



**Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities**

Kemi Badenoch MP

*Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up
Communities*

**Department for Levelling up, Housing and
Communities**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

www.gov.uk/dluhc

14 December 2021

Dear Mel,

Thank you for your email dated 21 October, on behalf of your constituent regarding remote meetings.

Whilst I appreciate the councillor's concerns, the regulations made under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020* only applied to meetings between 4 April 2020 and 7 May 2021. These regulations were time limited by the clause on the face of the Coronavirus Act 2020 at Section 78 (3) which states that the regulations only apply to meetings required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021.

The former Secretary of State supported an appeal to the High Court by Hertfordshire County Council, the Association of Democratic Service Officers, and Lawyers in Local Government, seeking a High Court declaration on whether the Local Government Act 1972 could be interpreted to include remote meetings. He agreed there was a case to be heard as the Local Government Act was passed by Parliament in a different age of technology. However, the High Court judgement handed down on 28 April 2021 was that the Local Government Act specifies that council meetings must take place in person at a single, specified, geographical location and being "present" at such a meeting involves physical presence at that location. Since 7 May 2021 local authorities have been required to return to physical meetings. You may find it useful to refer to the judgement, which can be found [here](#). The subsequent judgement of 4 May 2021 on the issue of public access can be found [here](#).

Prior to the expiry of the remote meetings regulations, the Government recognised that councils were keen to retain the flexibility to choose to meet remotely or in hybrid form as and when circumstances dictate. A Call for Evidence on the use of remote meetings was launched on 25 March 2021 and ran until 17 June 2021 to inform consideration of possible permanent provisions. Any permanent provision would require primary legislation and depend upon available Parliamentary time. The results of the Call for Evidence are under review and Government will respond in due course.

Yours sincerely,

KEMI BADENOCH MP



31 January 2022

To all Members of the Okehampton Town Council

The Community Centre at Okehampton College

I am writing to let you know about the proposed changes to the use of the Community Centre at Okehampton College. For context I have attached an account of the history of the building which is currently occupied by Community Links (CL) and Tor Support Services (TSS). We represent our beneficiaries, but we do not represent the whole community. For this reason, I feel a responsibility to inform Okehampton Town Council.

As you will be aware the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (DMAT) is opening a new school in Okehampton. CL and TSS have been told that the rooms of the Community Centre are required to ensure the school opens at the planned date, September 2022, for key stage 3 pupils. Representatives from DMAT are not able to give any assurances that the rooms will revert to being a Community Centre when the main building for the new school opens hopefully in February 2023.

We have been told that Devon County Council (DCC) transferred the building housing the Community Centre to the Dartmoor Federation, and it was then transferred to the DMAT. I am unsure how DCC could transfer a building that they did not own. Neither Community Links nor Tor Support Services, who have been based in the Community Centre since 2011, were informed. There is no tenancy agreement.

DMAT has offered to do all they can to provide suitable accommodation for the two organisations but is likely that we will no longer be able to work in the same location, an arrangement that has always been helpful as between us we often support whole families. We look forward to working positively with DMAT to secure alternative suitable accommodation and that the impact of this change on our beneficiaries is kept to a minimum. We hope that this will be a temporary arrangement and that we can return to the Community Centre when the new school opens.

If you wish to discuss this further please contact me by email mary@communitylinks-sw.co.uk. I am mostly working from home and have no mobile phone reception so I will be happy to arrange a call and telephone you.

Yours faithfully, Mary Lovell

Director

THE STORY OF THE PREFABRICATED BUILDING AT THE COLLEGE.

June 1984

At a youth meeting Philip Herriman agreed to provide hard standing as part of a complex which will also take in a set of rooms including toilet facilities which is being used as storage.

In the first instance to provide a permanent centre for youth organisations including the youth club. But is expected to provide a centre for all sections of the community. The elderly, young mothers, pre school groups etc., It would also have access to all facilities of the school. But the building would be independent of the school. Quote, "This is not a community centre for the school, it is a centre for Okehampton as a whole"

A sub committee of County's education decided that £8,500 would be set aside to provide temporary class rooms for the new headquarter for the youth club at Wonnacotts Road. It was nearly derailed because officers had recommended it be redistributed in the County as a whole. However the sub committee rejected this and allocated the money to Okehampton.

December 1984

Pupil power seems set to win the day in the storm over the siting of a former temporary bank building at Okehampton Upper School.

WDBC planners told the 5th form pupils a formal application by the education authority would not be greeted favourably. A further meeting with DCC chair of education, policy chair for WDBC and WDBC's chief executive agreed the site and colour (to match the existing buildings) DCC were asked what would happen if the planning committee was still not disposed to approve. The 5th form were told the capital was available until the end of March 1985. But County said "I do not believe the situation will arise knowing the long term plans for the school"

March 1985

County's engineer agreed with WDBC planners over site. A prefabricated flat roofed building was unsuitable and damaging to the visual amenities. It would also be likely to need regular maintenance if it was not to deteriorate. WDBC suggested a site next to the squash courts. DCC opposed this due to the amount of work needed to accommodate the new building when the school in Barton/Crediton Road closed.

April 1985

The bank handed over the building. It had been the subject of a planning row. WDBC refused to grant planning permission for it to be sited near the park entrance of the college. DCC education authority used it's powers to overrule the decision.

The building is a gift to the community of Okehampton and district. The County met the costs of moving the building, reinstating the bank car park and setting up the centre and a new section at the college. Estimated cost £90,000 (£75,000 + £15,000) for a permanent link to the school. WDBC said that for the cost of £90,000 a more traditional, sympathetic building could be built. County disagreed and said it would cost £333 for each sq. mt. and £360 was more realistic.

The building was opened in September 1985.



17 February 2022

To all Members of the Okehampton Town Council

The Community Centre at Okehampton College – Update

Further to my letter of the 31 January I can now provide the following update.

- The DMAT has confirmed that following the use of the Community Centre by the new school they will not be offering Community Links and Tor Support Services an option to return.
- We have not been able to definitively prove ownership of the building by either party. The land belongs to the DMAT. We are continuing with our investigations.
- The DMAT has indicated that they will almost certainly be able to offer accommodation for Tor Support Services which is logical as most of their clients are young people from Okehampton College.
- Community Links is actively looking for alternative accommodation in Okehampton. We have been speaking to other providers and organisations in the town. Of course it will be difficult for Community Links to find comparable accommodation and there will be a significant additional cost to Community Links. Derrick Brett from the DMAT is helping with this.
- Community Links is grateful for any ideas about accommodation in Okehampton and possibilities of funding for accommodation.

If you wish to discuss this further please or if you can offer us any help, please contact me by email mary@communitylinks-sw.co.uk. I am mostly working from home and have no mobile phone reception so I will be happy to arrange a call and telephone you.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Lovell, Director

Emma James

From:

Sent:

Subject:

02 February 2022 16:15

Local Councillor Panels - Rural Vulnerable Young and Older People

Dear RMTG member,

We are establishing two virtual panels from our Rural Market Town Group, one with a focus on Young People in Rural Areas and one with a focus on Older People in Rural Areas. We would be grateful if you could nominate a Councillor from your Local Council that has an interest in each of these issues, it may be the same Councillor or a different one for each panel. This involvement would require them to participate in filling out a few online surveys in the future.

Focus on Young and Older People in Rural Areas

[At our previous RMTG meeting](#) we committed to further explore the topic of Young and Older People in Rural Areas. Both of these groups have been affected by the cutbacks resulting from years of financial austerity before Covid and the pandemic will only have worsened that situation.

Many services in rural areas have been reduced, or discontinued and this can result in greater risk of these groups becoming more vulnerable. Lack of viable public transport options, difficulties accessing health and care support services and poor connectivity all exacerbate this situation. We would like to set up a list of a nominated contacts for each Local Council for Young People and Older People respectively to form Virtual Panels. These representatives will not necessarily be the appointed representative but will be the Councillors who have a specific interest in Young or Older People.

What will these virtual panels do and how will they work?

While we do work with other National bodies and organisations exploring the challenges facing Young and Older People in rural areas we would greatly appreciate input from those who are actually in the local communities. We appreciate that your time is limited, however we are keen to understand the issues facing both groups from a local perspective. Therefore, to gain invaluable insight from you we propose to send online surveys to nominated Councillors (a maximum of 3 surveys per year). These online surveys would be easy and would take a maximum of 5-10 minutes to complete. The input provided by the Councillors via these surveys would be invaluable as it would provide us with real local knowledge and opinions to help inform our national campaigning – [Revitalising Rural](#).

How you local councillor can get involved?

If you wish to be a part of the virtual vulnerability panel on young and/or older people in rural areas (or know a councillor at your local authority that would be interested), we would be grateful if you could complete the short survey below which asks you to provide nominated councillor names and their contact details. The contact details collected will be used in the future to get in touch with relevant surveys and information.

[Please click here to complete the survey](#)

Please note that by completing any of our surveys your contact details will be maintained in accordance with GDPR and Data Protection Regulations.

If you have any queries or questions about these Virtual Panels, please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing admin@sparse.gov.uk.

OKEHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL AND OKEHAMPTON HAMLETS PARISH COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN STEERING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group ('the Steering Group') is a joint working group of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council.

1. Membership

The core constitution of the Steering Group shall be a minimum of one and a maximum of three Members of Okehampton Town Council, a minimum of one and a maximum of three Members of Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council and a minimum of one and maximum of six members of the community who are not also Members of either Council.

The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Steering Group shall be chosen from any members of the non-council members of the Steering Group.

2. Voting

Each Member of the Steering Group (including the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson) has one vote. The Steering Group Chairperson may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote and, in the case of an equality of votes, may exercise his/her casting vote whether or not he/she gave an original vote.

3. Quorum of Steering Group

Three Members of the Steering Group shall constitute a quorum of which at least one must be from the Town and one from the Hamlets Parish Council. The Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson should always be present. If the number of Members present (not including those debarred by reason of a declared interest) falls below the required quorum, the meeting the members present may reach decisions by consensus which shall be voted upon at the next quorate meeting.

4. Purpose

The main purpose of the Steering Group is to prepare the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Okehampton, ensuring that all issues are addressed appropriately with high levels of community engagement to improve the likelihood that the Plan will be supported at the local referendum.

5. Responsibilities

The Steering Group shall have the following responsibilities:

- To work with the people of Okehampton in producing the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- To ensure that, as far as is reasonable, all households and organisations (which have expressed an interest in being involved) have the opportunity to contribute to the production of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

- To liaise with District, National Park and County-wide authorities to gain support for the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and for the final Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- As required, to commission specialist support for specific areas of evidence and analysis.
- To gain approval from both Town and Hamlets Full Councils for the Consultation and Communications Strategy.
- To gain approval from both Town and Hamlets Full Councils for the Vision and Objectives.
- To gain approval from both Town and Hamlets Full Councils for the Preferred Options.
- To gain approval from both Town and Hamlets Full Councils for any draft or final Neighbourhood Development Plan prior to it being circulated to residents.
- To work with the District Council and the Independent Examiner.
- To make applications to organisations for grants, donations and support specifically for the development and production of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- Control of the budget for the Neighbourhood Development Plan for the purpose of developing and producing the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Contributions from each Council will be apportioned according to the number of registered electors in each of their respective areas and reviewed at the start of each financial year.

6. Meetings

Meetings should be held not less than ten times a year, unless there is no urgent business to transact. Minutes shall be taken by one or other of the clerks, the Town Clerk only being available to attend meetings during normal working hours and subject to other commitments. Draft minutes shall be circulated as soon as practicable.

7. Reporting and Liaison with Outside Bodies and Professionals

The Steering Group shall report in writing to both full Council Meetings as and when necessary, but no less frequently than quarterly.

The council clerks will act as 'communication gatekeepers' and all correspondence and liaison with outside bodies and professionals will be through one of the clerks.

8. Life of the Steering Group

The Steering Group shall exist until the plan is made. The target date for completion is 31st July 2022.

9. Review

The Terms of Reference should be reviewed by Okehampton Town Council and by Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council in June of each year or earlier if deemed necessary.

Okehampton Town Council
Full Council Meeting 28th February 2022
Meeting Report

Date:	18th February 2022
Name:	Emma James

WDBC's Mayoral Awards – To consideration nominations for an award

Nominations are now open for the 2022 West Devon Borough Council Mayoral Awards, which recognise deserving people providing valuable contributions to the community.

The Borough Council is looking for outstanding people who deserve public recognition for their unpaid work or contribution. Whether an individual, group or an organisation, the Council wants to hear about them.

The Mayoral Awards have now been running for a fantastic 24 years. They have celebrated the outstanding achievements of a wide range of people who have done something significant to benefit the Borough.

Some past winners have enhanced the reputation of West Devon nationally, while others have contributed hugely to the conservation and protection of the Borough's beautiful natural environment. There are four categories this year:

- The West Devon Mayoral Award for Under 18s
- The West Devon Mayoral Award for Over 18s / Organisation
- The Mayor's Green Award
- Long Service Award

New for 2022 is the Long Service Award. It has been created to recognise those who have worked behind the scenes, contributing to their community over a number of years. The award could also be used to recognise those who are passing on the mantle to others.

The Green Award covers a wide range of environmental or sustainable areas, such as recycling, improving biodiversity or green transport. If you know someone who is 'green fingered' or doing their bit to combat climate change, this award is a great way to celebrate their achievements.

Mayor of West Devon, Cllr Caroline Mott, said: "We all know people and groups who work tirelessly for good causes in our Borough. Often they are quietly getting on with things without recognition.

"That is brilliant, but I would like to sing a few praises for them and thank them for the contribution they make to the wellbeing of others around them.

"We've all been through a difficult couple of years, with more issues in front of us – I feel that we need to recognise the contribution that people make to our communities.

"We would really like to see several nominations in every category, but especially for our younger residents in the Under 18 category. There are so many young adults in the Borough who are making such valuable contributions to their communities that we don't know about."

Judges will include the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Cllr Terry Pearce. The winners will receive their awards at a ceremony planned for Tuesday 5 April 2022.

Nominations close at midday on Friday 11 March 2022.

Civic Diary Report – To note events attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor during February 2022

12th February Mayor's Coffee morning