



## Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

**Minutes, number 310 of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, at 7.30 pm at Meldon village hall, Meldon, Okehampton**

### **Councillors Present -**

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

Also present Cllr George Dexter and Emily Young Parish Clerk

### **Cllr Cooper opened the meeting at 7.34pm**

**Members of the Public** – There were two members of the public present to talk about item 13.2 and their concerns with the speed of traffic along the Crediton Road and general safety of pedestrians, particularly children with the local school, St James' primary now being at full capacity. They have obtained over 400 signatures of support as well as having support from the local Police, school and Mel Stride MP. They are willing to be part of a 'speedwatch' group themselves. They have asked for the school flashing beacon to be fixed asap. They have contacted various people in the Council but feel they get bumped around the system. Cllr George Dexter said he would like to offer his support and help where he can.

A group of people also came to talk about item 6.1.2. They feel that the proposed development of 60 houses is doubling the number of properties in this area. This will bring in over 100 cars! There needs to be two accesses and not one as proposed. The previous application (from the same developer) was for bungalows only. They would like to see the south side of the proposed development to be bungalows at a minimum. A previous developer in Okehampton built in an established area of bungalows and built bungalows (Redrow). The existing road in Baldwin Drive is a cobbled road and it has been said that this road is not suitable for HGV lorries.

**2. Declarations of Interest** – Cllr Cooper declared an interest in items 6.1.3 and 10.5.2.

**3. Apologies** – Received and accepted from Cllr B Wood and Cllr A Ewen.

**4. Approval of Minutes** of previous meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**The minutes were approved as being an accurate record and were signed by Cllr Cooper. Proposed by Cllr J Goffey, seconded by Cllr P Heard. Agreed by all.**

**5. Matters arising - To ensure the tasks assigned at the previous meeting have been completed** – **Clerk** – to arrange March governance meeting, follow up with Natural England and Woodland Trust on OTP and Meldon woods, grass cutting tender work, devolution work, arrange speakers for annual meeting and contact Duchy re:VE day beacon. **Cllr Littlejohns** - Arrange planting of landmark tree and tidy up wood under viaduct area. **Cllr Cooper** - collect archive papers. **Cllr Ewen** – Check and top up all salt bins (if needed) and retrieve filing cabinet for storage at Oke glass.

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

**6.1.1 Ref – 0480/25/NMM** - Land at Parcel 4B, East of Crediton Road, Okehampton - Non Material Minor Amendment to the wording of Conditions 2, 6 and 8 of planning permission 1887/21/FUL <https://westdevon.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display/0480/25/NMM>

Clerk asked to clarify the amendments as the Cllrs felt they were not clear.

**6.1.2 Ref - 3815/24/OPA** - Land Adjacent To Baldwin Drive, Radford Way Okehampton - Outline Planning application with some matters reserved for a mix of residential housing and associated infrastructure, to include affordable housing. <https://westdevon.planning-register.co.uk/Disclaimer?returnUrl=%2FPlanning%2FDisplay%2F3815%2F24%2FOPA>

On the proposition of Cllr Littlejohns, seconded Cllr P Heard, it was **RESOLVED** to **OBJECT** to the application on the following grounds:

- **Amenity and Health & Safety** – proper consideration has not been given to pedestrians as there appears a lack of provision for pavements creating an absence of amenity. Residents needing to walk in the road.
- **Design** – the ground level of the proposed dwellings has been dropped and OHPC would like to see only bungalows on the proposed dwellings above Howards Close (West side numbers 18-25 on the location.pdf) and Baldwin Drive (South side numbers 1-17 in the location.pdf). Loss of privacy and overbearing presence for existing dwellings with proposed plan.
- **Access** was only through Baldwin Drive resulting in an increase of vehicles travelling through the residential area. Additional access onto Kellands Lane would be needed to help mitigate the volume of traffic using Baldwin Drive.
- **Cumulative impact of pollution and reduction in air quality** due to large increase in vehicles.
- **Planning history and related decisions**
- **Original application was for bungalows.**
- **Density of the development on a small site**
- **Potential for drainage issues**
- **Existing road is a cobbled road and we have been told it is not suitable for HGVs**

**6.1.3 Ref – 3887/24/FUL** – Erection of single storey garden centre structure – Mole Avon, Stockley EX20 1QQ <https://westdevon.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display/3887/24/FUL?cuuid=E9103EEA-4190-4355-8837-A257CA744202>

Proposed by Cllr Littlejohns to support, seconded by Cllr Norris agreed by all.

**6.1.4 Ref – 0326/25/VAR** - Application for variation of condition 2 (approved drawings) for planning consent 0533/24/FUL – National Bee

Supplies, Hamel Down Road, Okehampton

<https://westdevon.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display/0326/25/VAR?cuuid=164A4FC7-B024-4A1A-A34A-3078A7C16D13>

Proposed by Cllr Goffey to support, seconded by Cllr Norris, agreed by all.

**6.2 Planning decisions – To note:**

**6.2.1 Ref – 3869/24/LBC** - Lower Chichacott Barn, Chichacott - Householder application for proposed garden room – Conditional approval

<https://westdevon.planning-register.co.uk/Disclaimer?returnUrl=%2FPlanning%2FDisplay%2F3870%2F24%2FHHO>  
Noted.

**6.3.1 Committee notification – Ref 3483/23/NPO** - East of Okehampton Development (Parcels 3 and 4), Okehampton, Devon - Application for modification of Section 106 Agreement on 2731/15/OPA

**Update from Cllr Dexter - Barratt David Wilson Homes have been in contravention to their part of the S106 agreement in respect of their developments in the East of Okehampton. I have consistently said that we should seek to enforce S106 agreements with developers. This has been the driver behind obtaining the agreement for the pavement.**

The WDBC planning committee agreed Barratt David Wilson Homes proposal that they would:

- open the Link Road by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 (ready for the opening of the Interchange Station in spring 2026)
- contribute £100,426,41 which is 40.4% of the cost of the footway which the Council estimates to be £248,580.21.

This is a good result but there is much more to do, and I will be pressing for pavement and Link Road to be delivered as well as progress to be made on the many other issues in the new developments.

**6.4.1 National Planning guidance – Zoom – Democratic Svcs mtg 12.03.25 at 5pm (email circulated) – Cllrs Cooper and Goffey to attend. Clerk will try to attend for first hour.**

## **7. DCC and WDBC – Cllr George Dexter 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

### **English Devolution White Paper**

You will be aware that proposal by Devon County Council that it become a unitary authority along with the cancellation of the 2025 county council elections was rejected by the Government. The local government reorganisation part of this white paper has absorbed a huge amount of the time of the leaders and chief executives of the Borough and other District Councils in Devon. This is because the government has required local authorities to come forward with interim proposals for reorganisation by the 21<sup>st</sup> March. The current idea of the Devon District councils is for 3 unitary councils to be formed from:

- Plymouth (but with boundaries extended) with about 300,000 people;
- West Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge and Torbay with about 400,000 people; and
- The 5 remaining Districts with a population of around 500,000.

This proposal is based on constraint imposed by government that new unitary authorities should have populations of 500,000 and comprise existing Districts. (Thus, WDBC cannot be split with Okehampton looking to Exeter.) West Devon Borough Council has delegated its Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council Leader and the other Members of its Hub Committee, authority to respond to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution's letter dated 5 February, by the deadline of 21 March 2025, including doing anything appropriate which, in the Chief Executive's opinion, is in the best interests of the Council and its residents.

The necessity of an increased role for Town and Parish Councils has been recognised. However, there is great uncertainty about how the reorganisation will work, so it has not been possible to have a meaningful engagement with DALC or NALC.

A joint statement was issued setting all this out was issued on 28<sup>th</sup> February and a briefing for Town and Parish Councils has been arranged for Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March.

The government will ultimately decide on which option to implement and the timetable in September.

### **2024/5 Accounts**

WDBC is projected to have a significant underspend due mostly to higher than anticipated interest rates. It was agreed that £300,000 of this will be transferred to the Recovery Plan and Corporate Strategy Earmarked Reserve, for reinvestment back into the delivery of the Council Plan.

### **Budget 2025/26**

A balanced budget was set by the full council for 2025/26. However, a shortfall of about £1.6m is currently projected for 2026/27 because of the uncertainty over government grants in the future.

A rate increase for WDBC was agreed at 2.99%, with the following discounts will be applied from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025

- i) The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 100% for a maximum period of one month;
- ii) The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties after one month to one year is zero;
- iii) The discount for properties which require major repair work to render them habitable is 50% for a maximum period of 12 months; and
- iv) The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.

The following premiums will be applied from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

- i) An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for between one and five years;
- ii) An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for between five and ten years;
- iii) An empty homes premium of an additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over ten years; and
- iv). A second homes premium of 100% is levied on unoccupied furnished properties.

### **Cllr T Leech March report**

#### **Parcel 4b footpaths**

We are still awaiting a response from the developer on whether or not they will install a ramp to be included to help wheelchair users and others with mobility problems.

**Parcel 4a Footpath:**

Devon County Council now has a new Highways Officer, and the issue of the steps and road crossing is being discussed with this new officer to see if new eyes make a difference to DCC policies.

**Crediton Road footpath and Link Road**

Last week, the West Devon Planning Committee agreed to the variation in the S 106 agreement on the timings of the opening of the Link Road. The agreement is that the Link Road will be opened either when the 200<sup>th</sup> house has been occupied on Parcel 3, or by the end of September this year. It is imperative that the road is opened before the new train station is finished, and West Devon MUST enforce the issue property should the Developer default on this yet again. On top of this, the Developer will provide some funding for the footpath along the north side of Crediton Road up to the Primary School junction. We still need to try to push for this footpath to continue up to the Chichacott Road junction.

The Officer's report to the Planning Committee was very comprehensive, and if you have the time, I suggest that you all read this report, as it includes many of the issues that I have not been able to talk about for a very long time now. It does highlight how Developers manage to manipulate their way through binding contracts with Local Authorities, leaving locals to pick up the pieces.

**Kellands Lane blockage:**

As has been happening for years now, this issue goes one step forward and three back. Due to the complexities of the S106 agreements over the years, West Devon are finding it hard to pin down who is ultimately responsible for this area. An enforcement officer is still trying to unravel it all.

**Exeter Road Persimmons site:**

Still no update on this issue.

**Forthglade odors:**

No further issues to my knowledge.

**Persimmons Crediton Road site: Additional play equipment**

Still no further information.

**St James Primary School playing field: Flooding of neighbouring properties**

The enforcement officer involved in this is still off work, but another officer is going to chase where they are with this and get back to me.

**Changes in planning (NPPF)**

The AGM meeting to discuss the Joint Local Plan is scheduled for the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, so it is possible we will get some idea as to how the plan is to be updated to cover the changes in national planning and if the new updated plan will include all three authorities, South Hams and West Devon together or each having to do their own individual plans. Whichever way it turns out, it will mean a lot more work for our already stretched officers.

**Devolution**

As last month, we are still in the dark as to how this will affect us all. We do know that DCC will have to hold their elections this year, and the Districts / Boroughs are working together to see how best to split Devon up into reasonable sized unitary areas for the Government to see. We were expecting a press release on this sometime last week. One possible option would be to have a Unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon areas with Torbay, and a Unitary including East, Mid and North Devon alongside Torridge District and the City of Exeter.

Whatever the agreed split is, must be with the government by the end of this month, then hard and fast plans must be in place by next November... As ever, watch this space!!

**Car Parking Fees**

There have been scams regarding how people pay for car parking in the WD car parks. Only two apps should be used for payment, these are the Apple App and Google-pay when paying by phone. Any other app is likely to be a scam.

**8. Beating the bounds & VE day** – new committee met before this meeting. Terms of Reference agreed and actions agreed and noted. Next meeting 1<sup>st</sup> April at 7pm

**VE day** – Duchy approved access across land to beacon subject to written risk assessment.

**9. To receive reports from meetings and events attended by Parish Council representatives –**

**Cllr Goffey** attended the Regeneration and BID meeting – Regeneration recently had an employer fair which will be repeated. Workshops were also carried out. The proposed new station is on schedule. Network Rail commented on the positive community in Okehampton. With the new station local businesses are keen for some parking management if the new car park is going to charge for parking (not yet determined). There has been a new management company formed. BID – No news about the farmers markets. Two of the DRs of the BID management company are 1 from Forthglade and 1 from Weatherspoons. Who else is not yet known? There is a current vacancy for a BID manager which closes on 14 March 2025. There will be an open day at Forthglade to get more people to join BID. They are also looking at regular newsletters and there is a facebook page.

**10. Finance –**

**10.1 Accounts for payment –**

E Young wages for February	£675.13
E Young travel	£15.30
E Young expenses	£88.75
HMRC	£0.00
Meldon hall hire 4th March 2025	£25.00
Jane Gillard – archive work	£177.90
Jane Gillard – back dated pay for April & May	£58.07

**Resolved accounts be paid, proposed by Cllr P Heard, seconded by Cllr Norris agreed by all.**

**10.2 Credits received –**

To note interest earned 10/02/25	£51.35
Callington Construction (Meldon quarry) upto 31.03.2025	£1174.48

**10.3 Request for spending**

**10.3.1** Internal auditor approval – Proposed by Cllr Goffey to use Paul Russell at £165.00 for the remote audit, seconded by Cllr Norris, agreed by all.

**10.4 Finance general**

**10.4.1** Lloyds Bank letter – interest rate decrease – **noted.**

**10.4.2** Grass cutting tender doc – **Clerk asked to contact the two existing contractors for their prices for next two years.**

**10.4.3** Updated asset register sign off – **circulated to all – Proposed by Cllr Goffey to sign off, seconded by Cllr J Heard, agreed by all.**

**10.5 Grants**

**10.5.1** Grant feedback form – **Updated by Cllr Norris. Clerk to add to website and then all Cllrs to test.**

**10.5.2 Okehampton United Charity** – to consider request for £1049.69 towards the running costs of allotments. (Budget is £300.00). – **Proposed by Cllr Norris to contribute £600.00, seconded by Cllr J Heard, agreed by all.**

**10.5 RFO report/Bank reconciliation** – Cllr Littlejohns to approve

Prepared by Emily Young, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Date 26/02/2025

**To be approved by - Cllr Martin Littlejohns** .....  
**At the Parish Council meeting on 4 March**  
**2025**

**Balance per bank statements as at 26 February**  
**2025**

Current account (Treasurers)	£	1942.64	<b>Current Account (36901368)</b>
Deposit account (BB Inst online)		56,952.91	<b>Savings Account (38166660)</b>
		<b>58,895.55</b>	

Less: any unrepresented cheques 0 0.00

Add: any unbanked money 0 0

Net bank balances as at 26 February 2025 58,895.55

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

**Cashbook**

Opening Balance	58,800.13	
Add: Receipts in the Year	1,225.83	(up to 10/02/2025)
Less: Payments in the Year	1,130.41	(Include VAT - up to 05/02/2025)
	58,895.55	
Closing balance per cash book (receipts and payments book) as at 26 February 2025 (must equal net bank balances above)	58,895.55	0.00 Difference

It was proposed by Cllr J Goffey to approve the bank reconciliation, seconded by Cllr Norris, agreed by all. Cllr Littlejohns signed and dated the document.

**11. Environmental issues**

**11.1 Odours East of Okehampton – to receive an update –To be monitored.**

**12. Open Spaces**

**12.1 To receive update from Working Group – Bluebell signs to go up by Cllr J Heard. Clerk to re-circulate wood signs to be made.**

**12.2 OTP White Wood Management – Clerk – Clerk managed to get the Woodland Trust and Natural England to Update the ownership of OTP. Will continue to liaise with White Wood Management.**

**12.3 STOC coppicing at Meldon woods –Took place Friday 28 February.**

**13. Highways**

**13.1 Damaged fence by A30. Reported to Highways England (again 08.01.25) Ref: FMS6950731 – no update.**

**13.2 Residents letter Crediton Road – See public section above.**

**13.3 20's plenty campaign – Clerk to respond.**

**13.4 West Devon Matters (Police) mtg – 23 April 7pm (in person or online) – Cllr Littlejohns and Goffey to attend.**

**14. Economic Development Projects**

**14.1 Okehampton BID– to receive an update – See item 9 above.**

**14.2 Regeneration project to receive an update – See item 9 above.**

**15. Annual parish meeting – format – 3 speakers. Clerk to chase Dartmoor ranger. Maria cake. Martin refreshments.**

**16. Neighbourhood plan & OTC (letter circulated) – Clerk asked to ask OTC which areas in Hamlets they wish to look at.**

**17. North Devon Health Initiative report (email circulated) – noted.**

**18. To review and adopt updated Risk Assessment policy (to be circulated) – Proposed to adopt by Cllr Norris, seconded by Cllr Littlejohns, agreed by all.**

**19. Community governance meeting – next meeting 12 March in Tavistock. Plans circulated.**

**20. Meeting dates May – December 2025 inclusive – Clerk to book including August although Clerk will be on annual leave.**

**21. To confirm date of next ordinary meeting – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 at 7.30pm Meldon village hall.**

Beating the Bounds meeting at 7pm Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

**PART TWO – Proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr P Heard, 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.'

**22. To note current WDBC Enforcement case list and information – noted.**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.41 pm**

Signed ..... Date .....

Minutes 310/6

DRAFT