



## Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held at 7.30pm on Tuesday  
16<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at Meldon Village Hall

### **Parish councillors present**

D Webber, P Heard, R Maile, M Cooper, B Wood, J Heard, M Littlejohns

### **Guest speakers**

Richard Oaten (South West Ambulance Service)

Dave Potter (Okehampton Rugby Club)

Ian Brooker (DNP Ranger)

### **Also Present**

Cllr J Yelland (WDBC)

Clerk – J Gillard

6 members of the public

1. Cllr Wood welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. **Apologies** – were received from Cllr A Ewen, Cllr M Davies (WDBC), Cllr K Ball (DCC & WDBC)
3. **Chairman's report** –

The Chairman via use of a powerpoint presentation explained how the Council had been working with various partners over the last 12 months and then moved on to mentioning other bodies that different councillors assisted by serving on their committees. He then explained about the councils involvement in the planning process including the visit to the Romansfield development site to view the archaeological dig. The Council has also been maintaining many assets such as the bus shelter, Meldon Woods, and noticeboards. The Street Art project on the bridge in Exeter Road has also just been completed.

Administration – several new policies have been brought into force and existing ones reviewed. The most challenging administration task was transferring the Council's bank accounts from Nat West to Lloyds after closure of the local branch.

Councillors supported Meldon Wildlife Day, silhouettes were erected for Remembrance Day and a Fire Beacon was lit at Black Down on that evening. Cllr M Davies, Mayor of West Devon did the official lighting, this was a very successful event.

How is the Council performing – Internal Audit, passed with some ideas for improvement given which have now been implemented. Budget – spend all within budget. Number of valid complaints received – none ! Community Grant applications – successfully failed on this as more funding granted to local organisations that originally put in this line of the budget, however overall budget still not exceeded.

Future work – taking over Old Town Park from WDBC, then introducing a Management Plan and associated identified work required. Introducing a Planning Committee, continuing work on the Neighbourhood Plan, Okehampton Sports and Open spaces Recreation Plan.

The chairman thanked councillors for their support and work over the last 12 months.

#### **4. Guest Speakers**

##### **South West Ambulance Trust – Richard Oaten**

Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council has recently funded installation of a defibrillator at Meldon Village Hall. The Village Hall committee are going to be responsible for the installation costs and ongoing regular checks. It is to be placed in an unlocked cabinet outside the front door of the Hall. It is leased on a 4 year contract from S W Ambulance Trust who will be responsible for maintenance and replacement should that be required.

Richard showed an example of a defibrillator and how it is used.

There will be an annual training session organised which will take place in this Hall, the training is free to anyone interested in attending.

S W Ambulance Trust have installed several defibrillators in the Okehampton area recently.

He emphasised the benefits they could give and emphasised the importance of early recognition of a heart attack, early starting of CPR and chest compressions.

Anyone interested in attending the training sessions to contact Linda Pritchard, secretary of the Hall committee.

##### **Okehampton Rugby Club – Dave Potter**

The first team have this last weekend become champions of their League and obtained promotion to RFU Level 5 which is the highest level the Club has ever achieved.

Over the past 3 years a lot of funding has been put into improving facilities, also work on both pitches. The Stand has been refurbished and new maintenance equipment purchased. They are planning to undertake more work on the main pitch at the end of the season. They have received funding from RFU, Sport England, Okehampton United Charity and S106. No matches have been lost this season due to the weather. They have recently started a social team and a girls team.

They are investing in the future, land at Hilltown Cross will be leased to the Club, they have now obtained planning permission to construct a Club House and 3 pitches. This will all happen in phases, a 5 year business plan is now being written. The aim is for the new pitches to be used for training and junior rugby. It is hoped that no major work will now be required on the existing pitches for another 40 years.

### **Dartmoor National Park - Ian Brooker**

You are probably already aware that National Parks are under scrutiny again and this time the Glover Review has been asked to have recommendations available for debate by autumn this year, so that any recommendations can be taken forward to the next spending review. We already know that engagement with young people from wider backgrounds; how we maintain and improve the biodiversity of the areas and the possibilities of streamlining our governance, are all high up on the agenda but what else will be considered, only time will tell!

The pressure remains to improve our income generation and this has certainly happened with the introduction of car parking charges at several car parks that we own across the moor, including the one at Meldon Reservoir. Generally this charge has been warmly welcomed especially as the money raised can be used to maintain and improve the facilities.

We also took part in a Ranger Experience pilot project with four other National Parks to see if there was any demand for small groups of visitors to join a ranger for a day to have a 'behind the scenes' type experience! Although Dartmoor's Experience did attract some reasonable numbers of people willing to spend £125 each (yes really!) it was felt that the time involved in running these could not be justified by the financial return, so it will not be continued. However, the feedback from those taking part was very good and it was pleasing to see some recognition for what the Ranger team do. At the time of writing this report, the path network has held up extremely well to usage and the rigours of the Dartmoor weather, but I still have some outstanding projects which I would like to complete in the Parish. I did secure some funding to improve the bridleway and footpath running down the side of Meldon Woods from the car park, thanks to an in-kind contribution of stone from Meldon Quarry and improved the stepping stones in Halstock Woods.

We have launched a new web based system, so that the general public can report problems and issues but for me the networks that have been built up over so many years, including via the Parish Council, are still the main conduits for reporting any outstanding items.

I am pleased to announce, that following on from a third successful event, the Meldon Wildlife Day will happen again on Tuesday August 20th based at the Old Quarry. Up to 500 people attended last year's event, all enjoying the various nature themed activities that were provided by the numerous partners that joined us on the day. We will be following a similar format and can only hope to be blessed with the same weather.

My thanks to the Parish Council for allowing us to use their land for this event and for showing such a keen interest on the day.

You are probably already aware that I organise a number of volunteer tasks each year with different groups to help support the work that we do. Exeter College students have for the last 2 years supported a project to improve a path along the edge of the reservoir and will be joining me again in a couple of weeks' time to hopefully complete this project. My main group, the Sticklepath and Okehampton Conservation Group (StOC), have helped with numerous projects and includes ones at the Old Quarry clearing gorse from archaeological sites and in Meldon Woods, improving a path and removing another of the fenced enclosures.

My sincere thanks to them all and to my Voluntary Wardens, Jan and Neil Gilmour, for their never ending help, support and encouragement throughout another year.

**5. Questions from the Public** – No questions were raised.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.45 pm.  
All were invited to remain for refreshments.

**Signed**..... **Date**.....

**Annual Assembly Minutes 2019:4**