



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Earley of Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 17th May 2023 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

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

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and Y Crocker (Committees Officer) and one member of the public.

1. ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR

1.1 The outgoing Town Mayor, Councillor Tahir Maher thanked councillors, the Deputy Mayor and council staff for the support he had received during his year in office. Cllr Maher offered his respects to ex-councillor David Chopping for his long-standing service and spoke about the sad passing of Cllr Richard Sangster. Cllr Maher shared his enjoyment of attending engagements during his time as Town Mayor, which included events from a wide range of communities.

1.2 The outgoing Town Mayor called for nominations for the office of Town Mayor for the municipal year 2023/24. Two nominations were proposed and seconded. Both nominations were voted on and it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr Caroline Smith be elected to the office of Town Mayor (Chair of the Council) for the municipal year 2023/24.

1.3 The newly elected Town Mayor signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Cllr Maher and assumed the position of Chair, thanking Cllr Maher for representing the Town Council so well.

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

2.1 The Town Mayor called for nominations for the office of Deputy Town Mayor for the municipal year 2023/24. There was one nomination and after being proposed and seconded it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr Melanie De Jong be elected to the office of Deputy Town Mayor for the municipal year 2023/24.

2.2 The Town Mayor presented the Deputy Town Mayor with the Chain of Office.

3. DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Town Clerk confirmed that, following the elections held on 4th May, all declarations of acceptance of office had been signed.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr A Bassett.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr R Cook declared an interest as a member of Maiden Erlegh Residents Association (MERA).

6. PUBLIC FORUM

The member of the public present at the meeting addressed the Council asking for all councillors to put aside any political differences and work together, with mutual respect and understanding, for the good of the community. Cllr D Hare confirmed that the Council would always work in the best interest of Earley and its residents, with Earley at the heart of everything it does and he hoped that all councillors would work together. Cllr P Jorgensen endorsed the response of Cllr Hare.

Cllr Khayinza entered the meeting.

The member of the public left the meeting.

7. APPOINTMENTS

7.1 Leader of the Council

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Leader of the Council, Cllr P Jorgensen asked for clarification of the role of Leader. The Town Clerk referred councillors to Standing Order – 5n;vii which sets the definition of the role of Leader of Earley Town Council, and its parameters. One nomination was received and after being proposed and seconded it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr David Hare be appointed Leader of the Council.

7.2 Deputy Leader of the Council

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Deputy Leader of the Council. There was one nomination and after being proposed and seconded it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr Tahir Maher be appointed Deputy Leader of the Council.

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting for Members of Earley Town Council (135 - 155) held on Wednesday 29th March 2023 were a true record and could be signed by the Chair.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

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

9.2 Planning Committee

Cllr G Littler presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 147 - 159) held on 4th April 2023 and the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes

160 - 172) held on 2nd May 2023. The Council received the Minutes.

9.3 Policy and Resources Committee

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

Cllr Hare updated the new members of the council on the Elizabeth Room, which is a new relaxed, informal meeting space aimed at local charity and voluntary groups. The Town Clerk invited councillors to contact the office, should they wish to see the room.

10. GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE (ENGLAND)

Members considered the recommendation of the Town Clerk that Earley Town Council re-adopts the General Power of Competence (GPC England) (Localism Act 2011, s1-8), which was introduced by Government to assist Town and Parish Councils to be innovative, cost effective and efficient. Following a discussion, it was:

RESOLVED that the General Power of Competence (GPC England) be re-adopted.

11. STANDING COMMITTEES

Members noted that in accordance with Standing Order 4(d) the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor shall be ex officio members of all Committees, this being in addition to the number of committee places fixed by Council.

The Chair proposed that the Conservative party members should have one representative on the Amenities and Leisure Committee, one representative on the Policy & Resources Committee and four representatives on the Planning Committee.

Cllr N Jorgensen responded that the Conservative group did not find this proposal acceptable and suggested they have two representatives on each of the committees. Cllr P Jorgensen made the point that having two Conservative councillors on each committee should be seen as fair representation as six Conservative town councillors were elected in May.

There followed further discussions.

Cllr N Jorgensen formally proposed that two Conservative councillors should be appointed to each of the standing committees. The proposal was seconded and the motion voted on. It was

RESOLVED that two Conservative councillors should be appointed to each of the standing committees.

The Chair agreed to a five-minute adjournment to allow the Conservative members to discuss their proposed committee representatives.

Cllrs R Ahlawat, A Bradley, T Holton, M Iyengunmwena, N Jorgensen and P Jorgensen left the meeting.

Cllrs R Ahlawat, A Bradley, T Holton, M Iyengunmwena, N Jorgensen and P Jorgensen returned to the meeting.

11.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

11.1.1 It was **RESOLVED** that there be ten seats on the Amenities and Leisure Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.1.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the members of the Amenities and Leisure Committee would be Cllrs R Ahlawat, A Bassett, A Bradley, N Brock, R Browne, R Cook, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews and B Owen.

11.1.3 It was **RESOLVED** that the Amenities and Leisure Committee appoint its own chair at the first meeting of the Committee.

11.2 Planning Committee

11.2.1 It was **RESOLVED** that there be eleven seats on the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.2.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the members of the Planning Committee would be Cllrs N Brock, R Browne, R Cook, M Iyengunmwena, S Jordan, P Jorgensen, A Neal and M Smith.

11.2.3 It was **RESOLVED** that the Planning Committee appoint its own chair at the first meeting of the Committee.

11.3 Policy & Resources Committee

11.3.1 It was **RESOLVED** that there be ten seats on the Policy & Resources Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.3.2 It was **RESOLVED** that the members of the Policy and Resources Committee would be Cllrs A Bassett, J Eastwell, D Hare, T Holton, N Jorgensen, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews and S Newton.

11.3.3 It was **RESOLVED** that the Policy and Resources Committee appoint its own chair at the first meeting of the Committee.

11.4 Staffing Sub-Committee

Councillors noted that the Staffing Sub-Committee, a sub-committee of Policy & Resources Committee, sits as and when required and deals with significant staffing matters such as annual pay awards, grievance/disciplinary procedures, staffing restructures etc. The sub-committee is supported by the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and a professional HR advisor if required. Day to day staffing matters are dealt with by the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk.

It was **RESOLVED** that the members of the Staffing Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2023/24 would be Cllrs J Eastwell, D Hare, G Littler, P Jorgensen, S Matthews and S Newton.

12. **REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BODIES**

12.1 Members reviewed the Town Council representation on other bodies and it was **RESOLVED** to appoint the following Town Council representatives for 2023/24: -

ARC (Youth counselling) (1)	<i>Cllr R Cook</i>
Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (1)	<i>Cllr A Long</i>
CResCent Community Association (1)	<i>Cllr N Brock</i>
EarleyBus Management Committee (1)	<i>Cllr R Cook</i>
Highwood Management Conference (2)	<i>Cllrs G Littler & S Matthews</i>

Kenton Road Day Centre Management Committee (1)	<i>Cllr A Bassett</i>
Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum (1)	<i>Cllr S Newton</i>
More Arts – The Cultural Partnership (1)	<i>Cllr S Matthews</i>
Neighbourhood Action Group (2)	<i>Cllrs M De Jong & T Maher</i>
Places Leisure (1)	<i>Cllr R Browne</i>
The Queen Victoria Institute Fund (1)	<i>Cllr D Hare</i>
Readibus Management Committee (1)	<i>Cllr T Maher</i>
Sonning & District Educational and Welfare Trusts (1)	<i>Cllr B Owen</i>
Trustees of Earley Charities (2) (4-yr term until May 2026)	<i>Mr R Ames & Cllr T Maher</i>
Waterside Management Committee (1)	<i>Cllr S Jordan</i>
Wokingham Borough/Parish Liaison Forum (2)	<i>Cllrs R Browne & G Littler</i>
Wokingham Borough Sports Council (1)	<i>Cllr C Smith</i>
Wokingham Job Support Centre (1)	<i>Cllr I Khayinza</i>

13. CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

Members considered the Town Clerk's report on the Civility & Respect Pledge, a national project promoted by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) as a way of a council demonstrating its commitment to treating clerks, councillors, staff, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect. Councillors voted on the eight statements that make up the pledge and it was:

RESOLVED that Earley Town Council sign up to the Civility & Respect Pledge.

Cllr P Jorgensen stated that she was not familiar with the legislation referred to in statement number 8 and, although not against the principle, abstained from voting on that particular statement.

It was noted that the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 document in the Members Handbook states: - *this Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor*, meaning that councillors have agreed to adhere to the Code of Conduct. Cllr S Matthews proposed that it would be good practice for all members to individually sign a Code of Conduct document and it was:

RESOLVED that councillors would individually sign the Code of Conduct, separately from their Declarations of Acceptance of Office.

14. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

14.1 Record of Members' Attendance

Members noted the details of Councillors' attendance during 2022/23 at meetings of the Council and its Committees. The Town Clerk reported on two corrections that had now been made,

Cllr M Smith's attendance at Policy & Resources Committee on 13th July 2022 and Cllr G Littler's attendance at Amenities & Leisure Committee on 2nd November 2022.

15. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 5707-5734; 5735-5762, 5763-5772, 5773 – 5787, 5788 - 5792 and 5793-5799) and Imprest vouchers (781-787).

16. 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 14 th April 2023
Earley NAG	E-newsletter May 2023
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter 5 th & 19 th April 2023
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 21 st April 2023
Police & Crime Commissioner TVP	April 2023 update
Me2 Club	April 2023 newsletter

17. PRESS RELEASES

Councillors requested the following press release be issued:

- Election of the new Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor, and a thank you to Cllr T Maher for his service as Town Mayor in 2022/23.

18. 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

19. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

20. COMMITTEE REPORTS

21. ACCOUNT SIGNATORIES

22. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.14pm.

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Town Mayor