



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 21st June 2023 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor C Smith

Councillors: R Ahlawat, A Bassett, R Cook, M De Jong, J Eastwell, T Holton, M Iyengunmwena, S Jordan, N Jorgensen, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, A Neal, S Newton, B Owen, H Sarasan, and M Smith.

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and Y Crocker (Committees Officer)

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received Councillors A Bradley, N Brock, R Browne, D Hare and P Jorgensen.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Earley Town Council (1 - 22) held on Wednesday 17th May 2023 were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

27. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

The Town Mayor reported that she has not yet attended any engagements, but there were several scheduled in the diary which she would report on at the next meeting.

28. COMMITTEE REPORTS

28.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Cllr A Long presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 1 - 17) held on 31st May 2023. The Council received the draft Minutes.

28.2 Planning Committee

Cllr M Smith presented the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 1 - 17) held on 6th June 2023. The Council received the Minutes.

28.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Cllr T Maher presented the draft Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 1 - 20) held on 7th June 2023. The Council received the draft Minutes.

29. **REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

Councillor Cook reported on her attendance at the Earleybus AGM on 11th May 2023, which after a full year of operation, has not returned to pre-covid levels. Two new drivers have been recruited but there are still some issues around changes to driving licences made by Government, in relation to the size of vehicles which can be driven. Councillor Cook also reported on her attendance at the ARC AGM, a one-to-one counselling service. With 11,000 sessions being provided by way of online, telephone and face-to-face, two new supervisors have been employed and ARC have received some lottery funding.

Councillor Newton reported that town council membership of the Mid & West Berkshire Local Access Forum was reviewed, a decision on whether he can become a member of the forum is awaited.

Councillor Neal reported on his attendance at the Borough Parish Liaison Forum on 18th April 2023, which discussed the local plan, biodiversity and an update on improved partnership working. There was also a presentation to the Forum from Tim Parry from Connecting Communities in Berkshire.

30. **RISK REGISTER**

Council Risk Register

The Town Clerk explained that the Council's Risk Register is a live document which identifies risks to the Council and must be presented to the Council on an annual basis. The Town Clerk identified additions, suggested by Councillor Matthews, which had been made to pages 17 & 18, to now include Defibrillators. Councillor Eastwell suggested that each section could be numbered to make the document easier to follow and that on page 6, reference be made to an external Health & Safety Audit. Councillor Newton suggested some changes to certain wording which he would discuss with the Town Clerk at a later date.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council Risk Register 2023 be signed by the Chair and the Responsible Financial Officer.

31. **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

31.1 Financial Statements 2022/23

Councillors received the financial report prepared by the Finance Officer, 'Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2023'. The Town Clerk reported on amendments to page 8, point 2, the date should read 15th May 2019 and not 17th May 2023, and the total figures in point 4 should read £1950 and £1750. Also, on page 9 – Community Assets, the lease for Sol Joel Park was amended to 50yrs rather than 45yrs.

Councillor Maher provided an explanation of the current financial position of the Council to the newly elected members, noting that, during the covid pandemic, the Council's income had

been adversely affected but services provided by the Council had continued during that time. Coming out of the pandemic, like many others, the Council has experienced increases in energy and supplier costs and subsequent budgets have focused on long term projects such as the cemetery extension and further development to Sol Joel Pavilion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Unaudited Financial Statements 2022/23 be signed by the chair.

31.2 Internal Auditor's Report

31.2.1 Councillors received the Internal Auditor's written report for the year ended 31st March 2023 and were pleased to note a positive report.

31.2.2 Councillors received the Internal Auditor's completed Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23, page 3 of the AGAR 2022/23.

31.3 AGAR 2022/23 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

Members reviewed 'Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23' and agreed the responses for points 1 – 9. It was

RESOLVED that 'Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23' be signed.

31.4 AGAR 2022/23 – Accounting Statements 2022/23

Members reviewed 'Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23' and it was

RESOLVED that 'Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23' be signed.

32. **COUNCIL POLICIES**

Councillors considered the recommendation from the Policy and Resources committee that the Social Media Policy be adopted and it was

RESOLVED that the Social Media Policy be adopted.

33. **COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT**

Members noted the Policy and Resources Committee resolution for all Councillors to individually sign the Councillor Code of Conduct. Councillors were each provided with copy for signature.

34. **TOWN COUNCILLOR REMUNERATION**

Councillors considered the report on town councillor remuneration and noted the Council's current position was not to pay an allowance to any councillor, but to permit councillors to claim reimbursement of training and travel expenses, should they wish to do so. In addition, the Town Mayor may claim expenses (up to £500 per annum) for expenses incurred in the course of their duties as Town Mayor. It was

RESOLVED that Earley Town Council's position on remuneration would remain as it currently is.

35. **COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE**

35.1 Record of Members' Attendance

Members noted the details of Councillors' attendance during 2023/24 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

36. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 5825 – 5846, 5847 - 5852 and 5853 – 5892 and Imprest vouchers 826 - 827).

37. PUBLICATIONS

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

Connecting Communities in Berkshire	June 2023 e-newsletter
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38. PRESS RELEASES

No press releases were requested.

Councillors agreed that on future agendas, this item would be titled Press Releases, Website and Social Media.

39. 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

40. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

41. COMMITTEE REPORTS

42. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 7.45pm

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Town Mayor