



Okehampton Town Council

Town Hall
Fore Street
Okehampton
Devon
EX20 1AA

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www.okehampton.gov.uk

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

Members Present:

Cllr L Bird (Chairman)
Cllr T Cummings
Cllr A Fisher
Cllr M Ireland
Cllr C Marsh
Cllr D McNeill

Cllr T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Cllr B Tolley (Chairman, Parks)
Cllr M Richards
Cllr M Ricketts
Cllr J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)

In Attendance:

Mrs E James (Clerk)
2 Members of the Public
Cllr J Goffey (WDBC)
Cllr G Dexter (WDBC)

Absent:

Cllr C Holt

The meeting was livestreamed through the Council's Facebook page.

Cllr Bird welcomed those present and explained that the council was trialling a different layout prior to welcoming an additional councillor following May 2027 elections.

153. Apologies for Absence

On the proposition Cllr Ireland, seconded by Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** to approve apologies tendered by Cllr Colman (personal) and Cllr Weekes (work).

154. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Yelland declared a personal interest in Minute Reference 168

Cllr Ireland declared a personal interest in Minute Reference 168

Cllr McNeill declared a personal interest in Minute References 163 and 168 in relation to allotments

Cllr Tolley declared a personal interest in Minute Reference 168

155. Public Participation

A member of the public addressed the Council about ongoing concerns relating to trees in The Glen.

Cllr Grainger (DCC) was investigating and Cllr Leech would contact WDBC's Tree Officer.

A member of the public addressed the council about Allotments and commented upon the draft Allotment Policy.

A member of the public representing the Friendly Circle spoke about a trolley they were no longer able to store in the Charter Hall.

156. Members' Questions

Cllr Marsh reported that the Altar Cloth from St James' Chapel had been stolen and the police informed. CCTV coverage did not include the chapel entrance.

Cllr Ireland advised the Interchange Railway Station was opening on 1st August and reminded Councillors that there were no toilets at the station.

Cllr Cummings requested ideas about how Wren Music could be supported.

Cllr McNeill commented that members of the public were unaware of events taking place within the town.

Cllr Yelland advised that Wren Music had applied and were successful in obtaining a grant from the Town Council who had also previously provided a letter of support.

157. West Devon Borough Council

Reports had previously been circulated from Cllrs Dexter, Leech and Goffey.

Cllr Leech reported on matters including the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the complexity of the Government's decision, there would be four Unitary Councils in Devon and the amount of work WDBC was required to complete by 17th August. Concern about how income to cover the costs would be met was raised, noting that this would include a large proportion of the roads within Devon without income from the main economic areas of Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay. WDBC was writing to the government.

Cllr Dexter also reported on LGR and the West Devon/South Hams Joint Local Plan commenting it was uncertain how the JLP would progress when the LGR change came into force and if elections would affect the boundary change. The Town Council's request for an extension until 25th September for submission of comments about the Conservation Area Appraisal had been agreed. Renters Rights were also reported upon.

Cllr Goffey advised that the LGR was going to be costly and that along with Cllr Dexter she had sent a document to the Clerk about traffic management for consideration of the council.

158. Devon County Council

No report.

159. Questions Arising from Member reports

Cllr Marsh thanked WDBC Councillors for their reports and asked Cllr Dexter to be careful about how he referred to the boundary change as the Town Council was not taking over the Hamlets.

Cllr Richards commented that town council elections would be synchronised with those of a shadow authority so would be in May 2027.

Cllr Yelland noted that town and parish councils would have to fund their own elections if they fell out of sync.

Cllr Grainger to be asked why the Green Flag awarded to Simmons Park was not included with DCC's publicity that congratulated sites in Devon for achieving the award

The new Devon Coast and Country Unitary would be responsible for a large proportion of Devon roads but would have no economic centre from which to raise an income. Cllr Grainger to be requested to apply pressure on DCC to prioritise roads that would be within that Unitary so that they are in a good standard of repair before DCC is disbanded.

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

160.1 On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Richards it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Policy & Resource Committee** meeting held on 18th May 2026. Cllr Marsh requested that future minutes include the month of the audits reported upon and commented that the last was for June.

160.2 On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Parks Committee** meeting held on 18th May 2026.

160.3 On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Property Committee** meetings held on 10th November and 1 December 2025, 2nd February and 18th May 2026.

161. Full Council Meeting Minutes

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded by Cllr Richards it was **RESOLVED** to receive, approve and sign the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 29th June 2026.

162. Projects and Consultations

162.1 Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Leech declared a personal interest being a Member of WDBC

The Government announcement that Devon would consist of 4 Unitary Councils with elections scheduled for May 2027 ahead of vesting day when the new councils to begin delivering services in April 2028 was debated. Comments included:

- That the Okehampton Cluster Group all appeared to have concerns
- That the Government criteria had specified that Districts and Boroughs could not be split
- OTC could not fund a judicial review, but could support upper tier authorities by letter
- The Government's decision did not reflect criteria set by government
- The Devon Coast and Country Unitary will have no economic centre, it will be a Unitary with sparsity density which is more expensive to deliver services within.
- A group was considering setting up a crowdfunding page to fight for a judicial review
- The independence of a judicial review was queried

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Yelland (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** that a letter be sent to the Leader of WDBC and DCC, to be copied to the Minister of Local Government and MP. The letter would outline the Councils' support of a judicial review should either WDBC or DCC wish to commence the process. Clerk to consult with Cllrs Cummings and Yelland.

On the proposition of Cllr Richards, seconded by Cllr Fisher (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to also write to the Minister of Local Government expressing the councils' displeasure with the decision as it was not considered to be in the best interest of residents. Clerk to consult with Cllrs Cummings and Richards.

162.2 Community Governance Boundary Change

Cllr Leech, also a Member of WDBC declared a personal interest in this item of business and thanked the WDBC Officer for her work on this.

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** that the Draft Order was consistent with the outcome of the review.

162.3 Neighbourhood Plan

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded by Cllr Richards it was **RESOLVED** to approve the application statement for submission to WDBC.

162.4 Emerging Dartmoor Local Plan 2026

Cllr Marsh reported that she had attended the Dartmoor National Park Forum on 24th July.

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Cummings it was **RESOLVED** that Councillors send their comments to the Clerk by 14th August for collation and submission by the consultation closing date of 23rd August 2026.

163. Policies and Documents

On the proposition of Cllr Richards, seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs Leech, Marsh and Officers further review the Allotment Policy and Application form for reconsideration of the Council at an additional meeting in August.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Ireland (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to amend the Simmons Park Hire Policy to include a refundable deposit of £50 from all hirers for any damage that may be caused.

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to approve the following policies en block as recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee including a correction to the Expenses Policy:

- Business Continuity Plan
- Data Protection Complaints Policy
- Expenses Policy
- Health & Safety Policy and Procedures
- Press (Media) Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media, IT and Phone Use Policy for Employees
- Volunteer Policy and Agreement
- Whistleblowing Policy

164. Finance and Governance

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments, the BACS payments including grants awarded totalling £5,132.92 exclusive of VAT.

165. Wider Okehampton Cluster Group

Training and Networking Day had taken place on 22nd July when six local town and parish councils were represented. DALC had provided a free Managing Conflict training session and had awarded a grant of £50 for refreshments. The group had agreed in principle that following elections in May 2027 a group councillor training day would be beneficial.

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

166. Mayor's Diary Report

Cllr Colman had attended the Wider Okehampton Cluster Group Training and Networking Day, the Okehampton Pride event and a presentation by Read Easy.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

167. On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded by 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.

168. Allotment Leases and Documentation

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to approve a response prepared by the Clerk based on the draft lease for the Fatherford Allotment site and to reference any invasive species rather than just bamboo.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded by Cllr Fisher (4 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** not to accept responsibility for the access road to the North Road Allotment site but to request access rights only.

Following the provision of additional information from a representative of one of the Allotment Associations, on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Marsh (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** that the council would recognise the Allotment Associations and that they continue as existing with the exception of any management role for site inspections and administration all of which would be undertaken by the council. The situation to be reviewed in 12 months.

On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded by Cllr Leech (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Marsh join the Allotment Working Group.

169. Simmons Park Charity

The Clerk reported upon independent advice obtained regarding insurance implications and confirmation received from the council's insurer that the council was adequately covered. On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded by Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** to approve the renewal of the Management Agreement.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded by Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9.10pm.

Councillor Colman, Mayor

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