

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 25th November 2024 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Okehampton**

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

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Clerk)
 Cllr G Dexter (WDBC)

	Action
417 <u>Apologies for Absence</u> – Cllr Weekes had tendered apologies (health).	
418 <u>Declarations of Interest</u> – None	
419 <u>Public Participation</u> – None	
420 <u>Members Questions</u> – A review of the Community Emergency Plan in relation to climate change and to add potential risk for water contamination was requested in early 2025.	Clerk
421 <u>West Devon Borough Council</u> – Reports from Cllrs Dexter and Leech had previously been circulated. Cllr Leech further reported on the situation surrounding Airband contracts designed to bring fast fibre connection to rural areas. He had contacted DCC in relation to speeding issues and advised Speedwatch in a nearby local parish council may recommence, eventually potentially allowing others to join. He requested issues relating to rough sleepers were brought to his attention.	
422 <u>Devon County Council</u> – Report previously circulated.	
423 <u>Questions Arising from Members Reports</u> – Issues and concerns in relation to pavements in the Crediton Road area were commented upon and concerns relating to the BT analogue to digital switchover, as reported by Cllr Dexter, were made.	
424 <u>Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon</u>	
424.1 On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meetings held on 16 th and 23 rd September 2024.	
425 <u>Full Council Meeting Minutes</u> – The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 28 th October 2024 were approved on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Hart, to be signed by the Mayor.	
426 <u>Meetings, Projects and Consultations</u>	
426.1 Community Governance Boundary Review – The Clerk was awaiting information from WDBC.	

426.2 Government Consultation Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings - On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to respond to the consultation including the following comments:

- a) Remote meeting attendance was supported but should be an option available to town and parish councils rather than being statutory. Concerns included:
 - poor internet connection
 - viability of councils who did not own buildings being able to facilitate remote meetings
 - the ability of councillors and/or members of the public to connect remotely making local councils less accessible
- b) Proxy voting was not supported for reasons which included:
 - Town and parish councils were not generally political
 - Councillors should attend meetings open minded and listen to debate before deciding how to vote
 - Councillor 'cliques' could form and informal conversations which would not be transparent could occur
 - Councillors could be coerced into permitting another Councillor to vote for them

Clerk

426.3 Okehampton Hospital – Cllrs Marsh and Colman declared personal interests.

Correspondence received from Cllr Goffey, Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council, was considered. On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Hart (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to write a letter of support.

Clerk

426.4 NHS Service Consultation – It was **agreed** to respond to a consultation '[Helping to build a health service fit for the future](#)'. Response to include the following comments:

- Q1 The Council would like to see included in the 10-year health plan improved access to local beds including the reopening of the Ward facility at Okehampton Hospital. The reinstatement of maternity services at Okehampton Hospital along with a 7-day week Minor Injuries facility and introduction/improvement of Dentistry services.
- 1) Clear indication of what services could be accessed and where the facilities were. Services for which there was a charge needed to be clearly stated. Okehampton Hospital had space for reintroduction of facilities and more services. This should be utilised in order to expediate treatment for minor emergencies, diagnostics, scans and tests, ongoing treatment and therapies, and to provide beds for recuperation.
 - 2) It was believed there was a wide lack of confidence in the use of technology within the health service in terms of accessibility, understanding and security. Rural areas and some members of the public did not have reliable internet access meaning that they may be excluded from using services. This included access to GP appointments.
 - 3) Availability and easy of accessibility to quality health care provision through GP surgeries and other NHS services. Shortening waiting lists was vital. Some services had been privatised and these should be brought back into the control of the NHS. Income from taxes should be directly invested into care.

Clerk

426.5 Devon Nature Towns and Cities Fund – Cllr Marsh advised a meeting had been held and funding was being applied for.

426.6 Pulse Smart Hub – Suggested locations had been received. It was **agreed** that Cllr Fisher work with the Clerk on the project, including attending meetings to establish more facts and information, along with potential locations.

Cllr
Fisher/
Clerk

- 427 **Payments** – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments noting that the cheque to Okehampton Poppy Appeal should have read £65.00.
- 428 **Policies and Documents** - On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee. Clerk
- 429 **Council Insurance** – On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Hart, it was **RESOLVED** to:
- Ratify the Clerk’s decision to increase insurance values and include additional assets within the insurance policy in accordance with the recent Building Reinstatement Cost Assessment
 - In addition, that overinsured assets be reduced in line with the assessment. Clerk
- 430 **Beating the Bounds** – The Council noted that Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council would be Beating the Bounds on Wednesday 20th August 2025.
- 431 **Events**
- 431.1 **Edwardian Evening and Mayors Carols** – Thursday 5th December 2024.
- 431.2 **Council Christmas Informal Social Event** – A social event was being held on Wednesday 11th December 2024, at no cost to the Council - Councillors to ‘bring a plate’.
- 432 **Christmas and New Year Office Opening Hours** –The Council Office would be closed from 12noon Friday 20th December 2024 reopening on Thursday 2nd January 2025.
- 433 **Mayors Civic Diary Report** – Cllr Fisher had hosted a Mayor’s Quiz Night and Coffee Morning, had attended events including Rotary Coffee Morning, Remembrance Parade and Service, presented a grant cheque to St James’ Chapel, opened Budgens shop and the 3rd Anniversary of the opening of the Railway Station.
- 434 **Reports of Council working/Task & Finish Groups:**
- 434.1 **Climate Change** – No meeting had been held.
- 435 **Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation**
- 435.1 **Neighbourhood Plan Group** – No further report. Deferred until January.
- 436 **Members’ Reports and Items for Agendas**
- 436.1 **DCC Regeneration Board** – Cllr Tolley reported there was a meeting on 26th November.
- 436.2 **Business Improvement District** – The temporary manager had visited businesses. Cllr Tolley had been officially appointed a Director along with 4 other persons. Additional Directors from businesses within the BID area were being sought.
- 436.3 **Okehampton Community Hospital** – This item had been reported upon earlier in the meeting.
- 436.4 **Rural Market Town Group** – Cllr Leech advised there was no further update.
- 436.5 **Transition Town Okehampton** – Cllr Cummings reported on a recently held Visioning meeting and that work was continuing.

437 **PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Marsh 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.

438 **Fire Door Survey** – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation of the Property Committee to accept a quotation from ASAP for Phase 1 of fire door rectification work at the cost of £8,211.18 plus the addition of the ground floor reception door which had been missed from the quotation.

Clerk

439 **Civic Regalia** – Recommendations of the Policy & Resources Committee for the purchase of a Mayoral Chain and new ribbon for the Deputy Mayors pendant were considered. Concerns about the cost for the purchase of a new Mayoral Chain were raised and the following reasons for the requirement were noted:

- Insurance implications for use of the chain outside of office hours
- The age of the existing Mayoral Chain, which dated back to 1885, and its fragility meaning it should be used infrequently with handling kept to a minimum in order to preserve and elongate its life.
- Previous advice that the Chain should be retired and not used

It was suggested anticipated income in the 2025/26 financial year from the second homes council tax premium could be used to fund the purchase of a new chain.

On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to purchase Chain 2 with link B from Fattorini at the cost of £5,172, noting the cost could change as it was hoped the link could be attached to the centre of the chain with the additional facility to connect the current pendant. Chain to be mounted on black velvet. Once received the existing Chain only to be used for Town Council Civic Events; Mayor Choosing and Annual Council Meeting, Civic Service, Commonwealth Day, Remembrance Parade and Service. The new Chain to be used for all other events.

On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to purchase a new double mitred yellow and blue neck ribbon for the existing Deputy Mayors pendant from WH Darby at the cost of £86.90.

Clerk

440 **Staffing Matters** - On the proposition of Cllr Hart, seconded Cllr Marsh, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerks request for SLCC Community Governance Level 6 (BA Honours Degree) in accordance with the report. The Council's contribution being £3,850 spread over two years.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.15pm.

Councillor Fisher, Mayor