



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Earley Town Council held remotely on Wednesday, 25th November 2020 which commenced at 7:30pm.

Present

Chairman – The Mayor, Councillor D Hare.

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

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer).

81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Bhangra and A Mickleburgh.

82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Hare declared an interest in Item 9.1 – Earley Help Hub – Request. He stated he would not be taking part in any discussion on the matter nor would he vote on it.

83. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

84. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council (58-80) held on Wednesday 14th October 2020 were a true record and should be signed by the Chairman.

85. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on his recording of a reading, and the laying of a wreath, as part of the Remembrance Sunday virtual service at Earley St Peters. The Mayor has also recorded a reading for a Christmas virtual service at Earley St Peters.

86. COMMITTEE REPORTS

86.1 Amenities & Leisure Committee

Councillor A Newton presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on the 4th of November 2020. She noted the soft launch of the Earley Walks project, with a full launch on 7th December 2020. Councillor Newton reported that a donation

of £500 from a private company had covered the costs of the project so far, with the remainder of the monies to be used to produce some literature to accompany the walks.

The draft Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on 4th of November 2020 (Minutes 33-51) were received.

86.2 Planning Committee

Councillor G Littler presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 6th October and 10th November 2020. He noted a minor correction that was required for the Minutes of the 6th October (Item 38.2.3 – Application 202272) with the insertion of the word ‘refused’ between ‘be’ and ‘due’ in the first sentence.

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 6th October (Minutes 34-51) and 10th November 2020 (Minutes 52-70) were received.

86.3 Policy & Resources Committee

Councillor C Jones presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 11th November 2020. He noted that three Budget Working Party meetings had now been scheduled and confirmed that all Councillors were invited to attend.

The draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 11th November 2020 (Minutes 57-76) were received.

87. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

87.1 Councillor Maher provided a verbal report on the Trustees meeting of the Earley Charity held on 25th November. He reported that a budget had been agreed and that the charity was coping well despite the Covid restrictions.

88. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

88.1 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

Members were pleased to note that the completed annual return had been received from the external auditor and that no matters of concern had been raised. The relevant documents will be uploaded to the Town Council website in line with legislation. Councillors wished to express thanks to the officers and councillors who had made this possible.

88.2 Appointment of Internal Auditor

Councillors considered the Town Clerk’s recommendation that Claire Connell be reappointed as the Town Council’s internal auditor for 2021/22. It was

RESOLVED that Claire Connell be reappointed as the Town Council’s internal auditor for 2021/22.

88.3 Budget 2021/22

It was noted that the Budget Working Party would consider the recommendations of the Amenities & Leisure Committee and the Policy & Resources Committee in relation to the annual review of fees and charges. The chairman encouraged all Councillors to attend.

89. GRANTS

89.1 Earley Help Hub - Request

Members considered the request from the Earley Help Hub that the Town Council make a financial donation to assist in the provision of free meals over the Christmas holidays to children in receipt of free school meals. The Town Clerk confirmed that Earley Town Council was eligible to make such a donation as it holds the General Power of Competence and advised that, although the grants budget had been fully allocated, councillors did have the option of using general reserves for such an award. Members discussed whether this request had been overtaken by events, such as the Government grants to principal authorities for funding free meals and they expressed concern that the Council should not be duplicating funding. Councillors were, however, supportive of providing assistance to the Earley Help Hub and agreed that a less restricted donation would benefit more residents. It was

RESOLVED that £1,000 be donated to the Earley Help Hub to assist in the provision of free meals as well as gifts and general assistance over the Christmas holidays to Earley residents in need.

89.2 Grants Policy

Councillors noted the decision by the Policy & Resources Committee to amend the timetable for grant application submissions, and that the amended timetable would be posted on the Town Council website. Members agreed that membership of the Grants sub-Committee would be determined at the 17th February meeting of the Full Council.

90. DELEGATION OF POWERS

90.1 Full Council

Members considered the continuation of the schedule of delegation of emergency powers to the Town Clerk, and either the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Leader or Deputy Leader. It was

RESOLVED that the schedule of delegation of emergency powers to the Town Clerk, plus either the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Leader or Deputy Leader continue.

90.2 Planning Committee

Councillors noted that monthly virtual meetings of the Planning Committee were continuing and that the scheme of delegation of powers regarding this committee remain suspended.

91. TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

The Town Council received the recommendation of the Policy and Resources Committee that the following policies should be adopted:

Time off in Lieu (TOIL) Policy
Whistleblowing Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that both policies be adopted.

92. TELECOMMUNICATIONS APPARATUS – SOL JOEL PARK

The Deputy Town Clerk provided a verbal report on the issue. She confirmed that a meeting had been held with Harlequin on 13th November 2020. Harlequin was asked to provide information to the Town Council detailing which sites they had considered and the reasoning behind their decision to propose Sol Joel Park as the preferred site. The Harlequin representatives agreed to provide this information but, as of today, 25th November, no such correspondence has been received. At the meeting with Harlequin, the Council agreed to provide them with details of the Fields in Trust protection on Sol Joel Park and a copy of the Council's lease document. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that this information had been sent to Harlequin.

93. EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL – CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Members considered the formation of a Climate Emergency Working Group, reporting to Full Council, to look at the creation of an Earley Town Council Climate Emergency Declaration and an accompanying series of deliverable actions. A suggestion was made that this action should not be carried out until the Council had sorted out its budget for next year, especially in light of the view that the Policy and Resources Committee had expressed in September that the Council did not have the resources to carry out the work required.

A discussion took place regarding the membership of such a working group. Councillor Jones proposed a group of nine councillors, seven Liberal Democrats, one Conservative and one Labour Member. The Chairman suggested that the working group should be apolitical and consist of any Members who had a keen interest in the topic and who wished to be part of the group. Councillor Matthews suggested a small group of six, two from each party.

A discussion around the terms of reference and remit of the working group took place. A suggestion was made that this would be the first task of the working group, to agree its own terms of reference. The Town Clerk advised councillors that, as this was a working group of the Full Council, the terms of reference and remit should be decided by the Council not the working group. Councillor Jones disagreed and another councillor expressed the view that the next Full Council meeting was not scheduled until 17th February 2021 which was too long to wait. The observation was made that it would be sensible to agree terms of reference before the working party met and a suggestion was made that a small group be nominated to draw up appropriate terms of reference

Councillor Jones proposed that a Climate Emergency Working Group be formed, reporting to Full Council, to look at the creation of an Earley Town Council Climate Emergency Declaration and an accompanying series of deliverable actions. In addition, the proposal included the membership of that working group, namely Councillors Andrew Mickleburgh, Mike Smith, Caroline Smith, Anne Bassett, David Hare, Clive Jones, Alison Newton plus, either Councillor Sheena Matthews or Councillor Marion Shaw, and, either Councillor David Chopping or Councillor Gurdeep Bhangra. The proposal was seconded and a vote took place. It was

RESOLVED, by majority, that the motion be passed.

94. REVIEW OF TOWN PLAN

Members considered the formation of a working group, reporting to Full Council, to conduct a review of the current Town Plan and draft a revised Town Plan in accordance with the aspirations of the Council. A councillor asked that any review of the Town Plan include proper consultation with residents, for example the setting up of focus groups. Another

councillor recommended that aspirations and costings would need to be ascertained before a revised Town Plan could be drawn up.

Concern was expressed that the Council appeared to be forming two important working groups with the expectation that they would both present to Full Council in February. There followed several comments from councillors agreeing that consultation with residents was important and that, whilst it was good to ‘get the ball rolling’ it was important not to rush these important matters.

Councillor Jones proposed setting up a working group, reporting to Full Council, to review and draft a revised Town Plan in accordance with the aspirations of the Council. The working group to comprise of between eight to ten councillors, namely Councillors Geoff Littler, John Eastwell, David Hare, Ralph Houlbrooke, Clive Jones, Anne Bassett, Andrew Mickleburgh, Tahir Maher and, either Councillor David Chopping or Councillor Gurdeep Bhanga, and either Councillor Sheena Matthews or Councillor Marion Shaw. The proposal was seconded and a vote took place. It was

RESOLVED, by a majority, that the motion be passed.

95. COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

The Town Clerk reported on the Covid update meeting held between Wokingham Borough Council and the parish and town councils. Members noted the Community Champions scheme being launched by WBC.

96. POST OFFICE – SILVERDALE ROAD

The correspondence received from Post Office Ltd regarding the temporary closure of the Post Office in Silverdale Road was noted. It was now reported that this post office was soon going to be reopened. Thanks were expressed to those councillors who had campaigned for the reopening of such a valued community asset.

97. COUNCILLORS’ ATTENDANCES

97.1 Record of Members' Attendance

Members noted details of Councillors’ attendance during 2020/21 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

98. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 3500 – 3527, 3528 – 3559, 3561 - 3564), Imprest Account (Vouchers 531 - 534), and Current Account (Reimbursement Voucher 36).

99. PUBLICATIONS

It was noted that the following publications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices.

Involve Wokingham	Newsletter – November 2020
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100. PRESS RELEASES

Councillors requested a press release be issued in regard to the excellent financial report received by the Council. It was indicated that Councillor Jones would provide suggested wording to the Town Clerk.

A press release regarding the Earley Walks project was also requested but Councillor Long asked for this to be delayed until 7th December when the posters would also be published.

101. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no members of the public or press present. It was agreed that the remaining items on the Agenda be taken under Part II.

PART II

102. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

103. CHAIRMAN'S RECOMMENDATION

104. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.11pm

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Town Mayor