

**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on
Monday 20th November 2023 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber,
Town Hall, Okehampton**

Committee Members Present: Councillor C Holt (Chairman)
Councillor C Marsh (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor R Colman (Chairman, Property)
Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)
Councillor M Ireland
Councillor L Rogers
Councillor B Tolley
Councillor S Weekes

Other Members Present: Councillor L Bird

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)
Mr J McGahey (Park-Keeper)

Absent: Councillor M Harding

- 393** **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies tendered by Cllr Fisher (personal) and Leech (health) were **APPROVED** on the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Ireland.
- 394** **Declarations of Interest** – None
- 395** **Public Participation** – None
- 396** **Park Keeper** – Mr McGahey provided an update on matters including the recent very wet weather, four trees had been planted as replacement for those lost last winter and as memorials. The volunteer group was continuing to be well attended and productive, Mr Peek the Apprentice would be running future groups as part of the apprenticeship course. Areas including the gateway mural and verge adjacent to the Co-Op roundabout and been tidied, and tree work undertaken on behalf of the National Grid in Simmons Park.
- 397** **Members’ Questions** – None
- 398** **Minutes** - Minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 4th September 2023 were **APPROVED** to be signed by the Chairman on the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Marsh.
- 399** **Simmons Park**
- 399.1** **Bookings** – The previously circulated list of events was noted including a film that had been partly produced in Simmons Park, the town centre and Council Chamber.
- 399.2** **Cycle Rack Provision** – The Clerk advised quotations for the work were still to be sought.
- 399.3** **Electricity** – Engineers were unable to install the smart meter in September and a revised date was awaited.

Action

399.4	River Extraction Licence – The application to revoke the licence had been accepted, saving approximately £115 on the budget. Water extraction for use by the bowling club to irrigate the green was below the level needed for a licence.	
399.5	Bandstand – Response from WDBC to ascertain if planning consent to add a ‘top’ to the new structure adjacent to Chalet Treloar was awaited.	Clerk
399.6	Bridge/Riverbank Inspections and Repairs – The full written report was awaited. Some repair work would be required in 2024. The Park-Keeper would be obtaining quotations over the winter.	Park-Keeper
399.7	Green Flag Application - On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was RESOLVED to defer the item for further review by Cllr Marsh.	Cllr Marsh
399.8	Parks Office Broadband – In readiness for the digital switchover in 2025 a new contract and upgrading of the broadband connection was required. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to progress with the registration of the address and the conversion subject to checking with the supplier the necessity of registering the property separately with the postal service.	Clerk/ Ass. Clerk
399.9	Play Equipment – Cllrs Marsh, Tolley and Ireland declared personal interests being Trustees of Okehampton United Charity (OUC).	
The generous offer of a donation from the OUC of approximately £19,000 to cover the purchase and installation of a large play tractor in Simmons Park was noted and acceptance was RESOLVED by the Committee with thanks on the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Rogers (3 abstentions).		
The Clerk advised that removal of the climbing pole and standing seesaw would need to be considered along with their possible replacement at the next meeting.		Clerk
399.10	Christmas Free Parking - On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to extend the usual period of free parking offered in December to run from Edwardian Evening until 2 nd January 2024 from 12noon daily.	Clerk
399.11	Okehampton College and Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (DMAT) Signage – The Clerk reported Simmons Park Charity Trustees were liaising with the DMAT and the College regarding the wording and placing of signage erected in the vicinity of the playing fields without prior consultation in September.	
400	Skatepark	
400.1	Basketball Hoop – Cllr Marsh suggested that a basketball hoop or similar could be provided on the grassed area opposite the skatepark. Future consultation with young persons to be held.	
400.2	Skatepark and BMX Track – Cllr Marsh reported on a meeting held with a young person and an appropriate adult following an email received from them about improvements to the BMX track. Suggestions made included the provision of a bike rack.	

	<p>The Park-Keeper provided an update of progress and work being undertaken to obtain options from contractors for improvements whilst ensuring the track remained suitable for all levels of ability. He was also obtaining prices for skatepark resurfacing and replacing some metal ramps. Possibility of holding events in the area would be considered once work had been undertaken.</p>	Park-Keeper
401	<u>Cemetery</u>	
401.1	Burials – The summary of burials previously circulated was noted.	
401.2	<p>Scattering Lawn – Following a tree survey it had been established some work would be required to ensure the safety of persons working in or visiting the area. The trees were located on an adjoining bank the lower end of the scattering lawn that did not belong to the Council, which was not registered with Land Registry and the landowner was unknown.</p> <p>It was commented planning consent would be needed for the erection of a stone wall suggested as a boundary between burials and the scattering lawn.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was RESOLVED to approve the recommendations in accordance with the previously circulated report for creation of the scattering lawn.</p>	Admin Officer/ Clerk
401.3	<p>Memorial Bench – On the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED to approve a request by a member of the public to place a bench as a memorial in the cemetery, subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there being no cost to the council including for the provision of hardstanding, • the bench was in keeping with others in situ, • location to be agreed with Park-Keeper and applicant. 	Clerk/ Park-Keeper
402	<u>Other Outdoor Areas and Updates</u>	
402.1	Bus Shelters – Following inclusion of wording in the agreement with Fernbank as requested by the Committee, the new bus shelters had been provided. The living roofs would be added in the spring.	
402.2	<p>Weed Spraying Alternatives – A report, previously circulated, from the Park-Keeper setting out alternative methods of weed control was considered. Weeds were currently controlled by spot treatment to keep paths tidy, only undertaken in suitable weather conditions. Other control methods, including hot water treatment, destroyed roots so would incur additional work; one person to apply the treatment, one to clear the area.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to retain the current method of weed control.</p>	
402.3	Open Space, Sport and Recreation (OSSR) – An update in relation to S106 funding available from development in the area was provided. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was RESOLVED to submit applications for skatepark and putting green improvements with the priority being the putting green.	Park-Keeper/ Clerk
402.4	Tree Surveys – A survey of trees on council land, except Simmons Park, had been completed. The report and detail of work required were awaited but included felling of 2 ash trees infected with ash dieback.	

- 402.5 Clapps Wood Footpath Closure** – It was noted the footpath had been closed for 24 hours during the week of 23rd October 2023.
- 402.6 Bench Behind Lidl** – The Clerk reported the recycled plastic wheelchair accessible bench purchased in 2022 at the cost of £625 had been destroyed by fire. CCTV footage had been retrieved by Police who had identified persons responsible. Replacement of the bench to be considered in 2024.
- 403 Policies and Documents** - On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the Outdoor Area Inspection Policy to the Policy & Resources Committee with the amendment that bridges be inspected 3 yearly by external consultants and removal of reference to bus shelters.
- 404 Finance**
- 404.1 Payment of Invoices** – Cllr Marsh declared a personal interest in relation to grant payments to Melton Viaduct Trust and Everything Okehampton.
- On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Rogers, 1 abstention, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.
- 404.2 2024/25 Budget** – Draft V3 of the budget was considered. On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Mash, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the draft budget to Full Council.
- 405 Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups** -
- 405.1 Cemetery Management** – See Min Ref 401 above.
- 405.2 Putting Green Improvements** – No meeting had been held.
- 406 Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items** -
- 406.1 Dartmoor National Park Forum** – Cllr Marsh had attended a forum meeting the previous week. One of the main agenda items was about Curlew and Lapwing drop in number, the biggest cause being Crows.
- 406.2 Everything Okehampton** – Cllr Marsh reported on a successful Gala Dinner held the previous Friday which had raised approximately £1,700 towards the Christmas Lights. The next event was Edwardian Evening on 30th November at which the Mayor would be hosting Carols following the 6pm light switch on.
- 406.3 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)** – Cllr Tolley had attended a meeting of Trustees meeting in October and provided an update which included the Wind Turbine project. The next meeting was in January.
- 406.4 Okehampton & District Community Transport Group** – No report.
- 406.5 Parklands Leisure Centre Users Group** – The Clerk reported the Manager had indicated the User Group meetings would be restarted and a Meet the Manager meeting would be held later in November.
- 407 PART TWO CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** that under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press

Clerk

be excluded from the meeting for the following items which are 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.

(The Park-Keeper and other Councillors in attendance were permitted to remain.)

- 408** **Motorcycle Parking Bay** – It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3(bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Tolley.

Quotations received for the marking of the designated bay were considered. On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation of £500.

Park-Keeper

- 409** **Cemetery Land** – Cllr Marsh declared a personal interest.

The Clerk outlined two potential options that might be suitable and become available in the future.

- 410** **Memorial Masons** – The Clerk reported the matter in relation to an unpaid invoice had been resolved and outlined issues in relation to work being undertaken prior to permits being issued.

- 411** **Play Equipment** – The Park-Keeper provided information in relation to the play tractor to be donated by the OUC.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9pm.

Councillor Holt
Chairman