



Okehampton Town Council

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Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Democracy (D)

Introduction

This document sits under the Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 which was adopted by Okehampton Town Council on 28th October 2019.

Democracy (D) – Okehampton Town Council consists of an elected body of local people to provide a strong voice on decisions and services that affect the everyday life of local people including:

- D1 Representation – the Council will act as democratically elected leader of, and advocate for, the interests of the community. Councillors will receive support in their roles as representatives, leaders and the delivery of participation and engagement in public life.

Okehampton Town Council consists of 14 Members who are either elected at the local Council elections which take place 4 yearly, the next being scheduled for May 2023, or co-opted in the event there is an unfilled vacancy or if a casual vacancy arises during that 4 year period.

Members are provided with an induction pack which comprises a variety of information including the schedule of meetings, policies and procedures, the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and a boundary map. In order to assist Members settling into and understanding their role internal induction sessions are arranged by the Town Clerk. Members are also strongly encouraged to attend Devon Association of Local Councils courses, particularly those aimed at new Councillors and any that specifically relate to a Committee they may be nominated to sit on; for example planning and finance.

The Town Clerk operates an ‘open door’ policy and Members are encouraged to make appointments to speak to her about any concerns or issues they may have, including about how the Council operates and expectations of them in their role as Councillor.

- D2 General Power of Competence (GPC) – the Council will seek to maintain the GPC in order that it has the fullest opportunity to act for, and in the interests of, the residents of the town.

The GPC, as set out in the Localism Act 2011, extends the ability of local Councils allowing them to do anything an individual can do although this is subject to statutory prohibitions, restrictions or limitations which must be complied with. For example, the Council could invest in domestic property or set up a business trading arm.

Okehampton Town Council reaffirmed its eligibility to hold the GPC, which remains in place until the annual meeting after the next ordinary elections, at its annual meeting May 2019. The criteria a Council must meet is that at least two-thirds of Members (10 for Okehampton Town Council) must have been elected and the Clerk must hold a relevant qualification, which includes the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA).

- D3 Engagement – the Council will seek to engage with electors before making changes that affect the populace or relevant stakeholder groups. This will take place through Councillor Surgeries, the Annual Council Meeting and Town Assembly, Council and Committee Meetings, the Council website, social medial and the press.

Councillor Surgeries, to which the other 2 tiers of Councils and other bodies such as the police are invited to take part in, are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month with the exclusion of August and December. The Council is aware that daytime events are not suitable for everyone and will occasionally host a Saturday coffee morning or other event.

Members of the public are also welcomed to meetings of the Council and can make appointments to speak with Members or the Town Clerk at a time convenient to both parties. An Annual Town Assembly is held in March or April when Members are available to talk to residents about any issues, concerns or questions they may have.

Meetings and events are publicised in various ways which may include the website, social medial, noticeboards and in the local paper.

Issues that affect the residents and/or stakeholder groups within the local community will be communicated by way of the means already stated, or if felt to be beneficial wider consultation events may be held or supported by the Council.

- D4 Civic/Ceremonial – the Council will seek to sustain civic and ceremonial traditions

Many of the Civic/Ceremonial events that are held or attended annually by the Council have an historical background. The Council seeks to sustain and uphold the traditions surrounding its own events, whilst taking into account that:

- the majority of its income is funded through the precept
- being conscious of its carbon footprint, and
- future sustainability

Town Council events include; the Annual Mayor Choosing Ceremony, Civic Service and the Civic Dinner.

A Civic Protocol/Guideline document setting out how these events are held to aid the continuity of these traditions is in the process of being written.