

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 26th February 2024 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present: Councillor A Fisher (Mayor)
 Councillor R Colman (Chairman, Property Committee)
 Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources Committee)
 Councillor L Bird
 Councillor T Cummings
 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)
 Cllr L Samuel (DCC)
 Cllr G Dexter (WDBC)
 Sgt Ottley (Devon & Cornwall Police)
 1 Member of the Public

Action

The resignation of Cllr Harding due to work pressures was noted.

589 Apologies for Absence – Apologies tendered by Cllr Leech (health) and Cllr Holt (health) were approved on the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Rogers.

Apologies tendered by Cllr Vachon (WDBC) were noted.

590 Declarations of Interest – None

591 Public Participation – None

592 Visiting Speaker – Sgt Ottley, Neighbourhood Sergeant for West Devon, addressed the Council about the effectiveness of the town CCTV system commenting the cameras were good quality and footage had assisted crime detection and prevention. Examples where CCTV had proved crucial to identification and apprehension of offenders in Okehampton was provided.

Improvements to the system including live monitoring were suggested by Sgt Ottley who advised he had invited the Clerk to visit an alternative monitoring hub in due course.

593 Public Participation - A member of the public advised they were interested in the creation of a Youth Council.

594 Members Questions – Cllr Ireland had attended a vigil in Tavistock for peace in Ukraine.

595 West Devon Borough Council – Cllr Dexter’s report had previously been circulated. WDBC had agreed a balanced budget for 2024/25. To achieve this council tax would increase by 2.99%, some reserves had been released and interest from investments would be used. Housing crisis and related action plans had been considered. A revised council tax reduction scheme and additional measures relating to empty homes premiums had been approved.

A report from Cllr Leech had been circulated and Cllr Vachon had provided a comment in relation to the recent Community Governance Boundary Review.

596 **Devon County Council** – Cllr Samuel had circulated a report. Information about the Pay & Display Parking consultation were not yet available. She had expressed concerns from comments received and would report further in due course.

597 **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Cllr Dexter responded to a question posted about development land.

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

598.1 On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Parks Committee** meeting held on 20th November 2023.

599 **Full Council Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 22nd January 2024 were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Ireland, to be signed by Cllr Fisher.

600 **Community Governance Boundary Review** – The review had been completed by WDBC, the outcome being approval of amendment to the boundary as requested by the Town Council following submission of a petition. This would be finalised once the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order and approval by the Electoral Commission was received. The Council acknowledged this was not the outcome hoped for by Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council and wished to continue to work with them on joint projects and events in the future. A statement was **agreed**.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to defer consideration of setting up a working group until the 2024/25 financial year.

Clerk

601 **DCC Pay & Display On-Street Parking Charges Proposal** – On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** to agree a contribution of up to £100 towards the cost of transportation for members of the community to DCC's Cabinet Meeting on 13th March at County Hall, Exeter. The funding would be available to the transportation organiser on production of invoices or receipts.

Clerk

Cllr Samuel was requested to arrange 2 seats for the Council at the Cabinet Meeting on 13th March.

Cllr Samuel

602 **Consultations**

602.1 **Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal** – On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** that given differing views expressed the Council would not respond at this stage. Councillors to submit their personal opinions as individuals if they so wished.

Councillors

602.2 **BT Phone Box Removal Consultation** – On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to object to the removal/closure of the BT phone box at the junction of Station Road and Tors Road (01837 52479) on the following grounds:

Clerk

- First point of contact for people coming off Dartmoor, especially important for those who did not have a mobile phone or if a phone had lost its charge.
- First point of contact for tourists and users of the railway station.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the mobile signals in that area were not as good as stated on the report. 	
603	Charter Hall Roofing Project – Work had commenced on 19 th February 2024. Receipt of £15,634.34 from a S106 grant award towards the project was noted. Contract related queries to be considered in Part 2 later in the meeting.	
604	Youth Council – On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to approve the creation of an Okehampton Town Youth Council and the timeline including the holding of elections for Youth Councillors. Nomination of one or two Councillors, and potentially up to two other young adults from within the community to act as adult volunteers/helpers to be considered at a later date along with relevant policies and documentation.	Clerk
605	Policies and Documents	
605.1	On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve the Flexible Working Policy following staff consultation and as recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee.	Clerk
605.2	Review of the updated risk assessments was deferred until the next meeting.	Clerk
606	Finance – On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments, including the costs for the purchase of a play tractor for installation in Simmons Park as recommended by the Parks Committee at £19,650.	
607	Meeting Dates - On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve the 2024/25 schedule of meeting dates and Civic events.	Clerk
608	Events	
608.1	Commonwealth Day, 11th March 2024 – The event was taking place outside St James' Chapel at 9.30am. Councillors were encouraged to attend.	Councillors
608.2	Annual Town Assembly and Report for 2023/24 Meeting - Speakers confirmed were Network Rail with a presentation about the new railway station and Dartmoor National Park about the Dartmoor Dynamic Landscape project. The Youth Council would be promoted and suggestions for other speakers was requested from Councillors. Report - On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Richards, it was RESOLVED to approve the draft 2023/24 annual report as produced to date with amendments including that it only contained a Planning Committee report from Cllr Ireland, the Vice-Chairman, who had chaired recent meetings.	Clerk Councillors
609	Royal Garden Party Nomination – Cllr Ireland had been nominated to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 21 st May 2024.	
610	Devon & Cornwall Police Cyber Crime Presentation – The Clerk reported she had arranged a presentation, open to Councillors and members of the public, in the Charter Hall on the evening of 24 th October 2024. Sgt Ottley to be invited to the Annual Town Assembly to give a presentation about CCTV or Policing matters.	Clerk
611	WDBC Mayoral Awards – No nominations were made.	

612 **Mayors Civic Diary** – Cllr Fisher had attended a variety of events: Memory Cafe, Launceston Town Council's Civic Service, Rainbows and Brownies, Methodist Ladies Club and Activity Day, Nibbles Café opening at Parklands, presented a cheque to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Friendly Circle, Wellness Choir, Mossy Party, Concert at Hatherleigh.

613 **Meeting and Project Reports**

613.1 **DCC Regeneration Project** – A meeting had been held in early February where the feasibility of projects including the reintroduction of a Farmers Market, skills and apprenticeship opportunities had been discussed. The next meeting was in April.

613.2 **Dartmoor's Dynamic Landscapes** – Cllr Marsh and the Clerk had met with two Dartmoor National Park members wanting to work closer with the town.

614 **Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups** –

614.1 **Climate Change** – A meeting would be held once Cllr Leech was able to take part.

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

615.1 **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – A Regulation 16 hearing had been requested by the Inspector. Confirmation of a date in April was awaited.

615.2 **Okehampton Community Hospital** – Cllr Marsh advised a closed meeting with an MP and other stakeholders had taken place the previous week. Information had been requested and a future local meeting with stakeholders agreed.

615.3 **Business Improvement District** – Cllr Tolley had attended a meeting on 8th February when the workshops had been discussed. Ballot preparation was progressing. The next meeting was on 29th February.

Cllr Richards requested that Transition Towns be added to the agenda and was advised to email details to the Clerk for consideration of the Council.

Cllr Richards

616 **Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items** -

616.1 **Rural Market Town Group** – No information to report.

616.2 **20's Plenty for Devon** – Cllr Marsh reported no meeting for this item or for the Active Travel Project had been held. Clerk to follow up and report to the next meeting.

Clerk

616.3 **Active Travel Project** – Refer to 20's Plenty for Devon above, Min Ref 616.2.

(All persons with the exception of Town Councillors left the meeting)

617 **PART 2 Confidential Matters** - On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Bird 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.

618 **Charter Hall Roofing Project** – Queries raised by the contractor, email dated 26 February 2024, were considered as follows:

Clerk

Rooflights – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** to agree Option 2, the removal of the roof light over the toilet. A potential cost saving of £656.65.

Lightwell/Uncovered Area - On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Colman review the situation and the decision be delegated to the Clerk in consultation with Cllr Colman.

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

Slates – The reasons for and against salvaging the slates were considered. Comments including there was a responsibility to maintain and use assets wisely even if there would be additional cost, and the additional significant logistics of saving the slates were made.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, (5 in favour, 3 against, 3 abstentions) for reasons of expediency and logistics it was **RESOLVED** to agree the removal and disposal of the slates by the builder rather than salvaging them and accept an offer of a £3,000 reduction in cost due to confusion about this item. Clerk to establish if any of the slates could be utilised in Simmons Park or other council premises.

619 **Lower Market Hall, First Floor Lease Renewal** – Correspondence from the tenant was considered along with other reports and information. On the proposition of Cllr Cummings seconded Cllr Marsh (1 against), it was **RESOLVED** not to renew the lease and to give notice as requested within the received correspondence.

Clerk

620 **Town Council Mayoral Awards** – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** that persons would receive an award as noted by the Clerk. Councillors who had nominated persons to provide information and certificate wording to the Clerk.

Clerk

621 **Insurance** – Item deferred as the quotation had not been received.

Clerk

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to move out of Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9.15pm.

Councillor Fisher, Mayor