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**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on
Monday 29th September 2025 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present:

Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)
Councillor C Marsh (Vice Chair)
Councillor M Ireland
Councillor D McNeill

Councillor L Bird (Chairman, Property)
Councillor R Colman (Mayor)
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)

In Attendance:

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

The meeting was livestreamed through the Council Facebook page.

260. Apologies for Absence

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies from Cllr Yelland, Cllr Weekes and Cllr Hart (Personal).

Cllr Holt was absent

261. Declarations of Interest

None

262. Public Participation

None

263. Park-Keeper

Dartmoor National Park has completed a river sampling afternoon. While some ecological variety was found, it was less than hoped, so ongoing monitoring is planned. Work has begun on zoning areas for maintenance of the outdoor spaces. There has been no progress from the Environment Agency on the riverbank permit, and the Park Keeper will try to chase this up. Several bat societies have been contacted regarding the Barbastelle bats heard in the park, it is hoped that their sounds can be recorded again and the park may become a survey site.

The wildflower area has been trimmed back, and soil testing is scheduled. A lower-cost reseeding mix is being considered, which may last more than a year and self-expand as time goes on. Painting of Jubilee Bridge has been completed. A potential refurbishment of the bandstand is being considered for next year, depending on workload. Final weed tidying in the park has started near the ponds and is progressing towards the front gates. The new apprentice started today, and congratulations to Jacob, who passed his final exam with distinction.

264. Members' Questions

Cllr Marsh asked if there was an update on the repair of the fence behind Lidl. The Assistant Clerk had reported it again to DCC and had emailed WDBC Localities team who had also reported the

problem to see if they had had any response. The Parks team would collect the wood retrieved from the river this week.

Cllr McNeill reported that the ornamental deer depicted in the town guide was not currently very visible and could it be moved to another location or be kept clearer. The Park Keeper replied it was in its current location to stop vandalism making it difficult to reach to keep clear but it was due its bi-annual clearance in the next month.

Cllr McNeill also reported that the books in the book swap were untidy and some had been in there a while, was the book swap well used? The book swap was checked every Monday and it was being well used as a recent request for books had gone out. The Parks team did not have the time to tidy it daily.

Cllr Ireland reported that the Town Guides were available from the book swap as well as the Leisure Centre.

265. Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland and seconded by Cllr Colman (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to confirm, approve and sign the minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 14th July 2025.

266. Simmons Park

266.1 Bookings

The upcoming bookings were noted

266.2 Putting Improvements

The S106 application had not been successful. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh Cllr Colman seconded (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to keep the project moving forward in a phased approach using the current budget as well as applying for any available grants, as it was the main income from the park.

266.3 Car Park Surfacing

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to defer the item until after the meeting with the West Devon officer as it was not urgent.

266.4 Lighting work

Completion of the work was noted

266.5 Christmas Parking

On the proposition of Cllr Leech and seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** that parking would be free in Simmons Park Car Park Monday to Friday from 12noon, all day Saturdays and Bank Holidays from Monday 1st December until Thursday 1st January 2026 (inclusive).

266.6 Cooper Beech Tree

WDBC Tree Officer's approval of felling of the diseased tree was noted.

266.7 Goal Post Storage

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley and seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** to allow storage of the Football Club Youth Team goal posts on the council side of the fence by the putting green.

267. Skatepark and BMX Track

267.1 BMX/Pump Track Improvements

The Committee noted the completion and commented that the site was being well used.

268. Cemetery

268.1 Burials

An update was noted.

268.2 Annual Inspection

Due to the weather conditions in August when the inspections were undertaken it was decided to repeat the inspection in January when the ground conditions would be different. None of the gravestones were found to be dangerous. There was wildlife activity found in the cemetery but the camera had not identified the species.

269. Policies

On the proposition of Cllr Colman and seconded by Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the following policies to the Policy & Resources Committee:

- a) Snow and Ice Management
- b) Cemetery Fees
- c) Okehampton Cemetery Brochure
- d) Cemetery and Grave Digging Policy
- e) Cemetery Rules and Regulations
- f) Simmons Park Booking Terms and Conditions

270. Finance

270.1 Payment Schedule

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** to approve the payment schedule (BACS payments totalling £1,614.19 plus VAT).

270.2 2026/27 Budget

Feedback arising from a budget workshop held on to review the Committee's budget responsibilities for the current year and initial requirements for 2026/27 was noted. On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** not to make any changes at this time, and that further scrutiny of the budget continue through the budget setting process.

271. Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups

271.1 Cemetery Management

Recommendations had already been received at Min Ref 269

271.2 Projects:

Putting Green Improvements

Recommendations had already been received at Min Ref 262.2

272. Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items

272.1 Business Improvement District

Cllr Tolley reported on a strategy day last Friday and another meeting was being held this Friday to move things forward. The BID now has a strategic plan but is still having issues in communicating its messages to the businesses.

272.2 DCC Regeneration Board

Cllr Tolley reported that a meeting was being held this week.

272.3 Dartmoor National Park Forum

Cllr Marsh reported that there had been no meeting and it was noted that Cllr Mott, WDBC, is the Link Member.

272.4 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)

Cllr Tolley reported that a meeting was due to be held in October.

272.5 Parklands Leisure Centre User Group/ Meet the Manager

Cllr Marsh reported that she had attended the Meet the Manager session and was the only person there. It was disappointing that more people did not attend. General maintenance is currently being undertaken and the new studio floor is being laid by a local company.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

273. 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)

274. Cemetery Extension

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to seek a full quotation from Clifton Emery now that the pre app planning officers report had identified all the surveys necessary for a full application. This is a local company who had recently helped North Tawton Town Council with their cemetery planning application.

275. Memorial Masons

The Assistant Clerk reported on a review of memorial masons, and it was noted there were no current concerns.

276. Football Club

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Colman, (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to the Football Club to express the Committees disappointment that recent works were not brought to the Committee's attention. The Club was to be reminded that, as stipulated in the lease, prior written permission was required before commencing any such works in the future. The letter would also confirm that, in the event the lease is ended, the site must be reinstated to its former condition.

277. CCTV

On the proposition of Cllr Colman and seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to accept Option 2 of the report.

278. Simmons Park Alms House Resident Vehicles

Cllrs Marsh, Bird and Colman declared personal interests as Trustees of Simmons Homes.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk should send a letter to the Alms House resident requesting compensation for the destruction of the bench, which was valued at approximately £1,000.

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 7.46pm.

Cllr Tolley, Chairman