

**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillor C Marsh (Chairman)  
 Councillor B Tolley (Mayor)  
 Councillor B Matravers (Chairman, Planning)  
 Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)  
 Councillor C Holt  
 Councillor T Leech

**Other Members Present:** Councillor A Fisher

**In Attendance:** Mrs E James (Town Clerk)  
 Mr J McGahey (Park-Keeper)

	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>637</b>    <b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> – Apologies from Cllrs Ireland and Wood due to illness, and Cllr Abbots were <b>approved</b> on the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Holt.</p> <p>Apologies tendered by Cllrs Botton and Goffey who were not members of the committee were noted.</p>	
<p><b>638</b>    <b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b> – None</p>	
<p><b>639</b>    <b><u>Public Participation</u></b> – None</p>	
<p><b>640</b>    <b><u>Park Keeper</u></b> – Mr McGahey provided an update which included that tidying and cutting back of shrubs around the park had been undertaken, site made compost and woodchip from the trees in the park had been applied to the beds. The ponds had been cleared and some repairs to the concrete basin made and toad and frog spawn was appearing in the ponds. The Big Garden Birdwatch had been undertaken and an increase in species had been noted. An order of plants had been placed including for the replacement of some roses in the rose garden. Some benches were to be repainted; another had been refurbished. Tree work in Simmons Park had been completed and the Tawney Owl box was to be installed. Fallen trees along river from the meadow were the responsibility of others and were being dealt with by the Woodland Trust, however it was noted that the Council may have to remove one of them as it could potentially damage the bridge. Ivy had been cleared from the rockery by the entrance, bulbs were starting to come up in that area and other plants would be added.</p>	
<p><b>641</b>    <b><u>Members’ Questions</u></b> – Councillors were thanked for collecting litter and broken glass from the Skatepark over the weekend and the addition of CCTV in that area was queried. The Clerk advised that issues with the remote camera in another location were being addressed and once resolved an additional camera in the Skatepark could be considered.</p>	
<p><b>642</b>    <b><u>Minutes</u></b> - Minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were <b>APPROVED</b> to be signed by the Chairman on the proposition of Cllr Holt, seconded Cllr Yelland.</p>	
<p><b>643</b>    <b><u>Parks Bookings</u></b> - The following events scheduled to take place in Simmons Park were noted:</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June            Anderton &amp; Rowland Amusements            9<sup>th</sup> July                        Okehampton Celebrates in the Park</p>	

644	<p><b><u>2 Minute Foundation Litter Picking Station</u></b> – Cllr Marsh advised the possibility of siting the litter picking station by OCRA was being explored by the member of public who had made this suggestion.</p>	
645	<p><b><u>Volunteer Group</u></b> – The Committee noted that the Council’s insurer had advised they would not be happy with an ad-hoc arrangement and activities would need to fall fully under the control of the council within working hours.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Yelland it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to recommend the documentation to the Policy &amp; Resources Committee for consideration with changes which included the addition of a question requesting details of availability and the recording of volunteer hours which could be used forwards match funding applications.</p>	
646	<p><b><u>Simmons Park Information Boards and Town Signage</u></b> – The Clerk reported the information boards, finger post signs and map for the noticeboard at the Railway Station had been ordered. The remaining item was the provision of maps at the footpath entrances from Station Road into Simmons Park and these would be ordered within the next few weeks.</p>	
647	<p><b><u>Bin and Bench Audit</u></b> – The audit had highlighted some inconsistencies with number of bins the council owned/were responsible for and emptying charges by WDBC. On the proposition of Cllr Matravers, seconded Cllr Holt it was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Clerk liaise with WDBC.</p>	
648.1	<p><b><u>Wildflower Planting</u></b> – It was noted that prices had increased substantially for perennial seeds although they would result in a cost saving in the long term. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Tolley it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to purchase the following Wildflower seeds for the verge at Westbridge at the approximate cost of £483:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Native pollinator mix annual</li> <li>Euroflor Poppy</li> <li>Poppy and cornflower mix</li> </ul>	
648.2	<p>Cllr Marsh reported that the Ockment Rivers Improvement Group were considering planting some shrubs by the hoardings in East Street.</p>	
649	<p><b><u>Old Bandstand Base Enhancement</u></b> – Cllr Marsh reported a meeting with the appointed contractor had taken place and a revised design incorporating elements of the park fencing and gates was considered. The Clerk had met with WDBC Planning Officers who advised that planning consent was not needed if the structure was less than 4m in height from ground level and did not exceed 200 cubic meters.</p> <p>The addition of inscriptions around the bandstand base including Queen Elisabeth II, Coronation of King Charles III, benefactor Sydney Simmons and the person who had bequeathed money to the Council to be further investigated.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Holt it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the design with a single town crest over the entranceway, subject to the overall height being below 4m from ground level.</p>	
650	<p><b><u>Electricity Costs</u></b> – It was noted that the water fountains were expensive to run and were only in use from 7am to 5pm. The heaters had been replaced. Utility bills to be monitored to confirm if costs had reduced.</p>	Ass. Clerk

**651** **Simmons Park Trees** – A request from a member of the public to remove trees/saplings from alongside their property was considered. It was commented that trees help stabilize the bank which was steep and potentially not safe to work thereon.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to agree the partial thinning of sycamore trees, subject to planning consent.

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**652** **Cemetery**

**652.1** **Burials** - A summary of burials totalling 12 since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 was noted.

**652.2** **Land Purchase** – The offer made for the purchase of land in the vicinity of the existing Cemetery had been rejected but might be reconsidered if the offer was increased.

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Matravers it was **RESOLVED** to advertise the need for burial land and to ask Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council for suggestions.

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**652.3** **Land Adjacent to Skatepark** – Suggestions for future use of the land were made:

- Allotments
- Secure area for exercising dogs off leads
- Planting of trees – creation of woodland to help offset carbon footprint, possibly a community orchard

**653** **Payment of Invoices** – Cllr Marsh declared a personal interest.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Matravers (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments and that the amount relating to a direct debit payment to EDF be checked.

**654** **Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups -**

**654.1** **Cemetery Management** – No meeting had been held

**655** **Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -**

**655.1** **Dartmoor National Park Forum** – Cllr Marsh hoped to attend the next meeting.

**655.2** **Everything Okehampton** – Cllr Marsh reported that the road closure application for the Coronation Street Party had been rejected by DCC and it was now being held in St James Street. The 2023 Calendars had made approx. £700 and the cost of putting up the Christmas lights was increasing to almost £8,000 for 2023.

**655.3** **North Dartmoor Search & Rescue Team** – No report

**655.4** **Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)** – Cllr Tolley had attended a meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January when items including the following were raised; the opening of a memory café and warm space, a new clerk had been appointed, and analysis of responses to S106 questionnaire was ongoing. The next meeting was on 19<sup>th</sup> April. The AGM had also taken place when a new Trustee had been appointed and Cllr Marsh had been thanked for being Trustee since 2001.

**655.5** **Okehampton & District Community Transport Group** – Cllr Leech reported costs were increasing and there was a rise in the amount of people requesting transport for which more volunteers were needed. Volunteers

were being threatened with fines for stopping to drop off and collect persons outside of the RD&E and issues with the new phone system.

- 655.6 Parklands Leisure Centre Users Group – Cllr Leech advised the quarterly meeting with Fusion was due to take place the following week.
- 655.7 Beacon Path Sticklepath to Okehampton – Cllr Matravers had not been able to attend the recent meetings.
- 656 Urgent Item – The Clerk advised that work experience for two students for up to five days during the week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> March had been requested. It was **agreed** that this was acceptable for a maximum of three days.

- 657 Part Two Confidential Items – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Marsh, 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 items which are CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council.
- (Cllr Fisher and the Park-Keeper were permitted to remain.)

- 658 Car Park Agreement – Cllr Marsh reported that she and the Clerk had met with a representative from the DMAT. The Solicitor had confirmed that the 2021 Deed of Novation released both parties, being the Town Council and DMAT, from all prior obligations and liabilities. A revised record of income was awaited from WDBC and correspondence relating to the termination of the agreement with DMAT and revising/commencing a new agreement with WDBC had commenced.

- 659 Bridge Inspections – The Park-keeper reported 5 companies had been invited to submit a quotation although only 2 had been received.
- On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to defer a decision to full Council because of the potential cost and seek further quotations.

It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Yelland.

- 660 Viewing Platform behind Lidl – It was noted there was no budget for the work year and commented that potentially any unspent funds for the bandstand project could be repurposed. Repair/replacement with composite materials was preferred, further quotations to be obtained for consideration at the next meeting.

- 661 Bowling Club Agreement – Cllr Marsh reported on a meeting that had been held with representatives from the club. A subsequent proposal received from them was considered and a response **RESOLVED** on the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Leech

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.50pm

**Councillor Marsh**  
**Chairman**