



Okehampton Town Council

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Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Community (C)

Introduction

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

Community (C) – Okehampton Town Council seeks to be at the heart of the community and its activities. It will work closely with local voluntary, business, community groups and third/public sector partners within Okehampton that are key to vibrant and successful community life.

C1 Working Together – the Council will work with the Borough and County Councils and other representative bodies, partners and public authorities to promote a vibrant and healthy community life and wellbeing.

Representative Members of both West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) and Devon County Council (DCC) regularly attend meetings of the Council. They provide information and similarly feedback to WDBC/DCC any issues that may have arisen.

Members of WDBC, DCC and other bodies are invited to the regular Councillor Surgeries giving residents the opportunity to speak directly with them in a local setting.

When necessary the different tiers of Council work together on initiatives to improve facilities within the town and surrounding areas, this may include the holding of joint meetings and/or public consultations.

C2 Communications – the Council will develop communications to meet statutory and other requirements to communicate key messages

The Council will use its website, facebook page, noticeboards, the Annual Report and the local press to communicate key messages to the community.

Events such as coffee mornings will be held on occasion, Councillor Surgeries are normally held monthly, and meetings of the Council are open to the public. An Annual Town Assembly is usually held in March or April, although this was not able to take place in 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Public consultations may be held to gauge support for projects or to communicate intention and information to residents.

The Council will also consider attending other locally held events such as Okehampton Show, possibly sharing a space with WDBC.

An 'open office' policy has been adopted by the Town Clerk and members of the public are welcomed, on appointment, to speak with her about any issues or concerns they have, or indeed suggestions they would like to make. Councillors are also available by appointment for members of the public to speak with should they wish.

- C3 Financial Assistance – the Council will maintain a Grants Scheme to support eligible organisations providing benefits to the residents of Okehampton town

Council Policy clearly sets out the criteria and application process, and applications are routinely considered at meetings of the Policy & Resources Committee.

The Grants Budget is reviewed annually as part of the precept and budget setting process.

- C4 Outside Bodies – the Council will appoint representatives to, and work with, community and other groups supporting residents of the town

Members are nominated annually to represent and support local community groups and organisations.

The majority of these positions are historical, with the groups having been allocated a Member representative for a number of years. Requests from other groups or suggestions by Members are welcomed and will be considered by the Council as appropriate.

Nominated Members will attend meetings of the group and report back any activity, issues, comments or concerns to the Council for information. They will also endeavour to support the group's activities, the level of involvement the Councillor can offer being at their own personal discretion.

Foreign visitors to the town are encouraged, and on application by local organisations, a reception for visiting groups may be hosted on Council premises.

- C5 Community Assets – the Council will manage the community assets in its ownership and that it is responsible for to support the development and delivery of community services, benefits and community wellbeing

The Council has the following community assets that it owns or is responsible for, including:

- Simmons Park, the skate park and the garden area at Fairplace in which it is planned to create a sensory garden
- Public toilets at Fairplace, and on a short term lease the ones in Market Street
- The Town Hall, which is Grade II listed, and the Charter Hall

Simmons Park is often used by groups/organisation for events to fundraise for their cause or to provide activities for the community to attend. The Charter Hall is utilised most Saturday's by local groups for fundraising coffee mornings, the facility is offered at a reduced rate for this purpose.

Other facilities are available for hire by local groups and others from further away, the majority of whom use them to put on events for the benefit of the community.

In order to improve the safety and wellbeing of residents and the community the installation of a CCTV system covering much of the town centre and Simmons Park is planned.

- C6 Allotments/Burial Grounds – the Council will support other bodies to maintain allotments and burial grounds to service the Parish, including making provision for replacement/additional burial facilities, as necessary

Allotments are provided and managed by Okehampton United Charities (OUC) for use by residents residing within the boundary of the town and hamlets councils. A grant request is submitted annually by the OUC to both councils covering the cost of the provision of the allotments.

Councils have a statutory duty to provide allotments and the arrangement with the OUC takes responsibility for the management of them from the councils, whilst still enabling the delivery of this facility for residents.

In 2006 the Council purchased a strip of land adjacent to All Saints Church for the provision of burials. Funding received from burials on this land is set aside in an earmarked fund for the purchase of future land when required.

- C7 Events – the Council will seek to deliver events marking significant occasions whether on an annual or occasional basis

The Council holds annual various Civic events that welcome public participation; the Civic Service and Mayor Choosing Ceremony for example and will make every effort to ensure these continue into the future.

In addition to the regular events, the Council will endeavour to mark significant occasions appropriately, taking into account the benefit to the community and costs, for example the 75th Anniversary of VE Day.

Equally the Council works with other local organisations and attends events such as Remembrance Day and Edwardian Evening in an official capacity.