



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Reading, on Wednesday 9th November 2022 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

Councillors: A Bassett, D Chopping, J Clark, J Eastwell, R Houlbrooke, A Long, T Maher, and S Matthews.

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

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C Jones, A Mickleburgh and C Smith.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

65. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

66. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 5th October 2022 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair (Minutes 40-62).

Councillors requested an update on Minute 52 ‘Building Access Control’ and the Deputy Town Clerk reported that the system had been installed in both Maiden Place and Radstock Lane Community Centres. Officers were scheduled for training on the new system, after which hirers would be instructed and the system would be activated.

67. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for August and September 2022 had been made available to the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee for information.

68. MAYOR’S RECEPTION

68.1 The Committee noted that the annual Mayor’s Reception would be held on Saturday 10th December 3pm - 6pm at Radstock Lane Community Centre. The Mayor advised councillors that there would be a collection for the Mayor’s Charity, Arthritis Matters, and that he wished to invite representatives from all communities in Earley.

68.2 Councillors gave consideration to increasing the Civic Costs budget to fund the Mayor’s Reception and the Annual Town Electors’ Meeting scheduled for March 2023. They noted that



the remaining funds in the Civic Costs budget were lower than anticipated as two flags had been purchased during the year. It was

RESOLVED that the Civic Costs budget be increased from £1,200 to £2,000, with funds transferred from general reserves.

69. TELEPHONE KIOSKS

Members considered the Town Clerk's recommendation that the Town Council vire £3,000 from the Seats/Benches EMR to a Phone Box Project budget to fund the defibrillator and refurbishment works planned for the adopted telephone kiosk in Wychwood Crescent, a project being undertaken in collaboration with the Community HeartBeat Trust. It was noted that the Seats/Benches EMR was not expected to be fully utilised before the end of the financial year. It was

RESOLVED that £3,000 be vired from the Seats/Benches EMR to a Phone Box Project budget.

70. BUDGET 2023/24

70.1 The Committee discussed potential projects to be undertaken in the financial year 2023/24. They discussed installing defibrillators at other town council sites across Earley; commissioning an external Health and Safety audit; obtaining professional advice on solar panel installation; use of an Environmental Improvements budget to carry out appropriate works on ETC buildings; Parish Online; increasing the grants budget; supporting an Earley food bank; and making improvements to the Green Fair.

It was noted that there were already funds put aside for updating the website and running green events.

70.2 Councillors discussed the potential ordering of the projects mentioned and were of the opinion that the defibrillators, Health & Safety audit, solar panels, Parish Online, and grants budget increase were important priorities.

70.3 Members gave consideration to future projects beyond 2023/24 as part of the Council's long-term financial planning and agreed that installing defibrillators across Earley and installing solar panels on town council buildings were long term projects.

71. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS

71.1 Sports Sponsorship

Councillors considered a request for match funding for two young sports people who had been awarded £350 each from the Wokingham Sports Sponsorship Committee. It was

RESOLVED to match the funding from the Wokingham Sports Sponsorship Committee.

71.2 Acknowledgements

It was noted that letters of thanks for grants awarded by Earley Town Council had been received from Earley and Reading Welfare Rights, and the Salvation Army, Earley.



71.3 Town Council Grants Policy

The Committee reviewed the terms of Earley Town Council's Grants Policy to ensure that it remained fit for purpose. It was agreed that recommendations be made restricting applicants to submitting only one application per financial year, and to make clear in the policy that not all the grant fund would necessarily be awarded in the first tranche of awards thus enabling Council to consider making other awards later in the year should it wish to do so. It was agreed that all grant payments would be made electronically.

72. CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

72.1 Centrepoint

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update. She reported that WBC had been resistant to the Town Council's request that a new, 12-month landlords' break clause not be inserted into the terms of the new lease. The Town Clerk reported on a meeting she had had with the Assistant Director of Commercial Property, WBC on 8th November. The meeting had been positive, with the Town Clerk again outlining the necessity of security of tenure in order for ETC to employ youth workers and develop youth services. Following that meeting, the Assistant Director had confirmed to the Town Clerk in a telephone call on 9th November that, at a meeting she held with the WBC Executive earlier on 9th November, WBC councillors had insisted on the need to insert the break clause but offered to extend it from 12 to 24 months. Also at this meeting WBC councillors had decided to introduce commercial rental levels to the lease, an amount to be determined. The Town Clerk pointed out to the Assistant Director that the new lease was scheduled to begin in 15 days' time, that rent had not previously been payable therefore this new, substantial expense had not been budgeted for.

Town councillors were unanimous that these new conditions were not acceptable. They noted that the current lease granted a right to renew, terms to be agreed, and that Earley Town Council had already informed WBC that it did not agree to WBC's original proposed changes to the terms and conditions. Councillors were unanimous in the view that WBC's new proposed changes were unreasonable and that ETC should take legal advice and proceed accordingly. It was

RESOLVED that Earley Town Council does not accept Wokingham Borough Council's latest proposed changes to the terms and conditions for the lease of Centrepoint Community Centre and legal advice will be sought.

The Committee agreed that ETC should continue with the installation of the bike workshop at Centrepoint as this was an important community facility which had been closed due to the fact that ETC was having to leave the Silverdale Centre.

72.2 Silverdale

Councillors requested an update from the Town Clerk on the situation regarding the Silverdale Community Centre. She reported that she had met with a representative from Maiden Earley Trust and had repeated the fact that ETC fully intended to be out of the centre before the 31st July 2023 deadline. The Town Clerk had explained that progress had been made in clearing out the bike workshop, the preschool had moved to new premises, arrangements had been made for the remaining Silverdale hirers to be rehomed from January 2023, and work had begun on clearing the office. The MET representative accepted that these measures were evidence of the Town Council's intentions and suggested the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding be



investigated so as to provide reassurance to the Trust that the building would be vacant by the July 2023 deadline.

Members noted that whilst significant works had been undertaken in removing many ETC assets from the building, there was still work remaining, including the dismantling and packing up of the music workshop.

73. AMENITIES & LEISURE COMMITTEE - RECOMMENDATIONS

73.1 Sol Joel Park

Councillors considered the recommendation of the Amenities and Leisure Committee that the Council does not commit to extending the overflow car park at this time but that the situation be monitored to determine if the Berkshire Youth Development League's proposed actions resolve the issues. Members agreed that an extension of the overflow car park would not support its declaration of a climate emergency, that the Council should not commit to extending the overflow car park at this time and the situation be reviewed early next year.

73.2 Dog Waste Bags

Members discussed the recommendations of the Amenities and Leisure Committee that the provision of free waste bags be withdrawn for the financial year 2023/24 and the situation on the ground be monitored. The Committee had been concerned that continued provision would not be in line with its aim to discourage the use of single-use plastics and an extract from the WBC website was shared that explained that the provision of food waste bags had been withdrawn by WBC for financial and environmental reasons.

Councillors were conscious of the decision (Minute 62.2.3) at the P&R meeting of 11th November 2020 that the provision of free dog waste bags should be continued but were mindful of the Climate Emergency Declaration and the need to minimise the use of single-use plastics. Some Members held the view that this free service benefitted only a small proportion of Earley residents. Requests for dog waste bags had increased in recent weeks and concern was expressed that some residents were requesting bags on an unusually frequent basis and perhaps some of them could be using the bags for other purposes. Councillors were in favour of implementing a charge for the provision of dog bags and asked the Town Clerk to determine a suitable price with reference to the cost of the provision of the amenity. It was

RESOLVED that Earley Town Council introduce a charge for the provision of dog bags (amount to be determined) and that a policy be introduced, limiting residents to one pack per household per month.

Councillor D Hare left the meeting

74. PROJECT UPDATES

74.1 Sibly Transfer

Councillors received a verbal update from the Town Clerk who informed them that the town council's solicitor had not been able to make progress with Persimmon's solicitor. The Town Clerk suggested that the Council may wish to ask if Wokingham Borough Council's planning enforcement team could investigate as to whether the S106 agreement was part of the developer's planning permission and if so, could this be used to insist upon a positive response from Persimmon.



74.2 Replacement Bus Shelters

Members received an update and were informed that the company contracted to supply and install the new bus shelters was experiencing a shortage of fitters and therefore installation had been delayed. The Operations Manager had been assured they would be installed as soon as this issue had been resolved.

Councillor D Hare returned to the meeting

74.3 Cemetery Extension

The Town Clerk reported that she was in the process of agreeing the details of a professional geophysical survey of the extension area to determine which areas were viable for burials and which for interment of ashes. Once costings had been agreed the work could be commissioned. It was confirmed that ETC had planning permission for the extension as interments had already commenced in part of the original extension area.

75. POLICY REVIEWS

Members reviewed the following policies for re-adoption:

75.1 Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy be re-adopted unamended.

75.2 Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the Child Protection and Vulnerable Persons Policy be re-adopted unamended.

76. WAINGELS CONSULTION

Members noted that a consultation was taking place on changes to the 2024-2025 in-year admission arrangements for Waingels school.

77. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment made since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 5218 – 5223, 5224 – 5251, 5252 – 5289, 5290 – 5298) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 59 – 62 and 728 - 733).

78. PUBLICATIONS

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

CCB	E-bulletin September 2022
MERA	Executive Committee Minutes 8 th September 2022



Me2 Club	E-newsletter October 2022
Police & Crime Commissioner	E-bulletin October 2022

79. PRESS RELEASES

No press releases were requested.

80. 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

81. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

82. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.57pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee