



Okehampton Town Council

Town Hall
Fore Street
Okehampton
Devon
EX20 1AA

01837 53179

www.okehampton.gov.uk

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 19th January 2026 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present:

Cllr T Cummings
Cllr A Fisher
Cllr C Holt
Cllr M Ireland
Cllr D McNeill
Cllr M Richards

Cllr L Bird (Chairman, Property)
Cllr B Tolley (Chairman, Parks)
Cllr T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Cllr J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)

In Attendance:

Mrs A Horn (Assistant Town Clerk)
Cllr J Grainger (DCC)
Cllr G Dexter (WDBC)
Devon Communities Together Representative
3 members of the public

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Bird, Deputy Mayor and livestreamed through the Council's Facebook page.

506. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Marsh (personal), Cllr Weekes (work), and Cllr Colman (illness). On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded by Cllr Richards, it was **RESOLVED** to approve these apologies.

The resignation of Cllr Hart was noted.

507. Declarations of Interest

None

508. Public Participation

None

509. Devon County Council

Cllr Grainger provided an update on the following matters:

Gas Works and Road Closure: Wales & West Utilities were undertaking works and were responsible for signage. Initial confusion had improved. The closure would move further up the road on Tuesday, with access to the Medical Centre from Mill Road. Works were expected to last two weeks.

Footpath Closures: Work continued to reopen footpaths in Mill Road, and Castle Road to Leaze Park. Cllr Grainger had spoken with the Director of Public Rights of Way to try and move this forward.

Okehampton Interchange was still on schedule to open in May. A suggestion was raised asking if a water supply on-site could be provided in case of emergencies.

Exeter City Council Elections: Noted that elections had been postponed.

510. Visiting Speaker

Community Emergency Plans

The Council received a presentation from a Community Projects Advisor from Devon Communities Together, regarding the creation of Community Emergency Plans. He explained the background to statutory requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, emphasising that Town and Parish Councils can act as facilitators for community-led emergency responses.

- The plan serves as a local resilience document, complementing higher-level emergency frameworks.
- Parish and Town councils are the facilitator and enabler, not the doer. The Councils act as custodians of the plan which is reviewed annually and fully renewed every three years.
- Two versions exist: a full (contact details included) and redacted (public-facing) copy.
- Grant funding of up to £5,000 is available to support plan development, training, and equipment.
- Plans sit within a county database, accessible to emergency services.

Questions were asked about coordination with rescue teams, data maintenance, response during power outages, and integration with the Devon Resilience Framework. It was confirmed that coordination with Dartmoor Rescue was at the higher level plan, the Town Council would have responsibility for the emergency plan document, and that hard copies were part of local contingency arrangements.

511. Members' Questions

None

512. West Devon Borough Council

Cllr Leech reported on changes to planning guidance under the NPPF, including heritage, biodiversity, housing delivery and wellbeing standards. An article on Okehampton Castle had been published.

Cllr Dexter reported that Mayoral Award nominations were open, and that towns could apply for Town of Culture status. He highlighted concerns about future financial pressures due to central government funding formulas disadvantaging rural councils. He was having a briefing with Lidl's and if Councillors had any questions to let him know.

(Cllr Grainger left the meeting at 19:41.

Cllr Holt left the meeting at 19:44.)

513. Questions Arising from Member Reports

Cllr Richards queried the three-year financial plan when West Devon may not exist in three years' time. It was confirmed that this was a statutory financial planning requirement and that WDBC had a three-year funding deal for the first time in a decade.

514. Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon

514.1 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 8th December 2025.

515. Full Council Meeting Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Bird seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 15th December 2025 for signing by the Chairman.

(Cllr Holt returned 19:48)

516. Community Emergency Plan

Time scales for the introductory meeting were discussed as well as whether the plan would cover all types of risks. On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to proceed by introducing the initiative and inviting community groups to engage at the Annual Town Assembly.

Cllr Cummings volunteered to lead the initiative introducing the presentation at the Annual Town Assembly and collecting feedback from the local community groups.

(Devon Communities Together representative left at 19:57)

517. Projects and Consultations

517.1 Local Government Reorganisation

- a) A meeting to discuss assets with DCC had been requested. It was agreed to ask Cllr Grainger to try and push this forward
- b) No response had been received from WDBC in response to a request for the potential acquisition of assets, this had been chased again by the Clerk. Cllr Leech had been in contact with West Devons legal team, and it was on the to do list.

(Cllr Tolley left 19:57)

517.2 Community Governance Boundary Change

A draft notice to be included with the Council Tax bills had been agreed by OHPC, but they would not contribute to the cost, details of which were awaited from WDBC. The Clerk was meeting with WDBC at the end of January to discuss how the precept changes could be managed.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to agree the notice with an amendment.

(Cllr Tolley returned 20:00)

517.3 Neighbourhood Plan

A response was chased by the Clerk week during the week commencing 5th January when it was advised it was still with WDBC's legal team.

517.4 Lloyds Bank Closure

Cllr Richards declared an interest.

The Post Office was being considered for a cash-assisted facility. The Council expressed concern about digital accessibility for residents and on the proposition of Cllr Fisher and seconded by Cllr Ireland (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to write to the local MP regarding banking access again stating the need for a banking hub as the Post Office could no longer accept Lloyds Bank cheques, outreach Post Offices in the area were closing and there was not enough capacity in the Okehampton Post Office to provide the services needed.

517.5 Allotments

Cllr Tolley declared interest as a member of Okehampton United Charities (OUC).

The Clerk was waiting for feedback from OUC before the lease could be progressed.

517.6 Pulse Hubs

Cllr Leech declared an interest as a West Devon Borough Councillor

The withdrawing of the project was noted with sadness. The Police, Highways and WDBC Conservation Officer all had objections to the hubs and the project needed four or five hubs to make it viable.

518 2026/27 Budget and Precept

518.1 Budget for the 2026/27 financial year

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Fisher, it was **RESOLVED** to approve V3 of the budget with the addition of £10,000 for expenses listed in the report and adding the amount to the Riverbank repair budget line.

518.2 Precept requirement for the 2026/27 financial year

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the precept requirement of £475,273, for the 2026/27 financial year. The precept requirement amounted to an increase of 1.88% on a Band D property. 1.88% being an increase of £3.77 p/annum (£0.07 p/week).

519. Finance

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments, the BACS payments including January salaries totalled £32,664.11 exclusive of VAT.

520. Historic Plaque/Recognition Schemes

A request from a member of the public that a former local person, James Coombe, be recognised through a scheme was considered. It was noted that consent would be needed from the owner of a building to be able to affix a blue plaque to it. On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to support an application and suggest to the applicant they contact the Masonic Lodge as James Coombe had links to them.

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

521. Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)

On the proposition of Cllr Leech and seconded by Cllr Yelland it was **RESOLVED** maintain engagement with DCC regarding future schemes.

522. Nomination of Trustee to Okehampton Foundation

Cllr Tolley declared an interest being a Trustee

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland and seconded Cllr Leech (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to nominate Cllr Yelland.

523. Civic

523.1 Mayor's Diary Report

Cllr Bird, Deputy Mayor, had attended the induction service for the new Vicar of All Saints Church.

523.2 Pendant Repair

Advice from Fattorini relating to the age and fragility of the pendant was considered. On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to have the pendant glued and that it be retired alongside the historic chain of office. A new pendant to be purchased for use with the new chain. The current pendant would only be used when the old chain was used for previously identified Civic occasions in Okehampton (Mayor Choosing and Annual Council Meeting, Civic Service, Remembrance Service and Parade, Commonwealth Day).

523.3 Annual Town Assembly

It was agreed to invite the local groups to the meeting that might be interested in joining the Community Emergency Plan. It was asked that the assembly was advertised wider than previously and that questions be sent before the meeting. The layout to be as in previous years with committee Chairmen each on a table and other councillors spread around the rest of the tables which made the meeting feel less formal and more welcoming. Suggestions included

- Inviting the new vicar
- Inviting a local choir
- Including a Neighbourhood Plan update, if available

Councillors were requested to email the Clerk to confirm their suggestions of other items/ presentations for the agenda by mid-February.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

524. On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Richards 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.

525. Public Toilet Cleaning Contract

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher and seconded by Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to award the contract for one year to WDBC totalling £16,877 with future arrangements to be reviewed in spring/summer 2026.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Richards, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions therein.

The meeting was closed at 8.52pm.

Councillor Colman, Mayor