

**Minutes of a remote meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 30th November 2020 at 7pm**

Members Present: Councillor J Yelland (Mayor)
Councillor J Goffey (Chairman, Property)
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Councillor C Marsh (Chairman, Parks)
Councillor B Tolley (Chairman, Policy & Resources)
Councillor G Button
Councillor C Holt
Councillor M Ireland
Councillor P Jessop
Councillor D Sanger
Councillor D Travers
Councillor A Wood

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)
Councillor K Ball (DCC)
Councillor M Davies (WDBC)
3 Members of the public

Prayers were offered by Cllr Rev Davies

- 468** **Interest** – Cllr Goffey advised a personal interest in Min Ref 478 and that the Clerk had approved a dispensation request allowing her to vote on that item.
- 469** **Urgent Item** – The Clerk reported that an application to WDBC for a Local Restriction Support Grant for November's forced closing of the Charter Hall due to the pandemic lockdown was successful and an amount of £1,334 had been paid to the Council.
- 470** **Apologies for Absence** – None
- 471** **Deferment of Business** – A member of the public advised attendance in order to watch proceedings.
- 472** **Members Questions** – None
- 473** **West Devon Borough Council** – Cllr Davies reported that WDBC had published their accounts for the year ending 31st March 2020. Free parking in Mill Road car park after 3pm and Saturdays in December was being offered in line with that offered in Simmons Park. WDBC and SHDC had appointed 5 new members of staff; COVID Compliance Officers, 2 of whom were based in West Devon – their role was to help businesses be compliant with the regulations and deal with relevant complaints. Fusion Leisure centre was due to open on 2nd December.

(A member of the public arrived)

A winter support fund for households in severe hardship was available which DCC was leading. The 2020 spending review had brought good news for Okehampton with confirmation that the with Railway service to Exeter had been approved and provided some financial certainty for the next 12 months. Registration to vote was being encouraging with some elections being due in 2021. The Climate change and Biodiversity Group was meeting the following day.

Action

Cllr Leech reported that staff were picking up additional work in relation to the pandemic and working weekends to keep up. Environmental Health had more powers to fine businesses, 1 publican in the area had been fined the previous week. 2 new officers in West Devon had been appointed to assist businesses help keep to the pandemic rules. A new draft housing plan would be out to consultation in near future. Community Groups were impressed with attendance from persons in Okehampton and the Hamlets. WDBC have had some IT issues recently. A 2% reduction of the council tax base was expected in 2021, this was due to more people not paying, being mainly those on benefits. This had a knock-on effect, the more people on benefits the less tax available.

474 **Devon County Council** – Cllr Ball reported verbally that the National Infrastructure Strategy, which was part of the government spending review, had brought the welcome news of confirmation that the Okehampton to Exeter rail line link and passenger service would be going ahead. No further details were available, but an announcement was expected soon. Cllr Ball had requested the opportunity, at the cabinet meeting next week, to ask the Leader of the Council to put aside capital for the building of the Parkway Station.

The Town Centre Traffic Consultation had concluded a couple of weeks ago and the team was working on the responses. A summary of details had been received on Friday with overwhelmingly negative comments which would make pursuing the scheme difficult for DCC. 174 responses had been received, 142 of those agreed that something needed to be done but not with the proposals suggested. The summary would be forwarded to the Clerk.

DCC Cllr Leadbetter was the cabinet member overseeing COVID. The Exeter Nightingale Hospital had been opened and had less than 10 patients. The aim of the hospital was to relieve pressure on other hospitals and would take patients from across Devon and East Cornwall.

475 **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Cllr Yelland commented that the announcement about the railway was fantastic news and asked about DCC funding earmarked for the Parkway Station. Cllr Ball advised that the funding was still available, and he would be requesting further capital for the project. It was also commented that the preference of the public seemed to be for a Town Centre Access Road and that could be a possible reason as to why other proposals were not supported.

Cllr Leech queried the topsoil moved to the carpark area of the new Parkway Station site. Cllr Ball advised that the material would be used as a base for the carpark.

Cllr Ireland stated that access to the existing Station via Station Road would require traffic management alterations to be considered by DCC and the Parkway Station completed in time for the opening of the service was imperative to help with the additional traffic the rail link would bring. Cllr Ball to respond in due course. Cllr Goffey reiterated the need for the Parkway Station to be built as soon as possible and asked that Cllr Ball did his utmost to facilitate this.

(Cllr Ball left the meeting)

- 476 Adoption of Minutes of Committees and Members' Questions arising Thereon –**
- 476.1 Policy & Resources Committee** meeting held on 12th October 2020 - adoption proposed by Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Travers and **approved**.
- 476.2 Parks Committee** meeting held on 21st September 2020 - adoption proposed by Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Holt and **approved**
- 476.3 Property Committee** meeting held on 20th July 2020 - adoption proposed by Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley and **approved**.
- 476.4 Personnel Sub-Committee** meeting held on 14th September 2020 - adoption proposed by Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Yelland and **approved**
- 477 Full Council Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 26th October 2020 were received and **APPROVED** on the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Ireland noting that they would be signed at a later date.
- 478.1 Co-option of Councillors** – Five applications had been received for the two vacancies.
Vacancy 1 – Following voting Brendan Matravers was co-opted
Vacancy 2 – Following voting Terence Abbots – was co-opted
- 478.2** It was **agreed** that the newly co-opted Cllrs would sit on the Wards in which they resided:
- Cllr Matravers – North Ward
 - Cllr Abbots – South Ward
- 479 Matters Arising –**
- 479.1 Anti-Social Behaviour** – Issues had quietened down in recent weeks however Cllr Leech advised that a Portaloo from Mill Road car park had appeared in the East Okement River over the weekend.
- 479.2 WDBC Supporting our Towns** – WDBC were working with Everything Okehampton and the Town Council and were facilitating weekly adverts in the Okehampton Times. The current week would advertise the high street, previously the focus had been on Red Lion Yard and the Arcade.
- (Cllr Davies left the meeting)
- 480 Meeting with Chief Executive and Leader of WDBC** – Cllr Yelland reported on a meeting that she and the Clerk had attended on 13th November with Cllr Jory and Mr Bates, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service at WDBC. The aim of the meeting was to introduce Mr Bates to Okehampton and the local issues which included the local economy and the lack of a Chamber of Trade or a Business Improvement District. WDBC's Head of Placemaking had been invited to make a presentation to Council in January.
- (A member of public left the meeting)
- Cllr Jory and Mr Bates were also appraised of the traffic consultation and its history, and the situation in relation to the Railway link with Exeter. Prior to the meeting they had visited the Parkway Station site and then existing station later in the day accompanied by Cllr Yelland.

- 481 **Management Agreement** – On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Goffey it was **RESOLVED** to defer the item of business until the Trustees query in relation to insurance implications has been confirmed. Clerk
- 482 **Interim Internal Audit** – The previously circulated report was reviewed and it was noted that only two items had been highlighted, one of which the Council had until the end of the financial year to complete the other was ongoing and already known to the auditor. Members of staff were commended for their hard work during the particularly challenging times.
- 483 **Finances** –
- 483.1 On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Marsh it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.
- 483.2 **Budget 2021/22** – The implications of the anticipated 2% reduction in the Council Tax Base was brought to the attention of Members by the Clerk. It was noted that Committee budget recommendations would be brought to Council for consideration in December when it was envisaged more information in relation to CCTV costs would be known.
- 483.3 **Virement** - On the proposition of Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to defer a decision regarding the virement/use of the earmarked fund created to cushion the impact of the Council Tax Support Grant until a later date.
- 484 **Bank Signatories** – The bank signatories were reviewed and no changes were proposed.
- 485 **CCTV** – Cllr Leech was commended for amount of work he had put into the project. It was reported that the contract had been let to the preferred contractor and a meeting to finalise camera and equipment positions had been undertaken. Letters had been sent requesting permissions for installation of equipment and required work. The contractor was working with DCC to obtain permissions for connections to posts. Installation was anticipated in early 2021. Work towards connection with a monitoring hub was progressing well.
- Cllrs Marsh and Ireland advised they were Trustees of Okehampton United Charities. On the proposition of Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk seek grant applications with the assistance of Cllr Marsh.
- On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to create a clerked Task & Finish Group consisting of Cllrs Leech, Marsh, Tolley to review documentation and information in relation to monitoring hubs and the operation of the system. Clerk
- 486 **Charter Hall Roof Project** – On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Wood, it was **RESOLVED** to create a working group consisting of Cllrs Leech, Goffey, Sanger and the Clerk.
- On the proposition of Cllr Travers, seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to approve the previously circulated draft Terms of Reference of the WG with spending limits as follows:
- Limit for 3 estimates to be obtained to be raised from £500 to £1,000
 - Delegation to the WG for the authorisation of spending on the project up to an amount of £2,000
- Clerk

- 487 **Energy Management** – On the proposition of Cllr Travers, seconded Cllr Wood, it was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Goffey and Marsh work with the Clerk to research and appoint a company to manage the Council’s energy contracts, promoting green energy if possible. Clerk
- 488 **Town Council Office Christmas and New Year Opening Hours** – It was noted that the office would close to the public from 4pm on 23rd December and reopen on 4th January 2020, subject to pandemic restrictions.

A motion to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting was proposed by Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Marsh, and **agreed**.

- 489 **Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, 2022** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to create a Task & Finish Group to plan and arrange events marking the occasion in June 2022. The group to consist of Cllrs Marsh, Wood, Yelland and an Officer in line with the draft Terms of Reference previously circulated. Clerk
- 490 **Marketing Film** – Cllr Marsh reported that Everything Okehampton was commissioning a short film promoting local businesses and encouraging the shop local ethos. Filming was taking place on 7th December when the lockdown had finished, and the lights had been switched on.
- 491 **Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups -**
 491.1 **Charities** – Confirmation of the merger of the charities was awaited from the Charity Commission.
- (A member of the public left the meeting)
- 492.2 **Climate Change** – A meeting had been scheduled for the following week
- 492.3 **COVID19 Recovery** – A meeting was taking place the following day.
- 492.4 **Cemetery Management** – It was noted that this item of business no longer needed to be within Part 2 and the group would report to the Parks Committee in the future.
- 493 **Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation -**
- 493.1 **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – The consultant had raised the issue that the group website no longer existed and that one was required. On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded to Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to add a page for the Group to the Council’s website at a cost of £90. The information would be managed and uploaded on request at the discretion of Officers. Clerk
- 494 **Members’ Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -**
 494.1 **Okehampton Matters** – Cllr Tolley advised that no meeting had been held since his last report, the next meeting was scheduled for 20th January.
- 494.2 **Okehampton COVID19 Support Group** – Cllr Button reported that the group been busier during the latest lockdown but not as busy as anticipated.

(Cllr Matravers left the meeting)

It was **RESOLVED** that under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it involves the likely

disclosure of sensitive and confidential information. Proposed by Cllr Ireland, seconded by Cllr Leech.

495 **Meeting with Chief Executive and Leader of WDBC** – Cllr Yelland continued her previous report of the meeting held earlier in November. On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to create a Task & Finish group in relation to progression of elements of the report. Terms of Reference to be drawn up for consideration, membership to consist of the Mayor and Committee Chairs or the Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairman in their absence.

Clerk

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to move back into Part 1 and ratify resolutions made.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9pm

Councillor Mrs J Yelland
Mayor

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