



Okehampton Town Council

Town Hall  
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Devon  
EX20 1AA

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**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 7:30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

**Members Present:**

Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)  
Councillor C Marsh (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor F Hart  
Councillor M Ireland  
Councillor D McNeill  
Councillor S Weekes

Councillor R Colman (Mayor)  
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)  
Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, P&R)

**In Attendance:**

Mrs A Horn (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr J McGahey (Park-Keeper)

The meeting was livestreamed through the Council Facebook page.

**22. Apologies for Absence**

On the Proposition of Cllr Yelland and Seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies from Cllr Bird (Prior Engagement) Cllr Holt (Illness).

**23. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Ireland declared a personal interest in Parklands Leisure Centre as he was a regular user.

**24. Public Participation**

None

**25. Park-Keeper**

Mr McGahey reported recent events had been busy and successful. The VE Day celebration was very well attended, helped by the good weather and an excellent turnout of vehicles, tractors and aircraft. The Skate jam event held over the weekend also attracted a strong turnout and was well received. The Parks team put in a significant work preparing the sites in advance to ensure everything was ready for both events. This had made them behind on weeding, particularly in the area by Waitrose and the Exeter Road mural which would hopefully be tackled this week. The volunteer group would be out on Wednesday to help assist with the weeding, anyone was welcome to join. The Sensory Garden had been planted with summer bedding plants, areas of the park had been pressure washed and a few areas required attention such as the bridge into the car park which was in need of repainting.

**26. Members' Questions**

Cllr McNeill asked Mr McGahey who collated all the data on wildlife in the Park as there are some very knowledgeable birdwatchers in the area. Mr McGahey replied that the bird data had been collected during the Big Garden Bird Watch, and the butterfly count would be later

in the year. Wild Oke had been helping with the collection of data and everyone was welcome to come along and help.

## **27. Minutes**

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland and seconded Cllr Marsh it was **RESOVLED** to approve and sign the minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

## **28. Simmons Park**

**28.1 Bookings** - The Council noted the bookings clarifying the Rotary Summer Fair on 3<sup>rd</sup> August and The Amusement Fair from 10<sup>th</sup> October and not as per the report.

**28.2 Lighting Column Stability Inspections** – The inspection report was noted including the need not to repeat the inspections for approximately 5 years.

**28.3 Unauthorised Vehicles Accessing Formal Side of Simmons Park** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Yelland it was **RESOLVED** to get quotes for painting “no authorised vehicles” inside the park gates.

**28.4 Simmons Park Carpark** – The price increase, parking orders and agreements update was noted.

**28.5 Events** – A reptile and small mammal hunt was held with Wild Oke where heat mats were put out beforehand. It was well attended and it was hoped to hold another session later in the year. Dartmoor National Park were holding a pond dipping and river sampling day in Simmons Park on 21<sup>st</sup> August at 1pm and an evening bat and owl walk would be arranged later in the year.

**28.6 Management Plan** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOVLED** to accept the Management Plan

**28.7 Riverbank Repair** – Mr McGahey informed the council the delay in start was due to needing a license from the Environment Agency which had been applied for. Once this was received work could start.

**28.8 Ash Tree** – A tree survey raised that an ash tree needed to be taken down within a 6-month window. The tree was on the boundary of the park and 2 properties in Station Road. It was hoped to split costs between the properties; one was in agreement but it had not been possible to contact the owner of the other property. Mr McGahey outlined the options for the tree:

- a) Remove the branches over the park
- b) Remove the branches over the park and garden of the property in agreement
- c) Take the tree down and cover two thirds of the cost.

It was agreed that this be considered within Part 2 later in the meeting due to GDPR.

**28.9 Putting Improvements** – Cllr Leech declared an interest being a member of WDBC Planning Committee. On the proposition of Cllr March and seconded by Cllr Colman (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to submit the S106 application with the amendments recommended by the working group.

**28.10 River Risk Assessment** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Hart it was **RESOLVED** to accept the River risk assessment with the following additions:  
River in spate from heavy runoff from Dartmoor levels rise very quickly  
Ball games and retrieval of  
Winter vegetation along the river sparser and less of a natural barrier.

## **29. Skatepark and BMX Track**

**29.1 BMX/Pump Track Improvements** – It was noted that the £30,000 mentioned in the correspondence was S106 monies which could only be used for this purpose and this should be conveyed to the author. The initial design was noted which matched the footprint of the existing track. A consultation date was being arranged and once this had taken place the final plans would be agreed. CCTV in the area was discussed and it was agreed that this be considered within Part 2 later in the meeting due to contract details.

**29.2 Fires** – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley and seconded by Cllr Leech (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to remove the stones from the fire site and if the incident was repeated the continuation of the longer wildlife friendly grass would be reviewed.

### **30. Cemetery**

**30.1** It was noted that since the last Parks committee meeting there had been 1 headstone erected in the cemetery and no burials.

**30.2** The report from the survey had arrived shortly before the committee meeting, which seemed to indicate the area could be used as a cemetery but with limitations. It was agreed that the Cemetery working group review the report and bring recommendations back to the next meeting.

### **31. Other Areas and Updates**

**31.1 Vehicles** – Mr McGahey reported that the van had changed garages and the donor parts were being investigated. The van may need to be moved to a garage in Plymouth if they thought it was viable to solve the issue. If it was not then the van was unrepairable and the Council would need to decide what to do with it.

**31.2 Parklands Leisure Centre** – Cllr Ireland stated he was a frequent user of the Leisure Centre and he had not encountered some of the issues raised. Cllr Yelland suggested that as the contract was not between Okehampton Town Council and Fusion the correspondent be asked if their details could be shared with West Devon who held the contract. Cllr Leech had spoken to West Devon about the issues raised and the Assistant Clerk read an update from the manager regarding some of the issues. Cllr Marsh and Cllr Leech had both attended the Meet the Manager meeting which had replaced the User Group. They had suggested that these Manager meetings need to be advertised to the public so concerns could be raised.

**31.3 Allotments** – Cllrs Marsh, Ireland, Tolley and Colman declared personal interests as Trustees of Okehampton United Charities and Cllr McNeill declared a personal interest as an allotment holder. It was agreed that this item to be considered within Part 2 later in the meeting.

### **32. Finance**

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to approve the payment schedule (BACS payments totalling £18,770.47 plus VAT)

### **33. Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups**

**33.1 Cemetery Management** - The group would be meeting soon to discuss the report received.

#### **33.2 Projects:**

**Putting Green Improvements** – Already discussed in the meeting.

**BMX Track Improvements** - Already discussed in the meeting.

### **34. Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items**

**34.1 Business Improvement District** - Cllr Tolley reported that the new manager had been appointed, they were currently visiting local businesses and were playing a part in Okey music Day.

**34.2 DCC Regeneration Board** - Cllr Tolley reported the next meeting was yet to be arranged

**34.3 Dartmoor National Park Forum** - Cllr Marsh reported that this forum met twice a year and there had not yet been a meeting this year.

**34.4 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)** - Cllr Tolley circulated the Managers report prior to the meeting and highlighted it was important to remember that OCRA was a charity and not a business. They were facing challenges as all charities were with funding, they were focussing on working with those groups and organisations who support them and that fundraising was a key issue this year.

**34.5 Parklands Leisure Centre User Group** - Cllr Marsh reported she had spoken to the manager and asked for a User Group meeting which would hopefully be arranged.

**35. PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL**

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Leech 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 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 was permitted to remain) (Cllr Hart left at 8:30pm.)

**36. Commercial Use of Simmons Park**

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to charge for the commercial use of Simmons Park and more information was needed from bookings before a fee could be set. Bookings would also need to be made at least two weeks in advance to give the Park Team time to adjust their work schedule.

**37. Incidents in Simmons Park**

**37.1** An update was noted and it was agreed the Clerk would continue to try and recover the cost of the bench being in the region of £1,000.

**37.2** An update from Mr McGahey was noted and the Council were saddened to see the need for the reintroduction of Body Cams.

**38. Simmons Park Lighting Column Electrical Inspections**

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Weekes it was **RESOLVED** to do the work to the first column to see if this resolved the issue and accept the estimated cost of £1,000 from MHLS.

**39. Ash tree**

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and seconded by Cllr Weekes it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk try and obtain the address of the third party to invoice for the work. The Park Keeper and Cllr Leech would contact West Devon's Tree officer to see if it was possible to serve notice on the tree.

**40. Skate Park CCTV**

Cllr Leech provided an update on the CCTV in the Skate park.

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

**41. Allotments** – Cllr Weekes proposed the Council accept the allotments in principle; this was not seconded. It was **RESOLVED** on the proposition by Cllr Yelland that the committee recommend to Full Council a working group needed to be formed to explore the commitment for the council to fulfil its statutory duty. The members should not be Trustees of Okehampton United Charities or Allotment Holders it was seconded by Cllr Leech (5 abstentions).

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland seconded Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9:12pm.

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Councillor Tolley, Chairman