

**Okehampton Town Council  
Full Council Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
Meeting Report**

<b>Date:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Name:</b>	Emma James

**Okehampton Community Hospital – To consider correspondence received**



**Briefing  
Update on estates work at Okehampton  
Community Hospital  
May 2024**

**Overview**

- This briefing contains an update on important estates rationalisation work the local NHS is undertaking at Okehampton Community Hospital.

**Background**

In November 2023, NHS Devon confirmed that it had taken the decision to declare the former ward area, associated link corridors and ancillary space at Okehampton Community Hospital surplus to NHS requirements, and had effectively started the process of handing back the empty space to the owners of the building, NHS Property Services.

The decision was taken because the former ward at Okehampton Community Hospital has been empty and unused since 2017, which is not a good use of NHS resources and could save more than £200,000 a year in rent and other property charges paid by NHS Devon to NHS Property Services.

The NHS in Devon has experienced significant financial challenges for many years, consistently spending more money on health services than it has been given to meet the needs of the 1.2 million people it serves.

This has contributed to Devon being placed in the highest segment (segment 4, sometimes known as special measures or NOF4) of the [NHS Oversight Framework](#) by NHS England.

In 2022/23, Devon's end of year position was a deficit of £46.2 million and in 2023/24 the overall system deficit was £46.9 million, despite achieving efficiency savings of £207 million. The final forecast position for 2024/25 is still being confirmed but it is anticipated that a significant deficit will be forecast and a similar level of savings will be required.

Further information on the background to the hand back is available on [NHS Devon's website](#).

## Current position

During the process of handing back the ward area to NHS Property Services, a site development assessment was undertaken, and it was identified that maternity services could be relocated into the outpatient department in the main hospital building. This would enable the release of the maternity suite, which, combined with the empty former ward area, would provide a larger overall space for hand back that would facilitate work by NHS Property Services to market the space and find a future use for it.

The maternity area is indicated with the dotted yellow line, below, and is adjacent to the empty former ward area shown to the left.

In April 2024, NHS Devon's Finance and Performance Committee, on behalf of the NHS Devon Board, approved the handback of the maternity area to NHS Property Services. A report by the Committee Chair confirming the decision is due to be published in NHS Devon's Board papers on 22 May 2024 ahead of its meeting on 30 May.



**There is no impact on services as a result of this decision.**

**Current maternity services**

**(both those in operation and those currently temporarily suspended) can be relocated into the retained main building of the adjacent hospital. The services have not yet moved and patients should continue to attend appointments as normal.**

There is no impact on any other services being provided at the hospital.

Negotiations with NHSPS continue on what will happen next as the hand back process is not straightforward. If NHS Property Services accept the hand back, it would be for NHS Property Services to determine what to do with the building.

## Roof improvement works by NHS Property Services

NHS Property Services is undertaking some capital improvement work at Okehampton Community Hospital, which will see an investment of approx £1 million in the building.

As part of this, there is a need to temporarily relocate some teams who work in the building during the work programme.



The kitchen space has recently been cleared of the remaining kitchen utilities to enable Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust community nurses and admin teams to temporarily use the space while NHSPS undertakes its capital works, which include replacement of the roof and flooring in their usually occupied areas. The works are set for completion within the next six months (dependent on weather). Items removed recently include old regeneration trollies, fridges, and tea machines that were not disposed of when the kitchen closed in 2017.

The kitchen at Okehampton Hospital has been unused since 2017 when beds were removed. Food provision remains unaffected at the hospital as there has not been any food provision at Okehampton since the closure of the ward in 2017.

Some internal windows and doorway boarding has been undertaken within the works area. This is to prevent dust contamination to the working areas of the hospital. This is standard industry practice for health and safety and infection control.

The roofing work includes the areas being handed back – this is because they had also been affected by water ingress and the works protect the internal fabric of the building, facilitating potential work by NHSPS to find future uses for the space.

## Community engagement on under-used space in the main hospital

During its routine estates work, NHS Devon identified that, in general, space in the rest of the hospital, although tenanted, is under-utilised.

In November 2023, NHS Devon expressed a desire to widen community engagement work to explore ways of improving space utilisation in the hospital's main building to get better value from it.

This was envisaged as a medium-term piece of work to link with NHS and community partners to explore local needs and ideas. It was also made clear that any changes would need to be fully costed.

The early stages of this work are underway and a number of meetings have been held with community representatives.

In order to inform this work, the current focus is on working with other NHS partners locally to assess how much space could be available. Once this has been established, further meetings will be arranged to talk about local needs and develop ideas.

We will provide further information about the work to improve space utilisation in the rest of the hospital in due course.

ENDS

**DCC Children's Centre/Family Hubs Consultation – To consider a response to the consultation.**

1. See attached document.
2. Correspondence from the Leader of WDBC indicates there will be further consultations that will include towns, parishes, users and the general public and who believes this should be discussed further at WDBC and town/parish council level. I understand a meeting is being arranged.

**Okehampton Railway – To consider matters relating to rail services in Okehampton including the naming of the new Station and note that the meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> June had been cancelled.**

A response from GWR in relation to questions raised at the previous meeting are as follows:

Taking each point in turn, adding extra train carriages solely for bicycles is not something we are able to do, as we do not have the available rolling stock to convert currently. There is no specific limit on the number of cycles that can be carried on services to/from Okehampton, with the rolling stock and number of carriages operated varying at times slightly. However, on all the units used, you can accommodate 2-4 bicycles in the racks provided and the train guard can at their discretion carry more in the gangways if the service is not too busy and it is safe to do so.

There will be parking for bicycles at Okehampton Interchange once the new station is built, with improved walking and cycling routes nearby and cycle parking racks provided to store your bike close to the platform. Devon County Council will be leading with the active travel measures outside of the station construction package.

Not all services have reservable cycle spaces. Most branch lines, including Okehampton do not have reservable space and is operated on a first come, first served basis. A number of mainline services have reservable bike spaces, with the Night Riviera Sleeper and trains to/from London Paddington operating with mandatory reservations. If you have used Trainline to try and reserve space it is worth noting this is a third party ticket retailer and is not connected to GWR. You can book cycle spaces direct with GWR on the app, by telephone or at any station ticket office. Reservations also have to be made by 1800 on the day before travel. More information, including a copy of our bicycle policy can be found on our website here: <https://www.gwr.com/travelling-with-us/on-our-trains/bringing-your-bike>

Cancelled Meeting - The following was received from Network Rail on 12<sup>th</sup> June. An alternative date has been requested.

I've been informed as of this afternoon that Network Rail will no longer be able to attend any local council meetings to discuss projects until after the general election. This is following an instruction from our public relations team.

I can only apologise for the short notice once again, this information has only just been circulated amongst Network Rail. As soon as I receive further communication about when we can reconvene with external Stakeholder meetings I'll let you know.

**BT Phone Box Removal – To consider a report from the Clerk in relation to the decommissioning of the phone box located at the junction of Station Road and Tors Road in September 2024 by BT.**

The phone box is believed to be a K6 kiosk.

According to Historic England the K6 Kiosk was designed by Sir Giles Scott (1880-2960) and is one of Britain's most recognisable pieces of industrial design. Around 60,000 were installed between 1936 and 1968. The phone box in Simmons Park is also of this type.

Around 3,200 K6 kiosks are listed. Historic England advise that because a relatively large number have survived and are protected new listings are very rare and are determined on the basis of the quality of the 'group value' along with other listed buildings or sites.

Further information can be found here

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/consent-adapting-k6-telephone-kiosks/>