

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 27th November 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 J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources Committee)
 Councillor L Bird
 Councillor T Cummings
 Councillor M Harding
 Councillor M Ireland
 Councillor C Marsh
 Councillor L Rogers
 Councillor B Tolley
 Councillor S Weekes

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)
 Councillor M Calder (WDBC)
 Councillor G Dexter (WDBC)
 1 Member of the Public

Action

412 Apologies for Absence – Apologies tendered by Cllr Samuel (DCC) were noted.

413 Declarations of Interest – None

414 Public Participation – None

415 Members Questions – Cllr Marsh thanked WDBC Cllrs who had attended recent meetings, and it was noted reports had not been received from those not in attendance. The Clerk was instructed to monitor attendance and receipt of reports, and that the withdrawn proposal be revisited in six months.

Clerk

416 West Devon Borough Council – Cllr Dexter reported on two main items including the corporate strategic, on which there would be a public consultation that town and parish councils would be invited to comment upon, and the budget.

(Cllr Calder arrived)

Cllr Calder commented the Public Space Protection Order for Dog Control consultation was still open for comment to the Council.

Cllr Leech reported on a number of items including:

- WDBC staff who were experienced in matters relating to EV charging points and were able to assist town/parish councils with advice,
- WDBC was being asked to publish details of work ongoing in relation to footpath issues to the east of Okehampton.
- Prices for long stay parking in WDBC carparks were increasing, costs for short stays were remaining the same to ensure shoppers were not deterred,
- Prosperity funding received through bids to the government had been earmarked for specific purposes,
- Renters were now able to report poor property conditions to WDBC,
- Members of the public were encouraged to check with WDBC if they were eligible for help upgrading properties in relation to fuel poverty.

Cllr Leech advised this would be his last report for several weeks due to health matters.

417 **Devon County Council** – Cllr Samuel had advised a report would be circulated in due course.

418 **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Cllr Yelland asked the following questions for a response from WDBC Cllrs:

- Detail of the main differences between the existing and proposed new strategic plan,
- When parking charges in Mill Road were previously increased, revenue decreased. WDBC were asked to consider reducing parking fees instead of increasing them to encourage usage thereby gaining greater income.

WDBC
Cllrs

419 **Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon**

419.1 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Policy & Resources Committee** meeting held on 11th September 2023.

419.2 On the proposition of Cllr Holt, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Parks Committee** meeting held on 4th September 2023.

419.3 On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Planning Committee** meeting held on 2nd October 2023.

419.4 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Personnel Sub-Committee** held on 25th July 2022.

420 **Full Council Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the Town Council meetings held on 30th October and 9th November 2023 were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Marsh, to be signed by Cllr Fisher.

421 **Co-option** – One application for co-option had been received. On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Marsh (3 abstentions, 1 against), Mark Richards was co-opted to the South Ward.

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

Correspondence received from WDBC inviting the Clerk and a Councillor to a meeting of the People and Communities Advisory Group on 12th December was noted. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Fisher attend along with the Clerk.

Cllr
Fisher/
Clerk

423 **Consultations**

423.1 **DCC On-Street Parking Charges Proposal** – The Clerk provided an update on a meeting attended on 22nd November hosted by DALC and attended by Clerks of the affected towns and DCC Officers. The aim had been to discuss communication, the process and improving relationships with DCC rather than the consultation detail. DCC were asked to provide evidence of need and to delay the consultation until after the busy Christmas period. DCC Officers had advised they would not attend a public meeting.

It was commented the revised proposal from DCC had extended the free parking from 30 minutes to 1 hour with the possibility of paying for a second hour. Bank holidays were not included within the free parking times.

On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Harding, it was **RESOLVED** to hold a public meeting in the Ockment Centre at 7pm on Thursday 14th December. DCC Officers, Councillor, a Cabinet Member and the press to be invited.

Clerk

<p>423.2 Creating a smokefree generation and tacking youth vaping – On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Harding (2 abstentions), it was RESOLVED to approve the draft response prepared by Cllr Ireland and the Clerk.</p>	Clerk
<p>423.3 Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), Dog Control Order – In the previous six years no penalty notices had been issued in Okehampton.</p> <p>(Cllr Weekes left the meeting)</p>	
<p>424 <u>NHS Devon Integrated Care System</u> – It was commented as previously minuted, the possibility of the ward reopening was almost nil due to a government initiative that prevented the NHS reopening cottage hospitals once closed.</p> <p>(Cllr Weekes returned)</p>	Clerk
<p>The opening of Nightingale Wards, including in Exeter for Covid indicated units could reopen if necessary and was an example of need. It was commented the council could publish the history of the hospital including use of public money from residents. Item to be included on the February 2024 agenda to keep the matter live and high on the council's agenda.</p>	
<p>425 <u>Bideford Rail Service Restoration</u> – Cllr Ireland declared a personal interest being a member of OkeRail.</p>	Clerk
<p>On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED to approve the sending of a letter supporting the reinstatement of the service.</p>	
<p>426 <u>Charter Hall Roofing Project</u> – The Clerk reported the Lions were donating the sum of £728 towards the roof fund raised from a recent event. Councillors expressed thanks to the Lions for their generous donation.</p>	Clerk
<p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve and sign the contract for the work at the sum of £461,835.14.</p> <p>Cllr Fisher reported he had visited the site and confirmed safe storage of the slates. Work was due to commence on 19th February 2024 for approximately five months during which the hall would be out of use.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Harding, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED Cllr Fisher sign the contract.</p>	
<p>427 <u>CCTV Update</u> – The Clerk reported the fibre cable between Okehampton and the monitoring hub in Torbay had developed a fault which had been dealt with promptly by BT. CCTV footage could still be viewed and retrieved in Okehampton during the period the connection was down.</p>	Clerk
<p>A quotation for connecting the Camera behind Lidl to the system was still awaited and an update was provided in relation to the electricity supply for two remaining cameras for which DCC's contractor was awaited to action.</p>	
<p>428 <u>Communication and Community Engagement</u> 428.1 <u>Communication and Noticeboard Provision</u> – Cllrs Colman and Tolley reported on Councillor Surgeries held in alternative locations which would be continued in 2024.</p>	Clerk
<p>Quotations for additional noticeboards to potentially be located at Donalds in Fore Street and on the Council owned property in the walkway from Market Street to Red Lion Yard to be obtained.</p>	

428.2	Youth Engagement – (Cllr Holt left and returned during this item)	Clerk
	On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED to approve the creation of a Task & Finish group to investigate improving youth engagement. Members being Cllrs Colman, Rogers and Weekes.	
428.3	Council Communication – Councillors were reminded of the importance of regularly checking correspondence and responding promptly as required.	
429	<u>Policies and Documents</u>	
429.1	On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED to approve the following policies recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee:	Clerk
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Asbestos Management Plan b) Developer Engagement Policy c) Freedom of Information Publication Scheme 	
429.2	On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to approve the new and revised Terms of Reference for Task & Finish Groups as follows:	Clerk
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Charter Hall Internal Improvement b) Charter Hall Roofing Work c) Youth Engagement 	
430	<u>Finance</u> – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Bird, it was RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.	
431	<u>2024/25 Budget</u> – The Clerk reported a spreadsheet of properties added to the Council tax base this year had been received from WDBC; there being 10 within the town boundary and 133 in the hamlets.	
	The recent government announcement increasing the minimum wage by £1.02 in April 2024 and the potential effect on the salary budget was considered. On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Colman, (2 abstentions) it was RESOLVED to not increase the salary budget.	
	Councillors were reminded of the budget setting process and requested to advise the Clerk of any comments or suggested amendments before the meeting on 11 th December for consideration by the Council, the final budget and precept decisions needing to be made at the January Full Council meeting.	Cllrs
	It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Cummings.	
432	<u>Planning Application</u> - 3599/23/TCA On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED to support the application for tree work. T1: Ash - Fell due to severe Ash die back, now becoming dangerous, small dead branches have fallen off, T2 & T3: Ash - Fell due to disease, ash die back, T4, T5 & T6: Fell due to severe ash die back, all trees are bordering the Fountain Inn car park or rear access footpath/road. The Fountain Inn, Fore Street, Okehampton.	Clerk
433	<u>Events</u>	
433.1	Edwardian Evening – Councillors were reminded to advise attendance.	
433.2	Annual Town Meeting - On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was RESOLVED to book the Church Hall in Market Street for the meeting on 8 th May 2024 when the Charter Hall would be closed for roofing work.	Clerk

- 433.3 Mayor Choosing and Annual Council Meeting** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was **RESOLVED** the format of the meeting be reviewed by Cllrs Marsh, Yelland and Fisher for recommendation to the Council.
- On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to book the Church Hall in Market Street for refreshments after the meeting on 8th May 2024 when the Charter Hall would be closed for roofing work. Clerk
- 434 Christmas and New Year Office Opening Hours** – It was noted the Council Office would be closed from Friday 22nd December 2023 reopening on Tuesday 2nd January 2024. There would be minimal staff working reduced hours on normal working days throughout the Christmas and New Year period.
- 435 Mayors Civic Diary** – Cllr Fisher reported on events attended which included an Army Cadet inspection, the Tor Support AGM, Remembrance Parade and Service, Carnival Coffee Morning, Tavistock Civic Service, 2nd Anniversary of the reopening of the Railway, Wellbeing event, Rotary Coffee morning.
- 436 Working/Task & Finish Group** - On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** Cllr Marsh join the Charter Hall Internal Improvements Task & Finish Group. Clerk
- 437 Council Representative Roles** – The recommendation made by the Clerk on the previously circulated report was **agreed**. Clerk
- 438 Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups** –
- 438.1 Climate Change** – No meeting had been held.
- 439 Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation** -
- 439.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group** – A Regulation 16 Inspector had been appointed.
- 440 Members’ Reports and Requests for Agenda Items** -
- 440.1 Rural Market Town Group** – Minutes of last meeting had been circulated.
- 440.2 20’s Plenty for Devon** – A newsletter had been received.
- 440.3 Active Travel Project** – No meeting had been held.
- (Persons remaining other than Town Councillors left the meeting)
- 441 PART 2 Confidential Matters** - On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman 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.
- 442 Gas Quotations** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Harding, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation made by the Assistant Clerk for a 3 year contract with Yu Energy. Clerk

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.45pm