

**Okehampton Town Council**  
**Full Council Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**  
**Meeting Report**

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Emma James

11. **Okehampton Second Railway Station – To consider correspondence from Cllr Andrea Davis, DCC Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport and resolve to consider submitting a name for the new station for consideration.**

The following has been received following a request for clarification about the name of the new station:

Contrary to speculation the name of the second Okehampton station has not been confirmed yet. Devon County Council, GWR and Network Rail are in discussions about a potential name which allows the rail industry to maximise the proposed business case submitted to the Department of Transport, taking into account the location and the facilities it offers. We are not rushing this decision, there is still plenty of time before the station is due to open. It is vital that we carefully consider how we can attract new passengers to the station, to grow the Dartmoor line even further and continue to celebrate its success since opening.

12. **Consultations**

- 12.1 **DCC On-Street Parking Charges Consultation – To note the response submitted by the Clerk and consider any further action to be taken including the possibility of further collaborative working with the other affected town/parish councils**

Okehampton Town Council strongly objects to the proposals to implement pay and display charging for on-street parking in Okehampton on the following grounds having taken into account the views of its residents:

- a) A consultation undertaken by Okehampton Town Council in relation to DCC's original proposal clearly indicated that Okehampton residents, traders and visitors did not support such a scheme with 97% of the 1,826 who completed the survey voting against.
- b) The scheme would enable parking in the streets for 2 hours instead of 1 as existing. 1 hour free followed by a further paid for hour of parking will reduce turnover of spaces, not increase them. Clearly contradicting one of DCC's reasons for the proposal which is to increase the turnover of spaces.
- c) The streets included within the scheme are predominantly residential, not commercial, or directly in the centre of the town. Homeowners in the predominantly residential streets affected could be affected by reduced desirability and market value of their properties, thereby discriminating against these residents.
- d) Residents are concerned the provision of parking meters will highlight there is parking available in these residential streets. This will impact these residents by way of an increase in vehicle movement - directly contradicting DCC's aims which its states are to improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and reduce air pollution,

- additional vehicles will increase risks to pedestrians and cyclists
  - more vehicles parking directly adjacent to dwellings whose windows and doors are generally just a pavement width from the parking spaces will increase air pollution and risk to the health and wellbeing of these residents.
- e) There are often parking spaces available in the roads included in the proposal indicating there is not an issue with vehicle turnover.  
No evidence that congestion in Okehampton is due to lack of on-street parking in these or any other streets has been provided by DCC.
- f) Tickets will need to be obtained from a machine for the free period of parking as well as the paid additional hour, if required. Potentially making parking for a short time more difficult for those with disabilities (non-blue badge holders), elderly or with young children.
- g) Some pavements are not wide enough to accommodate parking machines, in these locations people parking will have to walk a distance to a machine to obtain a ticket. This could discriminate against persons with disabilities.
- h) Parking restrictions will apply on bank holidays.
- i) Options to pay by both cash and card should be provided. Okehampton has a predominantly elderly population of residents who do not use smart phones.
- j) There is no evidence provided by DCC that the scheme will reduce congestion, pollution and increase air quality as stated:
  - Parking machines are powered by electricity – increasing DCC’s carbon footprint,
  - Parking tickets will increase paper usage and potentially litter from the tickets – increasing DCC’s carbon footprint,
  - Increase in parking time from 1 hour to 2 will increase congestion and reduce turnover of spaces.
  - No evidence that implementation of on-street charging will increase vehicle turnover, footfall, benefit shops and the economy has been provided by DCC.
  - No economic impact assessment has been carried out by DCC who when asked for evidence said the council needed to take the officers opinion that it will.
  - There is no evidence of poor air quality in the streets included in the scheme.
- k) No complaints about on-street parking have been received by Okehampton Town Council and DCC have not provided evidence of any received.
- l) Okehampton is on a DCC list as being 1 of the 8 most deprived towns in Devon, and the Town Council is working with DCC and other stakeholders on a regeneration strategy. On the other hand, Okehampton is seen by DCC to be thriving and in need of on-street charging for parking, a scheme which contracts the regeneration work in progress.
- m) A cost analysis of the impact of installation and maintenance cost on DCC’s budget against expected income from the charging has not been provided.  
  
The cost is believed to be in the region of £250,000 for the 8 towns on the list and could be better spent.
- n) Implementation of pay and display parking will enable DCC future opportunities including:
  - Future expansion of the scheme to other areas of the town

- Changes to parking times and charges

There is no guarantee how long it will be before fees are increased and times reduced to meet an earlier scheme of 30 minutes free followed by the opportunity to pay for a further 30 minutes at greater cost.

- o) The proposals will push parking further out into other residential streets causing additional problems in these areas.
- p) DCC have failed to properly consult with the town/parish councils, listen to their views or provide evidence requested:
- Refused to delay the consultation, as requested by a number of the affected town/parish councils, until January so that it did not coincide with the Christmas and New Year period with no reasons or explanation having been given.
  - Failed to acknowledge the views of the 97% of Okehampton residents, traders and visitors through a survey undertaken by Okehampton Town Council
  - DCC consider the government to be imposing on their rights to charge for disposal of some kinds of waste at recycling centres – yet are doing just this to the towns affected by the implementation of pay and display parking proposals.
  - No evidence has been provided as requested by the town/parish councils with the exception of PCN figures.

## **12.2 West Devon Borough Council Corporate Strategy Consultation – To note the response submitted**

### **West Devon Borough Council Corporate Strategy Consultation Response (January 2024)**

1. Did you find the strategy easy to read and understand? **Yes**
2. Does the strategy reflect the West Devon you live or work in and the challenges it faces? **No**
3. Overall, do you feel that the ambitions, aims and actions set out in the strategy address those challenges suitably? **No**
4. If there are any particular areas that you feel we haven't got right, please let us know why.

Okehampton Town Council feels that the strategy is an overview document of WDBC's priorities but that it needs to be evidenced with more detail, although it is understood that there may or will be associated documents that will do this in relation to each identified priority.

The Council does not feel that the strategy adequately addresses all of the particular problems experienced at this time, both in Okehampton and across West Devon, particularly in relation to the economy and employment.

With regards to the economy and employment, more could be done to promote Okehampton/West Devon as a location for businesses to relocate to, especially with the good rail and road links now available in Okehampton, and the planned West Devon Transport Hub. Development of home-grown businesses could also be encouraged with help provided for those who wish to improve their skills and/or set up their own businesses. This would help to enable the economic sustainability of the area as a whole.

Page No	Comments
3	Reference to the 'agriculture' community should be more specific to reflect different farming patterns
4	The eight key priorities diagram should be proportionate the Council spending on each element.
6	Reference is made to address the 'broken housing market'. How? Isn't the market driven approach the problem?
6	No mention is made of the need to retain Okehampton Hospital and its beds. The Hospital is an important issue in the community.
6	The launch of a new website does little to help older persons or the disabled.
9	Welcome the plan for Wildlife Wardens'
11	Parking 'enforcement' strategy needed in Okehampton, not parking meters!
11	Okehampton transport hub is no the name for the new station which it is understood is yet to be agreed.
12	The paper needs to show the house price / income ratio. This would enable people to compare wages with affordability or lack off!
13	<i>Need to urgently implement the 200% Council tax for second homes.</i>
16	Agree road surfaces are a priority.
18	Replace the old picture of the railway with the modern 158 units.
19	The transport hub should NOT be called 'Okehampton' but West Devon & North Cornwall which is the actual area served. The new station should be called <b>Okehampton Parkway</b> , which is what it is!

5. What do you think should be most important for West Devon? (select 1 or more)
- Good digital connections
  - A skilled workforce
  - Flourishing open spaces
  - Truly affordable homes
  - Well paid jobs
  - Doing all that we can to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss
  - Delivering good quality council services
  - A place where everyone feels a sense of belonging
  - Access to sport and leisure facilities
  - The borough as a leading location for visitors, workers and residents
  - Support local businesses
6. Finally, do you have any further comments you would like to make about our draft strategy? Q5, the selection made by the Council does not mean that they feel the other items are less important but they should be priorities.

### 12.3 Peninsula Transport Draft Transport Strategy Consultation – To consider a response to the consultation which closes on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024

The consultation strategy and supporting information can be found via this link [Peninsula Transport Strategy: consultation | Peninsula Transport](#)

Should you wish to respond as an individual the survey [https://plymouth-consult.objective.co.uk/public/transport/peninsula\\_transport\\_strategy](https://plymouth-consult.objective.co.uk/public/transport/peninsula_transport_strategy)

## **PENINSULA TRANSPORT: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST**

### **Briefing note: Peninsula Transport Strategy consultation, December 2023**

Peninsula Transport, the sub-national transport body for Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay councils, is running a public consultation on its draft transport strategy.

The strategy will be used to guide regional transport investment decisions through to 2050. It sets out four outcomes and a route map to achieving a strategic transport network that works for everyone – from businesses to communities and visitors.

By 2030 the desired outcomes are:

- **Easier journeys:** integrating walking and wheeling with the bus and rail network, to make getting around without a car easy.
- **Going electric:** affordable zero-emission transport through a reliable electric vehicle charging network.
- **A connected peninsula:** safe, reliable and resilient road and rail travel within the peninsula and beyond.

These outcomes will ultimately lead to the key objective of:

- **Completing the network:** improved connections within a growing and fully integrated transport network on a path to net zero.

The strategy will be the foundation of a Strategic Investment Plan which will identify and prioritise transport schemes and projects that reflect national and regional policies and best meet the needs of the user. The transport strategy does not replace Local Transport Plans developed by local authorities but provides a series of strategic objectives to guide the development of local policies.

The strategy is available on our consultation space held on [www.peninsulatransport.org.uk](http://www.peninsulatransport.org.uk)

### **CONSULTATION AND EVENTS**

Our consultation is now open and we invite stakeholders to review the Peninsula Transport Strategy and feedback to Peninsula Transport through a short online survey that can be found at: [https://plymouth-consult.objective.co.uk/public/transport/peninsula\\_transport\\_strategy](https://plymouth-consult.objective.co.uk/public/transport/peninsula_transport_strategy)

**Webinars:** Peninsula Transport will be hosting free webinars throughout January 2024, open to anyone interested in finding out more about the strategy. Dates will be released shortly any people can pre-register interest at [www.peninsulatransport.org.uk](http://www.peninsulatransport.org.uk).

**Share:** help spread the work and share our consultation with others. Please feel free to share this briefing and the link with your networks. We are also promoting the strategy via our social media channels and would welcome your support in sharing content across your own channels.

- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/peninsula-transport/>
- X (formerly Twitter): <https://twitter.com/PensTransport>

### **EVIDENCE BASE**

We consulted on and finalised our vision, which also set out a series of high-level goals for the STB to take forward, in 2021. Since then, we have produced a comprehensive evidence base to create a

strong understanding of how the peninsula works and what will bring the biggest benefits to the region. The recommendations and priorities identified in individual pieces of technical work were brought together to define the four key outcomes set out in the transport strategy and develop a route map to achieving a better strategic transport network. Our full suite of technical works can be accessed: <https://www.peninsulatrtransport.org.uk/technical-work/>

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

Once the consultation closes, we will take the time to review and analyse all the responses, using the feedback to finalise the Peninsula Transport Strategy. The final draft of the Peninsula Transport Strategy will then be submitted to the Peninsula Transport Board to approve its adoption.

If adopted, we expect to publish the final strategy in March 2024. It will then be used to develop the Strategic Investment Plan and we will work with government, industry and local authorities to deliver its aims for the peninsula.

To keep up to date with the work of Peninsula Transport you can join our mailing list here: <http://eepurl.com/hynxmf>.

### **ABOUT PENINSULA TRANSPORT**

Peninsula Transport is the sub-national transport body (STB), bringing together the five lead transport authorities in the peninsula (Cornwall, Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay) to work directly with the Department for Transport (DfT) on the strategic transport priorities for the region. Sub-national Transport Bodies were established as part of the Cities and Local Government Act 2016.

Formed in 2018, we are a partnership established to transform transport and boost economic growth for the peninsula. Our role is to guide and advise government on our regional transport priorities and investment by developing and then maintaining a regional transport strategy. Our work is aimed at enhancing strategic cross-boundary connectivity and complements the work of our local authorities to enhance local connectivity.

More information is available on our website, <https://www.peninsulatrtransport.org.uk/>, or you can contact us by emailing [info@peninsulatrtransport.org.uk](mailto:info@peninsulatrtransport.org.uk)

**15. Postal Service – To note correspondence received from the Royal Mail in response to concerns raised about postal delivery delays**

Dear Ms James

Thank you for your recent communication regarding mail deliveries to addresses served by Okehampton Delivery Office.

I have spoken with the Customer Operations Lead who covers the Okehampton area. They have advised that mail deliveries have been affected over recent weeks due to a number of colleagues being away from work through sickness as well as vacancies within Okehampton Delivery Office. Unfortunately, that has impacted mail deliveries to addresses in Okehampton. I am very sorry for the obvious impact this will have had.

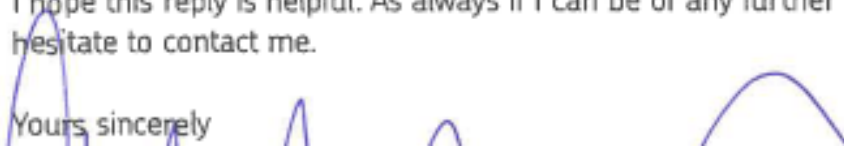
We are working hard to reduce sick absence. We have a number of health initiatives and resources available to all employees including Help@hand which gives access to GP at times convenient for them. This service is offered completely free of charge to all employees, regardless of grade.

We are currently delivering mail to addresses in Okehampton at least every other day to maximise the delivery frequency. We are working hard to further improve the service to customers over the coming weeks so that we deliver consistently six days a week to all addresses.

We are currently recruiting for postmen and women at Okehampton Delivery Office. These vacancies can be found at [www.jobs.royalmailgroup.com](http://www.jobs.royalmailgroup.com) and I would be grateful if you could use your social media channels to help reach those who are looking for a new role and might not be aware we are recruiting in the Redfern Park area.

I hope this reply is helpful. As always if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



19. **Interim Internal Audit** – To note that no items of non-compliance have been raised and to consider recommendations made



Emma James  
Town Clerk  
Okehampton Town Council  
Town Hall  
Fore Street  
Okehampton  
Devon  
EX20 1AA

31st December 2023

Dear Emma,

#### **Interim Audit Cover Letter**

An audit was carried out by Kevin Rose on Monday 18 December 2023. This was the interim internal audit, part of the annual internal audit coverage of the Council. Prior to the audit a 'Pre-Audit' was carried out remotely which tested items which are required to be published on the Council's website.

The audit was undertaken using the standard IAC Audit Checklist, that we use for all Local Councils, which has 203 items. A total of 135 items were tested during this audit, including items that were examined and tested as part of the pre-audit process. The balance of 68 items will be checked during the Year End audit.

The following 'Internal Control Objectives' of the Annual Internal Audit Report (part of the AGAR) were checked and confirmed as being Not Applicable to your Council for this financial year.

- Exemption from External Audit (Box K)
- the Transparency Code (for Smaller Authorities) (Box L)

#### **Areas subject to audit were;**

- the Accounting system and records (Box A)
- the Payment system (Box B)
- Risk and insurance (Box C)
- Budget and precept setting and monitoring (Box D)
- Income billing, collection and VAT (Box E)
- Petty cash (Box F)
- Payroll (Box G)
- Bank reconciliations (Box I)
- Accounting Statements (Box J)
- the Exercise of Public Rights (Box M)
- the Publication of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Box N)
- Trust Funds (Box O)



Of the 119 applicable items tested a Positive response was obtained in respect of 118 tests. There was 1 Negative response identified and 4 Observations were made, details of which are set out in the attached Interim Internal Audit Observations.

### Summary of tests undertaken during this audit

Positive response	118
Negative response	1
Not Applicable to your Council	16
Total tests carried out	<b>135</b>

I am pleased to advise that no 'Non-Compliances' were identified at this stage that would give rise to a negative response on the statutory Annual Internal Audit Report.

I would like to express my thanks for the assistance provided to me during my audit.

Yours sincerely,

Okehampton Town Council  
Financial Year 2023-24



IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd

Audit date: 18 December 2023

#### Interim Internal Audit Observations

**B** This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Are bank signatory arrangements (the bank mandate) in accordance with Financial Regulations?	Yes	The Council has recently updated bank signatories, but has not received confirmation from banks as to the bank signatories that banks have on file.	The Council to obtain confirmation from bank of the updated approved signatories.	High	
2	Has the Council complied with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations?	Yes	The Council has confirmed the award of a contract (Min ref 838), final contract sum £461,835.14 (Min Ref 426 27/11/2023). It was noted that the award of contract has not formally be posted on Contract Finder (it is understood that this will be done by the Council's consultant).	The Council to ensure that the award of the contract is formally posted on the Contracts Finder website.	Medium	

**E** Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Is income due on investments subject to regular check and verification? (Is investment performance regularly reported to Council?)	No	Income due on investments is not subject to a process of formal, regular, review. It was noted that the Council is earning significantly different interest on balances held at different banks/CCLA.	The Council should put in place arrangements for the regular review and reporting of investment performance. This review should be recorded in Minutes of the appropriate meeting.	High	

**G** Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.

No.	Audit Test	Response	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The Members allowances have been paid in accordance with approved rates	Yes	Councillors are reimbursed for expenses incurred. It was noted that the Council does not have a formal policy in place setting out what expenses may be reclaimed by Councillors. The Council does have a formal policy in place in respect of Staff Expenses.	The Council to put in place a formal policy for Councillors Expenses.	Medium	

