

**Minutes of an Okehampton Town Council Parks Committee Meeting held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7pm 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)  
 Mrs A Horn (Assistant Clerk)  
 Mr J McGahey (Park-Keeper)  
 Councillor D McNeill  
 Councillor M Richards

	<b>Action</b>
<b>637</b> <b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> – None	
<b>638</b> <b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b> – None	
<b>639</b> <b><u>Public Participation</u></b> – None	
<b>640</b> <b><u>Park Keeper</u></b> – Mr McGahey reported that the Team had had a very productive few months enabling work including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearance of the ponds during which in excess of 50 frogs had been located and had resulted in a lot of frog spawn being laid</li> <li>• Spreading of home produced compost onto flowerbeds in Simmons Park</li> <li>• Re-gravelling of the path alongside The Nook</li> <li>• Installation of bike racks in Simmons Park and the Skatepark</li> <li>• Sapling clearance along the riverbank had commenced</li> <li>• Painting of some benches</li> <li>• Servicing of machinery and the tractor</li> <li>• Fencing repair in Clapps Wood</li> </ul> <p>The Crocus were particularly good this year and the Magnolia was starting to flower. Annual RoSPA safety inspections of the play areas and skate/BMX park had been undertaken the previous week. Minor issues identified were being addressed.</p>	
<b>641</b> <b><u>Members' Questions</u></b> – None	
<b>642</b> <b><u>Minutes</u></b> - Minutes of the Parks Committee meeting held on 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2024 were <b>APPROVED</b> to be signed by the Chairman on the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Hart.	
<b>643</b> <b><u>Simmons Park</u></b> - Cllr Marsh declared personal interests in Min Refs 643.1 and 643.2.	
<b>643.1</b> <b><u>Updates</u></b> - The following were noted:	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bookings</b> - Events that had either taken place or were scheduled to take place in Simmons Park, subject to receipt of the necessary paperwork, noting that the Tea in a Tent event had been postponed to later in the year</li> <li>• <b>Okehampton College/DMAT Signage</b> – Signage had been replaced</li> <li>• <b>Lighting Column Inspections</b> – Light column electrical and stability inspections in Simmons Park were due to be completed</li> <li>• <b>Cycle Rack Provision</b> – The cycle rack provided by DCC had been installed</li> <li>• <b>Wildlife Information Boards</b> – The boards had been obtained and were in place</li> <li>• <b>Green Flag</b> - A visit from a mystery shopper was expected during this second year of the award</li> <li>• <b>Reassurance Scheme</b> –The Bronze Scheme in relation to the deterrent of travellers using the site had been entered into for the period of 1 year, signage to be erected.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>643.2 Chalet Treloar</b> – Consideration was given to the request from a resident. On the proposition of Cllr Marsh, seconded Cllr Fisher (4 against) it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to permit the planting of a Rhododendron in the middle of the lawn to the rear of the property, providing it was a non-invasive species, and was done so under the guidance of the Park-Keeper. Permission was also agreed for planting in pots and planters in the rear courtyard area, no planting was to take place directly into the ground.</p>	Park-Keeper/ Clerk
<p><b>643.3 Unauthorised Vehicles Accessing Formal Side of Simmons Park</b> – On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Hart it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to liaise with Devon Highways about the provision of ‘no unauthorised vehicles’ or similar wording on the roadway outside of the entrance gates along with a 5mph speed limit along the access into the formal side of the park.</p>	Park-Keeper/ Clerk
<p><b>643.4 Simmons Park Carpark</b> – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes (1 abstention) it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the draft parking order and associated map for inclusion within a review of parking orders by WDBC in the coming months, with the inclusion of a 10mph speed limit restriction in the carpark.</p>	Clerk
<p><b>643.5 Events</b> – The Park-Keeper outlined plans for the provision of wildlife events in Simmons Park. These included a schools event, evening bat/owl walk, moth trapping, butterfly count and pond dipping all of which form part of an ecological survey. It was noted that the Youth Council could become involved with these events.</p>	
<p><b>643.6 Management Plan</b> - The first draft of the revised management plan was reviewed and some amendments requested for further consideration of the Committee.</p>	Ass. Clerk/ Clerk
<p><b>644 Skatepark and BMX Track</b></p>	
<p><b>644.1 BMX/Pump Track Improvements</b> – The project had been published on Contracts Finder, the closing date being 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025.</p>	
<p><b>644.2 Skatepark</b> - The Park-Keeper reported the team was regularly needing to clear smashed glass and litter from the shelter which appeared to be attracting antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>On the proposition of Cllr Hart, seconded Cllr Yelland (3 against, 2 abstentions) it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve removal of the shelter, in principle,</p>	Park-Keeper/ Clerk/

	subject to the outcome of a consultation. Consultation results to be considered by the Committee prior to any action removing the shelter being taken.	Ass. Clerk
<b>644.3</b>	<b>Cycle Rack Provision</b> – The cycle rack provided by DCC had been installed	
<b>645</b>	<b><u>Cemetery</u></b>	
<b>645.1</b>	<b>Burials</b> - Details for the year to date were noted	
<b>645.2</b>	Feedback from the post-Christmas inspection and tidy-up was received. The Cemetery Working Group to review and report to the Committee.	Ass. Clerk
<b>646</b>	<b><u>Other Outdoor Areas and Updates</u></b>	
<b>646.1</b>	<b>Vehicles</b> – The Clerk advised she had visited the garage the previous week and work was required to be undertaken by an auto-electrician which it was hoped would resolve the issues.	Park-Keeper
<b>646.2</b>	<b>Dog Waste Bin</b> – The Clerk reported that the contractor had not responded to two requests for information about the emptying of a dog waste at the junction of Chichacott Lane and Crediton Road. Cllr Leech advised the bin was now being emptied 3 times per week, although problems may occur over bank holidays when a collection may be missed.	
<b>647</b>	<b><u>Finance</u></b>	
<b>647.1</b>	<b>Payment Schedule</b> – On the proposition of Cllr Tolley, seconded Cllr Colman, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the schedule of payments, the value of those BACS payments being £3,821.83 +VAT.	
<b>647.2</b>	<b>Donation</b> – The Committee noted a donation for the purchase of a Laburnum Tree for Simmons Park and battery chainsaw in the sum of £552.16 had been received from a person who wished to remain anonymous.	
	The Park-Keeper expressed his thanks for the donation and for others including for a Copper Beech Tree that had also been donated recently.	Clerk
<b>648</b>	<b><u>Work Experience</u></b> – It was noted a student would be undertaking work experience in Simmons Park on Wednesdays throughout the summer term.	
<b>649</b>	<b><u>Committee Terms of Reference</u></b> – On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Fisher it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to recommend the document for the 2025/26 Mayoral Year to Full Council for consideration at the appropriate meeting.	Clerk
<b>650</b>	<b><u>Reports of Council Working/Task and Finish Groups -</u></b>	
<b>650.1</b>	<b>Cemetery Management</b> – No recent meeting had been held	
	It was <b>RESOLVED</b> to suspend Standing Order 3 (bb) to permit extension of the meeting following a proposal by Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Tolley.	
<b>650.2</b>	<b>Putting Green Improvements</b> – (Cllr Holt left the meeting)	
	A meeting of the working group had been held, and a concept drawing obtained. The Working Group to develop the project for further consideration.	Ass. Clerk
<b>651</b>	<b><u>Members' Reports and Requests for Agenda Items -</u></b>	
<b>651.1</b>	<b>Dartmoor National Park Forum</b> – No recent meeting had been held.	

**651.2 Everything Okehampton** – Cllr Marsh advised a VE Day event was planned on 8<sup>th</sup> May in Simmons Park.

**651.3 Okehampton Community Recreation Association (OCRA)** – Cllr Tolley reported that a meeting had been held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February and the AGM was scheduled for April.

**651.4 Parklands Leisure Centre Users Group** – (Cllr McNeill left the meeting) No meeting had been held. There was now one manager covering both Okehampton and Tavistock Leisure Centres.

**651.5 Okehampton & District Community Transport Group** – Cllr Leech advised a member of staff had left, and the group was constantly applying for grants. A meeting with DCC about the transport hub had taken place.

**651.6 Twinning Association** – Cllr Weekes indicated he would like to be nominated as the Councils representative. Full Council to consider.

Clerk

**652 PART TWO CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS** – On the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Colman, 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 and Assistant Clerk were permitted to remain)

**653 Catering** – On the proposition of Cllr Fisher, seconded Cllr Ireland it was **RESOLVED** not to approve a request for permission to run a mobile café in Simmons Park. This was on the grounds of potential for littering, provision of parking, the setting of a precedent and that, if it were permitted, the opportunity should be open to tender.

Clerk

**654 Tree Survey** – The report from a tree survey undertaken in Simmons Park on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 was considered alongside subsequent comments by WDBC's Tree Officer. The Park-Keeper advised a tomograph of trees recommended for felling would be undertaken to confirm the need for the extent of work. It was noted planning consent may be required to be sought and that an additional quotation was awaited.

On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Weekes it was **RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Clerk and Park-Keeper to accept the best value quotation.

Park-Keeper/  
Clerk

**655 Riverbank Repair Tender** – Tender returns were considered and on the proposition of Cllr Ireland, seconded Cllr Hart it was **RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to Full Council for the acceptance of a tender.

Clerk

**656 Cemetery Extension** - Correspondence from Savills, the Land Agent, and quotations for surveys and assessments was considered.

(Cllr Weekes left the meeting)

On the proposition of Cllr Colman, seconded Cllr Leech it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Land Agents fee of £1,000 for this stage of the process and to

Clerk

accept the quotation from JPP for the initial surveys and risk assessments at the cost of £6,250.

(Committee membership of those Councillors participating in the meeting was questioned, having also been queried prior to the start of the meeting, following which Cllr Richards was asked to leave. The validity of resolutions and votes taken would be checked by the Clerk, and if necessary, brought back to the Committee for ratification.)

**657** **Incident in Simmons Park** – Cllrs Marsh and Fisher declared personal interests.

The Clerk reported on an incident, which had been reported to the Police, on the formal side of Simmons Park on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025. A vehicle had crashed into a bench adjacent to Jubilee Bridge resulting in its destruction.

On the proposition of Cllr Yelland, seconded Cllr Leech (2 abstentions) it was **RESOLVED** to withdraw permission for the associated person to drive any vehicle along that accessway with immediate effect. Any connected deliveries to be made by official companies only.

Clerk

On the proposition of Cllr Ireland seconded Cllr Fisher, it was **RESOLVED** to exit Part Two and ratify decisions made therein. The meeting was closed at 9.30pm

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Chairman