'Proper Officer' (the Town Clerk) and to support the Council's business and general administration, including maintenance of Simmons Park.

The Town Council, comprising eight elected councillors for the North Ward and a further six for the South Ward, meet at 7 pm on most Monday evenings, either in the form of a full council or as one of the standing committees. Okehampton has four standing committees: Policy & Resources, Parks and Open Spaces, Planning, and Property. At present, there is also one Council Working Group, Destination Okehampton, whose main – though not exclusive - focus over the last 12 months has been to keep the possibility of the Northern Option rail route in the attention of the decision-makers. For further information on agendas for and minutes of meetings – or indeed to find out who your councillors are – please see the Council's website: [www.okehampton.gov.uk](http://www.okehampton.gov.uk). The last town council elections were held in May 2015, at the same time as the General and West Devon Borough Council elections, and take place on a fixed four-year cycle. The Town Council, some of whose members are also borough councillors, act as a representative and a lobbying force through both the borough and county councils but in every case are acting for you as your representatives.



The Mayor reads the Commonwealth Affirmation at 10.00 a.m. on 13 February 2017 while the Commonwealth Flag is raised at St James Chapel

OKEHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL  
AGREED BUDGET 2017-2018



## Grants awarded from April 2016 by Okehampton Town Council

The Town Council has the authority to award grants to organisations under specific powers or under Section 137, a provision which permits the award of a grant where it will demonstrably benefit the residents of the parish. The following grants have been awarded in this financial year. Information on grants and applications can be found on the website: <http://www.okehampton.gov.uk/grants.php>

Recipient Organisation	Amount of Grant (£)	Purpose
Relate Exeter and District	500	Support for Okehampton residents in addressing relationship difficulties
Okehampton Community Garden Association	500	Assistance to complete the water connection to the garden
Okehampton & District Community Transport Group	2,000	Assistance to improve the quality of life for older and disabled residents
Meldon Viaduct Company Ltd	500	Contribution to viaduct maintenance programme
WREN Music	500	Assist promotion of Baring-Gould Folk Weekend, bringing folk artists to town
Okehampton United Charities	300	Contribution to costs of managing and maintaining allotments
Okehampton Community Archive	250	Providing new boards to display photos and materials
OCRA	1,000	Contribution to support the Okehampton Sports and Fitness Festival in July (promoting health and well-being)
Museum of Dartmoor Life	3,500	Contribution to the running of the Museum as an attraction to tourism in Okehampton
Tourist information Point	1,500	Contribution to assist with provision of the tourist information facility at the Museum
2443 Squadron (Okehampton) Air Cadets	500	Grant towards purchase of adventure training and sports kit stock
Okehampton Street Pastors	500	Contribution to start-up costs
Okehampton Hockey Club	500	Grant to assist purchase of goalkeeping kit for Men's team
Okehampton Carnival	1000	Contribution towards staging the 2016 Carnival
Okehampton Fairtrade Group	150	Contribution to town Fairtrade signage/Schools Conference
Royal British Legion	50	Contribution for Town Council wreath (Remembrance Day)
Ockment Centre	5,000	Contribution to maintenance of services to Okehampton residents

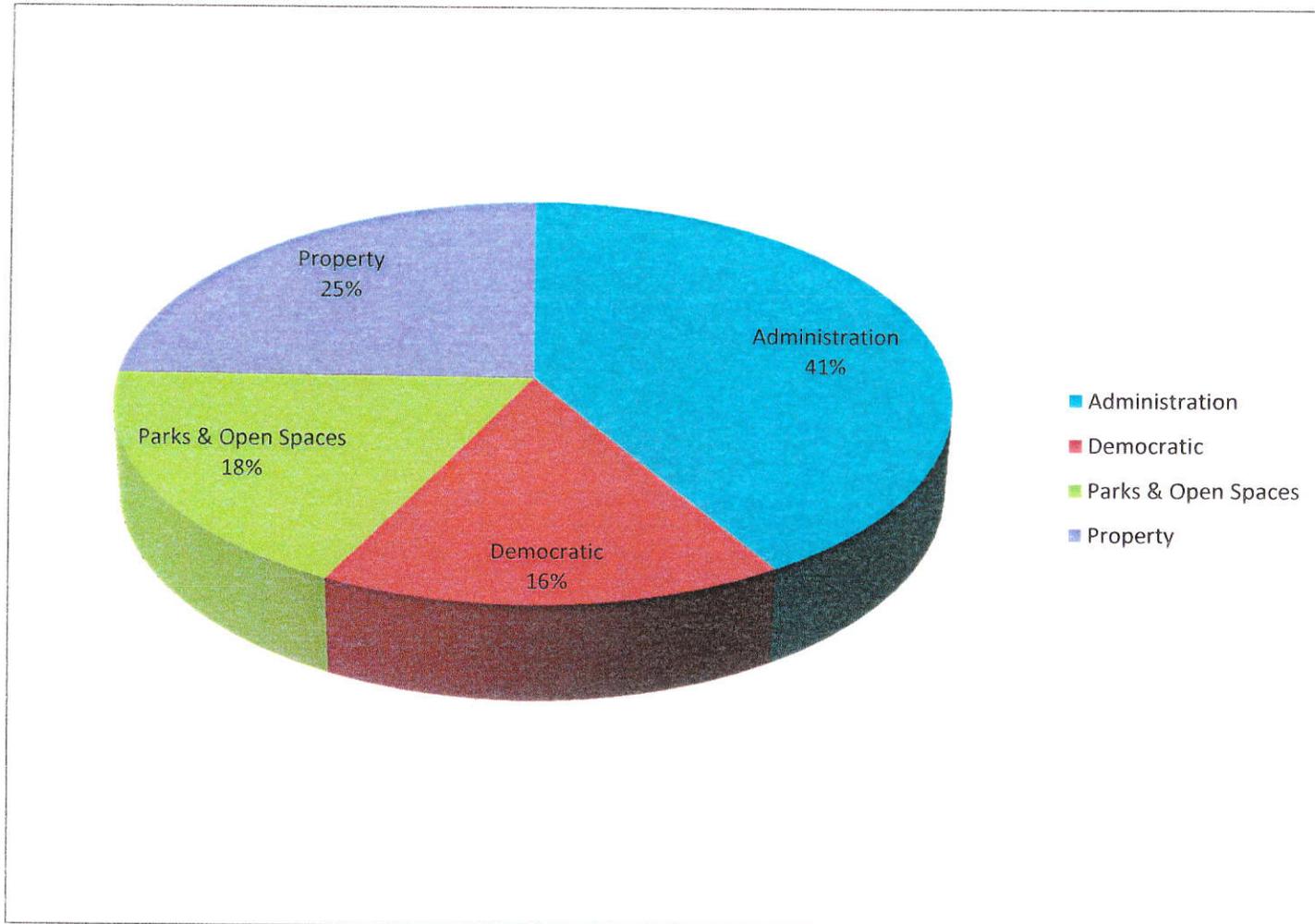
Okement Rivers Improvement Group	500	Contribution to maintenance of amenities, protective equipment and insurance
Okehampton Remembers	500	Contribution towards professional design of new monument/sculpture
Okehampton Skatepark Group	500	Contribution towards improvement of facilities at skate park
North Dartmoor Search & Rescue Team	500	Grant towards purchase of Hi-Vis jackets and collection boxes
OkeRail Forum/CIC	500	Grant towards promoting the potential for a new passenger rail service from Okehampton to Exeter
Battle of the Bands	500	Grant towards provision of sound system for the Party in the Park in August 2017
Citizens Advice	4,000	Contribution towards cost of operation in providing services for Okehampton residents from the Okehampton office



Town Mayor, Cllr Goffey, presents a cheque to Vicky Rowe, CEO Torridge, North Mid and West Devon Citizens Advice.

## OKEHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL

How the Council budgeted to spend your money in the current year 2016-17 - Precept £218,365  
For every £1, the following % (pence) was budgeted





Okehampton Town Council

### ORGANOGRAM

