



Okehampton Town Council

Town Hall
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Devon
EX20 1AA

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**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 27th April 2026 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present:

Cllr R Colman (Mayor)	Cllr L Bird (Chairman, Property)
Cllr T Cummings	Cllr T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Cllr A Fisher	Cllr J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)
Cllr M Ireland	Cllr B Tolley
Cllr C Marsh	Cllr M Ricketts
Cllr D McNeill	Cllr M Richards

In Attendance:

Mrs A Horn (Assistant Clerk)
Cllr J Goffey (WDBC)
Cllr G Dexter (WDBC)

699. Apologies for Absence

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded by Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** to approve apologies tendered by Cllr Holt (illness).
Absent: Cllr Weekes

700. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Yelland declared a personnel interest in Minute Reference 708.4
Cllr Tolley declared a personnel interest in Minute Reference 708.4
Cllr McNeill declared a personnel interest in Minute Reference 708.4
Cllr Ireland declared a personnel interest in Minute Reference 708.4
Cllr Colman declared a personnel interest in Minute Reference 708.4

701. Public Participation

None

702. Members' Questions

Cllr Ireland commented on the pollution in the East Okement river as a result of the incident with the train and a diesel spill. Cllr Cummings commended the Park Keeper Mr McGahey and Cllr Marsh on the speed with which they responded to the incident.
Cllr Ricketts commented that some of the lighting in Mill Road carpark was not working

703. West Devon Borough Council

Cllr Goffey's full report would be circulated. Cllr Goffey confirmed a win with County/Network Rail the two designated bus drop-off points could be used as car drop-off points. There was a proposal for the footway to run inside the hedge on Crediton Road. The People's Emergency briefing was being arranged for Tuesday 28th April, there may be an opportunity for a separate council briefing. WDBC now requires all councillors to have a DBS check and are offering their councillors neurodiversity training which Cllr Goffey had signed up for. Cllr Goffey thanked Cllrs Colman, Marsh and Tolley for their St Georges Day celebration.

Cllr Dexter reported that at the Leisure Centre, Parkwood would be taking over on a temporary basis, permitted under emergency procurement procedures. Thanks were expressed to officers working with the administrators (rather than proceeding to liquidation) for the considerable work undertaken.

NPPF five-year land - supply while the council had a supply under the previous housing target, WDBC was now unable to demonstrate a five-year supply against the revised requirements. Without a five-year supply, relevant planning policies were less likely to carry full weight, and decision-making may require specific evidence of harm rather than reliance on policy alone. Developers were encouraged to bring forward land for consideration. Planning committee arrangements were expected to change at borough/district level, with more applications determined by officers under delegated powers and a smaller proportion referred to committee; this would not affect the town council's role as a consultee.

Cllr Leech reported that on Crediton Road (in Okehampton Hamlets) a piece of play equipment associated with the Persimmons development had taken eight years and would be installed in July. Exeter Road footpath; the original plans showed a footpath on the inside of the hedge all the way to the school, but this was removed in a revised version and the change was missed.

Lidl application; WDBC had received unacceptable comments via email and Facebook, but councillors must consider the application as submitted. There were five separate issues affecting the application, two of which were national matters, and one of which prevented progress for three months. It was highlighted that, if a decision was made contrary to officer recommendation, there was a risk of referral to the Secretary of State and reputational damage.

Okehampton Castle had had a wide range of visitors, including international visitors on short breaks. New station bus bays have capacity for three coaches, though it is expected that only one may be used; it was suggested that the remaining space could be used for drop-off, and that it may not be too late to amend this.

704. Devon County Council

Cllr Grainger had sent his apologies and there was no report

705. Questions Arising from Member reports

Cllr Yelland asked Cllr Dexter whether the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation for planning meant that only the Chair would have call-in powers, rather than all members. Cllr Dexter believed this was correct. Ward members would instead be able to make representations to the Head of Planning and the Chair.

Cllr Leech outlined a three-stage process:

- Minor applications would be determined directly by officers. These would still go out for consultation, but ward members would have no formal involvement.
- Intermediate applications would be reviewed by the Head of Planning and the Chair of Planning to decide whether they met the criteria to go to committee. If not, they would be dealt with under delegated powers.
- Major applications only would go to the Planning Committee.

Cllr Leech added that if an application was near a station, it would not necessarily come before committee and could instead be approved under delegated powers.

Cllr Fisher commented that it was concerning that elected representatives were being kept out of the planning process.

Cllr McNeil commented that the gate on the church path needed repair.

Cllr Ireland noted that the main station had toilet facilities, but there would be no facilities at the new interchange. It was asked what would happen if trains were delayed, as GWR do not provide toilets at intermediate stations. Cllr Leech reported that the car park was finished as far as the railway was concerned, with the remaining works to be completed by DCC contractors. He added that part of the car park could potentially be used for toilets, but 200 spaces are required, and removing spaces for toilets would create difficulties as there was no room for expansion.

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

706.1 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and second by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Policy & Resource Committee meeting held on 2nd March 2026.

706.2 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland and seconded by Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 2nd March 2026

706.3 On the proposition of Cllr Leech and seconded by Cllr Cummings it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Planning Committee** meetings held on 26th January and 16th February 2026.

707. Full Council Meeting Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to receive, sign and approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 23rd March 2026.

708. Projects and Consultations

708.1 Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Leech declared a personal interest as a WDBC Councillor

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland seconded by Cllr Fisher (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** that no bids for the acquisition of any land or property, including the Market Street Public Toilets, be made.

708.2 Community Governance Boundary Change

The advice from the Solicitors that Okehampton Town Council is required to determine a single council tax requirement for the whole parish was noted.

708.3 Neighbourhood Plan

It was noted that no response had been received as it had been missed from the Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council April meeting agenda and would be included on May's agenda.

708.4 Allotments

Cllr Leech noted that the allotments currently ran at a loss and asked if the council should expect it to be self-financing? Cllr Marsh commented that providing allotments was a statutory duty and the council should absorb the costs.

Cllr Yelland asked if there was any disadvantage to plot holders if the allotment associations were not recognised by the council? It was felt that there would be no disadvantage to the plot holders.

It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to allow Cllr Goffey WDBC to add comment as Chair of one of the Allotment Associations, following a proposal by Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Fisher (1 abstention).

Cllr Goffey offered to be a conduit between the allotment holders and the council. The allotments, although under two associations, were run under the same rules.

It was **RESOLVED** that the standing order 3 (bb) which was suspended, be now reinstated following a proposition by Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Ireland.

Cllr Richards requested that the accounts be made available for review to which Cllr Yelland confirmed happened at P&R meetings and were available to view on the website. Cllr Marsh noted that the Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments and that, fortunately, the OUC Foundation has supported this provision which is why a grant application had been submitted to help fund them each year.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Fisher (5 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to

- Not recognise the Allotment Associations (Fatherford Road and Okehampton)
- The council joins the National Allotment Association
- Details of all Allotment Holders will be registered with the National Allotment Association through which their public liability insurance will be obtained and charged to them alongside the annual plot fee
- The Council manages all aspects of the maintenance of the three sites, including allotment holder insurance, water and toilet provision, grass and hedge cutting, pest control

- A letter to be sent to allotment holders by the OUC
- The Allotment Agreement including the changes suggested
- The rent for 2027 to be £70 per plot

708.5 Community Emergency Plan

It was noted that the Clerk had only received the group/individual contact details on 20th April and had not yet had time to contact them.

708.6 Cemetery Extension

It was noted that correspondence confirming sale of land to the Council had been received and that, as previously approved, inspections, surveys and work to obtain planning consent was being progressed.

708.7 Bus Parking

Cllr Colman asked councillors for suggestions of where bus parking in the town could be sited. If any suitable options could be found, Cllr Colman would bring it back to council for consideration.

709. Finance

709.1 Payments

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments, the BACS payments totalling £2,475.47 exclusive of VAT and those from the week commencing 20th April 2026, including April salaries, totalling £27,884.70 exclusive of VAT.

709.2 Mayor's Charity

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher and seconded by Cllr Leech (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** that income obtained from fundraising activities throughout the Mayoral year be donated to the Mayor's Charity at the end of the civic year leaving £100 in the account to cover banking charges

709.3 Internal Audit

The Council noted that the year-end closedown would take place on 12th May. The only observation regarding asset checking would be made easier with the new software the council had purchased which would produce a report once the checks had been completed.

710. Policies and Documents

710.1 Policies

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded by Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to approve the following policies and documents as recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee:

- a) Civic/Council Protocol
- b) Dealing with the Press/Media
- c) Document Retention Policy
- d) Fire Safety Policy
- e) Staff Handbook
- f) Standing Orders

710.2 Committee Terms of Reference

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Terms of Reference for the 2026/27 Mayoral Year:

- a) Property Committee
- b) Parks Committee
- c) Planning Committee
- d) Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee
- e) Personnel Sub-Committee (reports to P&R)

710.3 Working Group Terms of Reference

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to approve the generic ToR covering all working groups.

711. Wider Okehampton Cluster Group

711.1 It was noted that a group Councillor/Clerk training/networking day was planned to be held on 15th July. It was commented that applying to DALC for a grant, asking councils for a contribution and suggesting everyone bringing a plate for a shared lunch were good ideas.

711.2 Cllr Leech declared a personal interest as a WDBC Councillor

It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to allow Cllr Dexter WDBC to comment, following a proposal by Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Richards (1 abstention).

Cllr Dexter reported that Code of Conduct complaints went before the Audit Committee. It was a confidential process but the data of the number of complaints upheld and dismissed was published in the meeting papers annually.

It was **RESOLVED** that the standing order 3 (bb) which was suspended, be reinstated following a proposition by Cllr Ireland, seconded by Cllr Richards.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Cummings (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** not support the proposal to request additional details of Code of Conduct Complaints and to feed back to the cluster group where the information is published.

711.3 On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to support the sending of the joint letter to the DCC Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport in relation to consultation and roadworks.

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

712. Mayor's Diary Report

The Mayor had not attended any events since the last meeting but on a personal basis had been involved in the St Georges Day event which had gone very well, and he thanked everyone who had helped.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

713. On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Fisher 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.

714. 2025/26 Mayor's Awards

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded by Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** that an award be presented to an individual noted by the Assistant Clerk. Cllr Yelland to provide the Clerk with relevant information.

715. Simmons Park Riverbank Repairs

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings and seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to accept the amended quotation from AD Williams Building Contractors Ltd at the sum of £51,665, an increase of £9,845. Reasons for the delay and additional cost to be included in the May newsletter.

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

The meeting was closed at 8.41pm