

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

Members Present: Councillor A Fisher (Mayor)
Councillor R Colman (Chairman, Property Committee)
Councillor C Holt (Chairman, Parks Committee)
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning Committee)
Councillor L Bird
Councillor T Cummings
Councillor M Harding
Councillor M Ireland
Councillor L Rogers
Councillor B Tolley
Councillor S Weekes

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)
Councillor K Ball (WDBC)
Councillor G Dexter (WDBC)
Councillor L Samuel (DCC)
2 Members of the Public

Action

370 Apologies for Absence – Apologies tendered from Cllrs Marsh (personal), Yelland (illness) were approved on the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Holt

Apologies tendered by Cllr Vachon (WDBC) were noted.

371 Declarations of Interest – None

372 Public Participation – None

373 Members Questions – None

374 West Devon Borough Council – Cllr Dexter provided an update as Chair of the Audit Committee. Last year WDBC had a £79k underspend assisted by higher interest rates from investments. Ongoing financial challengers included capped precept increases for principal councils and the annual audit fee for 2024/25 which would increase by over £100k.

Cllr Ball reported better engagement with armed forces had been approved by WDBC. Comment was made in relation to Minute Reference 380 stating personal reasons as the cause of lack of attendance and apologised for not informing the Council.

Cllr Leech reported on items including concerns raised by members of the public in relation to fireworks. WDBC had no power relating to fireworks unless they were being set off from a location on a very regular basis. Provision of a footpath in the Crediton Road area was continuing to be investigated as was the opening of the Kellands Lane blockage.

Cllr Vachon had provided a report which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

375 Devon County Council – Cllr Samuel had provided a report which had been circulated and spoke about her Cabinet appointment for the new SEND portfolio.

376 Questions Arising from Members Reports – Cllr Leech requested information from Cllr Samuel in relation to care staff visiting persons at home and funding within the education system.

(Cllr Ball left the meeting)

377 Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon

377.1 On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Policy & Resources Committee** meeting held on 17th July 2023.

377.2 On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Planning Committee** meetings held on 5th June, 3rd July, 21st August and 11th September 2023.

377.3 On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Property Committee** meeting held on 10th July 2023.

378 Full Council Meeting Minutes – The minutes of the Town Council meetings held on 18th September and 11th October 2023 including an amendment to Minute Reference 315.1 of the meeting on 18th September 2023 changing the word ‘group’ to ‘Clerks and Chair’ were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded by Cllr Ireland, to be signed by Cllr Fisher,

379 Notice of Co-option – The Council noted following confirmation had been received from WDBC the vacancy on the South Ward could be filled by co-option. The Co-Option had been published on 13th October. Closing date for applications was 24th November with Co-Option at Full Council on 27th November 2023.

380 WDBC Okehampton Ward Members – On the proposition of Cllr Harding, seconded Cllr Rogers it was **RESOLVED** to defer to the next meeting Cllr Marsh’s proposal the Council wrote to the Leader of WDBC and Leaders of the Independent, Conservative and any other groups expressing disappointment that, with the exception of Cllr Leech, Ward Members had not attended or provided reports for meetings of the Council.

Clerk

381 Business Improvement District – The timeline for the next stage of the project which envisaged a ballot date of 18th July 2024 was noted.

382 Community Governance Boundary Review – Cllr Leech declared a personal interest being a Member of WDBC.

A letter setting out options for the next stage of the consultation had been circulated to all households in the Town and Hamlets by WDBC. The options being to retain the existing boundaries or amend them in line with the Town Councils petition.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Harding, (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to send a document through the Royal Mail to households that would, due to the postal areas, include some hamlets residents. The mailing cost being approximately £200.

Clerk

383 Consultations

383.1 DCC On-Street Parking Charges Proposal – The Town Council’s survey had attracted 1,826 responses, 97.6% of respondents not being in agreement with DCC’s proposal. A letter received from DCC dated 26th October advising their intention to advertise the scheme was noted with disappointment.

It was commented Okehampton was on a list of top eight Devon towns considered to be deprived and part of a DCC Urban Renewal strategy to create and develop business cases to increase and draw footfall to the town. DCC’s parking proposal was in direct contradiction to the regeneration project.

Okehampton was the only town to feature on both the regeneration project list and that for the implementation of on-street charging.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** that if DCC continued with their proposal, to hold a public meeting to which DCC be invited to answer questions and the press including Spotlight be invited. DCC to be forwarded a copy of the Town Council's survey.

Clerk

(Cllr Samuel left the meeting)

- 383.2 Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Dog Control Order** – Cllr Leech declared a personal interest being a Member of WDBC.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to comment requesting additional enforcement and to submit a freedom of information request for details of prosecutions arising from the PSPO.

Clerk

- 384 NHS Devon Integrated Care System** – Cllrs who had attended a meeting with the NHS North and East Devon Locality Director to discuss the possibility of reopening the hospital ward provided an update.

The possibility of the ward reopening was almost nil due to a government initiative that prevented the NHS reopening cottage hospitals once closed, or to build new facilities.

(Cllr Weekes left the meeting for a short time during this item)

The possibility of utilising space within the main part of the hospital as a day care centre for people discharged from hospital who needed support during the day had been discussed. It was commented this would not help reopen the community beds.

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Harding, it was **RESOLVED** the letter from the Locality Director be further considered at the next meeting.

Clerk

- 385 Postal Service** – On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was **RESOLVED** the Clerk write to the Postal Service Managing Director copying in the Okehampton Branch Manager, raising concerns, asking for information about the reasons for postal delays and information about action being taken to resolve the issues.

Clerk

- 386 West Devon Transport Hub/Railway Station** – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to support the name of Okehampton Parkway, noting the West Devon Transport Hub was the name for the project as a whole.

Clerk

- 387 Vaping** – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was **RESOLVED** Cllr Ireland work with the Clerk on a response to the government 'Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping' consultation for consideration at the next meeting of the Council. Councillors could respond as individuals.

Cllr Ireland/
Clerk

- 388 Charter Hall Roofing Project** – The Clerk advised photos of slates in storage had been received and Cllr Fisher was visiting the site on 9th November.

- 389 Assets**

- 389.1** The Council noted Cllr Wood, prior to her resignation, had undertaken an audit of some assets, including regalia and paintings in June. On the proposition of

Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** not to undertake further checks in the 2023/24 year.

- 389.2** The valuation report of specific items of regalia, silverware and other objects dated September 2023 was considered. On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to insure items on the same basis as existing.

Clerk

390 **Finance** –

- 390.1** Cllr Fisher explained his Mayors expense claim for posters relating to launching a Street Cleaning initiative was on behalf of ORIG. The Clerk commented it could appear the Council was paying another organisations account given the invoice was not in the name of the Town Council or Cllr Fisher, and the initiative, which appeared to be a Council scheme due to the wording should have been prior approved by the Council, as confirmed by Devon Association of Local Councils. On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the expense claim.

On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.

- 390.2** On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Marsh undertook audits of bank reconciliations following the resignation of Cllr Wood.

Cllr
Marsh

- 390.3** On the proposition of Cllr Harding, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank signatories as listed in the meeting report.

Clerk

(Cllr Holt left the meeting)

- 391** **Mayors Civic Diary** – Cllr Fisher reported on events attended which included a cheque presentation to Tor Support Services, the Ordination of a new Curate, the opening of special needs school, Dartmoor Search and Rescue, a plastic free event, Girl Guides, Goosey Fair, an RBL Coffee Morning, Okehampton Carnival, Get Changed Theatre and WDBC's Civic Service.

(A member of the public left the meeting)

392 **Working/Task & Finish Groups, External Representatives and Trustees**

- 392.1** **Working/Task & Finish Groups** - On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to close the following groups which had fulfilled their remit:

- Investment
- Okehampton Celebrates in the Park

Clerk

- 392.2** **Membership, Nomination Review and Councillor Roles** – On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Harding, it was **RESOLVED** to fill external representative roles impacted by the resignation of Cllr Wood as follows:

- Devon Climate Emergency Group – Cllr Bird
- Fairtrade Group – Cllr Weekes
- Okehampton & Area Health & Wellbeing Alliance (CVS) – Cllr Leech
- Twinning Association – Cllr Rogers
- Okehampton Ukraine Support Group – Cllr Ireland

Clerk

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

On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to fill Working/Task & Finish Group roles impacted by the resignation of Cllr Wood as follows:

- Emergency Plan – no nomination
- Okehampton & Hamlets Neighbourhood Plan Group – no nomination
- Climate Change – no nomination
- Charter Hall Roof Replacement – Cllr Fisher

Clerk

392.3 Emergency Plan Working Group – The Clerk reported on a meeting with other Town Councils when it had been suggested the councils shared their emergency plans with neighbouring councils, Town and Parish, with the aim of providing mutual aid and support where possible. The creation of an Okehampton town plan was ongoing.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to approve continued collaboration with other councils and information sharing.

Clerk

392.4 80th Anniversary of D-DAY, 6th June 2024 – Councillors who had attended a meeting with Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council on 18th October provided an update of plans to date which included the lighting of a beacon at the Showground, the provision of a marquee, toilets and entertainment. The estimated budget requirement was £3,880.

On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to agree a 50% split of costs with Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council, a maximum contribution by the Town Council of £1,940.

Clerk

392.5 Museum of Dartmoor Life Appointment of Trustee – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Bird as the Council's nominated Trustee and that a separate Councillor Museum representative was no longer required.

Clerk

393 Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups –

393.1 Climate Change – No meeting had been held.

394 Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation -

394.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group – The Clerk reported the Regulation 16 Consultation was progressing and would be further considered by the Council in the Part 2 Confidential part of the meeting due to consideration of the appointment of external inspectors.

395 Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -

395.1 Rural Market Town Group – Cllr Colman had attended a recent meeting.

395.2 20's Plenty for Devon – Cllr Cummings advised only newsletters had recently been received and he was waiting for the response to governments proposals in relation to transportation and its impact on the scheme.

395.3 Active Travel Project – Cllr Weekes had not been able to attend the meeting.

(Persons remaining other than Town Councillors left the meeting)

396 PART 2 Confidential Matters - On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Tolley 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.

397 **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – Cllr Leech declared a personal interest being a Member of WDBC and a previous member of the group.

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to agree the appointment of Mr Lee as one of the external examiners if needed. The other potential examiner, who had a conflict of interest having previously undertaken consultation work on the production of the plan, could equally be appointed if there were no other suitable external examiner options available.

Clerk

398 **Window Condition Survey** – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to apply for a grant to cover the costs and to approve, in principle subject to grant finding a preferred contractor, that being Hayden Associations at the total cost of £6,182.20. The other quotation received had not included the full breakdown of costs as requested.

Clerk

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9.05pm

Councillor Fisher
Mayor

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