



Okehampton Town Council

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**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on
Monday 20th July 2026 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present:

Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)	Councillor L Bird (Chairman, Property)
Councillor C Marsh (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Councillor M Ireland	Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)
Councillor D McNeill	

In Attendance:

Mrs A Horn (Assistant Clerk)
Mr J McGahey (Park Keeper)
2 members of the public

Absent:

Cllr S Weekes

The meeting was livestreamed through the Council Facebook page.

133. Apologies for Absence

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

134. Declarations of Interest

None

135. Public Participation –

A representative from OCRA outlined suggested improvements to make sports facilities in Simmons Park clearer and more usable as formal pitches:

- movable, weighted goals on the cricket pitch, rather than fixed posts;
- fixed posts on the playing field to support informal kickabouts; and
- a potential Section 106 application for one kickabout goal opposite the container.

A skateboarder expressed an interest in helping Okehampton Town Council upgrade the skatepark.

136. Park-Keeper

Mr McGahey reported that the recent very dry period had required late-afternoon watering. The wildflower areas were struggling and had gone to seed early, but the sensory garden had held up well, with many bees seen on the lavender. With reduced grass growth and less mowing was required and the team had been able to catch up with weeding. It had been a bumper year for butterflies in the park. Yellow rattle and southern marsh orchids in Platts Meadow indicated that the current management approach was working. A butterfly count carried out recorded ten species.

Year 6 pupils from the primary school visited the park and were shown the ponds, took part in bug catching in the meadow, and saw a slow worm. Owl pellet dissection was also carried

out.

The zip wire was due to be repaired on Tuesday, and the phone box had been repainted.

Cllr Tolley thanked the Parks team and the Assistant Clerk for all their hard work in securing a third green flag.

Cllr Yelland commented that the Green Flag judging report mentioned the values within the Parks team and congratulated them on having a positive impact in the park.

137. Members' Questions

Cllr Bird reported that a runner had tripped on Jubilee Bridge, between the car park and the formal side of the park. The Park Keeper was asked to investigate whether there was a trip hazard.

Cllr Tolley reported that the Portaloos from the Pride Event had not been collected by 6pm and asked that this be followed up.

138. Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOVLED** to approve and sign the minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 18th May 2026.

139. Simmons Park

139.1 Sporting Facilities

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Yelland it was **RESOLVED** to support in principle the upgrade to the sporting facilities and any applications for outside funding towards this aim.

139.2 Bookings

The bookings in the park were noted and the committee asked that hirers were requested to remove signs after the event.

Information about recent bookings was noted. The Committee also noted that:

- options to reduce fire risk at events in the park would be investigated; and
- the P&R Committee had recommended to Full Council that a copy of the Bylaws be included with the Terms & Conditions of Hire.

139.3 Footpath reinstatement

It was noted that the work would commence on Tuesday 28th July.

139.4 Riverbank Repairs

It was noted that the work was commencing during the last week of July

139.5 Diesel Spill

The Park Keeper reported that the cleanup company appointed by GWR had removed the booms the previous Thursday. Heavy rain that evening caused diesel to begin washing into the river. The booms would remain in place until there had been at least two weeks of rainfall. A test dig was undertaken approximately a month ago when it was identified diesel remained in the soil just below the surface.

139.6 Sponsorship

Cllr Marsh reported that a member of the public would like to adopt a flower bed, possibly by the bandstand, rather than sponsor it. The Park Keeper indicated that he would be happy for that to happen as long as the insurance company had no issues. On the proposition of Cllr Tolley and seconded by Cllr Bird (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to agree to this proposal as long as the insurance company agreed.

139.7 Playing Field Signage

It was noted that the existing soft signs had not been effective, although it was questioned whether any signage would resolve the issue. Cllr Leech agreed to raise the matter with the WDBC Dog Warden. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Leech (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** agree to the signs as proposed.

139.8 Wildlife Events

The nocturnal evening was well attended with around 60 people present and moths caught in the trap. Three different species of bat were recorded in the park. A birds and hedges event with a BTO expert and Wild Oke attracted 50 people, and pond dipping was held with Dartmoor National Park. Insect catching and a butterfly count were scheduled for 18th August followed by a nocturnal walk on 28th August.

139.9 Green Flag Community Award

It was noted Simmons Park had won a third community award and scored in the top range.

140. Cemetery

140.1 Burials

An update was noted

140.2 Row 19 Memorial Alignment

The Assistant Clerk reported that she was waiting for one stone mason to move the last 2 stones that were out of alignment, the rest had been repositioned or removed for internment.

140.3 Access Road to Carpark

Cllr Ireland noted it was a safety issue that the repairs be made. Cllr Leech confirmed that the access was a bridleway and not a road and that it did not have to be kept to the same standard of repair by Highways. On the proposition of Cllr Leech and seconded by Cllr Marsh it was **RESOLVED** to reply to the correspondence suggesting that ownership and responsibility needed to be established and they should approach Highways at DCC.

141. Skate Park Improvements

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh and seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** the approve draft tender documents and that a project manager would be needed to ensure the contact documentation was worded correctly and appropriately managed.

142. Town Passport

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley and seconded by Cllr Bird it was **RESOLVED** that the passport be created in A5 size.

143. Dartmoor National Park Dynamic Landscapes Project

Cllr Marsh reported that she was attending the Dartmoor National Park Forum on Friday and would be asking why this was the first update that had been received about the project which had been underway for a while.

144. Payment Schedule

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to approve payment of invoices including July's salaries in accordance with the schedule (BACS payments including July salaries totalling £28,307.67 excluding VAT)

145. Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups

145.1 Cemetery Management

The group had not met

145.2 Projects

Matters had been discussed as agenda items

146. Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items

146.1 Business Improvement District

Cllr Tolley reported that the new Bid Manager was in place. He was meeting as many levy payers as possible in person and had arranged 3 dates where they could come and meet him. 3 dates in September had been agreed for him to show his plans for the BID. A meeting with the stakeholders of Edwardian Evening was taking place on 29th July which would include the event manager, and the Christmas lights arrangements were well under way.

146.2 Dartmoor National Park

Cllr Marsh was attending the forum on Friday

146.3 DCC Regeneration Board

Cllr Tolley reported that there was still no meeting date set.

146.4 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)

OCRA was on track to make a small profit. Only 25 places remained on the HAF summer holiday programme. The girls' junior netball group had 47 members attending on Friday evenings. The Pavilion was holding uniform stock for all town schools. The school sports premium was coming to an end, with the school sports coordinator returning to DMAT. OCRA were managing the first floor of the Pavillion with weddings and corporate events, and new menu options, including iced teas, were being considered. Staffing remained challenging as some staff were leaving for college and university.

146.5 Devon Town Champion

Cllr Marsh reported that she had not heard anything since she had been nominated and asked if the Clerk could follow up.

146.6 Okehampton Carnival Committee

Cllr Ricketts reported that the meetings often clashed with council meetings as they were on a Monday evening. The committee were organising a cream tea afternoon to raise funds and had recently had a bingo evening. They were organising posters for the best dressed window competition which would be judged on carnival day.

146.7 Parklands Leisure Centre User Group/Meet the Manager

Cllrs Tolley and Marsh reported there had not been a meeting.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

147. 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.

148. Play Equipment Quotations

On the proposition of Cllr Bird and seconded by Cllr Marsh it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation from Kompan at £3,730.58 for the replacement play equipment, noting that it was only available from one company

149. Pest Control

The Park Keeper reported this was on hold until late autumn.

150. Cemetery Land Purchase

On the proposition of Cllr Leech and seconded by Cllr Ireland (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation for the surveys at the combined cost of £12,320.

151. Simmons Park Management Agreement

This item was deferred information was not available in time for the meeting.

152. Football Club

It was noted that the Club had been in contact and the land registration process appeared to have started.

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 8:12pm

Councillor Leech, Chairman