

**Minutes of a meeting of Okehampton Town Council held on
Monday 30th September 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 M Richards
Councillor S Weekes

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

Action

- 315** **Apologies for Absence** – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to approve apologies tendered by Cllr Marsh (personal).
- 316** **Declarations of Interest** – Cllr Ireland declared a personal interest in Min Ref 326.3.
- 317** **Public Participation** – None
- 318** **Members Questions** – A question was raised regarding a statement made recently that the Council was taking the lead on a new Neighbourhood Plan that would be completed by 2026. The Clerk advised the Council had indicated they would take this forward but completion by 2026 had not been agreed and was potentially not feasible.
- GWR had reiterated there would not be any toilet facilities provided at the Okehampton Interchange station.
- 319** **West Devon Borough Council** – Cllr Dexter had previously circulated a report and noted that WDBC had responded to the National Planning Policy Framework Consultation.
- A report from Cllr Leech had been previously circulated.
- 320** **Devon County Council** – A report from Cllr Samuel had previously been circulated. Cllr Samuel commented on the success of the Civic Service and offered potential funding support to the Okehampton Youth Council. Creation of the Devon and Torbay Combined Authority through devolution from the Government was being progressed, anticipated to be established in 2025.
- 321** **Questions Arising from Members Reports** – Clarification of council responsibility for the collection of bulky items was requested, this being WDBC. It was queried if toilets were not being provided at Okehampton Interlink, if the company responsible for the associated bus station could be requested to provide them.

Okehampton Interlink access roads were being used for vehicles to park along which could potentially become an issue.

322 Adoption of Minutes of Committees and to Receive Questions from Members Thereon

- 322.1** On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Parks Committee** meeting held on 8th July 2024.
- 322.2** On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Property Committee** meeting held on 22nd July 2024.
- 322.3** On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Policy & Resources Committee** meetings held on 10th June and 5th August 2024.
- 322.4** On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the **Personnel Sub-Committee** meetings held on 15th April and 2nd September 2024.

323 Full Council Meeting Minutes – The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 29th July 2024 were **approved** on the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded by Cllr Ireland, to be signed by Cllr Fisher.

324 Councillor Resignation – The resignation of Lynne Rogers was noted, the Notice of Vacancy had been published.

325 Okehampton Projects and Consultations

325.1 Business Improvement District (BID) – Cllr Tolley reported that professional advice had been obtained to ensure the BID Board was correctly formed. A meeting was taking place on 1st October 2024.

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Tolley as the Council's Representative on the BID Board.

- 325.2 Bespoke Heritage Watch Scheme - proposed for Okehampton Castle** – The presentation to councillors prior to the meeting had been well received.
- 325.3 Rail Update** - A stakeholder meeting in relation to the second, Okehampton Interchange, station had been held by GWR on 4th September 2024. It was noted that there was another railway station in the country with the name 'Interchange'.
- 325.4 Neighbourhood Plan** – Correspondence received from Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council advising they were supportive of any future plan, but did not wish to be directly involved was noted. The future of Neighbourhood Plans was not known due to proposed changes with the NPPF.

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Colman (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to review the situation in January 2025.

325.5 Community Governance Boundary Review – A Town Council meeting with WDBC had been arranged for 21st October 2024. Correspondence from Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council requesting a joint meeting was noted and would be arranged in the future.

325.6 Pulse Smart Hub Presentation – A virtual presentation taking place on 9th October was noted.

325.7 Okehampton Community Hospital – A response sent on behalf of Wes Streeting MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was noted. It was commented that the backing of other local councils could be requested.

326 Simmons Homes Charity – Following a resignation consideration was given to nominating a Trustee to the Charity for the period of 4 years from the date of appointment. It was commented the list of skills appeared to be specific and that it would be difficult to find someone who met all of the requirements. No nomination was made.

327 Policies and Documents – On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the following as recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee:

- Co-Option Policy
- Discretions Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Flexible Retirement
- Recruitment
- Snow and Ice Management
- Woods and Logs

328 Finance and Governance

328.1 Payments – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Yelland, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments.

328.2 2023/24 External Audit – The Report and Certificate which identified a typographical error on transposition of figures from the 2022/23 Accounting Statement, this being Box 6 for 2022/23 which should read £268,558 was noted. To eliminate future risk of a similar error, another members of staff to double check the submission.

328.3 Notice of Conclusion of Audit – The notice had been published on 16th September 2024. On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** that it remain in place until 7th October 2024.

328.4 Internal Auditor Appointment – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** to confirm the appointment of IAC Audit and Consultancy as the council's internal auditor for the last of a three-year agreement at the cost of £770 p/annum.

329 Planning

329.1 Planning Application - [2758/24/OPA](#) Outline planning permission, with all matters reserved, for residential development for up to 2 dwellings. Land Adjacent to Thrumster, Darkey Lane, Okehampton.

A proposal by Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Bird to support the application was not carried.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, it was **RESOLVED** to OBJECT to the application on the grounds that it did not comply with Policy TTV26 in relation to restricting isolated development in the Countryside

Clerk

329.2 Licensing Application - Supply of Alcohol Off the premises Monday to Sunday 0700 – 2200. Opening Hours Monday to Sunday 0700 – 2200. Snowdon Retail (Fore Street) Limited, 8-9 Fore Street Okehampton

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Cummings (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to support the application.

Clerk

329.3 WDBC Consultation - Gambling Act 2005 – Consultation of draft Gambling Statement of Principles. No comments were made.

329.4 Crediton Road Pedestrian Crossings – Concerns of residents from both the town and hamlets about pedestrian safety whilst crossing the road and newly installed steps that were unsuitable for use by those with disabilities were being forwarded to DCC. It was commented there was no lighting, it was a fast road although there was a 40mph speed limit, and the newly created steps would impact negatively the elderly, disabled, people with pushchairs and similar.

The Clerk reported she had spoken with the Chairman of Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council when it had been suggested the Town Council could work with them in relation to the issues, if invited to do so as the area was outside of the town boundary.

329.5 Proposed Development of Phase 4B (Okement Park and Hampton Mill Phase 2), Crediton Road, Okehampton – The Clerk advised Councillors, for transparency purposes, not to attend a closed meeting with the developer.

329.6 DCC (West Devon HATOC) (Traffic Regulation) Amendment Order 6143 – On the proposition of Cllr Richards, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to support the proposals relating to West Bridge Close, Okehampton.

Clerk

330 Civic Events

330.1 Mayor Choosing/Annual Council Meeting and Mayoral Awards – Recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee as follows were agreed:

Mayoral Awards

- a) The number of awards be limited to a maximum of three p/annum:
 - i. 1 nominated by the Okehampton Town Youth Council
 - ii. 2 nominated by the Town Council
- b) Criteria:
 - i. An individual or group/organisation who lives, works, volunteers or operates within the town boundary
 - ii. Must have demonstrated service to the Okehampton community

Mayor Choosing/Annual Council Meeting will be held in the Charter Hall instead of the Council Chamber so that the number in attendance can be increased and places can be set aside for town residents. Guests will be seated at round tables cabaret style in order to facilitate refreshments following the formal events. Councillors will be seated in front of, not on, the stage, and the projector used to show the Council Crest and/or relevant photographs.

330.2 Civic Service 2025 – Fairplace Church were unable to accommodate the Service on one of the usual dates in September 2025. On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Cummings it was **RESOLVED** the Service be held on Sunday 12th October 2025

Clerk

331 Mayors Civic Diary Report – Cllr Fisher had attended a variety of events including the Rotary Fair, a community meeting at the Ockment Centre, Okehampton Show, the Memory Café, a green space meeting, Adventure 7 presentation, Inner Wheel, Methodist Church Coffee morning, Meldon Wildlife Day, Hospicecare Coffee morning and golf day, Friendly Circle outing, Force Concert for cancer, WDBC Civic Service, Fairtrade tea party and presented Tor Support with a grant cheque.

332 Reports of Council working/Task & Finish Groups:

332.1 Climate Change – No meeting had been held.

332.2 Charter Hall Roof Replacement – Installation of a safety rail, review of some leadwork and the final invoice were awaited.

333 Reports on Current Activities by Community Groups with Town Council Representation

333.1 Neighbourhood Plan Group – No further report.

334 Members' Reports and Items for Agendas

334.1 Business Improvement District – No further report.

334.2 Okehampton Community Hospital – Cllr Richards advised a meeting was being arranged. Work that had been undertaken to the building would potentially make it difficult for the space to be reused as hospital wards.

334.3 Rural Market Town Group – Cllr Leech reported on meetings attended in August, one relating to rural services for older people and one about young people. Presentations had been circulated. Urban areas continued to receive more government funding than rural areas.

334.4 Transition Town Okehampton – Cllr Cummings reported the group was getting involved and organising various meetings and was currently at an information gathering stage. They would be taking part in the carnival.

334.5 DCC Regeneration Board – Cllr Tolley reported on a meeting on 10th September, when there had been a presentation about the railway station and BID. Next meeting was on 26th November.

335 On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman 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.

336 Outstanding Balances - On the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Bird, it was **RESOLVED** to write off an outstanding debt for £12 on the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee and Responsible Financial Officer, on the grounds that time spent chasing the debt outweighed the amount owed. Letter to be sent expressing disappointment and advising any future bookings would require upfront payment.

337 Staffing Matters

337.1 Assistant Clerk Resignation – The resignation of the Assistant Clerk whose last working day was 8th November 2024 was noted. Recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee outlined in the tabled report dated 25th September 2024 were considered:

On the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to ratify resolutions a) and b) made by the P&R Committee as follows:

- a) Assistant Clerk role be changed to that of Finance Officer.
- b) Change the Admin Officer role to Assistant Clerk, with agreement following consultation.

On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Hart, it was **RESOLVED** to approve recommendations a) and b) as follows and as set out in the report:

- a) In the event of extended absence of the Town Clerk/RFO the Assistant Clerk will be the person nominated as deputy RFO and Proper Officer. (These periods to be confirmed by Full Council as required.)
- b) Cover for any interim period following the last working day of the current Assistant Clerk be arranged as set out in the report.

The Clerk reported the Finance Officer role had been internally advertised during week commencing 23rd September and would be advertised externally later in the week if there were no expressions of interest.

337.2 Parks Staffing – To resolve to ratify recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee

On the proposition of Cllr Cummings, seconded Cllr Hart, it was **RESOLVED** to ratify recommendations a) and b) from the Policy & Resources Committee and in accordance with the report to:

- a) Employ an additional full-time permanent Groundsperson to work with the Parks Team in the Spring of 2025
- b) The appointment of a further apprentice when the existing apprenticeship ended.

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Cummings, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.25pm.

Councillor Fisher, Mayor