



## Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

**Minutes, number 321 of the Ordinary council meeting held on Tuesday 5 August 2025, at 7.30 pm at Meldon village hall, Meldon, Okehampton**

### **Councillors Present -**

M Cooper - Chair  
M Littlejohns  
P Heard  
A Ewen  
J Goffey  
J Heard

**Cllr Littlejohns opened the meeting at 7.30pm**

### **1. Chairmans welcome**

**2. Members of the Public** – Two members of the public present. They confirmed they have received a letter from Lidl about a possible new planning application for a new store, 120 parking spaces and EV chargers on the field between the houses on Exeter Road, Stockley and Barton Tor House/garden centre, opposite exit off A30. Councillors have not been consulted about a new application.

**3. Declarations of Interest** – None

**4. Apologies** – Cllr Wood (away) and Cllr S Norris.

**5. Approval of Minutes** of previous meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025

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

**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 2121/25/LBC – Listed building consent for internal modifications to create 3<sup>rd</sup> bedroom, an en-suite and installation of 2 new rooflights – Lower Chichacott Barn, Chichacott EX20 1RS** – Cllr Ewen proposed application is supported. Seconded by Cllr Goffey, agreed by all.

### **6.2 Planning correspondence**

**6.2.1 DNPA** – updates to planning consultation and application requirements (email circulated) – **Cllrs disagree with proposed changes to Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) whereby neighbouring properties will no longer be notified. OHPC believe neighbours and landowners should be informed by post.**

**7. DCC and WDBC** – to consider the Councillors written reports/updates.

### **Cllr George Dexter**

#### **Standards Complaints Procedure**

The complaints procedure sets out how the Council deals with complaints that Borough, Parish and Town Councillors within the Council's area, have broken their respective Code of Conduct. The Council's Audit Committee agreed to simplify the current process to make it more efficient. The 'remedies' available for breaches of the Parish, Town and Borough Councils remain weak and are not affected by this change in process. We await the outcome of the nationwide consultation carried out last year about strengthening the Standards enforcement process and 'remedies'.

### Draft Statement of Licensing Policy

WDBC is carrying out a regular consultation on its Licencing Policy.

The policy gives clear guidance of our policies and expectations to licence holders, applicants, and people who may comment on premises licence applications or seek reviews of licences.

The four Licensing Objectives under the Licensing Act 2003 are:

- Prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- Prevention of public nuisance
- Protection of children from harm

The consultation provides our existing policy and our draft policy showing our amendments along with an opportunity to give us your views using the link

<https://statementoflicensingpolicy.commonplace.is/>

### Local Government Reorganisation

The work on defining proposals for local government reorganisation is continuing. Both Devon County Council and WDBC are carrying out separate public consultation exercises to support the development of their plans. There was a DCC consultation in Okehampton last week and WDBC will be carrying out its own consultation in Okehampton on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Also, everyone across West Devon is being invited to help shape the future of Devon through the link - [www.westdevon.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation).

I think that it is useful to understand the overall process, so I have summarised this from the MHCLG 'Summary of the local government reorganisation process, published 25 July 2025'. It comprises 7 stages, followed by a timetable.

- Invitations have been sent to the 21 two-tier areas and their neighbouring small unitaries specifying criteria for establishing new unitary authorities'
- Submission of formal unitary proposals. Each council can only make one formal proposal, either individually or jointly with other councils. WDBC is working with the other Devon Districts to put forward its 1:4:5 proposal. Devon County Council is also assessing 3 options 9:1, 8:2, and 1:4:5. If councils in an area cannot agree on a single proposal, the Government preference is that they all be submitted together as a single submission supported a shared information base.
- Statutory consultation. The government will carry out a statutory consultation.
- Decision to implement a proposal. Once the statutory consultation is concluded, Ministers will decide, subject to Parliamentary approval, which, if any proposal is to be implemented, with or without modification.
- Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO). The Government will prepare the necessary legislation (the SCO) for Parliamentary approval. The SCO will establish the new single tier of local government and make provision to abolish the predecessor councils. It will replace any currently planned elections with new elections for the new councils with appropriate wards / divisions for these elections, amend the terms of office of current councillors as required, and give any preparatory functions needed.
  - The order** will specify arrangements for the first elections of the new unitary council, councillor numbers, the functions of the new council will have in the transition period before the council goes live. This will be done by giving powers to the relevant executive or joint committee overseeing the transition. The Order will probably take between 6 and 9 months to prepare and go through Parliament, dependent on the complexity of the Order.
  - Elections**. Typically the first elections to the new unitary council will take place using the electoral arrangements specified in the SCO, which will be built on a mixture of existing wards / divisions and in some cases parishes. A councillor can stand in elections for the new unitary council at the same time as serving their term in the existing council until such time as the existing authority is abolished. This may be a reduced term, or in some cases their term may be extended to provide for the transition.
  - Transition period arrangements**. The SCO will specify the governance arrangements for the new unitary councils in the transition period. That is. What sort of transition body will be in place during the transition period until the predecessor councils are abolished and the new unitary councils go live.
- Transition period. Once the SCO has been made, existing councils carry on delivering services until vesting day. They will also be required to prepare to transfer all assets, functions and staff ready for vesting day. On vesting day the unitary council will take over. The MHCLG will require an implementation plan from the relevant transition body for this process.
- New unitary authority goes live. A minimum of around a year a year is allowed to enable safe and legal transfer of key services from the point when the legislation is made. The Government is aiming for Surrey to go live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027 and other areas on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028, *depending on the proposals received*. New

councils will have to start on 1<sup>st</sup> April for financial reasons. So, if we cannot make the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028 the next date will be 1<sup>st</sup> April 2029.

#### Implementation Timetable

The Government is committed to ending two-tier local government in England in this Parliament. Devon is the third wave of 14 areas. In this wave final proposals must be submitted by the end of November 2025 and a consultation will be launched in the new year and will likely close in May. Following this, decisions on which proposals to implement *could* be announced before the summer recess. Secondary legislation would then be prepared and laid before the House after the Summer recess. This would allow for elections to the new unitary authorities on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2027. The new authorities would then go live on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2028.

#### Household Support Grants

Devon County Council (DCC) has been provided with funding of £8.93m by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and, as for previous schemes, they intend to cascade a proportion of this funding to Devon districts for distribution to households in need. The funding is intended to help vulnerable households in the most need with the cost of essentials such as food, energy and water, wider essentials, and in limited circumstances where housing support does not meet need, housing costs and preventative support.

The decision about how the new fund will be distributed was made by the new Devon County Council administration at their Cabinet meeting which took place on 25 June 2025. Following the pattern of previous Household Support Fund schemes, Devon County Council has provided districts with allocations based on Universal Credit uptake. For West Devon this is £196,076, which includes £21,008 for administration costs.

#### Cost of living support 24/25

Due to the short-term duration of this scheme, the Council again delivered support through a mixture of direct payments and an open application process. The table below provides a summary of the type of support provided and the number of households helped

Type of support provided	Number of households helped	Spend
Food	38	£9,850
Energy and Water	115	£34,270
Essentials linked to energy and water	19	£5,350
Wider essentials	475	£115,390
<b>Total</b>	<b>647</b>	<b>£164,860</b>

The Council provided support to residents and households during the 2024/25 financial year in many ways. These included:

- Extra support for housing costs through Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) of £127,233 which helped 170 residents with on-going rental costs or provided help to move to alternative accommodation.
- Making 59 Exceptional Hardship Fund awards totalling £15,366 to provide residents already receiving Council Tax Reduction (Support) additional help with paying their Council Tax.
- Delivering a take up campaign for Pension Credit with a further 56 eligible pensioners now receiving this important benefit which provides a 'passport' to other financial support.

With many households already on low incomes, reliance on discretionary financial assistance has continued to see significant demand. For some households this support has become an important lifeline to help them meet basic living costs or receive financial help in an emergency.

#### 2024/25 Accounts

An underspend (surplus) of £502,000 was generated in 2024/25 through effective budget management, over achievement of income targets and efficient management of costs. This has enabled the Council to approve allocating a further £400,000 for reinvestment into the next year's Council Plan. This funding has been put into the Council Plan earmarked reserve leaving an underspend (surplus) of £102,000 for the 2024/25 financial year. This equates to 1.1% of the 2024/25 net budget of £9.488 million

In accordance with normal accounting practice, this surplus of £102,000 has gone into Unearmarked Reserves in 2024/25 and increased its balance to £1.820 million as at 31 March 2025.

#### Cllr T Leech

**Link Road:** Discussions are on-going to see if this can be opened early to help with the Exeter Road closure due to gas works.

**Parcel 4a and 4b footpaths:** No change with these issues.

**Crediton Road footpath and Link Road:** The Highways and Traffic Order Committee (HATOC) has now officially agreed to the construction of this new footpath, and hopefully the design work is still ongoing within DCC. The other thing this committee agreed to, was the construction of an official pedestrian crossing by St James Primary School, something the residents and council members have been asking for well before the school was built. Better late than never.

**Kellands Lane blockage:** As before, the appeal by the developer has still not been determined, and the locals have opened up both fences to allow access through this area. I am still awaiting news from both the WD Legal and Planning departments as to what can be done to resolve this situation, but I have been doing so for well over eight years now!!!

**Exeter Road Persimmons site:** Access issues - still no news on this.

**Forthglade odors:** Without any further issues being reported, I will take this off my next report

**Persimmons Crediton Road site:** Additional play equipment: I was led to believe that an official legal notice was to be served on this developer, but again, no one has come back to me to say that it has or what the outcome maybe.

**West Devon Household support fund:** A new allocation of funding has now been provided by DCC. This money will be spread out between carers and other organizations plus those most in need around WD.

### Ongoing consultations

#### Local Government Reorganisation (LGA)

Everyone across West Devon is being invited to help shape the future of Devon: [www.westdevon.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation)

**Devolution** - It looks like all of Devon's Local Authorities have agreed that there should be a Mayoral Authority set up under the Devolution proposals. With this, as well as the proposed LGA, everyone should get involved with the consultations as these very big changes will have an effect on us all.

**Parking fine text scam** - We've been made aware that some residents are receiving scam text messages about supposed outstanding parking fines.

#### **Messages for residents:**

- These messages may look official, but they are not from the council
- The web addresses in the texts are fake
- The payment amounts are often incorrect or suspicious
- Do not click on any links or provide any personal or payment details
- If you're unsure whether a message is genuine, please contact us - [www.westdevon.gov.uk/parking](http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/parking)

Please share this to help protect others

#### **Regenerative Farming**

The West Devon Council Overview and Scrutiny committee has now set up a working party to look at how we may be able to help farmers who would be interested in going down the Regenerative Farming route plus look at Food Security. It would be interesting to know how many of our local farmers already are doing this or would like more information on it.

#### **WD JLP**

The existing JLP will stay in force until new plans have been developed. This could take 2.5 years and will certainly not include Plymouth this time round, and there are thoughts that we may have our own stand-alone plan. This does mean that until we can be certain of a five year land supply, this will make us more vulnerable to unplanned developments.

#### **Police open door meetings**

These still provide us with up-to-date information as to how policing is going, and in a very casual way. Hopefully they will continue.

### **Fusion and Parklands:**

Fusion has given WD their yearly report on how things are going. From what has been said, their membership and activities have now returned to pre Covid numbers, and they now have new management and staff. There are still issues that must be resolved, but overall, things are certainly getting better.

Junior Life Skills, that WD has run for many years now, will now be organised through Fusion this year. The basic programme and venues will be like other years, but it is hoped that with fresh eyes, the events can be given a bit of a facelift!

## **Community Engagement Round-Up**

### **West Devon 'Building Communities Together' Workshop**

In response to feedback from our partners and aligned to supporting a strong, resilient and connected West Devon, we held our first West Devon Community Collaboration event at the Ockment Community Centre last week, co-hosted by WDCVS and WDBC.

The purpose of this event was to strengthen our partnerships and communities by bringing key West Devon partners together to learn from each other, to better understand the current challenges and opportunities in our communities as a collective, and to co-create solutions and opportunities together.

The event was well attended and well received by partners. Attendees included representatives from Citizens Advice, various Health/NHS partners, Police, Learn Devon, OCRA, Young Devon, Devon Mental Health Alliance, Community Action Groups (CAG) Devon, Museum Development South West and our West Devon and South Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership.

Cllr Jane Elliott, in her Lead Hub Committee role for Community Wellbeing, did a brilliant job co-designing and leading the workshops and the day for us.

Key feedback from the day was: it was a great opportunity to make connections, build relationships, link client groups and network in person as well as a learning more about the voluntary sector and all the organisations in the room. Please can we do more of this.

So we look forward to hosting more West Devon community collaboration events in the future based on the success of this first.



**8. Beating the bounds** - £200.00 received from OTC which councillors appreciate. Cllr Cooper to ask for an earlier start by the Okehampton Carnival Committee.

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

### **10. Finance –**

#### **10.1 Accounts for payment –**

Mrs E Young wages	£666.13
Mrs E Young – travel	£13.95
Mrs E Young – expenses	£3.48
Meldon hall hire Inv250729	£20.00
Westcountry grounds maintenance WGM0879	£381.60
WesternWeb renewal of cloud email account	£86.40

**Resolved accounts be paid, proposed by Cllr Goffey, seconded by Cllr J Heard, agreed by all.**

#### **10.2 Credits received –**

Quarterly payment Meldon quarry received 18/07/25	£736.46
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#### **10.3 Grants**

**10.3.1 Okement Rivers Improvement Group - £250.00 Proposed to support by Cllr Goffey, seconded by Cllr Ewen. All in favour.**

**11. Environmental issues**

**12. Open Spaces**

**12.1** To receive update from working group + next steps – **Update from Cllr P Heard. Meldon Lane signs have been Knocked down. SWW parked a water bowser which is affecting visibility when joining main road.**

**12.2** Meldon wildlife day **Clerk to advise quarry on event and extra traffic**

**13. Community governance meeting** – to agree communication strategy with OTC – **Proposed letter to Oke Times approved. Proposed by Cllr J Heard, seconded by Cllr P Heard, agreed by all. Cllrs received requests for dog poo bins in new estates. Clerk to let OTC know. Asset value to be discussed later.**

**14. Okehampton castle** – summary of public meeting – **Cllrs thought OTCs suggestion of setting up a ‘friends’ group would Be a good idea. Clerk to advise EH.**

**15. Wider Okehampton cluster group invitation** (see emails sent on 04/07/25) – **To be discussed at September meeting with BID mgr.**

**16. To confirm date of next meeting** – Tuesday 9 September 2025 at 7.30pm Meldon village hall

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.30 pm**

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

Minutes 321/6