

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee**  
**held on Monday 7 October 2013**  
**in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton at 7.00 pm**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillor Mrs C Marsh (Chair)  
Councillor Dr M Ireland (Vice Chair)  
Councillor P Vachon  
Councillor M Davies (Town Mayor)  
Councillor A Leech (Chair, Planning)

**Other Members Present:** Councillor T Cummings

**In Attendance:** Mrs J Gillard (Deputising for Town Clerk)  
Mr D Whitfield (Park Keeper)

224. **Apologies for Absence** - Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of Councillor D Weekes, Councillor K Ball and Councillor Mrs M McDonald.
225. **Deferment of Business** (for comment by the public) - There were no questions raised by members of the public.
226. **Members' Questions** - There were no questions from Members regarding the workings of the Committee.
227. **Minutes** - The minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on Monday 19 August 2013 were approved and signed by the Chair on the proposition of Councillor M Ireland and seconded by Councillor A Leech.
228. **Matters Arising** -
- 228.1 **Clapps Wood** - The Chair advised all easements had been signed and there was just form RPCON to be returned to West Devon Borough Council from the Housing Association in order for the matter to be completed.
- 228.2 **Park Bookings** -
- (i) A request from the Rotary Club of Okehampton to make a booking for 4 May 2014 for the annual May Fair was received. Councillors resolved to accept this booking.
  - (ii) Introduction of terms and conditions and booking form for hirers - no further progress to date, carry forward to next agenda.
- 228.3 **Notice Board** - No update in the absence of Councillor Mrs J Goffey. The Chair reminded Members that, depending on the size of the notice board, it may require planning permission and also recommended that a decision be made, if this progresses, to allocate what organisation should be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of any new board.

- 228.4 Red Telephone Box, North Street** - The Park-keeper advised he was still waiting to find a mobile sandblaster to clean the box.
- 228.5 Sophia Simmons' Memorial** - The Chair advised a letter had been received from the Exeter Diocese stating they wished the stone to be refaced as opposed to replacing. The Clerk is waiting to hear from the firm of conservators to discuss this further with them and to obtain a copy of their original report. It was suggested a meeting be held with the appropriate person on site to discuss this further, Clerk to investigate. It was also suggested that it would be worth investigating the possibility of listing headstones of architectural importance to protect them for the future.
- 228.6 Mobile CCTV Cameras** - The Park-keeper advised one quote had been received from Metcalfe Allen and a second one was awaited. Clerk to advise name of company who quoted for town centre CCTV.
- 228.7 Lighting in Park/Leisure Centre** - The Park-keeper advised that the lights to the swimming pool were now working, also from the bandstand to the play area and lights at the Leisure Centre itself. A fault had been reported for the lights on the main road that weren't working and the Park-keeper advised he would check the timing on the lights from the car park down to the entrance of the College.
- 228.8 Park Bench Accident** - The Clerk advised a quote for a new bench had been submitted to the insurance company, the car driver had accepted responsibility for the accident.
- 228.9 Skate Park** - The Chair advised that investigations were now ongoing with an expert firm of installers as regards the railings.
- 228.10 Churchyard Strimming Complaint** (minute no 163.2) - The Chair advised she was meeting with the complainant on 21 October. Councillor Leech advised that West Devon Borough Council have no written policy on strimming procedures.
- 228.11 Mural beside Gate way Garden** (minute no 163.3) - The Chair advised that the mural was not going yellow, it is as designed.
- 229. WDBC Leisure Review** - It was agreed that Councillor M Davies and Councillor A Leech represent the Town Council at future meetings, the next one being 18 November 2013.
- 230. Okehampton Finger Posts** - A request has been received from West Devon Borough Council for a contribution towards the repair and refurbishment of the finger post outside the office of West Devon Borough Council in St James Street, the cost being £942.30 + VAT. It was agreed that as there were no funds in the budget for this, a contribution could not be made. Item discussed further under agenda item 11 Open Spaces.
- 231. Questions Raised by Members of the Public** -
- (i) Why do park Staff not dead head the roses in the park to keep them flowering throughout the year?

The Park-keeper advised that the roses were of the old-fashioned variety, some are repeat flowering others not, therefore if they were dead headed there would be no colour and hips in the autumn.

- (ii) Why has the grass along the entrance path (on the right hand side below the first shelter) not been cut this season?

The Park-keeper advised that the area in question had been left for habitat protection and wild flowers, early cutting removes seed regeneration. Historically the area was strimmed too regularly, wild flower seeds have now been spread in various areas to enhance the habitat. Councillor Ireland suggested information to this effect be placed on an information board in the park and it was also agreed that information such as this could be placed on the new website when developed.

- (iii) Why is the Park-keeper spraying Japanese Knotweed along the river (outside of the park operation) and what chemicals is he using?

The Park-keeper responded that spraying of the weeds had been undertaken for several years in the interest of the community and to protect further spread, time taken was minimal, glyphosate chemical was used, the Park-keeper also has the necessary qualifications to enable him to do this.

- (iv) Why have the park staff been working in the Old Park (WDBC property) when there is still work to do in the main park?

The Chair advised there were surplus stones from the wall by the cricket field which the Park-keeper agreed could be used in the bank in Old Park to avoid further erosion happening. He advised there was no detriment to his workload at the time and the area has now been improved. The river bed was not disturbed and the work was completed at a time when it was safe to do so protecting the spawning fish. (See amendment to this paragraph agreed in Parks Committee minutes of 4 November 2013, minute no 287.)

232. **Dog Fouling** - The Clerk advised one complaint had been received re dog fouling from Exeter Road into Giblands opposite the Costcutter shop. Mr J Dean has now visited this area and tidied up. A letter had been received complaining that dogs were not under control in the park and requesting that they should be kept on leads. After discussion it was agreed that instructions re dogs be included in the review of signs in the park that was due to take place.

233. **Children's Centre** - Councillor A Leech declared a personal interest. A letter had been received requesting three free parking permits for Simmons Park as the Children's Centre staff sometimes find it difficult parking at the College. It was agreed to respond stating that the College car park was not free, but that if anyone had a permit for the College car park this was also valid in the Simmons Park car park and therefore no free passes should be required.

234. **Open Spaces** (minute no 166) - Concerns raised at a previous meeting from a member of the public re areas such as Fairplace Gardens, the land at Westbridge, land in front of advertising hoardings and the Gateway Gardens. The Chair suggested the Council could consider taking over areas such as this including the finger posts in the town and also the information boards in the Waitrose car park and Mill Road car park.

It was agreed to investigate ongoing costs if responsibility was taken for these items, proposed by Councillor Mrs C Marsh and seconded by Councillor P Vachon that this be brought to full Council when further information obtained.

- 235. Gates to Small Play Area** - The Park-keeper advised that the gates meet all required standards, they close outwards not inwards and there are no catches. The closing times on the gates have been adjusted and an improvement in the operation seen.

**236. Urgent Items -**

- 236.1** The Park-keeper advised his mobile telephone for work had ceased to be operational. It was proposed by Councillor Mrs C Marsh and seconded by Councillor M Davies that a new phone and contract be obtained and the contract be placed in the Council's name.

- 236.2** A complaint had been received about the footpath from Pig Bridge to the station stating it was not safe to use as it was very slippery and required renovating. It was pointed out this path is actually owned by the Woodland Trust, member of public to be advised.

- 236.3** Sand and Sandbags and Community Emergency Planning Workshops - an offer had been received from West Devon Borough Council for sand and sandbags, it was agreed to liaise with Alan King at the College to see if he would benefit from any. There were no takers to attend the Community Emergency Planning Workshops.

**237. Members' Reports -**

- (i) Parklands Leisure Centre Users' Group - the Chair advised a meeting had taken place, this was now run by Leisure in the Community. They are hoping to get more funding for cleaning, work on the gym floor is to be undertaken and their contract has been extended to 2015.
- (ii) Okehampton Community Recreation Association - Councillor Mrs Marsh advised the kitchen is now being installed and an official opening is being planned for mid November.
- (iii) North Dartmoor Search and Rescue Group - Councillor Ireland advised contracts had now been signed for the new building. There was an article about the group in the recent Dartmoor Active magazine. The group had been on a call-out two weeks ago where all agencies had been involved looking for a missing person who was then found. The group are also preparing to help with the Okehampton Carnival and Hatherleigh Carnival and the Edwardian Evening.
- (iv) Tennis Court Management - the Chair advised a meeting is due shortly where the level of funding required from the West Devon Borough Council and Town Council would be reviewed.
- (v) Okehampton Community Archive - Councillor Vachon advised a successful coffee morning had been held, he also requested an urgent item be discussed at the next Property meeting as at the coffee morning lights were turned off by a Member of the Council. The group have just completed a second exhibition for Lloyds Bank, they are now looking at potential exhibitions and displays for the World War I centenary, Councillor M Davies agreed to try and locate the Town Council meeting minutes for that period. The Park-keeper suggested

that a display of park history be a future project for the group and Councillors Vachon and Ireland agreed the group would adopt this as a project.

- (vi) Carnival Committee - Councillor Cummings advised events commence this weekend with a busy week for the whole week planned culminating in the Carnival procession itself.
- (vii) Youth Issues/Room 13 - Councillor Mrs Marsh advised Devon Youth Services were being restructured. Councillor Leech commented those from Room 13 who attended the meeting with Devon County Council came across in a very positive manner.
- (viii) Children's Centre - no meeting.

Meeting closed 9.00 pm.

---

**Councillor Mrs C Marsh**  
**Chairman**