



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Berkshire on Wednesday, 19th June 2019 which commenced at 7.45pm.

Present

Chairman – The Mayor, Councillor D Hare

Councillors A Bassett, N Brock, D Chopping, J Clark, R Cook, J Eastwell, M Eastwell, R Houlbrooke, C Jones, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, A Mickleburgh, A Neal, A Newton, R Sangster, M Shaw, K Yabsley

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and J Shaw (Deputy Town Clerk)

The first fifteen minutes of the meeting were set aside for members of the public to pose questions to the Council. There were no questions and the meeting started forthwith.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Bhangra, D Ireland and C Smith.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 15th May 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

24. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported that he had attended the following events:

19th May – St Nicholas Church Christian Aid cream tea.

28th May – Air Cadets Earley branch for an inspection with the Squadron Leader.

6th June – Earley Volunteer Driver Bureau AGM, where the Chief Officers were re-elected and local police representatives spoke about phone fraud.

7th June – Attended Peter Soul's funeral as a representative of the Town Council.

9th June – Attended the final service given by Neil Warwick, Vicar of St Nicolas Church before he moves to become Archdeacon of Bristol.

11th June – Sandhurst College Annual South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (SERFCA) briefing.

12th June – Hawkedon School to visit Head, staff and excited children.

14th June – Whiteknights School to visit Head, staff and excited children.

25. COMMITTEE REPORTS

25.1 Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 21st May 2019 (Minutes 1 - 14) be received.

25.2 Amenities & Leisure Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on 29th May 2019 (Minutes 1 - 15) be received.

25.3 Policy & Resources Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 5th June 2019 (Minutes 1 - 13) be received.

26. REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BODIES

In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk confirmed that the outside bodies were being informed of the new Town Council representatives' contact details and that the new representatives would be provided with contact details for the relevant organisations at the same time.

26.1 Fellowship Education Society/Dialogue Society

Councillor Long and his wife had accepted an invitation to a Ramadan Iftar dinner held at Reading Cricket Club on 10th May 2019. He reported that it had been a very interesting and enjoyable event.

26.2 Earley Volunteer Driver Bureau

Councillor M Eastwell gave a verbal report on her attendance at the Earley Volunteer Driver Bureau AGM held on 6th June 2019.

27. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Councillors noted that Town and Parish Councils are required to undergo an annual examination of their finances by both an Internal and an External Auditor.

The Internal Auditor is appointed by the Town Council and he/she conducts thorough checks into the processes and procedures used by the Council during the conduct of its business. The External Auditor is a company allocated to the Town Council as part of a national process governing all Town and Parish Councils. The External Auditor's role is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office.

27.1 Financial Statements 2018/19

Councillors discussed the Financial Statements 2018/19.

RESOLVED to receive the financial report prepared by the Town Council's Finance Manager, 'Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2019'.

27.2 Internal Auditor's Report

Councillors discussed the Internal Auditor's report for the year ended 31st March 2019. They noted that the report would be unqualified with the exception of Assertion G. The Internal Auditor had observed that PAYE and NIC systems had not been properly operated on certain payments made to the former Town Clerk. The Internal Auditor had referred to this issue in earlier reports. Councillors were satisfied that the situation had now been rectified.

RESOLVED to receive the Internal Auditor's report for the year ended 31st March 2019.

Following discussions at an earlier meeting between the Town Clerk, Finance Manager, Leader of the Council and other members of the Policy & Resources Committee, the Finance Manager was instructed by Council to provide a monthly report, in the format indicated by the Internal Auditor, by 14th of each month. The report is to be provided to the Town Clerk, Town Mayor and Leader of the Council.

27.3 AGAR 2018/19 – Annual Governance Statement 2018/19

The Town Clerk reported that the Internal Auditor was satisfied that the answer to all boxes should be positive and that a sound system of internal control and effective arrangements for the preparation of accounting statements were in place. Councillor Jones informed Members that during the earlier meeting held with the Town Clerk and Finance Manager, Councillors had asked lots of questions regarding the finances and had received satisfactory answers. Members discussed the Annual Governance Statement and

RESOLVED to sign 'Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2018/19'.

27.4 AGAR 2018/19 – Accounting Statements 2018/19

Members reviewed 'Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2018/19' and

RESOLVED to sign 'Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2018/19'

28. **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

Members were informed that as part of the Account and Audit Regulations, the Town Council was required to carry out risk assessments on its assets and operations and that currently, specialist software is used to produce reports for this purpose.

The Council's assets and operations are reviewed, potential risks are identified and categorised as low, medium or high. An action plan is then produced detailing the measures in place, or those that will be put in place, in order to contain or reduce the identified risks.

RESOLVED that the Chairman and the Responsible Financial Officer be authorised to sign off the current risk assessments.

29. **BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

The Town Council's annual subscription for membership of BALC and NALC (National Association of Local Councils) was due for renewal. The Town Clerk explained that BALC had been experiencing difficulties of late but it had now signed a service level agreement with HALC (Hampshire) who would be providing the support service going forward.

RESOLVED to continue membership of BALC/NALC for the year 2019/20.

30. LAUREL PARK WORKING GROUP

Members discussed the request of the Policy and Resources Committee that a Laurel Park Working Group be formed. The role of the Working Group would be to conduct research and discussions in support of the Town Council's aim of taking over responsibility for the Laurel Park site from Wokingham Borough Council. It was

RESOLVED

1. that Laurel Park Working Group be formed and the following Councillors be appointed to it - Councillors C Jones, R Cook, A Mickleburgh, N Brock, A Neal and D Chopping together with the Town Clerk, Facilities Manager and members of other organisations deemed necessary by the Working Group.
2. That the Laurel Park Working Group report to the Policy & Resources Committee

31. LICENSING APPLICATIONS

Notification of Application for Minor Variation of Premises Licence:

Application number PR0024 – George, 479 Loddon Bridge Road, Earley

Application number PR0069 – Asda, Lower Earley District Centre, Lower Earley

Members discussed the above licensing applications and agreed to submit a 'no comment' response to both applications

32. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCES

32.1 Record of Members' Attendance

Members noted details of Councillors' attendance during 2019/20 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

33. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors noted details of the Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 2118 – 2194) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 333 - 342).

34. PUBLICATIONS

No publications had been received.

35. PRESS RELEASES

RESOLVED to give particular press attention to the formation of the Laurel Park Working Group, a statement on its composition and its Terms of Reference.

36. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no members of the public or press present.

37. FORMER TOWN CLERK

Members discussed matters relating to the employment status of the previous Town Clerk, as referred to in the Internal Auditor's report.

RESOLVED

To form a Working Group, to comprise of all those members of the Policy & Resources Committee that wish to take part, to discuss the matter in greater detail. The Working Group to report their findings to the Policy & Resources Committee.

38. STAFFING COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk reported that the Staffing Committee had met on 6th June and that the following should be noted:

- The Deputy Town Clerk would be leaving in mid-July, work on the new job description and the recruitment process was being undertaken
- Due to a recent, and unusual, issue with staffing levels, it had been necessary to close the Earley Town Council Help Shop during the afternoons for the past two weeks.
- Consideration is being given to restructuring the staffing arrangements, especially in respect of reporting lines. Discussions continue.
- A person has been appointed to a new full-time, temporary 6-month post which has been created in order to give support to Senior Officers and to provide a level of coverage during the gap between the current Deputy Town Clerk leaving and the new one taking up position. The need for, and the requirements of, the post will be reviewed after five months.

39. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 9.38pm.