



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Earley Town Council held remotely on Wednesday, 31st March 2021 which commenced at 7:30pm.

Present

Chair – 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, C Smith, M Smith and K Yabsley.

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

130. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

131. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

132. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

133. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council (105-129) held on Wednesday 17th February 2021 were a true record and should be signed by the Chairman.

Councillors A Long and C Jones entered the meeting.

134. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Mayor reported on a telephone call he made to staff at Austen House and his subsequent, socially distanced, visit to deliver flowers to the home.

Councillors J Eastwell and M Eastwell entered the meeting.

135. COMMITTEE REPORTS

135.1 Amenities & Leisure Committee

Councillor A Newton presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on the 3rd March 2021. She noted Minute 72 – Earley Environmental Group

Proposal. The Town Clerk reported that Earley Town Council had written to Wokingham Borough Council and responses had been received.

The draft Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on 3rd March 2021 (Minutes 67-81) were received.

135.2 Planning Committee

Councillor G Littler presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 9th February 2020 and 9th March 2021. He noted Minutes 116 and 130 – Proposed EE Ltd Telecommunications Mast. The applicant has now submitted a request for formal prior approval to Wokingham Borough Council and the matter would be considered at the next meeting of the Town Council's Planning Committee.

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 9th February 2021 (Minutes 105-120) and 9th March 2021 (Minutes 121-135) were received.

135.3 Policy & Resources Committee

Councillor C Jones presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 17th March 2021. He was pleased to note Minute 104 – Town Council Grants.

The draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 17th March 2021 (Minutes 96-114) were received.

136. **REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

136.1 Earley Charity

Councillor T Maher provided an overview of the charity and its grant-making activities.

136.2 Readibus

Councillor T Maher gave a report on the activities of the charity over the last year and the scale of the challenges ahead brought about by the impact of Covid.

137. **TOWN COUNCIL AGENDAS**

Members considered the Chair's recommendation that only members of the Council's standing committees receive hardcopies of the relevant agenda packs, and that other councillors receive this information in electronic form only. Councillor A Mickleburgh proposed an amendment to the recommendation whereby any councillor requesting a hardcopy of an agenda pack would be entitled to receive it.

It was **RESOLVED** that only members of the Council's standing committees receive hardcopies of the relevant agenda packs, and that all other councillors receive this information in electronic form only.

It was also **RESOLVED** that any councillor requesting a hardcopy of an agenda pack would be entitled to receive it.

138. DELEGATION OF POWERS

138.1 Full Council

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

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

139. VIRTUAL MEETING LEGISLATION

The Town Clerk noted that since the parish councils had written a joint letter to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, the government had announced that the emergency legislation allowing virtual council meetings would not be extended. Councillors gave careful consideration to the Town Clerk's request that that the date of the Annual Meeting of Earley Town Council be moved forward from Wednesday 12th May to either Tuesday 4th or Wednesday 5th May 2021 so that it could be held remotely. The Town Clerk explained that the Council did not have a venue large enough to accommodate 25 town councillors, 3 officers and members of the public at a meeting, whilst maintaining social distancing and complying with Covid-secure guidelines. She pointed out to Members that at least some of the officers expected to attend this meeting would not have received any vaccination by this date. Members discussed the requirement to hold an Annual Meeting in May, the lack of suitable venues in Earley, their obligations as an employer and the ongoing legal action in the courts.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk, together with the Town Mayor and Leader would make a decision under delegated powers in two weeks' time, as to whether the Annual Meeting would be held on 12th of May 2021 or moved to the 4th or 5th of May 2021.

140. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS

Councillors considered the recommendations of the Policy and Resources Committee regarding the 2021/22 grant awards, noting that some funds would be held in reserve for sporting awards and future needs. It was

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Policy and Resources Meeting on the 2021/22 awards, as detailed in Appendix B, be approved.

141. INTERNAL AUDIT

Members received the Town Council's interim internal audit report. Councillors were pleased to note the positive nature of the report and the Town Mayor wished to express his thanks to the Town Clerk, the Senior Operations Support Officer and the Finance Officer for their efforts. The Town Clerk confirmed that plans to spend the first tranche of CIL monies on equipment at Meadow Park were being drawn up and it was agreed that further details would be provided at the next meeting of the Amenities and Leisure Committee.

142. TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

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

142.1 Annual Leave Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Leave Policy be adopted.

142.2 Sickness Absence Policy (updated)

It was **RESOLVED** that the Sickness Absence Policy (updated) be adopted.

142.3 Service to Earley Awards Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the nomination period for the Service to Earley Award be amended to open on 1st May 2021 and remain open for 6 weeks. This amendment to apply only for 2021.

143. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

143.1 Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan

The Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan, developed by the Town Council Climate Emergency Working Group was received. Councillor A Mickleburgh proposed an amendment to the agenda item: 'the Climate Emergency Working Group to immediately begin a 12 month period of significant and meaningful engagement with Earley Stakeholders leading to the production and adoption of an updated Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan'. It was

RESOLVED that the amendment as proposed by Councillor Mickleburgh be approved.

143.2 It was further

RESOLVED that the Earley Climate Emergency Action Plan, dated 31st March 2021, be adopted.

144. CYCLING AND WALKING INITIATIVES

144.1 Active Travel Fund

Members received a report from Councillor A Neal on Wokingham Borough Council's proposal for active travel routes. It was noted that this proposal was currently out for public consultation. Councillors considered the observations and conclusions of the report, and agreed they should be submitted as comments on behalf of Earley Town Council. Should Councillors have any further remarks, they are to be sent to the Town Clerk for inclusion prior to submission.

144.2 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Councillor A Neal reported on WBC's consultation on the development of a borough-wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Members agreed to convene a Working Group, comprising of Councillors C Smith, A Neal, R Cook and R Sangster, to prepare a Town Council submission. Councillors to submit any points for consideration to the Working Group, via Councillor C Smith, in the next two weeks. Members expressed their thanks to Councillor A Neal for this work on these two reports.

145. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

145.1 Record of Members' Attendance

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

146. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 3803 – 3826, 3827, 3828 – 3860), and Imprest Account (Vouchers 560 - 564).

147. PUBLICATIONS

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

MERA	Executive Committee Minutes – 11 th March 2021
Involve Community Services	e-newsletter 19 th March 2021
Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner	e-newsletter March 2021

148. PRESS RELEASES

Councillors requested the following press releases be issued:

- Adoption of Climate Emergency Action Plan; encourage residents to look at the document on the Town Council website
- The awarding of Town Council grants

It was recognised that extra care must be taken when issuing press releases during a period of purdah.

149. 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

150. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

151. COMMITTEE REPORTS

152. ACCOUNTS MATTERS

153. LEGAL MATTERS

154. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.22pm

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Town Mayor