

Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on Monday 9th September 2024 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton

Committee Members Present: Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)
 Councillor R Colman (Chairman, Property)
 Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
 Councillor J Yelland (Chairman, Policy & Resources)
 Councillor F Hart
 Councillor C Holt
 Councillor M Ireland
 Councillor C Marsh
 Councillor S Weekes

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)
 Mr J McGahey (Park-Keeper)
 3 members of the public

		Action
256	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> – Apologies from Cllr Fisher (personal) were approved on the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman.	
257	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> – Cllrs Ireland, Marsh and Tolley declared a personal interest in Min Ref 262.5.	
258	<u>Public Participation</u> – A member of the public addressed the council about the putting improvement project and raised concerns including about fencing off the area. Disappointment at having been asked to remove advertising signage from Simmons Park was expressed. A member of the public, who is a park user, had emailed comments for circulation to Councillors in relation to the putting improvement proposal.	
259	<u>Park Keeper</u> – Mr McGahey reported on matters including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing repairs to the skatepark which had been well used over the summer. • Maintenance work undertaken to the paths through the woods • A flagpole for the flying of the Green Flag awarded recently to Simmons Park had been installed and the flag was flying. • A Wildlife booklet had been printed and was available to the public. A related guided trail would be held during October half term. • Winter jobs were being planned and included improvements to the path which led to the bandstand adjacent to Chalet Treloar, removal of saplings that were growing up along the riverbank and re-gravelling the path adjacent to The Nook. • Hedgehog feeding stations and houses had been purchased to support the hedgehog community and those recently released into Simmons Park. 	
260	<u>Members' Questions</u> – None	
261	<u>Minutes</u> - Minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 8 th July 2024 were APPROVED to be signed by the Chairman on the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Marsh.	
262	<u>Simmons Park</u>	
262.1	Updates - The following were noted:	

- **Bookings** - Events that had either taken place or were scheduled to take place in Simmons Park, subject to receipt of the necessary paperwork, were noted. This included a request to hold an inflatable event in 2025.
- **Okehampton College/DMAT Signage** – Trustees of Simmons Park Charity were awaiting a response from DMAT.
- **Flagpole** – Following correspondence from WDBC advising that planning consent was not required, a 4m flagpole for the flying of the Green Flag had been installed and the flag raised by Cllr Tolley on 5th September

262.2 Putting Improvements – A working group had been held to which Cllr Tolley had taken part in, in the absence of other Cllrs. It was noted that a plaque on a bench adjacent to the putting green was from the Putting Club that had been established in 1929.

259 responses had been received in relation to the consultation:

- Choice A – 40 responses received 15%
Retain as existing
- Choice B - 219 responses received 85%
Putting holes with hard standing surrounded by wildlife and bee friendly planting
- Choice C - 1 response received 0.04%
Mainly hard standing with no planting

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** that the working group meet to review results of survey. Cllrs Marsh, Tolley and Ireland to be included within the working group.

262.3 Carpark – No overnight camping/campervan signs had been purchased following a surge in use of the carpark for overnight camping in contravention of the byelaws.

262.4 Parking Incursions – The Clerk advised that on the second occasion travellers had arrived in the carpark a contractor had been appointed to serve a legal notice to vacate. Consideration was given to subscribing to a contract for preventative signage and action should further instances occur.

On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Ireland, (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to agree Bronze level cover at the cost of £500 to join a scheme run by Devon Investigations which could help to prevent future incursions. To be actioned in February 2025.

(2 members of the public left the meeting)

262.5 Play Equipment – Removal of one of two the Rotators, which would need repair, and replacement with an inclusive seesaw in 2025 was considered, the lack of inclusive play equipment having been noted within the Green Flag award report. Funding for this could be applied for from Okehampton United Charity in the next financial year.

263 Skatepark and BMX Track

263.1 BMX/Pump Track Improvements – The Clerk raised concerns about management of the project, management of Health & Safety, CDM and the form of contract that should be entered into. The scheduled working group meeting had not gone ahead as only 1 of the 4 nominated Cllrs had attended.

Clerk

Clerk

	On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Rogers (1 abstention), it was RESOLVED to approve the draft documentation and progress with the project.	Clerk
264	<u>Cemetery</u>	
264.1	Burials – Since the last meeting the following had taken place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 new burials • 1 pre purchase EROB • 1 reopening burial • 3 headstone permits issued 	
264.2	Scattering Lawn – Signage was to be purchased and a booking had been received, the date of which was to be agreed.	Clerk
265	<u>Other Outdoor Areas and Updates</u>	
265.1	Vehicles – Progress repairing the van had been made, further investigation was required. (Cllrs Holt and Weekes left the meeting)	
265.2	Picnic Area Behind Lidl - A bench had been delivered and would be installed the following week. Those responsible for destroying the previous bench had been charged with Arson and were due in court later in September.	
265.3	Building Security – It was note that an upgrade or improvement to the security systems may be required. Information was awaited.	
266	<u>Policies</u> – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED to recommend the following policies to the Policy & Resources Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow and Ice Management • Wood and Logs 	Clerk
267	<u>Finance</u>	
267.1	Payment Schedule – The Clerk explained the invoices received from Pozitive Energy relating to property in Market Street. On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.	
267.2	2025/26 Budget – Feedback arising from a budget workshop held on 5 th September to review the Committee’s budget responsibilities for the current year and initial requirements for 2025/26 was noted. On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was RESOLVED not to make any changes at this time, and that further scrutiny of the budget continue through the budget setting process.	
268	<u>Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups -</u>	
268.1	Cemetery Management – A meeting to view potential land for purchases was taking place on 19 th September and a subsequent meeting of the working group would be arranged.	
268.2	Putting Green Improvements – See Min Ref 262.2 above	
268.3	BMX/Pump Track – See Min Ref 263 above	
269	<u>Members’ Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -</u>	

269.1	Dartmoor National Park Forum – Cllr Marsh advised the meeting had been cancelled and a revised date was awaited.	
269.2	Everything Okehampton – Cllr Marsh reported that Edwardian Evening plans were progressing, and they were hoping the BID would take it on. In April they were considering an event supporting St George’s Day and putting on an event in May for VE Day.	
269.3	Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA) – Cllr Tolley reported no meeting had been held.	
269.4	Okehampton & District Community Transport Group – Cllr Leech advised they had a school contract with DCC which the group were able to keep, but DCC would not be putting any new school contracts in place with Community Transport Groups. WDBC and the Transport Hub had agreed to meetings with the group so that they would be integrated into the scheme. A quarterly report would be sent to the Clerk.	
269.5	Okehampton Ukraine Support Group – Cllr Ireland had not able to contact the group. Clerk to investigate.	Clerk
269.6	Parklands Leisure Centre Users Group – No meeting had been held. Cllr Leech reported that as a Member of WDBC he had raised the matter as the Meet the Manager meetings were not publicised.	
269.7	Twinning Association – Cllr Rogers had not had any contact from the group.	
270	<u>PART TWO CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS</u> – 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. (A member of the public left the meeting, the Park-Keeper was permitted to remain).	
271	<u>Staffing</u> – The Clerk reported that the Assistant Clerk had tendered her resignation earlier in the day and as such some projects and work would be delayed.	
272	<u>Cemetery Extension</u> – A landowner had in principle agreed to sell some land to the council for this purpose and a site meeting was due to be held on 19 th September with the land agent.	
273	<u>Memorial Masons</u> – The Clerk reported on a review of memorial masons and it was noted there were no current concerns. It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Ireland.	
274	<u>Parks Staffing</u> – As requested at the previous meeting the Park-Keeper and Clerk had prepared a proposal for additional resources within the Parks Team.	

On the proposition of Cllr Rogers, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee/Personnel Sub-Committee that on completion of the current apprenticeship a full time Groundsperson role within the Parks Team was made available.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Rogers, it was **RESOLVED** recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee/Personnel Sub-Committee that on completion of the current apprenticeship a further apprenticeship was offered within the team in accordance with OTC's aim to invest in the community by offering an opportunity to learn whilst working.

Clerk

275 **Simmons Park Carpark** – An update in relation to the lease and agreements associated with the carpark was provided by the Clerk who advised a meeting with a WDBC Officer and Cllr Marsh was taking place within the next few weeks.

276 **Fairplace Tree** – The Park-Keeper requested the thoughts of Councillors as to what could replace the tree at Fairplace. The most popular suggestion was a *Ceanothus arboreus* 'Trewithen Blue'.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland seconded Cllr Tolley it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.50pm.

Chairman