

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 20th May 2024 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

Members Present: Councillor A Fisher (Mayor)
 Councillor R Colman (Chairman, Property Committee)
 Councillor B Tolley (Chairman, Parks Committee)
 Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning Committee)
 Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources Committee)
 Councillor L Bird
 Councillor T Cummings
 Councillor C Holt
 Councillor M Ireland
 Councillor C Marsh
 Councillor M Richards
 Councillor S Weekes

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Clerk)
 Cllr P Vachon (WDBC)
 Cllr Samuel (DCC)
 1 member of the public

Action

31 **Apologies for Absence** – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to approve apologies tendered by Cllr Rogers (personal).

Apologies tendered by Cllr Dexter (WDBC) were noted.

32 **Declarations of Interest** – None

33 **Public Participation** – A member of public addressed the council.

34 **Members Questions** – Cllr Ireland reported the new station had been named 'Okehampton Interchange', stating the name did not reflect the nature of the station, was meaningless, and not consistent with the naming of stations.

Cllr Cummings commented on the pavement situation by St James' School.

Cllr Richards expressed concern about responses received in relation to questions raised about the new railway station at the Annual Town Assembly. Cllr Fisher had written to the MP.

Rail matters to be included on the next agenda.

Clerk

35 **West Devon Borough Council** – A report from Cllr Dexter had been circulated.

Cllr Vachon advised WDBC was meeting on 21st May when the new Mayor, Committees and roles would be decided. Assistance was offered in relation to the facilitation of a joint Town and Hamlets Parish Council working group to consider matters relating to the boundary review and transition period.

Cllr Leech reported on a number of matters including:

- The provision of footpaths in the vicinity of Crediton Road and St James' School, the Crediton Road/Kellands Land blockage and work WDBC was doing to progress these matters.
- St James Primary School playing field, matters were ongoing.
- A Tree Preservation Order had been placed on a newly planted sycamore tree at Oaklands Park replacing one previously felled.
- The Peer review draft report had been received.

- WDBC Annual meeting was taking place on 21st May, from when he would no longer hold the health and wellbeing role.

36 **Devon County Council** – Cllr Samuel advised that since circulation of her report £10M had been agreed for Highways improvements. She had not been aware about the naming of the new railway station until the evening before the event which had been organised by GWR.

37 **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Cllr Leech was requested to provide a written about the pavement issues and Kellands Land blockage that could be given to residents. It was commented the developers were not believed to be properly protecting trees in the Nexus Way area of development.

Cllr
Leech

Cllr Yelland requested DCC advise:

- Who made the decision to call the new station ‘Okehampton Interchange’ and the reasons for this.
- Parking cones had not been provided in accordance with the road closure notice over the Ten Tors event

Cllr
Samuel

38 **Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon**

38.1 On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Parks Committee** meeting held on 19th February 2024.

38.2 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Personnel Sub-Committee** meeting held on 19th March 2024.

39 **Full Council Meeting Minutes** – The minutes of the Town Council meetings held on 22nd April and 8th May 2024 were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Ireland, to be signed by Cllr Fisher.

40 **Co-option of Councillor** – The two applications received were considered. Following a vote Frankee Hart was co-opted to the North Ward of Okehampton Town Council. Cllr Hart would sit on the Parks and Policy & Resources Committees where there were vacancies following the Annual Council Meeting on 8th May 2024.

Clerk

41 **Simmons Homes Charity (201676) – Nomination of Trustees** - On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Colman (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to nominate the following as Trustees to the Charity for a term of 4 years:

Clerk

- Rev Mike Davies
- Christine Marsh
- Maria Cooper

42 **Charter Hall Roofing Project** – Further discussion was **agreed** to be deferred to Part 2 later in the meeting due to contractual information.

43 **Community Governance Boundary Review** – Cllr Leech declared a personal interest being WDBC Member.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Cummings (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to hold informal meetings that all Councillors could be involved with for initial internal discussions, and to the creation of a joint working/task & finish group with Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council. Representatives to be appointed to the joint group at a later date.

Clerk

44	<p><u>Transportation Links</u> – Cllr Bird reported that room for cycles on trains coming to Okehampton were very limited and didn't support active travel initiatives. The booking system did not seem to show any availability of space for cycles.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was RESOLVED that Network Rail and/or GWR be requested to make to make more room available for bikes, to investigate their cycle booking system and to include provision for bike parking at the new station.</p> <p>It was commented WDBC could also investigate cycle provision at the station.</p> <p>(A member of the public left the meeting)</p>	Clerk
45	<p><u>Okehampton Area Appraisal and Management Plan</u> – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Richards, it was RESOLVED that Cllrs Marsh and Cummings work with WDBC to review the draft document for consultation. Cllr Weekes to attend in the place of Cllr Cummings if he was unavailable.</p>	Clerk
46	<p><u>WDBC Public Space Protection Order Consultation (PSPO)</u> – Cllr Leech declared a personnel interest being a WDBC Member.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh (2 abstentions), seconded Cllr Ireland, it was RESOLVED to support the proposal for a town wide PSPO which would assist police in dealing with anti-social behaviour and give them additional power.</p>	Clerk
47	<p><u>BT Phone Box Removal</u> – It was noted that despite the Council's objection, the phone box at the junction of Station Road and Tors Road would be decommissioned in September 2024.</p> <p>Clerk to check the type of phone box and its listing status which would determine if it could be removed.</p>	Clerk
48	<p><u>Finance and Governance</u></p>	
48.1	<p>Payments - On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.</p>	
48.2	<p>Bank Signatories – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was RESOLVED to approve the circulated list of bank account signatories and those authorised to make online payments.</p>	
48.3	<p>Budget Workshops – The Council noted workshops would be held in August/ September as part of the budget review and setting process for 2025/26.</p>	
48.4	<p>Rollover of funds from 2023/24 to 2024/25 Budget – On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Richards, it was RESOLVED to approve the rollover of funds in accordance with the report and as considered within the budget setting process for 2024/25 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charter Hall Roof Replacement - £6,737 General Maintenance Town Hall - £2,115 General Maintenance Charter Hall - £4,814 External Decoration - £5,000 	Ass. Clerk
48.5	<p>Virement, Town Centre Business Grant Initiative – On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve the virement of £2,896, that being the balance in the grant budget 2023/24 year end, from general reserves to a new heading for the initiative.</p>	Ass. Clerk

48.6	Financial Checks - On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED that Cllr Marsh undertake monthly Council financial checks including bank reconciliations and BACS payments.	Ass. Clerk
48.7	Asset Audit - On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Ireland, it was RESOLVED that Cllr Fisher undertake an audit of elements of the assets held by the Council including regalia, silverware and paintings.	
49	<p><u>Polices and Documents</u> On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to adopt the following documents, as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Regulations • Financial Risk Assessment & Management • Treasury and Investment Policy • Reserves Policy 	Clerk
50	<u>2023/24 Annual Governance and Audit Return</u>	
50.1	End of Year Bank Reconciliation/Balance Sheet – On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve and sign the bank reconciliation/balance sheet for the year ended 31 st March 2024.	Clerk
50.2	Internal Audit Certificate and Report – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Bird, it was RESOLVED to note the 2023/24 year-end certificate and report for which no recommendations had been made.	
50.3	<p>AGAR Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 – Councillors considered the Council’s internal control processes and their effectiveness, and the statements were read out separately. Councillors considered each statement and agreed a response of ‘yes’ to each.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to agree a ‘yes’ response to each statement. Cllr Fisher and the Clerk signed the statement.</p>	
50.4	AGAR Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2023/24 – On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve and sign the accounting statements.	
50.5	Electors’ Rights – On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Bird, it was RESOLVED to approve the dates for the exercise of Electors Rights those being Monday 3 rd June 2024 to Friday 12 th July 2024 as recommended.	
51	<u>Internal Auditor Appointment for 2024/25</u> – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was RESOLVED to ratify the appointment of IAC Audit and Consultancy as the council’s internal auditor for the third of a three-year agreement which commenced in the 2022/23 year at the cost of £770 p/annum.	Clerk
52	<p><u>Council Events</u> – The upcoming events were noted. Cllrs were asked to assist if possible, with the setting up, holding and clearing up of the D-Day event on 9th June:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th June, 80th Anniversary of D-Day – Joint event with Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council from 5pm at Okehampton Show Ground • 20th June, Network Rail Presentation - 10am in the Council Chamber, Town Hall. 	Cllrs

- 53 **Staffing, Caretaker Role** – It was noted that a fixed term position had been advertised to cover long term sick leave as resolved by the Policy & Resources Committee.
- 54 **Mayors Civic Diary Report** – Cllr Fisher had attended various events including the following: Beavers visit to the Town Hall, Tavistock Civic Dinner, Great Torrington Mayfair, plastic free meeting, Annual Bowls Charity match, Hospiscare Meeting, Cheerteam Performance, Ten Tours, Library Coffee morning, World Fairtrade Day, Mayor Choosing at Launceston and Plymouth, Civic Dinner and Church Service at Plymouth
- 55 **Reports of Council working/Task & Finish Groups:**
- 55.1 **Climate Change** – No meeting, date to be set.
- 55.2 **Charter Hall Roof Replacement** – Item deferred to Part 2 due to contractual information.
- 56 **Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation**
- 56.1 **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – The Inspector had published the draft report following the Hearing in April. The content was confidential until the final version was published.
- 57 **Members' Reports and Items for Agendas –**
- 57.1 **Business Improvement District** – Cllr Tolley reported there had been a meeting on 14th May 2024. Documents were being finalised, a website was being developed and an email set up. The business plan would be shared when the ballot commenced in June. The outcome would be announced in mid-July.
- It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Leech.
- 57.2 **Okehampton Community Hospital** – Cllr Richards reported a brainstorming session had been held on 18th May when it had been agreed North Dartmoor Health Initiative would become a formal committee, and potentially a CIC.
- 57.3 **Rural Market Town Group** – Cllr Leech report a meeting date had been requested.
- 58 **Urgent Item – Mace** – The Clerk reported that repair and maintenance of the Maces had been arranged and they would transfer to Exeter Museum in June. The Councils insurer had been informed.
- (persons in attendance except the Clerk left the meeting)
- 59 **PART 2 Confidential Matters** - 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 were **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.
- 60 **Charter Hall Roofing Project** – Due to circumstances beyond the control of the council delays had occurred, each delay adding to the cost of the project. Reasons for the delays included rain and contractual matters. An email from the Project Manager and inspection note dated 20th May were referred to.

Ass.
Clerk

- 61 **Neighbourhood Plan** – The outcome of the draft report, which would be published when confirmed, was outlined by the Clerk.
- 62 **Staffing Matters** – In order to address workload concerns recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee were considered. On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED**:
- a. That no new projects or services unless essential would be approved to limit further pressures on existing staff. Any proposals coming forward included full consideration of resources required, including staff time and budget.
 - b. The employment of an additional member of staff initially on a fixed term 2-year contract in the role of Facilities/Property Manager, or similar, for a minimum of 26 hours p/week.
 - c. Review of all job descriptions and evaluation to facilitate the new role, the job evaluation being carried out by an external consultant.

Clerk/
Cllrs

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

Councillor Fisher, Mayor

DRAFT