



Okehampton Town Council



Okehampton Town Council
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www.okehampton.gov.uk

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2023

Sign up to receive the newsletters electronically by visiting the Council's [website](http://www.okehampton.gov.uk)

Councillor Surgery on 16th February is being hosted by Councillors Julie Yelland and Carole Holt. Why not pop along to the Town Hall between 10am and 12noon for an informal chat if you have any questions or queries, or perhaps would like to make a suggestion. It is also an opportunity to find out what being a Councillor entails.



Joint Okehampton Town Council (OTC) and West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) Mayoral Coffee Morning – 25th February 2023 in the Charter Hall



Mayors Cllr Bob Tolley (OTC) and Caroline Mott (WDBC) are hosting a joint fundraising Coffee Morning for their respective chosen charities; Dream-A-Way and the North Dartmoor Search & Rescue Team.

The Town Clerk and some Councillors will be present if you want to chat to anyone or find out more about standing for Election to the Council in May.

Town and Parish Council Elections – 4 May 2023

Did you know that the term of office for the existing Town Councillors comes to an end in May? Are you interested in **your** town and feel that **you** could make a difference in some way, that **you** could represent the best interests of the other residents?

No qualifications are needed to become a Councillor although there are some requirements that you will need to meet; for example, you will need to be over 18 year of age. Training will be available to assist you to become familiar with how local councils work, what they can and cannot do. All you need is commitment, the ability and willingness to learn and get involved, and are prepared to put aside time to attend meetings, which are usually on Monday evenings, read relevant papers and represent the council where required.

Interested in finding out what being a Town Councillor involves? There are lots of ways:

- Okehampton Town Council [website](http://www.okehampton.gov.uk)
- The internet including the [National Association of Local Councils](http://www.nationalassociationoflocalcouncils.org.uk) website
- Emailing or phoning the Town Clerk – townclerk@okehampton.gov.uk 01837 53179
- Calling into the Town Hall and talking to the members of staff
- Making an appointment to chat with the Town Clerk or one of the existing Councillors
- Popping along to the Councillor Surgery on 16th February or 16th March
- Attending the joint OTC/WDBC Coffee Morning on 25th February. The Town Clerk will also be present with information about the council and what being a councillor involved and available to chat to if you have any questions or queries.

Voters are now required to take photo ID to be able to vote - details can be found on the [Electoral Commission website](http://www.electoralcommission.gov.uk).



Cllr Caleb Botton was co-opted to the South Ward of the Town Council on 19th December 2022. Cllr Botton can be contacted through the council office or via the [website](http://www.okehampton.gov.uk) where details of all of your councillors can be found. Although there are still two vacancies for Councillors, the Council has decided not to co-opt Councillors at this time as elections are being held in May 2023.

Market Street Public Toilet Consultation and the Budget/Precept for 2023/24

Okehampton Town Council's budget is mainly met through the precept – this is an amount that is collected for the council by WDBC as part of the town residents Council Tax bill. This pays for local services provided by the town council including the upkeep of Simmons Park, Clapps Wood, the skatepark, Town Hall and Charter Hall, public toilets, CCTV, some of the bins and benches, and the cemetery amongst other things. In 2022/23 for a Band D property the precept was £140.26, or £2.69 p/week.

Over the past few months Councillors have been scrutinising the budgets in preparation for the new financial year which starts on 1st April. This process started in September when budget workshops were held to review expenditure to date and to start looking at what funding might be needed for the next year. The next stage was that draft budgets based on suggestions made during the budget workshops were reviewed by the relevant Committees. Recommendations made by the Committees to Full Council were considered on 19th December when it was agreed to consult residents about the Market Street public toilets before making a final decision.



The public toilet consultation asked if Okehampton Town Council should continue to maintain the leased public toilets in Market Street at the estimated cost of £24,696 for 2023/24. As expected, the feedback was mixed, some objecting to their closure and in agreement.

Full Council considered the responses at a meeting on 30th January, this being the final stage of the 2023/24 budget and precept setting process and decided to retain them.

The Council has had the benefit of being in a three-year agreement for its insurance policies, but this is coming to an end in March. Going on insurance increases experienced by other local councils, a rise of up to 100%, from just short of £20,000 for this financial year to £40,000, is expected.



As you all know energy costs are increasing dramatically as are the costs of everything else. In order to help combat the rises, the Council will no longer be financially subsidising the Annual Mayor's Civic Dinner, which will now have to be self-funding, and has cut the budget for other civic events. Just to maintain the services that are currently offered the precept will have to increase, add into that the Charter Hall roofing project and the future replacement of the Town Hall windows, the council have agreed a precept of £421,893 which equates to £186.42 for a Band D property, an increase of £0.89 p/week.

There has been a small growth in the Council Tax Base (the amount of properties that the precept is split between) which will help to spread the cost slightly, although the majority of the new development is outside of the town boundary and within the surrounding Hamlets meaning that those people do not contribute towards the cost of the services in the town that are offered by the Town Council.

Okehampton Railway Station 'Platform to Park and Town' Project

Okehampton Town Station has been working with GWR, who have awarded the council a grant towards the project, and Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership to provide better signage for visitors, especially those coming to the town by train.

The project has resulted in a new Council owned noticeboard at the Station containing a map of how to get to the town, Simmons Park, and access footpaths to other tourist spots including Okehampton Castle and the Granite Way. Incorporated into this project is the addition of information boards complete with maps of the park and associated footpaths in Simmons Park. In addition, with the agreement and assistance of DCC, new public footpath/bridleway signs detailing locations and distances between these areas is being provided by the town council. It is anticipated that this work will be complete by the end of March.

CCTV Scheme – Phase 2, which will complete the town and Simmons Park scheme is well underway and will be up and running shortly.

Charter Hall Roof Repair Update

The long-planned repair work to the Charter Hall has been approved by the Council. Discussions with the contractor in relation to timescales are in progress and planning permission is awaited. It is envisaged that the work will take place over the spring and summer. We will be contacting all those who have made bookings that may be affected by the work in due course when we have more of an idea of the timings.

Grants towards the project have so far been awarded to the Council as follows and an application has been made to Okehampton United Charity:

- £890 from WDBC Councillors Ball, Vachon and Yelland from their Locality Funds
- £500 from DCC Councillor Samuel's Locality Fund
- £15,634.34 from WDBC s.106 funding for community facilities
- The Sponsor a Slate initiative is also going well with £640 donated so far.

Annual Town Assembly – 3rd April

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, a meeting of the parish of Okehampton Town will be held at 7pm on 3rd April in the Charter Hall.

This is a meeting for the residents of the town. It is an opportunity to find out what the Council has been doing and what its plans are for the forthcoming year, ask questions and to speak with your Councillors.

Do you want to learn more about how to keep your details secure online? Look no further - there will be a Cyber Security presentation from Devon and Cornwall Police Cyber Protect Team and a member of Read Easy will be sharing information about the work of the group.

Coronation of King Charles III 6th May 2023

Okehampton Town Council is working with Everything Okehampton and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council to organise events to celebrate the Coronation.

The plan, which has yet to be finalised, encompasses a Coffee Morning in the Charter Hall on the morning of 6th May when the Coronation will be shown on the large screen. This will be followed, hopefully, by a 'bring and share' street party in the afternoon with some entertainment.

Hire Fees and Charges from 1st April 2023

Charges for the hire of the Charter Hall, Council Chamber and Committee Room are increasing for commercial bookings from 1st April 2023 but will stay the same for community/not-for-profit groups.

Livestreaming of Council

Meetings – Meetings of Full Council are now being Livestreamed through the Council Facebook page. Please contact the council in the usual way, by email, phone, post or in person, if you have any comments as the livestream will not be monitored.



Okehampton Town Mayor
CHARITY BOWLS CHALLENGE
Sunday 7 May
Register 9:30 for 10am
Okehampton Bowling Club
£30 per team
of 3 non-bowlers
Includes:
Bowls, instruction, and light buffet.
Also available: paying bar and raffle
For entry form
Email: bob.tolley@okehampton.gov.uk
or admin@okehampton.gov.uk
T: 01837 53179
All profits to Mayors Charity


Did you know that Okehampton Town Councils' [website has an events page](#) and if you are holding an event, you can add the details?

To add your event you can submit the details through the link at the bottom of the events page or send the details to Abi, the Admin Officer at admin@okehampton.gov.uk. Please note that inclusion of events is at the discretion of the Town Clerk and events must be located within the town.

Town Council Grants

This year, 2022/23, the Council has a budget of £29,000 for the award of grants supporting not-for-profit community organisations and groups for the benefit of the residents of Okehampton. Contact the office for details of how to apply or find them on the [website](#).

The following grants have recently been granted which brings the total awarded to date this financial year to £24,295.13.

- Okehampton Fairtrade Group - £140 towards the hosting of events during Fairtrade Fortnight
- Okehampton United Charity - £1,988.63 towards the provision of allotments
- Immersion in the Community CIC - £500 towards the purchase of a pool table
- Okehampton United Ecclesiastical Charity - £750 ongoing maintenance of the Clock and chimes
- Everything Okehampton – £2,000 towards the cost of new security bolts and wires for the Christmas lights, their erection and taking down

The grant application process has been reviewed and is changing for forthcoming years. Details can be found on the Council's website or obtained from the Town Hall.

Don't delay - applications for grants within this financial must be received by 3rd March.

Coming up in February - For more information, please see the council website [events page](#) to which groups and organisations are welcome to add their own events

- 2nd Community Links Flute Concert (Charter Hall)
- 4th Community Links Befriending Big Breakfast (Charter Hall)
- 7th Friendly Circle (Charter Hall)
- 16th Town Councillor Surgery 10am-12noon (Council Chamber, Town Hall)
- 18th Okehampton Primary School PTFA Coffee Morning (Charter Hall)
- 25th Joint Mayor's Coffee Morning (WDBC and Town Council) (Charter Hall)
- Wren Music Lantern Procession (Simmons Park)

Town Council Meeting Dates

February 2023

- 6th Parks Committee
- 20th Planning Committee
- 27th Full Council

Meeting dates for the 2022/23 Mayoral Year were agreed at the Annual Council Meeting on 11th May 2022 and can be found on the [website](#). Some Planning Committee Meetings have been scheduled; others will be convened as needed.

Council meetings normally start at 7pm and are held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Fore Street. Occasionally meetings are subject to change, the [website](#) or noticeboard in the Victorian Arcade should be checked for up-to-date information.

Contact Us – 01837 53179

Emma James, Town Clerk & RFO
townclerk@okehampton.gov.uk

Caroline Ellis, Assistant Town Clerk (Accounts)
accounts@okehampton.gov.uk

Abi Horn, Admin Officer and Mayor's Assistant
(Bookings and Invitations for the Mayor)
admin@okehampton.gov.uk

James McGahey, Park-Keeper
parks@okehampton.gov.uk

Your Councillors

Cllr Bob Tolley (Town Mayor)

Cllr Terry Abbots	Cllr Caleb Botton
Cllr Allenton Fisher	Cllr Jan Goffey
Cllr Carole Holt	Cllr Dr Michael Ireland
Cllr Tony Leech	Cllr Christine Marsh
Cllr Brendan Matravers	Cllr Ann Wood
Cllr Julie Yelland	

Individual Councillors contact details can be obtained from the Office or website.