



Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

Minutes, number 307 of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 3rd December 2024, at 7.30 pm at Meldon village hall, Meldon, Okehampton

Councillors Present -

M Littlejohns – Vice Chair
M Cooper - Chair
P Heard
J Heard
S Norris
A Ewen
J Goffey

1 x member of the public

Cllr Cooper opened the meeting at 7.30pm.

1. Members of the Public – Kit Hancock came to introduce himself as the new DNP Ranger. Due to the recent storm bad weather there had been damage at Fatherford – Chapple ford, they are looking at diverting the path. DNP are trying to get money out of DCC for the board walk by the castle.

The Dartmoor marshalls are under review and DNP are waiting for the government budget.

The Byelaw could change re: wild camping.

2. Declarations of Interest – None.

3. Apologies – Received and accepted from Cllr B Wood and Cllr G Dexter. The Clerk also sent her apologies.

4. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting held on 5th November 2024. **The minutes were approved as being an accurate record and will be signed by Cllr Cooper at the next meeting. This was proposed by Cllr M Littlejohns seconded by Cllr J Heard, agreed by all.**

5. Matters arising - Clerk – advise NDSART Beating of bounds date 2025, order free landmark tree, liaise with Men in Sheds ref wildlife boxes. **Cllr Cooper** – Contact army camp and Lloyds bank. **All** – to consider next years' budget prior to next mtg. **Cllrs Cooper, Heard and Littlejohns** – fencing repairs. **Cllrs Ewen and P Heard** to fill up all salt bins. **All completed apart from Cllr Cooper's tasks. Fencing repairs to take place over Christmas period.**

6. Planning – to consider and agree response to applications listed below together with any others received up to date of this meeting:

6.2 Planning decisions –

6.2.1 Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/W/23/3327985

Land off Radford Way, Okehampton, EX20 1UP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Leander Developments Ltd against West Devon Borough Council.
- The application Ref is 4440/22/OPA.
- The development proposed is outline planning permission with some matters reserved (access) for a mix of around 60 1 to 4 bedroom residential dwellings & associated infrastructure.

Decision The appeal is dismissed. Noted.

6.2.2 3742/24/ARC Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions

Applicant Name: Mr Colin Field - Network Rail Officer: **Richard Nicholson**

Grid Reference: (260683, 95590)

Site Address: Land At Sx 606 955, Higher Stockley Mead, Okehampton

Decision: **Discharge of Condition Approved**

Description: Application for approval of details reserved by condition 4 (CEMP) of planning consent 2396/24/PAS

Decision Date: **22 November 2024** **Noted.**

7. DCC and WDBC – November report from Cllr G Dexter

Crediton Road and the Link Road

You will have seen the letter from the developer concerning their offer to part fund the Crediton Road pavement and to open the Link Road by September 2025, in time for the opening of the new station. This marks a great step forward, which is the result of a great deal of work behind the scenes. There are still important details to be agreed and the final decisions rest with WDBC, but I hope to see a positive conclusion to these issues very soon.

Strategic Planning

I attended the District Council Network (DCN) webinar on Strategic Planning in England in 2024. This report is intended to provide a brief overview of that webinar which described the significant changes to the planning system and allocations of new housing which will be brought in the new government.

In this context strategic plans provide long term special investment frameworks which aim to ensure cross boundary issues are efficiently addressed. It means, among other things, that it should help all the local authorities to pull in the same direction. This should help to boost investor confidence in both the public and private sector and so help to deliver more sustainable growth.

The legal requirement for strategic planning was abolished in 2010 but will now be coming back into statute through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and the Devolution Bill. However, Strategic Planning has been happening though in various parts of the country and we have the Joint Local Plan covering Plymouth and South Hams and West Devon.

I find it interesting that Okehampton has strong communications and economic links to Exeter rather than Plymouth. I hope that there will be an opportunity to reflect this connection in the new Strategic Planning arrangements.

Research funded by the DCN found that there is an unmet need for a more effective approach strategic planning; and that strategic planning:

- is currently highly fragmented;
- should be mandated by government and be embodied in a statutory document, but not be ‘a big local plan’;
- should focus on long-term vision and key cross-boundary issues; and
- should provide a sustainable growth led framework for prioritising and coordinating investment in infrastructure.

On 31st July the deputy prime minister wrote to all local authority leaders and chief executives to say that the government would be taking “the steps necessary to enable universal coverage of strategic planning [and they will] explore the most effective arrangements for developing Spatial Development Strategies outside mayoral areas.”

The government’s proposed approach includes “a more strategic approach to planning by strengthening cross-boundary collaboration ahead of the legislation to introduce mandatory mechanisms for strategic planning and help deliver 1.5 million new homes.”

This will clearly have some effect on the NPPF consultation which I previously reported which proposed an increase in the number of houses to be built in West Devon from 160 to 430 each year. It was suggested at the DCN webinar that these numbers may change and that the allocation of housing numbers may well be decided by the Devon Combined Authority (through the Devolution Bill).

The provisional timetable for implementation is:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Nov / Dec 2024 | Publication of English Devolution White Paper |
| Dec 2024 | Updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) |
| Early 2025 | Planning and Infrastructure Bill laid before Parliament (containing most of the new legislative provisions to support strategic planning) |
| Spring/Summer 2025 | Consultation on National Development Management Policies, Devolution Bill laid before Parliament |
| | Review of NPPF to include strategic planning |
| 2029 | Universal coverage of strategic plans(?) |

Housing Strategy Update

Councillors received an update on WDBC Housing Strategy. The officers reported both WDBC achievements and ‘challenges’.

The achievements so far this year included:-

- exceeding targets for preventing homelessness with over 60% of all prevention activities ending successfully against a national average of 51%;
- 33% of those experiencing homelessness had positive outcomes, which is line with the national average of 31%. (Clearly a poor outcome for the 67% who WDBC could not help);
Used the local authority housing fund to buy 8 houses and currently buying 3 more. (This significantly reduces the cost to WDBC of temporary accommodation); and
- Delivered 97 Affordable homes in West Devon (Affordable means rents at 80% of market rents, ie not necessarily 'affordable')

There are however a number of 'challenges'.

- Lack of Registered Providers delivering S106 units because of the need for them to invest in their existing stock to meet the required EPC level C.
- Lose of existing stock due to disposals.
- Uncertainty with NPPF.
- Difficulty in providing enough 1 bedroom accommodation to meet demand
- Limited number of smaller homes available for households seeking to downsize, thereby reducing the number of moves from under occupied family sized homes.
- Economic pressures pushing some private landlords out of the market.

This reflects some of the point I made last month about the Devon Housing Commission Report concerning the changes in demographic and need to deliver more smaller houses to meet the demand.

Cost of Living Update

Devon County Council has been provided with £5m from the Household Support Fund (HSF) from 1st October to 31st March 2025, of which West Devon will receive £151,354. The funding is intended to support households who would otherwise struggle to buy food, pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs.

WDBC previously provided the following support for residents through its Housing Support Fund from its previous allocations.

| Type of support provided | April 2023 – March 2024 | | 1 April to 30 September 2024 | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| | Number of households helped | Spend (£) | Number of households helped | Spend (£) |
| Food | 102 | 19,765 | 36 | 12,550 |
| Energy and Water | 214 | 42,690 | 83 | 26,050 |
| Essentials linked to energy and water | 34 | 7,050 | 15 | 6,320 |
| Wider essentials | 751 | 158,309 | 191 | 63,815 |
| Housing costs | 92 | 21,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 1,193 | 248,814 | 325 | 108,735 |

For the period of October 2024 to March 2025 WDBC is proposing to provide support in different ways to individuals and households, including continuing to provide further financial support to Devon care leavers. So, to the next 6 months the council plans to:

- Write to all residents who may be entitled to Pension Credit Guarantee Credit to encourage them to apply, meaning they will still receive winter fuel payments;
- Update and distribute cost of living leaflets to partners;
- Support residents with advice and signposting to partners tackling issues such as fuel poverty; and
- Work with Community Development and Environmental Health colleagues, as well as partners, to take a more strategic approach to identifying those residents struggling financially and requiring support.

8. Dartmoor marshalls update – Due to having a sector ranger, it was proposed by Cllr Norris to not do Dartmoor marshalls scheme in 2025, seconded by Cllr J Heard, agreed by all.

9. Beating the bounds & VE day – To create a committee in new year for BTB. Clerk registered on VE day official site.

10. Memorial bench Exeter Road – checked.

11. OTC Christmas social – 4-6pm Wednesday 11 December – Cllrs Cooper, Littlejohns, Goffey, Norris and Ewen to attend.

12. To receive reports from meetings and events attended by Parish Council representatives

Cllrs Cooper, Littlejohns and J Heard attended Remembrance Sunday.

Cllr Goffey to send reports for bid and regen to Clerk.

Oke BID has elected 4 members and accountant. 2/3's of businesses have paid and a newsletter is to be produced.

Regen project is looking at re-establishing farmers market.

13. Finance –

13.1 Accounts for payment –

| | |
|---|---------|
| E Young wages for November | £833.37 |
| E Young travel | Nil |
| E Young expenses | £69.99 |
| HMRC | £9.14 |
| Meldon hall hire 3 rd Dec 2024 | £25.00 |
| SLCC annual membership | £110.00 |

13.2 Credits received –

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| To note Interest earned | £61.81 |
| Refund from Hedgerow Print 30/10/24 | £135.00 |

Resolved accounts be paid, proposed by Cllr Norris, seconded by Cllr Ewen agreed by all.

13.3 Request for spending –

13.4 Finance correspondence –

To note letter from Lloyds bank changing account to Community account and charging £4.25 per month – **Cllr Cooper to raise this new fee with the bank along with ongoing account problems.**

13.5 RFO report/Bank reconciliation – Cllr Littlejohns to approve

Period ending 27 November 2024

Prepared by Emily Young, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Date 27/11/2024

Balance per bank statements as at 27 November 2024

| | £ | £ | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Current account (Treasurers) | 74.94 | | Current Account (36901368) |
| Deposit account (BB Inst online) | 66,796.06 | | Savings Account (38166660) |
| | 66,871.00 | | |

Less: any unrepresented cheques 0 0.00

Add: any unbanked money 0 0

Net bank balances as at 27 November 2024 66,871.00

The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book (receipts and payments account) for the year, as follows:

Cashbook

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Opening Balance | 70,074.77 | |
| Add: Receipts in the Year | 196.81 | (up to 11/11/24) |
| Less: Payments in the Year | 3,400.58 | (Include VAT - up to 13/11/24) |
| | 66,871.00 | |

Closing balance per cash book (receipts and payments book) as at 27 November 2024 (must equal net bank balances above) 66,871.00 0.00 Difference

**It was proposed by Cllr Littlejohns to approve the bank reconciliation, seconded by Cllr S Norris, agreed by all.
Cllr Littlejohns to sign and date the document at the next meeting.**

13.6 Budget 2025-2026 – to set budget for coming year – Removal of Dartmoor marshalls, stationery to be reduced to £200, to ask for a loyalty rate at Meldon village hall. To finalise next month. Clerk to update document and recirculate.

13.7 Grant applications –

13.7.1 Everything Okehampton requesting £500.00 (previously circulated) – **Proposed by Cllr Littlejohns, seconded by Cllr J Heard to support. All agreed.**

13.7.2 Citizens Advice £500.00 (previously circulated) –

Proposed by Cllr Ewen, seconded by Cllr Littlejohns to support. All in favour.

To note reduction in future years re: boundary review.

13.8 Grant form addition(s)

14. Environmental issues

14.1 Granulite quarry – **Invoice received from Darcy Heard re: fencing**

14.2 Odours East of Okehampton – to receive an update – **nothing to report.**

15. Open Spaces

15.1 To receive update from Working Group to include damage to woods – **Cllr Littlejohns sorted tree issues after storm. There are some urgent issues in Meldon woods. Cllr Littlejohns to ask Ian Brett to do work asap.**

Proposed date of 3rd January 2025 11am Meldon to do fencing repairs. Cllr Cooper to bring pasties. StOC work Clerk and Cllr Cooper to organise stone, etc for path work at OTP. Proposed by Cllr Littlejohns £700 limit for stone purchase, seconded by Cllr Norris, all agreed.

16. Highways

16.1 Snow warden \ salt bins – update Cllr Ewen and P Heard - **salt bins are all filled. Cllrs to look in to putting a new bin at Southcott.**

Proposed by Cllr Norris to write to council to say to note less road gritting means lack of working for business, seconded by Cllr Goffey, agreed by all.

National Highways bridge and retaining wall survey – Weds 11 December 8pm-6am A30 Okehampton to Belstone.

Flood plan discussed – Cllr Ewen asked is there a need for a plan as the EA appear to notify those at risk directly.

17. Economic Development Projects

17.1 Okehampton BID– to receive an update – **See item 12 above.**

17.2 Regeneration project update – **as above.**

18. Office closure - 23 Dec – 6 January inclusive – noted.

19. To confirm date of next meeting – Tuesday 14 January, then first Tuesday each month excluding August and extra date in April (15th). **Noted.**

PART TWO – Proposed by Cllr Norris, seconded by Cllr Ewen, agreed by all.

Items which may be taken in the absence of the press and public. The Council is recommended to pass the following resolution:- ‘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 as they involve the likely disclosure of sensitive and confidential information.’

20. To note current WDBC Enforcement case list and information.

21. Lease of easements, Solicitor & Clerk's notes – To note Solicitor appointed and Clerks notes.
With regards to the Lease of easements no extra conditions are needed, proposed by Cllr Littlejohns, seconded by Cllr Ewen, agreed by all.

22. Potential Pathway Link in Parcel 2 – waiting to hear who will pay for it?

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Signed Date

Minutes 307/6

DRAFT