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**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

**Members Present:**

Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)  
Councillor C Holt  
Councillor M Ireland  
Councillor D McNeill

Councillor L Bird (Chairman Property)  
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.

**131. Apologies for Absence**

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies from Cllr Marsh (Personal) and Cllr Weekes (Illness).

**132. Declarations of Interest**

None

**133. Public Participation**

None

**134. Park-Keeper**

The recent dry weather had been beneficial, allowing the Parks Team to catch up on grass cutting and slowing weed growth. The improved weather also led to an increase in butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. A work experience student had been helping with a butterfly count to monitor species and numbers.

Repairs to the skate park wall have been undertaken, following issues with antisocial behaviour.

The wildflower area was flowering well, and the lavender in Fairplace was flourishing. Repainting of Jubilee Bridge had begun.

Upcoming wildlife events included a nocturnal walk with moth traps and bat detectors at 8pm on 1<sup>st</sup> August, and a Dartmoor National Park riverbed species discovery afternoon at 1:30pm on 21<sup>st</sup> August.

Cllr Yelland noted that an article in Oke Links highlighted the impressive work and high quality of maintenance in the park. She expressed thanks to the Parks Team.

Due to reduced staffing hours, major projects, and the busy summer season, Cllr Tolley requested that members email the team rather than phone, to help them manage their workload effectively.

**135. Members' Questions**

None

### **136. Minutes**

On the proposition of Cllr Leech and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to confirm, approve and sign the minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 with an amendment at Min Ref 28.3 correcting the word 'authorised' to 'unauthorised'.

### **137. Simmons Park**

#### **137.1 Bookings**

The upcoming bookings were noted

#### **137.2 Trees**

The Ash tree identified with dieback in the last inspection had been reduced to a safe height, with the trunk retained as habitat. The Beech tree, diagnosed with canker and recently tomographed, has deteriorated rapidly with leaf loss and dying branches. West Devon Borough Council's Tree Officer was due to visit later in the week, and permission to fell and replant was being sought.

#### **137.3 Park Carpark**

No update had been received from WDBC.

#### **137.4 Riverbank Repair**

The contractor was still waiting for the licence from the Environment Agency and no work could take place until this was received.

### **138. Skatepark and BMX Track**

#### **138.1 BMX/Pump Track Improvements**

Work had been finished extending the bends, and currently the jumps were being expanded. It was still on target to finish in the first week of August. On the proposition of Cllr Tolley and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to hold an opening event.

#### **138.2 Lighting Column Stability Inspections**

The stability inspections were noted and electrical inspections were in hand.

### **139. Cemetery**

**139.1** It was noted that since the last Parks Committee meeting there had been 2 headstones erected with additional inscriptions, a request for a scattering on the lawn and no burials.

**139.2** On the proposition of Cllr Leech second Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** to accept recommendations in the report and continue with the purchase of the cemetery land.

### **140. Other Areas and Updates**

#### **140.1 Vehicles**

Mr McGahey reported that the van was in Plymouth and had been there a fortnight, it had been running but a few warning lights had come on which they were currently working on. They were hoping to have finished the work by end of the week.

#### **140.2 Waterwheel**

It was noted that installing the waterwheel would require constructing a secure, enclosed structure, but no suitable location was identified in the park. It could not be adapted as play equipment due to current regulations and the high cost of compliance, which would also alter its original character. A query was raised regarding a possible covenant restricting its removal. Cllr Colman proposed that the council didn't accept the offer as the cost and insurance implications outweighed the benefit of taking it, seconded Cllr Leech, 1 abstention, which was **RESOLVED**.

### **141. Finance**

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to approve the payment schedule (BACS payments and July salaries totalling £21,820.58 plus VAT).

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

### **142.1 Cemetery Management**

Recommendations had already been received at Min Ref 139.2

### **142.2 Projects:**

**Putting Green Improvements** – There was no update to report

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

### **143. Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -**

#### **143.1 Business Improvement District**

Cllr Tolley reported that a meeting was held last Friday. The BID was not currently promoting itself effectively and work was ongoing to implement a CRM system to improve communication with BID members. The team was awaiting the outcome of a Brighter Futures grant application. Efforts were being made to improve the websites functionality, and a revised Facebook page and social media plan were in place. The Waitrose Manager was asked to look into the feasibility of improving the road past Oaklands House as an exit from the carpark. There were also plans to support improvements to the derelict walkway by The Mill and to collaborate with Okehampton College with the business training platform. Support had been offered for Oke Music Day and for the town's Christmas lights.

#### **143.2 DCC Regeneration Board**

Cllr Tolley reported the next meeting was yet to be arranged and could be a while due to devolution.

#### **143.3 Dartmoor National Park Forum**

The forum had been cancelled and the newsletter circulated.

#### **143.4 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)**

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

#### **143.5 Parklands Leisure Centre User Group**

Cllr Tolley reported that there had been no meeting.

### **PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

**144.** 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)

#### **145. Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship interviews were held over two days with five candidates; two are taking part in workplace taster days in the park this week, and an apprentice would be confirmed shortly

#### **146. Green Flag Award**

The Assistant Clerk disclosed the outcome of the application and reminded those present that the result was embargoed until 15th July. A thank you was extended to the Park-Keeper and Parks Team for their work, the quality of which was recognised.

#### **147 Unauthorised Vehicles Accessing Formal Side of Simmons Park**

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley and seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quote of £650 plus VAT from JHB UK Ltd.

#### **148 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)**

Cllr Tolley reported an ongoing issue affecting OCRA, but noted it was progressing towards resolution.

**149    Urgent Item**

Cllr Ireland asked if it could be brought to the attention of the appropriate committee the issue of parking on the pavement in Fore Street.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland seconded Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 7:50pm.

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Cllr Tolley, Chairman

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