



**EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023 which commenced at 7.30pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor T Maher

Councillors: A Bassett, G Bhangra, N Brock, D Chopping, J Clark, R Cook, J Eastwell, M Eastwell, D Hare, R Houlbrooke, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, S Matthews, A Mickleburgh, A Neal, A Newton, M Shaw, M Smith, and K Yabsley.

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk)

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Councillor Maher requested a one-minute standing silence to remember Councillor Richard Sangster who recently passed away and who was a very dedicated member of the Council.

*Councillor Newton entered the meeting.*

**135. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Ireland, Clive Jones and C Smith

**136. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following interests were declared in relation to Item 9 - Town Council Grants. Although there were no pecuniary interests declared, Members indicated if they had an association with the applicant.

Councillor Brock – Trinity Church.

Councillor Hare – Trinity Church.

Councillor Matthews – Cianna’s Smile.

Councillor Maher – Readibus.

Councillor Mickleburgh - EEG, Wokingham Volunteer Centre and Reading Male Voice Choir.

Councillor Newton - Berkshire MS Therapy Centre.

Councillor Smith – Readibus.

A significant number of councillors declared membership of, or were volunteers for, EASI and/or EEG. It was agreed that none of them had a pecuniary interest or stood to benefit from any grants to these organisations agreed to under Item 9, and no dispensations were required.

**137. PUBLIC FORUM**

No members of the public were present.

**138. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Littler requested an amendment be made to Minute 125– Schedule of Meetings 2023/2024, to clarify that it had been resolved that the 7pm start time for future meetings would

commence as of the Planning Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023, as illustrated by the schedule attached to the agenda item.

It was **RESOLVED** that following the agreed amendment of Minute 125, the Minutes of the Meeting of Earley Town Council (115-134) held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023 were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

Councillor Houlbrooke asked for an update on Minute 121.1 as to whether a letter had been sent to the Post Office following the closure of the post office at Asda. The Town Clerk reported that, prior to any letter being sent, further information on banking services available at FADS/Silverdale Road post office had come to light. This had been provided to members of the Amenities and Leisure Committee who had agreed to investigate further. The Town Clerk had not received any further instruction and so, to date, a letter had not been sent. Following further discussion, it was:

**RESOLVED** that a letter be sent to both the Post Office and Asda expressing the Council's concerns about the lack of full post office facilities now available in Earley and the detriment this has on the local community. It was noted that Asda had been given a retail monopoly when it was permitted to develop the site and councillors were of the opinion that Asda had a duty to provide services to the community. It was also noted that the unit previously providing post office services was currently empty.

#### **139. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION**

Councillors received a report from the Town Mayor, emailed to councillors prior to the meeting, which detailed his attendance at events since the last meeting of the Council. Cllr Maher spoke of his attendance at Berkshire Magistrates' Mock Trials which 25 schools took part in; a University of Reading Court Meeting; hearing presentations from the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts, Shinfield Studios and the Natural History Museum. The Town Mayor had also attended World Day of Prayer Reading at St Luke's Church and the Annual Town Electors' meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March.

The Town Mayor thanked councillors for having elected him as Mayor last May, he also thanked the chairs of the committees and the previous Mayors. The Town Mayor observed that the last 4 years of the present Council had been very productive, with the introduction of new systems, good financial data and an improving relationship with Earley residents.

#### **140. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### **140.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee**

Cllr N Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 99 - 116) held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The Council received the draft Minutes.

Councillors were pleased to note that the HUGE Earley Litter Pick on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023 had gone well, and councillors asked for thanks to be passed on to council officers Max Brown (Operations Manager), Grahame Hawker (Senior Park Ranger), Ashley Prior (Park Ranger) and also to Brenda Hill from EASI and the staff at McDonalds.

Councillors were also pleased to note that the refurbishment of the telephone box in Wychwood Crescent was underway in preparation for the installation of a defibrillator.

#### 140.2 Planning Committee

Cllr G Littler presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 116 - 132) held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes (133 - 146) held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The Council received the Minutes.

#### 140.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Cllr D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 100 - 118) held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The Council received the draft Minutes.

Councillors Hare referred to Minute 107 – Elizabeth Room and recommended that councillors who hadn't already done so, visit the newly opened Elizabeth Room at Radstock Lane Community Centre, which is now available to hire by local support and charity groups.

Councillor Matthews requested a typo error be amended on page 3 of the minutes, Item 110, to correct the spelling of 'partnership'.

Councillor Bassett referred to Minute 108 – Coronation and asked for all councillors to get involved in helping to put up bunting around Earley to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III.

### **141. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

#### 141.1 Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC)

The Town Clerk read a written report from Councillor C Smith on her attendance at a meeting of the Berkshire Association of Local Councils on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023, at which a presentation had been given by Roland Cundy, Chair of BALC, about its aim to improve working relationships with local councils.

#### 141.2 Earleybus

Councillor Cook reported on her attendance at the Earleybus AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Concerns remain about the impact on income following the pandemic and they are aiming to attract new users. Councillor Cook also reported on issues with the age of the bus and recent required maintenance, as well as the driver qualifications required to drive it. Earleybus are in the process of developing new policies and procedures.

#### 141.3 Earley Charity

Councillor Maher reported on his attendance at an Earley Charity meeting and on the various grants which have been awarded by the charity.

#### 141.4 Readibus

Councillor M Smith reported on his attendance at a Readibus meeting, detailing the number of journeys carried out by Readibus, the number of staff and the types of vehicles they have available.

*Councillor J Eastwell left the meeting.*

### **142. ASSET REGISTER**

Councillors **RESOLVED** to bring forward Addendum Item 20 – Asset Register. Members noted that the Town Council's asset register had been updated throughout the year and any

further amendments, if required, would be made before the end of the financial year. The most significant changes in 2022/2023 had been the disposal of both Laurel Park Pavilion and the Silverdale Centre.

*Councillor J Eastwell entered the meeting.*

**143. SERVICE TO EARLEY AWARD**

Members noted that the Service to Earley Award had been presented by the Town Mayor to Bob Collis of Earley Environmental Group, at the Annual Town Electors' Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

**144. GRANTS**

Councillors received the recommendations of the Policy & Resources Committee following its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023, and following a vote on each individual application, it was **RESOLVED** that the following grants be awarded. Payments to be made in May 2023.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>
ARC	£2,000
Berkshire MS Therapy Centre	£800
Berkshire Vision	£360
Chemogiftbags	£500
Cianna's Smile	£500
Citizens Advice (Reading)	£500
Citizens Advice (Wokingham)	£2500
Cruse Bereavement Support – Thames Valley Berkshire	£500
Earleybus	£750
Earley Day Centre	£400
Earley District Guides	£1,000
Earley Environmental Group	£300
EASI	£300
First Days Children's Charity	£1,500
Home-Start Wokingham District	£600
Keep Mobile	£900
Link Visiting Scheme	£1,000
Me2Club	£500
Parenting Special Children (PSC)	£700
Readibus	£2,000
Reading Male Voice Choir	£135
Trinity Church	£500
Wokingham Volunteer Centre	£500
Wokingham Waterside Centre	£686
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£19,431</b>

Councillor Chopping thanked council officers for the revised discussion process that had been put in place and the detailed information provided to councillors on each application. This had aided discussions and councillors' considerations.

**145. LGBCE CONSULTATION – WOKINGHAM BOROUGH WARDING**

*Councillor Hare left the meeting.*

Councillors noted the recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of warding arrangements for Wokingham Borough and considered their

impacts on the town council wards within Earley. It was **RESOLVED** that a response be submitted to the consultation expressing the Council's concerns about single councillor town council wards, especially at times of illness. In order to avert the creation of single councillor wards, two suggestions will be made: Redhatch ward be joined with Maiden Erlegh ward, creating a 3 councillor ward; and Egremont ward be joined with Radstock ward, making a 5 councillor ward (or this area could be split more evenly into a 2 councillor ward and a 3 councillor ward).

*Councillor Hare entered the meeting.*

## **146. UPDATES**

Councillors received the following updates from the Town Clerk: -

### **146.1 Silverdale Centre**

Councillors noted that Maiden Erlegh Trust has now taken back possession of the Silverdale Centre, ETC handed back the keys on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The building will now be removed from the Town Council's asset register and insurance policy.

### **146.2 Centrepoint Community Centre**

Councillors noted that negotiations are still ongoing with Wokingham Borough Council in relation to acceptable terms for a new lease. The Town Clerk is currently organising a meeting between representatives of ETC and WBC, which is unlikely to take place until at least 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

### **146.3 Transfer of Sibley**

Councillors noted that the terms of transfer have been agreed and ETC's solicitor has been communicating with Persimmon's solicitor to finalise the asset transfer. ETC's solicitor has reported that there is no reason for the current delay and is making every effort to complete the transfer. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Town Clerk would contact Marcia Head, Head of Development Management, Place and Growth at Wokingham Borough Council to request the assistance of WBC, as the local planning authority, in pursuing the matter with Persimmon.

### **146.4 Mays Lane Cemetery Extension**

Councillors noted that, following delays outside the Town Council's control, the specialist ground surveys to determine which areas of land will be suitable for burial have been completed, the Town Clerk is now awaiting the reports. Councillors were also pleased to note the resurfacing work carried out on the exit road. The Town Clerk gave an update on WBC's proposed footbridge works at the rear of the cemetery, and informed the meeting that borough council contractors would be accessing the site on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 in order to dig trial pits.

## **147. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE**

### **147.1 Record of Members' Attendance**

Members noted the details of Councillors' attendance, both remote and face to face, during 2022/23 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

Councillor Hare reported to the Council that Councillor Jones had requested that his absence from this meeting and from the remaining meetings in this municipal year 2022/2023, be granted approval, he gave the reason for this request.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council approves Councillor Jones' absence from this evening's meeting and from any further meetings this municipal year.

**148. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

Councillors noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 5635 – 5636, 5637 – 5673, 5674 - 5701 and 5702 - 5706 and Imprest vouchers 773 - 780).

**149. PUBLICATIONS**

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

Hardship Alliance Action Group	E-newsletter 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
ACER	E-newsletter Spring 2023
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2023

**150. PRESS RELEASES**

No press releases were requested at this time. Councillors suggested that, after the election has taken place, the grant awards could be the subject of a press release.

**151. 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**

**152. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**153. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**154. ADVISOR TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**155. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.12pm

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**Town Mayor**