

**Minutes of Okehampton Town Council Policy and Resources Committee Meeting
held on Monday 4th November 2024 at 7.02pm in the Council Chamber,
Town Hall, Okehampton**

Committee Members Present: Councillor J Yelland (Chairman)
Councillor R Colman (Chairman, Property)
Councillor T Leech (Chairman, Planning)
Councillor B Tolley (Chairman, Parks)
Councillor L Bird
Councillor S Weekes

In Attendance: Mrs E James (Town Clerk)

Action

- 385** **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies tendered by Cllr Fisher (personal), Cllr Marsh (personal) and Cllr Hart (health) were approved on the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Colman.
- 386** **Declarations of Interest** –
Cllr Leech declared a personal interest in Minute References 391.2 and 391.8
Cllr Yelland declared a pecuniary interest in Minute Reference 391.3
- 387** **Public Participation** – None
- 388** **Members' Questions** – None
- 389** **Minutes** – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 16th and 23rd September 2024 to be signed by Cllr Yelland.
- 390** **Grant Feedback** received from the following groups and organisations was noted:
- a) **Okehampton Ladies Friendship Group** for the grant of £300 awarded in June 2023
 - b) **Okehampton Friendly Circle** for the grant of £500 awarded in June 2024
 - c) **Okehampton Community Recreation Association** for the grant of £500 awarded in June 2024
 - d) **Okehampton Fairtrade Group** for the grant of £125 awarded in June 2024
- 391** **Town Council Grants** – The available budget, which was not enough to cover applications received, was noted. Careful consideration was given to each individual application. Councillors expressed how difficult it was agreeing the awards to be made, noting the vital role the groups and organisations played within the community.
- 391.1** **Okehampton United Ecclesiastical Charity** - On the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £500 towards the upkeep of St James' Chapel and the Town Clock
- 391.2** **Okehampton District Community Transport Group** - A proposition to award the requested grant of £1,000 was not carried.
- On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Colman (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £750 towards the provision and delivery of core services.
- 391.3** **Citizens Advice Torrridge, North Mid and West Devon** - (Cllr Yelland left the room for this item of business and Cllr Tolley took the chair)

On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Colman (1 abstention, 1 against), it was **RESOLVED** to award a reduced grant of £4,000.

(Cllr Yelland returned and retook the Chair)

391.4 Meldon Viaduct Trust - On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Colman (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to award a reduced grant of £250 to assist with funding of essential repairs and maintenance and build a reserve for refurbishment plans in 2029.

391.5 Everything Okehampton - On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes (1 abstention), it was **RESOLVED** to award a reduced grant of £2,000 towards the cost of erection, maintaining and dismantling the Christmas Lights.

391.6 Okehampton Carnival - A proposition to award the requested grant of £500 was not carried.

On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to award a reduced grant of £400 towards the running costs of the annual carnival

391.7 Okehampton Voices - On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to award a reduced grant of £340 towards the purchase of a PA system and microphones for performances at events. The grant to be released on confirmation that full funding for the purchase of equipment had been obtained.

391.8 Okehampton Ladies Friendship Group - On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Bird (1 abstention, 1 against), it was **RESOLVED** to award a reduced grant of £342 towards the cost of room hire, refreshments for monthly meetings and for anniversary and Christmas celebrations

392 Town Centre Business Grant Initiative – WDBC had contributed £5,782 to the grant fund provided by the Town Council, this amount could be administrated by the Town Council to double any grant amount agreed by OTC through the scheme. Any funding provided by WDBC that was not used would need to be repaid to them.

392.1 Dogberry & Finch Books – On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Colman, it was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £386.85 towards the cost of window decal, vinyl sign panels and an eco-friendly wall mounted heater.

The cost would be split as follows from the budget: OTC £128.92 / WDBC £257.90.

392.2 The Arcade Trust (Victorian Arcade) – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to award a grant of £500 towards the design and installation of a large entrance sign at the Fore Street end, refurbishment of the entrance panel the opposite end and repainting of associated entrance ceilings.

The cost would be split as follows from the budget: OTC £166.67 / WDBC £333.33.

The committee noted that additional funding requested had not been included within the agenda. This was deferred for additional consideration at the next meeting of the committee.

393	<p><u>Okehampton Town Youth Council</u> – The Clerk reported that the Youth Council had met on 30th October when they had also spent time creating a poster and their social media presence – Facebook and Instagram. Hosting a First Aid course for young people in February half-term was being considered. A Logo had been agreed upon and grant applications had been submitted to Cllr Dexter (WDBC) and Cllr Samuel (DCC) for the cost of badges, branded hoodies and to cover the cost of the first aid course.</p>	
394	<p><u>Policies and Documents</u> - On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Bird, it was RESOLVED to recommend the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme to Full Council for approval. The Asbestos Management Policy had not been available for consideration.</p>	Clerk
395	<p><u>Civic Regalia</u></p>	
395.1	<p>Consideration of options for the purchase of a Mayoral Chain for use at Civic events outside of the town was deferred to Part 2 due to a review of initial indicative quotations received.</p>	
395.2	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech, it was RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council the replacement of the ribbon on the Deputy Mayors pendant with one which was yellow and blue in colour and double mitred, at the cost of £86.90.</p>	Clerk
396	<p><u>2024/25 Pay Agreement</u> – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech, it was RESOLVED to ratify the implementation and backdating of the Local Government Services Pay Agreement for the 2024/25 financial year to 1st April 2024. Backpay to be split over a number of months within the current financial year if requested in writing by members of staff.</p>	Clerk
397	<p><u>Finances</u></p>	
397.1	<p>Councillor Audits – No report.</p>	
397.2	<p>Management Accounts – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve the management accounts, as circulated, for months ended 31st August 2024 (month 5) and 30th September 2024 (month 6).</p>	
397.3	<p>Investments – Investments and interest rates were reviewed and noted.</p>	
397.4	<p>Mayors Charity Account – Correspondence from Lloyds advising the Treasurers Account was to be changed to a Community Account in January 2025 was noted. There would be a monthly account maintenance fee of £4.25 for the Community Account, the existing account not incurring any fees.</p>	
	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Bird, it was RESOLVED to close the Lloyds account and open a Unity Trust Instant Access Savings Account in its place. There were no charges for this account and an interest rate of 2.60% (as of 06/09/2024). Signatories to be as existing, report circulated.</p>	Clerk
397.5	<p>Bank Signatories – The previously circulated list was considered.</p>	
	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Bird, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to remove Mrs Ellis from all accounts and online banking services.</p>	
	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Bird, it was RESOLVED to add the new Finance Officer, once appointed, as signatory to the bank accounts and online banking services in place of Mrs Ellis.</p>	

	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to add Cllr Tolley as an additional signatory and to online banking services for the new Unity Account once opened.</p>	Clerk
397.6	<p>Payment Schedule – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED to approve the schedule of payments.</p>	
397.7	<p>Virements – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech, it was RESOLVED to approve the virement of £5,792 from General Reserves to the Town Centre Business Grant Initiative nominal code, this being the amount contributed to the initiative by WDBC.</p>	
	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech, it was RESOLVED to approve the virement of £700 from the Charter Hall Roof nominal code (4140/202) to the Charter Hall Roof EMR (352) to enable payment of the retention amount due to be paid in August 2025.</p>	
	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Leech, it was RESOLVED to approve the virement of funds remaining in the Charter Hall Roof nominal code, £12,368. The Property Committee to agree to which EMR it was moved.</p>	Clerk
397.8	<p>Regular Direct Debits, Standing Orders and BACS Transactions – The regular payments paid by Direct Debit and Standing Orders were reviewed. On the proposition of Cllr Weekes, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to approve they continue.</p>	
397.9	<p>Annual Subscriptions – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Colman, it was RESOLVED to agree the renewal of annual subscriptions for 2025/26, noting costs may change.</p>	
397.10	<p>2025/26 Budget – V3 of the draft budget and precept for 2025/26 was reviewed.</p>	
	<p>On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was RESOLVED not to continue with the Town Centre Business Grant Initiative.</p>	Clerk
	<p>It was noted the salary budgets would be revised following announcement of the pay agreement for the current financial year and to take into account the Government Budget which would increase Employers NI contributions from 13.8% to 15% from a lower payment threshold of £5,000 from April 2025</p>	
398	<p><u>Reports of Council Working/Task & Finish Groups</u> –</p>	
398.1	<p>VE Day 80th Anniversary, 8 May 2025 – There had been a meeting in October, when it was suggested that the Town Council would work on the history aspect of this anniversary working with Okehampton Memories. The next meeting was in January.</p>	
399	<p><u>Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items</u> –</p>	
399.1	<p>Citizens Advice – Cllr Leech reported that volunteers and funding were needed. The Chief Executive had made a presentation to WDBC recently and a report had been circulated.</p>	
399.2	<p>DALC Larger Councils Sub-Committee – The AGM and Conference was on 2nd October and had been attended by Cllr Yelland and the Clerk. The Clerk had been invited to speak about the Youth Council and two Youth Councillors had attended and answered some questions. DALC priorities and goals were outlined by Cllr Yelland.</p>	

- 399.3 Devon Climate Emergency Group** – Clerk to forward Cllr Bird links and information.
- 399.4 Fairtrade** – Cllr Weekes advised there was a meeting in the next few weeks, he had been unable to attend the last one.
- 399.5 Museum of Dartmoor Life** - Cllr Bird reported the Museum would close at the end of the week until 17th March 2025 with the exception of some events including Edwardian Evening. 2024 had been a successful year.
- 399.6 Police Council Advocate Scheme, Northern Links and West Devon Matters** – Cllr Yelland had not been able to attend the Advocate Scheme meeting, the next was on 2nd December. There had not been a West Devon Matters meeting. The Northern Links meeting had not effectively merged with any others and its future was unknown.
- 400** **On the proposition of Cllr Leech, 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.**
- 401** **Outstanding Balances** – The list of outstanding balances was noted. On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to take action in relation to an outstanding dept.
- It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Bird.
- 402** **IT Equipment Purchase** - Quotations received for the purchase of an additional computer or laptop to enable the Facilities Officer role were considered.
- On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to purchase a Laptop, associated items and licences in accordance with the quotation from AME Solutions at the cost of £1,652.72. Clerk
- 403** **Staffing Matters**
- 403.1** **Temporary Finance Cover** - On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Casual Contract for the employment of Mrs Ellis on a casual basis as Temporary Finance Administrator to cover critical elements of work in the interim period and potentially for a handover. Contract to commence on 25th November 2024 to terminate once an initial handover has been undertaken and for a maximum of six months Clerk
- On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to delegate the appointment of another Clerk to facilitate critical financial work including VAT returns, if required in the event that Mrs Ellis is unable to undertake this work. This would be through the means of a Casual Contract, rate of pay to be at that person's usual salary, paid hourly plus any travelling expenses. Clerk
- 403.2** **Facilities Officer** – The report, which included a review of the role and recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee was considered. On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Leech, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations 1 to 4 of the report. Clerk
- 404** **Mayors Chains** – Quotations received were considered. On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Weekes, it was **RESOLVED** that quotations for options

from Fattorini for a chain on black velvet with a King Charles III Coronation Link to be recommended to Full Council for consideration.

On the proposition of Cllr Leech, seconded Cllr Tolley, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part 2 and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9.15pm

Cllr Yelland, Chairman