

**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 7.10pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall,  
Okehampton**

**Committee Members Present:** Councillor B Tolley (Chairman)  
Councillor A Fisher (Mayor)  
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)

		<b>Action</b>
468	<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> – None	
469	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b> – None	
470	<b><u>Public Participation</u></b> – None	
471	<p><b><u>Park Keeper</u></b> – Mr McGahey reported on matters including the following: Repair work to the fence through Clapps Wood had been undertaken Hedges in Simmons Park and the Cemetery had been cut back. Damage had been caused to shrubs and trees in Simmons Park from the snow when woodland areas and the formal side of the park had been closed due to falling branches. Trees lost included a Willow tree in Platts Meadow, a Silver Birch and two Laburnum trees. The riverbank had been damaged during recent storms. Tidying of garden areas at the front of the park had been delayed because of the storm damage tidy-up and the team were approximately 5 weeks behind. Planned winter work such as installation of cycle racks, creation of a path to the bandstand and planting may also be delayed.</p> <p>Cllr Tolley thanked the team for their work.</p>	
472	<b><u>Members' Questions</u></b> – None	
473	<b><u>Minutes</u></b> - Minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 9 <sup>th</sup> September and 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2024 were <b>APPROVED</b> to be signed by the Chairman on the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Yelland.	
474	<b><u>Appointment of Committee Vice-Chairman</u></b> – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Yelland it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to appoint Cllr Holt (1 abstention) as Committee Vice-Chairman following the resignation of Cllr Rogers.	
475	<b><u>Simmons Park</u></b>	
475.1	<p><b>Updates</b> - The following were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bookings</b> - Events that had either taken place or were scheduled in Simmons Park, subject to receipt of the necessary paperwork</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Okehampton College/DMAT Signage</b> – Trustees of Simmons Park Charity would be considering a proof design at the next meeting</li> <li>• <b>Putting Improvements</b> – A meeting of the working group to review the survey results would be held in early 2025.</li> <li>• <b>Christmas Free Parking</b> – In accordance with the resolution made in November 2023 the following had been offered: Free parking Monday to Friday from 12noon, all day Saturdays and Bank Holidays from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December until Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 (inclusive)</li> <li>• <b>Tree Survey</b> - A survey of trees in Simmons Park due to be undertaken on 21<sup>st</sup> November had been rescheduled to 16<sup>th</sup> December due to the storms</li> </ul>	
475.2	<p><b>Signage</b> – On the proposition of Cllr Hart, seconded Cllr Ireland it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve a request from Nibbles Café to place an advertising A-Frame in a safe place providing it was taken inside when they were closed.</p>	Clerk
475.3	<p><b>Trees</b> - On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve a request from a member of the public for the planting of a Copper Beech Tree adjacent to a shelter and in place of a Silver Birch that had been damaged in recent storms.</p>	Clerk
475.4	<p><b>Car Park Fees and Charges</b> - It was noted that parking fees had not been increased for at least 10 years.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Weekes (1 abstention), it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to increase the Simmons Park parking fees, to be implemented from the date of a revised management agreement with WDBC, date to be confirmed.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Fisher (1 abstention) it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to increase the parking permit charges for Simmons Park, to be implemented from the date of a revised management agreement with WDBC, date to be confirmed.</p>	Clerk
476	<p><b><u>Skatepark and BMX Track</u></b></p>	
476.1	<p><b>BMX/Pump Track Improvements</b> – It was noted the project would be progressed in early 2025.</p>	Clerk
476.2	<p><b>Skatepark</b> - Correspondence received from a member of the public was noted.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Yelland it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve a request from a PCSO to hold a graffiti teaching class at the skatepark including use of some ramps for this purpose also a potential event.</p>	Clerk
477	<p><b><u>Cemetery</u></b></p>	
477.1	<p><b>Burials</b> - Details for the year to date were noted</p>	
477.2	<p><b>Scattering Lawn</b> – Creation of the facility was complete, and a booking for its use had been made.</p>	
477.3	<p><b>Consultation</b> – <a href="https://consult.justice.gov.uk/law-commission/burial-and-cremation/">https://consult.justice.gov.uk/law-commission/burial-and-cremation/</a></p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Fisher it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the response recommended by the Cemetery Working Group.</p>	Ass. Clerk

**477.4 Cemetery Fees and Charges 2025/26** – Fees and charges for the coming financial year were reviewed.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Fisher it was **RESOLVED** not to change them for the 2025/26 financial year in accordance with the recommendation of the Cemetery Working Group.

**478 Other Outdoor Areas and Updates**

**478.1 The following was noted:**

**Vehicles** – The Park-Keeper advised that the garage had not made any progress. Cllr Marsh to follow up.

**Lighting Column Inspections** – Light column inspections in Simmons Park and the Skatepark were required to be undertaken, quotations would be sought in early 2025

**Clapps Wood Annual Footpath Closure** – The permissive footpath through Clapps Wood had been closed from 8am Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October to 8am on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024

**Snow/Ice** – The Council's Snow and Ice Policy had been implemented during a spell of inclement weather towards the end of November which had resulted in the closure of the formal side of Simmons Park due to falling tree branches

**Bench Behind Lidl** – The individuals responsible for deliberately destroying the bench by fire in October 2023 had been identified by the CCTV system, found guilty of Arson and dealt with by the Court. The outcome included ordered the payment of compensation towards the cost of the lost bench and community reparation, potentially undertaking work within Simmons Park.

**478.2 Dog Waste Bin** – A request from a member of the public for the provision of an additional or larger bin to be provided at the junction of Chichacott Lane and Crediton Road was considered.

It was noted that WDBC owned the existing bin and that it was only being emptied once a week instead of the contracted twice weekly services.

On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Yelland (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to follow up complaint by letter to contractor and review the situation following a response.

Clerk

**478.3 Bus Shelter** – To consider a proposal for the installation of a bus shelter in Exeter Road.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Marsh (1 abstention) it was **RESOLVED** to support a proposal for the installation of a bus shelter in Exeter Road. The company proposing the installation should consult with the police in relation to potential fear and threat of crime, ensure that the relevant landowner is in agreement, obtain planning consent if required and from DCC Highways.

Clerk

**479 Finance**

**479.1 Payment Schedule** – On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments dated 9<sup>th</sup> December and retrospectively for that dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024.

**479.2 2025/26 Budget** – V5 of the draft budget was considered. It was commented that WDBC may be planning to increase the cost of emptying of waste bins and damage caused to the riverbank in Simmons Park during recent storms would financially impact on the repair costs. To be reviewed by Full Council when potential additional costs may be known.

**480** **Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups -**  
**480.1 Cemetery Management** – See Min Ref 477 above

**480.2 Putting Green Improvements** – See Min Ref 475.1 above

**480.3 BMX/Pump Track** – See Min Ref 476.1 above

**481** **Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -**

**481.1 Dartmoor National Park Forum** – Cllr Marsh had been unable to attend the last meeting. Papers had been circulated.

**481.2 Everything Okehampton** – Cllr Marsh reported that Edwardian Evening had been successful despite the weather with good support from residents.

Everything Okehampton had taken over responsibility for Edwardian Evening and the Christmas Lights from the Chamber of Trade several years ago and had given a large donation to Okehampton Town Council to purchase the lights approximately 3 years ago. This year it had cost in excess of £10k to erect, dismantle the lights and the associated expenses which had been funded through grants and donations. Businesses, with exception of 6, had not supported lights in the past but they should take responsibility for them and decide themselves on this in the future. From 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Everything Okehampton would cease to be responsible for the Christmas lights and Edwardian Evening.

**481.3 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)** – Cllr Tolley reported he had been unable to attend the last meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November School partnerships were ongoing although there were none in Okehampton/DMAT area. The Memory café and home education sessions were going well as were other activities. The Pavilion Lounge was now being used by the Football Club. Parkrun started in October and had been successful to date. The Charity was still seeking a Clerk.

**481.4 Okehampton & District Community Transport Group** – Cllr Leech advised seeking grants and funding was becoming more difficult. The group was trying to work DCC and WDBC. A new Trustee was going to be treasurer, and they had some new drivers including four who were willing to drive the wheelchair friendly vehicles.

**481.5 Okehampton Ukraine Support Group** – The Clerk reported that there was no longer a formal support group in Okehampton, support continued to be available through WDBC. Item to be removed from future agendas.

**481.6 Parklands Leisure Centre Users Group** – No meeting.

**481.7 Twinning Association** – No councillor representative.

**482** **PART TWO CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS** – On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Hart, it was **RESOLVED** that under section 1(2) of the Public

Bodies (Colman 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.

(The Park-Keeper was permitted to remain)

- 483 **Simmons Park Riverbank Maintenance** – Item deferred due to additional work required following the storms. Clerk to check if the damage was covered by insurance.
- 484 **Cemetery Extension** – There was no update in relation to potential land purchase.
- 485 **Simmons Park Carpark** – There was no update in relation to the lease. Some information had been received from WDBC but was not what was requested.

On the proposition of Cllr Fisher seconded Cllr Colman it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 8.20pm.

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Chairman