

EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL



PRECEPT 2023-24

Earley Town Council sits in the tier of local government closest to its residents. Town Council officers and town councillors work to deliver high quality services to the people of Earley whilst making efficient use of the council tax monies available to it.

The Town Council has continued to face significant challenges in the past year, as have many of our residents and local businesses. We have experienced a gradual recovery from the impacts of the pandemic but have had to deal with unprecedented increases in gas and electricity charges alongside rising inflation. Income from hall hire and sports pitches has increased but have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. The pressures on council finances remain challenging but Earley Town Council will continue with its proactive approach to improve efficiency and obtain best value for residents, whilst maintaining its commitments to address issues around climate emergency and improving the general environment.

Earley Town Council is limiting the increase to its 2023/24 precept (the element of residents' council tax bills received by Earley Town Council) to 2%. This will enable the delivery of Town Council services to continue to improve. The annual precept for a Band D household in 2023/24 will be £83.94, an increase on the previous year of 2.75 pence per week.

Earley Town Council Services

Parks and Public Open Spaces

Earley Town Council continues to employ its own in-house team of Grounds staff and Park Rangers which enables us to maintain our land to a very high standard.

Sol Joel Park remains a popular site, offering skate park and parkour areas; soft ball, cricket and football pitches and a sports pavilion; a highly regarded children's playground including a large inclusive play area, as well as being a beautiful park in which to stroll or walk the dog.

The inclusive swing and new safety surfacing has been installed at **Meadow Park**, and new litter bins provided. Plans are underway to replace the old roundabout as part of an ongoing project to upgrade all the equipment on this site. Town Council staff continue to maintain the **Paddick Drive** green space, including looking after the **BMX track**, and fruit trees and an edible hedge have been planted at **Bulmershe Park** (jointly owned and managed with Woodley Town Council).

Earley Town Council is in the unusual, but fortunate, position of being responsible for its own nature reserve, **Maiden Erlegh Lake and Nature Reserve**. Our park rangers, grounds staff, water bailiffs and a dedicated group of volunteers work hard to ensure that the site is well maintained and a welcoming place for visitors, anglers and wildlife. Conservation work is regularly undertaken to preserve and enhance the flora and fauna and the **Interpretation Centre** remains a focus for environment based activities.

Community Centres

The Town Council has three community centres in Earley; **Radstock Lane CC, Maiden Place CC and Centrepoint CC** and is continuing with its ongoing programme of maintenance and improvements. In 2023/24 a priority for the Council will be improving the energy efficiency of its buildings. Various types of rooms are available for hire both for regular bookings or one-off functions. The Elizabeth Room at Radstock Lane CC is new for 2023/24, a comfortable, informal space reserved for use by local support groups and charities.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to operate our youth club since the pandemic as the Council has been required to vacate the Silverdale Centre. However, we remain committed to finding an alternative venue where we can rebuild this service and also install the Bike Workshop for community use. Funds have been allocated for this purpose in the 2023/24 budget and we are working with another local council to establish a much needed high-quality **youth service** which will benefit our young people. Earley Town Council also plans to build on its work with other organisations such as the local police and Reading FC.

Representation

Earley Town Council meets regularly throughout the year, either as Full Council or in its particular Committees.

Details of these meetings are displayed on our website at www.earley-tc.gov.uk and on noticeboards around Earley. Residents are welcome to attend.

Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, RG6 5UL
Open: Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm & 2pm to 4.30pm

Town Clerk: Jo Friend BA(Hons) PSLCC



0118 986 8995

www.earley-tc.gov.uk



administration@earley-tc.gov.uk

Cemetery and Allotments

The Town Council owns **Mays Lane Cemetery**, offering provision for burial and interment of ashes as well as a special area for child burials, a designated area for Muslim burials and a Garden of Remembrance. We continue to work on improvements to the site, including the relaying of the exit road, due to be completed soon. The Council is working with a specialist cemetery development company to extend the facility into the land available to it at the eastern end of the site.

The Council's **Culver Lane Allotments** site remains popular, offering an opportunity to be active, spend time outdoors and increase plot holders' self sufficiency. A variety of plot sizes are offered and the site has an allotment association always ready to give advice where needed.

Environment

Earley Town Council has pledged to make the environment a key priority. It has adopted a **Climate Emergency Action Plan** and a **Green Infrastructure Plan** and our work to implement positive changes to the way the Town Council operates continues. Environmental projects are a priority and consideration for the 'green agenda' is part of every decision the Council makes.

Earley Town Council remains a statutory consultee on planning issues in Earley. Its **Planning Committee** meets monthly to consider and comment on planning applications. These comments are submitted to the planning authority, Wokingham Borough Council, for their consideration. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Planning Committee. We have begun a rolling programme of upgrading Town Council **bus shelters** and **notice boards** across the town and will be installing a **defibrillator** in the red telephone box the Council has adopted in Wychwood Avenue.

Local Community

Each year Earley Town Council awards local charities and organisations a number of **grants** to assist them in their work with Earley residents. Town Councillors also sit on the boards of various local organisations and report back to Council on these groups' activities and the issues they may be facing.

Earley Town Council is involved with a number of community events throughout the year. The Town Council run annual **Green Fair**, held at the Nature Reserve in early August, has returned and the Council continues its support of the annual **Huge Earley Litter Pick** (HELP) each spring, expanding the area covered and encouraging more residents to join in.

Following the success of the series of **environment themed events** organized in the run-up to COP 26, the Council plans to run some of these again in 2023/24, such as bat walks at the Nature Reserve, the clothes swap and visits to the wind turbine.

In 2022/23 Earley Town Council volunteered its Helpshop as a collection point for the **Wokingham Foodbank**. This has proved to be very popular and we will continue with the project, assisting the Foodbank volunteers by delivering the donations to their depot for allocation.

The **Help Shop** based at the Town Council Offices allows local residents to access Town Council services such as fishing permits and dog waste bags, as well as providing access to many of the services offered by Wokingham Borough Council but in a location convenient to the residents of Earley. These services include applications for travel passes, payment of council tax and purchase of refuse and garden bags.

Earley Town Council **offices** are based in Radstock Lane, we are always happy to hear from our residents and customers. More information is available on our website www.earley-tc.gov.uk

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2022/23			BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023/24			
Net			Net			
Income	Expenditure	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure	Expenditure	
179,270	103,755	75,515	Community Facilities	216,288	164,896	51,392
20,175	99,140	(78,965)	Parks & Play Areas	18,925	115,485	(96,560)
0	34,150	(34,150)	Highways & Street Furniture	0	58,000	(58,000)
15,050	1,013,900	(998,850)	Help Shop, Grants & Admin	17,550	1,120,731	(1,103,181)
214,495	1,250,945	(1,036,450)	Total Expenditure/Revenue	252,763	1,459,112	(1,206,349)

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Telephone: 0118 986 8995

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