

**Minutes of Okehampton Town Council Emergency Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 5.30pm in the Council Chamber,  
Town Hall, Okehampton**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)  
Councillor J Yelland (Mayor)  
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)  
Councillor C Marsh (Chairman, Parks)  
Councillor P Vachon (Chairman, Property)

**Other Members Present:** Councillor P Jessop

**In Attendance:** Mrs E James (Town Clerk)

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|       |   | <b>Action</b> |
| 741   | In the absence of the Mayor, on the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Leech, Cllr Tolley was nominated Chairman of the meeting.  |               |
| 742   | <b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> – Cllr Yelland had advised she may be late due to attendance at an earlier meeting.   |               |
| 743   | <b><u>Members Questions</u></b> – None<br><br>(Cllr Yelland arrived)  |               |
| 744   | <b><u>COVID-19 (Coronavirus)</u></b> -  |               |
| 744.1 | The Clerk provided an update in relation to advice received from the Government, the National Association of Local Councils, NALC and DALC, including staffing issues; how illness and isolation due to the virus should be managed. No specific information relating to the management of Council meetings or other matters had been issued to date.<br><br>Cllr Leech reported that WDBC’s Environmental Health Officer was investigating and keeping up to date with the situation.<br><br>On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Council issue a press release in the Okehampton Times relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to contact for medical advice</li> <li>• Where to find updated guidance and information</li> <li>• That there is no need to stockpile items</li> <li>• The Council’s actions and plans</li> </ul>   | Clerk         |
| 744.2 | On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> that in the event of the closure of the Town Council offices for the duration of this emergency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council Business Continuity Plan would be activated</li> <li>• The main office phone number would be transfer to the home of the Clerk initially</li> <li>• Employees would be authorised to access emails from their own devices</li> <li>• The Clerk, or in the event she was incapacitated, the Assistant Clerk takes home the laptop enabling working from home – access to council files from own computers could be enabled as a last resort only</li> <li>• Clerk and Assistant Clerk take home any relevant passwords to systems to enable basic services to continue</li> <li>• Charter Hall bookings would need to be cancelled, and possibly any in Simmons Park dependent upon staff levels – booking cancellation fees to be waived</li> </ul> |               |

- DCC Registration Office be notified as Weddings in the Council Chamber would have to be cancelled
- DCC Registration Office be given the option to open their office in the Town Hall dependent upon their risk assessments and policies, and noting that there would be no caretakers on the premises or regular health and safety checks taking place within the building
- In the event of isolation and/or infection with the virus employees may not be required to obtain a fit note from their GP although evidence may be required in accordance with guidance issued
- Parks employees may be in isolation and unable to come to work

It was noted that other aspects of business could be affected by this emergency, including

- The Annual Town Assembly scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020
- Mayor Choosing and the Annual Council Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020
- End of Year Financial Closedown
- Annual Internal Audit and submission/completion of the Annual Return
- Public toilets in Market Street and Fairplace may have to be closed

**744.3** On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** that for the duration of this emergency:

- Cllrs and the Clerk/Assistant Clerk take home banking information to enable staff wages and invoices to continue to be paid
- Investigation into the possibility of setting up forward automatic payment of basic salaries for the next few of months with adjustments being made once services are back to normal
- Budget/planned expenditure be authorised without the need for approval at meetings of the Council, unbudgeted expenditure agreed by a Member of the Emergency Committee by email as a last resort and if the Committee was unable to meet due to Members being incapacitated
- As a last resort decision by the Emergency Committee to be made by email (depending upon advice from the Government, NALC etc)

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.29pm.

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**Councillor Leech**  
**Chairman**