

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 11th December 2023 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present: Councillor A Fisher (Mayor)
 Councillor C Holt (Chairman, Parks Committee)
 Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources Committee)
 Councillor L Bird
 Councillor T Cummings
 Councillor M Harding
 Councillor M Ireland
 Councillor C Marsh
 Councillor M Richards
 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

- 463 **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies tendered by Cllrs Colman and Leech (health) were noted as were those tendered by Cllr Ball (WDBC).
- 464 **Declarations of Interest** – None
- 465 **Public Participation** – None
- 466 **Members Questions** – Cllr Ireland reported the Clerk was awaiting a response from Network Rail and GWR to a request for a timetable for the provision of the new railway Station.
- 467 **West Devon Borough Council** – Cllr Calder advised a planning application appeal with respect to a tree in Castle Road had been upheld by the Inspector. Although outside of the town boundary, progress on the provision of a pavement along Crediton Road was being made. Some parties including OkeRail and the Town Council were not being kept fully updated on progress with the West Devon Transport Hub/Station progress. WDBC’s external auditors had given a positive opinion with regards financial stability and budgetary management.
- Cllr Dexter had provided a report which had been circulated and commented on a grant available to those eligible for the improvement of homes.
- 468 **Devon County Council** – No report.
- 469 **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Cllr Richards commented surveyors had been working on Crediton Road in relation to footpath provision.
- 470 **Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon**
- 470.1 On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Property Committee** meetings held on 16th October and 20th November 2023.
- 471 **Full Council Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 27th November 2023 were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Tolley, to be signed by Cllr Fisher, including an amendment to Min Ref 433.2 correcting the date from 8th May 2024 to 8th April 2024.

472 **Committees, Working Groups and Council Representative Roles** – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Cummings it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Richards sit on the Property and Planning Committees.

473 **Community Governance Boundary Review** – Cllr Fisher and the Clerk were due to attend a meeting of WDBC’s People and Communities Advisory Group on 12th December.

474 **Consultations**

474.1 **DCC On-Street Parking Charges Proposal** – A public meeting was being held at 7pm on 14th December in the Ockment Centre. Councillors were urged to attend.

The Clerk advised no-one from DCC, with the exception of Cllr Samuel who would not be able to comment, had accepted an invitation to the meeting, including the Director for Climate Change, Environment & Transport who had declined. BBC Spotlight were visiting the town on 2nd January 2024.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to object to the consultation on grounds including those listed, and the response be delegated to the Clerk in consultation with the Mayor.

- No evidence had been provided by DCC that the scheme would reduce congestion, pollution and increase air quality as stated. There was no evidence of poor air quality in the roads included within the consultation.
- An economic impact assessment had not been undertaken by DCC, and there was no evidence it would not negatively impact or benefit the town. When asked for evidence a DCC Officer said the council needed to take his professional opinion – firm evidence was needed to back up the statement.
- Retention of 1-hour free parking and the introduction of further paid for parking would set a principle of paid for parking on the streets resulting in making it easier for future changes to parking times and fees to be made by DCC.
- Increasing the permitted on-street parking time by introducing a second hour would create congestion and decrease turnover of spaces, contrary to DCC’s reasons for implementation of the scheme.

Cllr
Fisher/
Clerk

474.2 **West Devon Borough Council Corporate Strategy Consultation** – An extension of the 15th January 2024 deadline had been requested by the Clerk.

It was commented there was no mention of the WDBC owned land at Wonacott’s and there was a lack of employment related opportunity/strategy incorporated in the document.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was **RESOLVED** that due to the timescales Cllrs Richards, Ireland and the Clerk draft a response to be emailed to all Cllrs for comment. Final response delegated to the Clerk.

Cllrs
Ireland/
Richards

475 **Business Improvement District (BID)** – A timescale for the final stages leading to a ballot had been circulated, including workshops. On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** Cllr Tolley be the council representative on the BID Steering Group.

Cllr
Tolley

476 **Okehampton Community Hospital** – The following questions were posed by Cllr Yelland in response to correspondence from NHS Devon relating to the hand back of the vacant ward at Okehampton Hospital to NHS Property Services:

1. As NHS Property Services is a Government controlled company, why does it need to charge other public bodies market rent as opposed to covering the costs of the overheads plus a percentage towards repairs/maintenance? I

can understand that there could be issues around State Aid if renting out to non public sector, however, One Devon is public sector.

2. On the basis of the question above, what is the justification for charging £200,000 per annum for one Ward?
3. What is the square meterage of the space?
4. How much is that per metre and how does that compare with rental costs within the Okehampton area?

It was commented the facility could be used for other purposes including a care home or rehabilitation centre, and that once the beds/ward space had been given up they would not be reintroduced. The provision of the facility had included funds raised by the town.

On the proposition of Cllr Richards, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Richards and Marsh be council representatives on any steering group that may be set up by others relating to Okehampton Community Hospital and report back to Full Council.

Cllrs
Marsh/
Richards/
Clerk

- 477** **Charter Hall Roofing Project** – The project was due to commence on 19th February 2024.
- 478** **Finance** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.
- 479** **2024/25 Budget** – Councillors were reminded of the budget and precept setting process and requested to advise the Clerk of any comments or suggested amendments before the end of December for final consideration at the January Full Council meeting.
- 480** **Mayors Civic Diary** – Cllr Fisher reported on events attended which included the Friendship Club, and Wellbeing Café.
- 481** **Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups** –
- 481.1** **Climate Change** – No meeting had been held.
- 482** **Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation** -
- 482.1** **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – No meeting had been held.
- 483** **Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items** -
- 483.1** **Rural Market Town Group** – No report.
- 483.2** **20's Plenty for Devon** – No report
- 483.3** **Active Travel Project** – No report.
- 484** **Urgent Items** - The Clerk advised there would be a meeting of the Planning Committee at 3pm on Wednesday 20th December 2023.

Cllrs

The meeting was closed at 8.15pm

Councillor Fisher, Mayor