

**Okehampton Town Council**  
**20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**  
**Meeting Report**

<b>Date:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2025
<b>Name:</b>	Emma James

**16. Simmons Homes Charity – Following a resignation the Council is requested to nominate a Trustee to the Charity for the period of 4 years from the date of appointment.**

The following additional information has been received from the Charity:

Trustees advise the selection of skill set requested, as below, is **desirable but not essential** and whilst it would be preferable to have an independent (from the council) nomination it is not imperative.

1. Understanding of Charity Law - policies and charity management
2. Understanding of Operations - H & S, facilities, property management, the benefits system
3. Understanding of Finance - investment and auditing
4. Understanding Governance/leadership – law, planning, safeguarding

Trustees would like it noted that currently 4 of the 7 trustees are also on the local councils and wondered if there was any possibility consideration could be given to nominating someone who is not a town or hamlet council member.

**18. Accessibility Grading System – To consider correspondence from a member of the public in relation to accessibility of businesses to people with disabilities, associated advice from the Devon Association of Local Councils and the Council’s insurer**

Correspondence and a request has been received from a member of the public, following which advice has been sought from DALC and the Council’s insurer. Caution is advised as detailed in the responses, including the risk of legal challenge.

Advice from the Council’s Insurer – The agent acting for the council has been unable to give a definitive answer and would not be in a position to until further work had been completed on the possibility of such a scheme. However, they do say as follows:

‘We would need a lot more information/context to be able to discuss with your insurers but, as I say, I can’t currently see that your Policy would provide any cover... there certainly could be the possibility of “issues” here.’

Advice from DALC – DALC forwarded the request for advice to the National Association of Local Councils, the following is the subsequent response from DALC:

I have received a response from NALC’s legal team regarding the suggestion of a “council Scheme” which I have set out below.

“NALC Legal does not believe that this request raises any legal issues but suggests that the scheme may require a level of knowledge and expertise on accessibility issues for buildings that the Council does not possess.

They have suggested it may be preferable to use already existing resources such as Centre for Accessible Environments (<https://cae.org.uk/>) and the Royal Institute of British Architects

([https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/new-guidelines-put-accessibility-and-inclusion-at-the-heart-of-building-design?srsId=AfmBOopXsB-VFimS1\\_VSjdbNo1X-aIRufO8iLCK86Ybwer74ky68Mtq7](https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/new-guidelines-put-accessibility-and-inclusion-at-the-heart-of-building-design?srsId=AfmBOopXsB-VFimS1_VSjdbNo1X-aIRufO8iLCK86Ybwer74ky68Mtq7)).”

In addition, we have discussed this matter and have a few suggestions in relation to the council running such a scheme.

We would concur with NALC’s initial point around the area of expertise as we imagine there would be a wide range of specialist considerations needed, and we suggest you would need a fully qualified professional to undertake such work.

We have concerns that any scheme could be subject to challenge. For example, a business that may not score highly in a scheme could see a drop off in trade and this could leave the council open to challenge if this is attributable to the scheme. Equally, if a business scored highly and there were then issues with accessibility, then the council may be open to challenge.

There will be cost implications of setting up any scheme, especially if you are engaging with specialist organisations and these would need to be considered.

One possibility might be to refer the scheme to the town’s Chamber of Commerce where they could consider adopting it and where businesses could decide whether to participate.

We would suggest you also contact your insurers and establish their position.

The request received from the member of public is as follows:

### **Okehampton Accessibility Grading System**

Interestingly accessibility grading systems are being discussed online nationally amongst disabled people. Okehampton could be a pilot project offering a Council Award. We could work with the help of Transition Town Okehampton to implement the grading system and find funding. We could also look at becoming a Carer Friendly Town together.

Accessible places as examples are the Granite Way Cafe, only needing a couple more Blue Badge spaces. Adventure Oke are making adapted bikes, and the owner is disability aware. **REDACTED** is the only Carer friendly business in the town and the ramp has been tested, an example of how much a small shop can make a difference to inclusivity and quality of life experience.

A shared ramp scheme in Victorian Arcade and other places could work like railway station ramps. Stored in an upright position and locked, the key could be available from a business representative and the scheme could run under BID.

Apps exist like Euan’s Guide and Snowball to assess accessibility but these rely on variable user experience. We would build a standard checklist with criteria based awards. Here are some ideas:

### **CHECKLIST for assessment**

*Euan’s Guide Criteria - Accommodates: Wheelchair, Powerchair, Mobility Scooter, Walking Aid, Symbol Cane, Long Cane, Assistance Dog – Visual Impairment, Assistance Dog – Other, Sign Language, Hearing Aid or Cochlear Implant, AAC, Hidden Impairment, Speech Impairment, PMLD, Autism, Dementia, Learning Disability*

I have .... disabled car parking spaces

- There are dropped kerbs on car park pavements Y/N
- There are footbridges/tunnels/underpasses (please delete)
- There are platforms with gaps/steps (railway)
- There is blister paving/Corduroy hazard warning surfaces

- There is payment required for parking Y/N Via an App Y/N Parking machine Y/N  
Lighting is good in the car park Y/N in the premises Y/N  
There is a bus stop here Y/N (Distance: ....)  
Walking distances are: To the premises from the car park .... Round the premises: ....
- Are there any gradients/slopes .... If so details are: ....  
I have .... Step/s  
There is a raised door threshold which is .... cm high  
There is a ramp Y/N please delete: (on premises/communal)  
The width of my door is ....  
NHS average wheelchairs can access my business/venue (60cm width) Y/N  
There is space in my premises for wheelchairs to move around Y/N  
There is only space for people with wheelchairs to enter the doorway Y/N  
I have a lift which is accessible for all (including powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters) Y/N
- The dimensions of my lift are: ....
- The weight limit of my lift is .... (400kg in Mole Avon/Museum/Pavilion in the Park)  
There are escalators Y/N  
There is a handrail by the door/s Y/N  
There are automatic doors Y/N  
There is seating available Y/N
- I have a chair with arms Y/N
- Electric wheelchairs can fit under any tables (leg space:....) Y/N  
There is a hearing loop Y/N  
My premises is dementia friendly Y/N
- (I am a dementia friend Y/N)  
I have an accessible toilet Y/N including an emergency red cord to floor level Y/N  
Staff will support people to view items at the door Y/N  
Staff will support people to view items in the premises Y/N  
There is a video/photos available of upstairs if there is no access there Y/N

## **GOLD**

Fully accessible: NHS powered wheelchair access (60cm W, my scooter: 142cm L, 62cm W)  
All items in the checklist are covered.

## **GREEN**

Most items are covered in the checklist (definition to be confirmed). For example a manual wheelchair can access the lift but an electric wheelchair can not.

## **YELLOW**

Some items are covered in the checklist (definition to be confirmed). For example there is an inaccessible, upstairs area.

## **RED**

Items are not covered in the checklist. Premises has restricted access with step/s with no accessibility.