

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 30th January 2023 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present: Councillor B Tolley (Mayor)
Councillor C Marsh (Chairman, Parks Committee)
Councillor B Matravers (Chairman, Planning Committee)
Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources Committee)
Councillor T Abbots
Councillor C Botton
Councillor A Fisher
Councillor J Goffey
Councillor C Holt
Councillor T Leech

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)
4 members of the public
Councillor Samuel (DCC)

The meeting was Livestreamed through the Council Facebook page.

Action

607 **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies tendered by Cllrs Ireland and Wood, both of whom were unwell, were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Abbots.

Apologies tendered by Cllr Davies (WDBC) were noted.

608 **Declarations of Interest** – None

609 **Public Participation** – The Chairman of the Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan Group addressed the Council advising the plan had been amended following the Regulation 14 consultation, including removal of some policies in line with feedback from WDBC. The group was now seeking permission from Okehampton Town and Hamlets Parish Councils to submit the Neighbourhood Plan to WDBC for a referendum.

610 **Members Questions** – Cllr Abbots brought an item to the attention of the Council on behalf of a member of the public about recent thefts from shops in Okehampton by a group/gang of persons. Cllr Goffey offered to forward the information to the new local Police Inspector for his attention.

Cllrs Abbots
& Goffey

611 **West Devon Borough Council** – Cllr Leech reported that the cost-of-living crisis was taking up most of his time and WDBC were placing an informative article in the local paper on a weekly basis. He had not yet been able to meet with the local Ukraine Support Group, but there were around 77 individuals in West Devon, 2 or 3 of whom were in temporary accommodation due to breakdowns with hosts. Council Tax levels and discretionary allowances were due to be discussed on 31st January.

Cllr Yelland advised that WDBC's bid to the Levelling Up Fund for a Transport Hub had been successful and would incorporate new parkway station. This was being progressed by DCC, WDBC and GWR who were in the process of drawing up the paperwork in line with the bid conditions.

Photo ID would be required by those voting in the May 2023 elections, this could be obtained free of charge and information would be circulated to all households by WDBC.

EV charging points were being provided in Mill Road car park in a project led by DCC in a partnership with other local authorities and for which there would be no costs to either of the councils.

612 **Devon County Council** – Cllr Samuel had provided a report which had been circulated shortly before the meeting. She advised it was mainly about finance; DCC had managed to find the shortfall and had received some extra funds from government.

613 **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Cllr Yelland raised several questions for the attention of Cllr Samuel in relation to the approval of DCC's Cabinet for the installation of on street parking charges in Tavistock and Okehampton which would be emailed by the Clerk to Cllr Samuel.

It was commented that earlier in the day the Government had announced the reopening of hospital beds and the support of DCC for the reopening of the wards/beds in Okehampton Hospital was requested.

Cllr Samuel

614 **Adoption of Minutes of Committees and Members' Questions arising Thereof** –

614.1 **Policy & Resources Committee** meetings held on 14th November and 5th December 2022 - adoption proposed by Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Botton and **approved**.

614.2 **Property Committee** meetings held on 7th November and 5th December 2022 - adoption proposed by Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Holt and **approved**.

615 **Full Council Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the Town Council meetings held on 19th December 2022 and 16th January 2023 were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Abbots, and signed by Cllr Tolley.

616 **Co-Option** – On the proposition of Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Fisher, it was **RESOLVED** not to co-opt any persons onto the Council until after the elections which were only a few months away in May 2023.

617 **Neighbourhood Plan** – The Chairman of the Okehampton Town and Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan Group was commended for her work on the Neighbourhood Plan. Consideration was given to the Post Regulation 14 version that had been previously circulated and on the proposition of Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Matravers, it was **RESOLVED** to approve its submission subject to a final check.

Clerk

618 **WDBC Levelling Up Funding Bid** – The Council noted that the bid for a West Devon Transport Hub incorporating the Parkway Railway Station on the eastern edge of the town had been successful and £13,455,000 awarded. All those involved in the project to date were thanked and congratulated.

619 **Wild Camping on Dartmoor** – The High Court Ruling that camping overnight on Dartmoor required the consent of the landowner and subsequent agreement between the Dartmoor National Park Authority and Landowners was noted. On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Goffey, it was **RESOLVED** to support the Dartmoor National Park Authority decision to appeal the ruling if an error of law was found.

620 **DCC Regeneration Project** – The Clerk reported that the initial meeting for the DCC led project had been held on 26th January and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council had been invited to the follow up meetings which were planned to take place during February and early March. An aim of the project was to assist 8 identified Devon towns, of which Okehampton was one, to create an economic strategic plan that could be used to apply for future funding. Some 'quick win' funding that had to be spent by the 31st March 2023 was also available for economic projects and was being considered at the meetings.

621 Business Improvement District – The most recent report, January 2023, detailing the next steps and timings which would result in a report on findings and recommendations being provided for consideration by the Council in May 2023 was noted.

622 CCTV Scheme – The Clerk reported that work to install Phase 2 of the system had commenced. It was anticipated that work would be complete by 10th February although this was dependent upon the manufacture of two bespoke brackets and power supply.

623 Market Street Public Toilet Consultation – Cllrs Leech and Yelland declared personal interests being Members of WDBC.

It was noted an agreement between WDBC and the Town Council dated October 1998 indicated that WDBC appeared to have an obligation to be responsible for the management, maintenance and control of the public toilets. This had been brought to the attention of WDBC and a response was awaited. It was commented that the Town Council may be able to reclaim costs incurred over recent years from WDBC.

A summary of responses to the consultation was considered and on the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Fisher, (1 abstention, 2 against) it was **RESOLVED** to retain funding in the budget to cover their upkeep.

624 2023/24 Budget and Precept - Consideration was given to the draft budget, and it was suggested that the Council could reduce its grants budget to limit the increase. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was **RESOLVED** to approve V4 of the draft budget and the precept amount to be requested from WDBC being £421,893 which amounted to an increase of £0.89 p/week on a Band D property.

625 Finance

625.1 Payment Schedule - On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Holt, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule.

625.2 Grant Application – Cllrs Marsh, Yelland, Fisher and Tolley declared personal interests, being Trustees of Okehampton United Charity.

It was noted that Fatherford Road allotments had a waiting list of approximately 30 people. On the proposition of Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Matravers, (4 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to award Okehampton United Charity a grant of £1,988.63 towards the cost of the provision of allotments.

626 Events -

626.1 Coronation of King Charles III, 6 May 2023 – The Council noted that the Policy & Resources Committee had approved a request from Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council (OHPC) to join the working group and Cllr Fisher reported that pens would be purchased and given to primary school children by the Chairman of OHPC and the Town Mayor.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Botton it was **RESOLVED** to approve the revised Terms of Reference including amendments as considered.

626.2 Okehampton Celebrates in the Park, 9th July 2023 - Everything Okehampton had contracted an events company to assist with the planning and running of their overall event. The Town Council would be working with other groups including Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council, Okehampton

Clerk

United Charity and the Museum of Dartmoor Life to create a display or similar in a large marquee celebrating various anniversaries.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Goffey it was **RESOLVED** not to include the 50th Anniversary of Okehampton Town Council as part of the main celebration as it had evolved from being Okehampton Borough Council, and was therefore much older, and to approve the Terms of Reference.

626.3 D Day 80th Celebrations, 6th June 2024 – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Bottom, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the invitation by Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council to join a working group to plan and progress events including the lighting of a beacon at Okehampton Showground. Appointment of Councillor/s to the working group to be made after the elections in May.

626.4 Mayor’s Annual Civic Dinner – Consideration was given to the allocation of free tickets which had historically been given to Councillors, although some had paid at their discretion, the Mace Bearers, Mayor’s Chaplain and the Clerk.

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** that due to the cost-of-living crisis Mace Bearers would be offered tickets at 50% of the cost and the Clerk’s, who would be working, would be free.

627 Policies and Documents - On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the following documents as recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee:

- Asbestos Management Plan (as produced by Environmental Services who were contracted to undertake the annual inspection)
- Complaints Policy & Procedure
- Flag Flying Policy
- Grant Policy
- Treasury & Investment Policy and Strategy
- Waste Management and Recycling Policy

Clerk

(Cllr Botton and 1 member of the public left the meeting)

628 Livestreaming of Council Meetings – It was commented that the livestreaming of meetings helped to increase transparency. On the proposition of Cllr Goffey, seconded Cllr Fisher (2 against, 1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to only livestream meetings of Full Council.

Clerk

629 WDBC Mayoral Awards – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to nominate persons/organisations for the 2023 awards:

Clerk

- Long Service – Mike and Hilary Wreford for their tireless work over many years and the Okehampton related books and guides they have written and published
- Over 18/organisations – Simon Chudleigh/London Inn for the contribution to the community which includes the provision of a safe space, a warm hub with games, free tea/coffee at all times, free space for meetings, sponsorship of kit for local clubs
- Green Award – Fran Rickward for her relentless work promoting green events and national initiatives including the Big Green Week and initiating group work, for example making green hearts for ‘I love ecology week’

630 Simmons Park Charity (1101388) – The Clerk advised that a dispensation allowing Councillors who were also Trustees to speak and vote on items

relating to the Charity was granted in May 2020 and was valid until the elections in May.

On the proposition of Cllr Matravers, seconded Cllr Abbots it was **RESOLVED** to agree to the request of the Trustees that Okehampton Town Council become Sole Trustee of the charity, noting that it would widen discussion allowing all Councillors to become involved in strategic decision making of the Charity.

- 631** **Civic Diary** – Cllr Tolley reported that during January he had attended a Charity Burns night in Torrington and a meeting with DCC in relation to their Regeneration Project.
- 632** **Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups -**
- 632.1** **Climate Change** – Cllr Goffey reported that a meeting had recently been held when electric vehicle parking had been discussed. The group was continuing to investigate this and other ways the council can help promote recycling and work concerning climate change.
- 632.2** **Charter Hall Roof Replacement** – The Clerk advised that an offer to hold a concert in aid of the roof fund had been received, the grant application to Okehampton United Charity outcome was awaited and the sponsor a slate initiative had raised in excess of £600 to date.
- 632.3** **Placemaking Working Group** – No meeting had been held. It was noted that this tied in with the feasibility work in relation to the creation of a Business Improvement District.
- 633** **Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation -**
- 633.1** **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – Previously considered.
- 634** **Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -**
- 634.1** **Okehampton Matters** – Cllr Goffey and other members of the council had attended the last meeting. It was reported that the name of the group was changing, had been widened in area, included Councillor Advocates, and would be meeting quarterly. The new Inspector had been introduced.
- 634.2** **Okehampton Ukraine Support Group** – Cllr Leech had not yet attended a meeting.
- 634.3** **Rural Market Town Group** – Cllr Goffey advised there was a meeting at the end of March and there was currently household cost of living in rural areas survey being undertaken.

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

(All remaining members of the public left the meeting)

- 635** **PART 2 Confidential Matters** - On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Holt 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 were 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.

636 Charter Hall Roofing Project – The Clerk reported on progress and that the revised costings which were circulated had been received earlier that day.

The risks which included planning consent for the slates priced within the tender, M&E revision and rising costs, some of which were not fixed, were considered. It was commented that any further delay would see an escalation in costs and doing nothing was not sensible option.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Marsh it was **RESOLVED** to:

- accept Version 4 of the revised tender dated 30th January 2023 from Classic Builders, subject to planning consent, the cost of which would be made public at a future meeting following acceptance from them had been received
- clarification of the position in relation to the resale of reclaimed slates
- virement of funds to the project to be reviewed following the outcome of grant application to Okehampton United Charity
- dates that the Charter Hall is required for use to be advised to the Project Manager to be included within the documentation, these include the Elections on 4th May, Coronation on 6th May and Civic Dinners in March.

It was commented that when work to this section of roof had been completed, it still totalled less than 1/3rd of that which would need to be eventually addressed.

On the proposition of Cllr Goffey seconded Cllr Yelland it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.46pm.

Councillor Tolley
Mayor