

**Minutes of Okehampton Town Annual Assembly
held at 7pm on Monday 3rd April 2023 in the Charter Hall, Okehampton**

The Assembly was chaired by Councillor Tolley, Town Mayor.

In Attendance: Town Council Members; Cllr's Goffey, Holt, Fisher, Ireland, Leech, Marsh, Matravers, Tolley, Yelland, Wood

Cllr Samuel, DCC
1 representative from the Community Fridge
2 representatives from Read Easy
Approx. 12 members of the public
Mr J McGahey, Park-keeper
Mrs E James, Town Clerk
Mrs C Ellis, Assistant Clerk
Mr P Tucker, Caretaker

2023.1 Apologies for Absence – Apologies from the following had been received:
Cllr Botton
Cllr Davies, WDBC
Clerk, Okehampton United Charity
A former Town Councillor

2023.2 Welcome and Introduction – The Mayor, Cllr Tolley, welcomed those present.

2023.3 Minutes of Previous Annual Town Assembly – Minutes of the Town Assembly held on 28th March 2022 were agreed as correct on the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded by Cllr Matravers, and signed by Cllr Tolley.

2023.4 Questions from the Public to the Town Council
Written Questions –

Q. With reference to the Town Council's Grant Policy applicable from 01/04/2023; could the Town Council explain why Community Interest Companies are now excluded from applying for grants? I understand that a number of local CIC's may have benefitted from TC Grants in the past and I am wondering why there has been a change of policy?

A. A CIC is expected to make a profit/surplus from which it funds its community element, whereas a charity is considered as a not for profit so should not profit from the work it carries out. CICs are expected to reinvest their surpluses to do more of their work but can also pay a proportion (up to 35%) of this out to the owners or investors.

A member of the public commented there were quite a few CIC's now in the town, and concern was raised that the council may be cutting out groups of community social enterprise projects. The Council was asked to review the policy in the future.

Q. I understand that the Town Council Offices are now subject to an Energy Performance Assessment. Can the TC explain what measures have been taken to improve the buildings given that energy costs were high and the buildings are currently highly inefficient. As the funding to maintain these buildings is footed by the local taxpayer, it would be

Action

interesting to know if the TC had considered moving to more energy efficient accommodation and selling the existing TC buildings?

A. EPC surveys are being undertaken on some council premises later in the week. Impending work to the Charter Hall roof will include insulation improvements, lights are gradually being changed to LED's. The Town Hall windows need repair/replacement, but the building is Grade II listed and any replacements needed or changes to the style/type of materials will have to comply with any consent granted by WDBC for the work. The council had not to date considered moving to alternative accommodation.

Q. What progress has been made in installing electric car charging points in TC car parks that are actually working?

A. The Council's Climate Working group has looked at various options and is continuing to investigate. Some suppliers/contractors were going to be asked to visit to do a survey and present to the group. WDBC had recently advised that the EV charging points in Mill Road car park were now live.

Comment was further made by a member of the public that consideration be given to installing electric charging points in the main street instead of charging for parking.

Cllr Tolley confirmed that the parking on the roads was the responsibility of DCC and that this comment would be passed back to them for consideration.

2023.5 Questions from the public – Questions raised by those present included the following:

Q. The Cricket Field in Simmons Park had been fenced off by the school, between the fence and hedge is a gap which is full of litter. Who is responsible?

A. It is the responsibility of the College to keep it clear of litter. The comment would be raised with the College.

Q. Concern was raised about a road traffic problem in Northfield Road. The 'stop' lettering on the road was faded. Vehicles were regularly illegally going the wrong way down the road, ignoring the signage. Suggestion that the 'traffic approaching from the right' sign be moved or increased in size.

A. Cllr Samuel, DCC, advised she would take the concerns back to Highways.

Q. A member of the public asked for the reasoning behind the 32% budget increase this year.

It was further commented that some of the budget related to building costs, that the buildings were not fit for purpose and the council should be in a more efficient building. Comments were also raised about the Christmas lights which had been on all day.

A. A detailed list of expenditure for the 2022/23 financial year had been provided. Cllr Marsh advised that the Council did not pay the electricity cost for the Christmas lights.

Q. When would the new link road be installed?

A. The new developments were outside of the town boundary, but it was understood that it was dependent upon the selling or occupation of the new houses.

2023.6 Simmons Park Presentation

Mr McGahey, Park-Keeper gave a presentation about Simmons Park and other outdoor spaces that were the responsibility of the council.

A member of the public congratulated James and the team for their work.

2023.7 Community Fridge Presentation

The fridge was located in the Ockment centre and was volunteer run. It's primary aim was to reduce food waste by giving away surplus food from businesses and households.

2023.8 Read Easy

The aim of the group was to help those who could not read or wanted to improve their skills. Free confidential learning programs were provided by Turning Pages and delivered in a structured fashion by trained providers.

2023.9 Conclusion and Thanks – The Mayor, Cllr Tolley, thanked everybody for taking the time to attend and closed the meeting at approximately 8.35pm.

Signed as a true record of the Assembly.