



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 12th July 2023 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

Councillors: A Bassett, M De Jong, J Eastwell, T Holton, N Jorgensen, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews and C Smith

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), Y Crocker (Committee Officer), Councillor M Smith and Rebecca Brooks (WBC).

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Newton.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr T Holton declared an interest in relation to agenda item 19. Advisor to the Planning Committee.

23. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

24. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – CIL REQUEST

Rebecca Brooks, Wokingham Borough Council’s Community Transport Manager attended the meeting to provide further information on WBC’s request that Earley Town Council make a financial contribution, from CIL monies, towards local bus services. Ms Brooks explained that the cost of providing the same level of services had increased significantly and therefore the borough was looking at new funding models, including the use of its S106 monies.

Councillors asked a range of questions and learnt that the sum being requested from towns and parishes was in relation to that parish’s total CIL receipts and to the mileage covered by the local bus services within their parish. The request to Earley Town Council is for a contribution from CIL of £1,293.21 per year for a 3 year period with effect from September 2023. Councillors thanked Ms Brooks for attending.

It was **RESOLVED** that a recommendation in favour of this request be put to full Council for approval at its meeting on 26th July 2023.

Rebecca Brooks left the meeting.

25. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 7th June 2023 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair (Minutes 1-20).



26. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for April and May 2023 had been made available to the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee for information.

27. INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members received a recommendation from the Town Clerk /RFO that Claire Connell be reappointed as the Town Council's internal auditor for 2023/24. Ms Connell's qualifications and experience were noted. Cllr T Maher suggested that consideration be given to changing the internal auditor in two to three years' time in order to bring in a fresh perspective.

It was **RESOLVED** that Claire Connell be reappointed as the Town Council's internal auditor for 2023/24.

28. FINANCE

28.1 Financial update

A financial update was given by the Town Clerk for the financial year up to 5th July 2023.

28.2 HMRC changes

Members discussed the report on recent HMRC changes to VAT treatment of local authority sports and leisure activities, these are no longer treated as a business activity and therefore VAT is no longer applicable. Members discussed the implications of this change to the rules and it was

RESOLVED that, with effect from 1st April 2023, hire charges for sports pitches and facilities would be at the previously agreed net amount for 2023/24 (rounded up), thereby resulting in a reduction in charges for hirers.

A discussion took place regarding any VAT amounts relating to the hiring of sports pitches and facilities subsequently reclaimed from HMRC following this rule change. It was **RESOLVED** that the funds would be ring-fenced by the Town Council for expenditure on the pitches and pavilion at Sol Joel Park.

29. TOWN PLAN

29.1 Town Plan Working Party

Members discussed the need for a working party to be set up to carry out a review of the Town Plan. They were keen for all the Council's standing committees to be represented on such a group.

The following was **RESOLVED** by the Members of the Policy & Resources committee:

- The Town Plan working party to comprise of six members.
- Those members to be Cllrs T Holton, C Smith, T Maher, S Newton, S Matthews and M Smith.



- All draft revisions of the Town Plan will be sent by the working party to the Town Clerk who will forward them to all town councillors for comments, these comments to be submitted to the working group.
- The working party to provide an update on their work to the Policy & Resources committee in a few months' time.
- The final version of the revised Town Plan to be submitted to Council for adoption.

30. SIBLY - TRANSFER

The Town Clerk confirmed that the transfer of land, assets and associated S106 funds to Earley Town Council from Persimmon had now taken place. It was agreed that all town councillors would be informed via email as soon as possible before the news was posted on ETC's social media.

31. CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Town Clerk confirmed that there had been no update or response from Wokingham Borough Council following the meeting on 27th April 2023. Councillors were disappointed to hear this as they had felt the meeting had been reasonably positive.

Cllr G Littler proposed a follow up communication to WBC stating what terms ETC would be prepared to accept in order to secure the future of Centrepoint Community Centre. These to include a seven year lease; peppercorn rent; 12 month landlord's break clause; 'lift and shift' clause, ie if notice served then WBC must offer suitable alternative venue to ETC; and an arbitration clause. It was agreed that this communication would show that the Town Council is still pursuing the matter of a lease on Centrepoint in order that it can deliver community services such as youth services.

32. SOCIAL MEDIA

Members noted that the Earley Town Council Facebook page was now active and the number of followers is increasing.

33. BOUNDARY REVIEW - WOKINGHAM

33.1 Members noted the final recommendations from the Boundary Commission for England's review of Wokingham borough which have now been published.

33.2 Members noted that the Boundary review's recommendations include changes to Earley Town Council's parish wards. The Council will continue to have 25 Town Councillors but these will be allocated to seven wards rather than the current eight wards.

34. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment made since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 5893 – 5900, 5901 – 5918, 5919 - 5950) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 828 – 832).

35. PUBLICATIONS

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



Hardship Alliance Action Group	E-newsletter June 2023
ME2 Club	E-Newsletter June 2023
Involve Community Services	E-Newsletter 24 th June 2023
NAG	Agenda – 10 th July 2023

36. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

It was requested that the new boundary map for the Earley Town Council wards be the subject of a press release.

37. 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

38. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

39. ADVISOR TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

40. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.41pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee