



Town Hall
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Okehampton
Devon
EX20 1AA

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Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on Monday 16th February 2026 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton

Members Present:

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

Councillor R Colman (Mayor)
Councillor L Bird (Chairman, Property)
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)

In Attendance:

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

The meeting was livestreamed through the Council Facebook page.

565. Apologies for Absence

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded by Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies from Cllr Holt (illness).

566. Declarations of Interest

None

567. Public Participation

None

568. Park-Keeper

Despite not having had a single dry day recently, a great deal had been achieved over the past six weeks. Resurfacing work on Jubilee Bridge was unfortunately delayed due to the persistent wet weather but was now complete. In East Street Garden, a new gorse bush had been planted and was already in flower. Soil testing in the wildflower area revealed low pH levels and deficiencies in phosphorus and potassium, so steps were being taken to improve the yield of flowers. Compost and wood chip had been spread on the flower beds to help suppress weeds and enrich the soil. The Big Garden Birdwatch recorded new species in the park over winter, including Blackcaps using the feeder in the rose garden, and Siskins. Planning was underway for this year's wildlife events, including a hedgerow day (focusing on hedge laying and species identification), a wildlife walk, an insect-catching day in the meadow, and a re-run of the bat and moth evening with the Devon Bat Group. There were also plans for a tree-themed event and bird box walk, hopefully including the ringing of small birds, as well as a litter pick with Wild Oke. These would take place during the summer holidays or weekends. Frog spawn had appeared later than usual, although there were plenty of baby newts and damselfly larvae in the ponds. A large oak tree that fell before Christmas near the old bandstand had been cleared, pressure washing in the park had been completed, and some of the older roses had been removed ready for replanting. A riverbank meeting was scheduled for 3rd March to assess any additional damage.

Cllr Leech asked if new permission was needed for the additional riverbank work? The work was hopefully starting in May and as the new damage was an extension of the old damage it was hoped that a new permit would not be needed.

569. Members' Questions

Cllr Ireland reported concern that a class that was held twice a week in the Leisure Centre with two sessions on a Tuesday and two on a Thursday for strength and balance had now had the sessions reduced to once a week on a Tuesday.

570. Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded by Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to confirm, approve and sign the minutes of the Parks Committee meetings held on 17th November and 1st December 2025

571 Simmons Park

571.1 Bookings

- a) The St Georges Day event, PTFA Colour Run and the Fair were noted.
- b) Following receipt of additional information, a request to hold an Inflatable event in the park was reconsidered and confusion about this situation at the last meeting was noted. All paperwork had been completed correctly and was adequate. The inflatables were PIPA tested and overnight security provided. The affected area would be enclosed for the duration of the event.

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Colman (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to allow the event and charge a fee in accordance with that of the fair for the two operational days, plus a refundable bond in the event of any damage of £500.

571.2 Seating Simmons Park

Cllr Marsh asked that this item be withdrawn and deferred to a later date.

572 Cemetery

572.1 Burials

It was noted that since the last meeting there had been 3 burials, and 1 headstone permit issued.

572.2 Memorial inspection

The memorials had been reinspected, and it was noted that none were dangerous. Much of the movement previously reported had gone and had been due to the very dry conditions when the previous inspection had taken place. There were a few Memorials that had some movement, a couple of which were fairly new. Correspondence would be sent to the families to explain the situation.

572.3 Stone Mason Review

The council viewed a photograph of the misalignment of headstones in a row in the cemetery. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** write to the stone masons asking them to move the affected stones and to the families involved to keep them informed. At next review, the relevant policy would be amended and resent to the stone masons to ensure headstones were lined up and how this would be managed. The Parks team would provide stakes at each end of the rows so a plumb line could be used when stones were erected.

573. Other Outdoor Areas

573.1 Skatepark Lighting and CCTV

It was noted that Electrical provision for additional CCTV had been completed and a date for installation was awaited from the contractor.

573.2 Clapps Wood

It was noted that a dead Sweet Chestnut tree had been felled and would be replaced.

574. Zoning Map

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to continue to maintain areas not owned by the council as listed in the report.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations in the report with a change to the skate park that it would be maintained fortnightly, rather than 3 weekly or monthly.

575. Payment Schedule

On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded by Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to approve payment of invoices in accordance with the schedule which included February salaries, (BACS payments totalling £44,631.31 excluding VAT).

576. Governance

576.1 Committee Terms of Reference

On the proposition of Cllr Leach, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the draft Terms of Reference to Full Council including retention of point d.

576.2 Play Area Policy

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Leach, it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the policy to the Policy & Resources Committee with the following amendments:

- Point 4, to include - adverse weather conditions and lack of supervision in the fenced play area
- Point 7, to amend to read - '... cordoned off immediately, removed immediately (as soon as practicably possible) and replaced when possible.
- Summary, to include – Retain an Earmarked Reserve for replacement of equipment

577. Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups

577.1 Cemetery Management

No meeting

577.2 Projects

a) Putting Green Improvements

No meeting

578. Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items

578.1 Business Improvement District

Cllr Tolley reported that at the meeting held on 16th January, governance matters and the job description for the new Manager were discussed. Members had been informed of the Marketing Business Breakfast scheduled for 30th January at the A30 Business Centre, as well as a meeting of the Business Network Group taking place on 17th February. A Teatime Business Meeting would be held on 17th March at the London Inn. The next meeting was scheduled for 3rd March.

578.2 DCC Regeneration Board

Cllr Tolley reported that a request from the Board for a councillor to be nominated to represent the Council on a sub-group investigating creation of a farmers' market within Okehampton would be considered by Full Council. There had been a meeting on 20th January between the temporary BID Manager, Chair and DCC. An Employment fair had been held on 5th February in the Charter Hall. The Business Information Point was hosting two tourist symposiums, the West Devon one on 23rd February in Killworthy Park. Demolition

of the desert factory and consultation about new Lidl plans had been discussed. Dynamic Dartmoor reported on projected activities for the next 5 years including a community led moorland and rivers festival in 2028.

578.3 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)

Cllr Tolley reported that they had met on 28th January and discussed the Football Club ending their memo of understanding regarding use of the lounge. They also discussed asset transfer and communications as well as hand over and an exit strategy. The next meeting was on 4th March and the AGM was on 28th March.

578.4 Dartmoor National Park Forum

Cllr Marsh reported that there had been no meeting. The Chief Executive was leaving in March and a replacement been appointed and was in the changeover period.

578.5 Parklands Leisure Centre User Group/Meet the Manager

Cllrs Tolley and Marsh reported that there had been no meeting but after Cllr Ireland's report in members questions (Minute Ref 569), they would make contact.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

579. On the proposition of Cllr Ireland seconded Cllr Bird 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)

580. Football Club

Members considered the status of the Football Club lease and **agreed** that a solicitor's letter be issued reminding the Club of their obligation to register the lease with the Land Registry.

Cllr Yelland proposed that a formal rent review was not undertaken as the cost would likely outweigh any rent increase, this was seconded by Cllr Leech and **RESOLVED**.

Cllr Yelland proposed that the rent be increased in line with inflation rate, 3.4% in December 2025. This was seconded by Cllr Leech (1 abstention) and **RESOLVED** the annual rent for 2026/27 be increased by £12 to £387.

581. Pest Control

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Weekes (1 against, 1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation in the report as a trial. Data would be reviewed to assess effectiveness which would direct future control methods.

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

582. Trespassers

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to renew the annual contract with Devon Investigations at a fee of £495. The large sign would be replaced free of charge.

583. Cemetery Extension

On the proposition of Cllr Bird seconded, Cllr by Marsh it was **RESOLVED** to recommend the quote to Full Council with the caveat that the work did not commence until confirmation the land would be sold to the council had been received in writing.

584. Footpath Reinstatement

Cllr Colman declared a personal interest, knowing one of the contractors who had quoted.

On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded by Cllr Leach, it was **RESOLVED** (1 abstention) to appoint Hulls to undertake the repair work at a cost of £3,800 plus VAT. It was noted that a handrail may be needed due to a change in legislation and the additional cost of this would be investigated.

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 8:42pm.