



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 27th September 2023 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

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

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), Emma Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk)

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J Eastwell, T Mahir and S Newton.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

44. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 12th July 2023 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair (Minutes 21 - 40).

45. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

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

46. ANNUAL AUDIT

Members noted that the audit process for 2022-23 had been completed resulting in Earley Town Council achieving a clean external audit report. The appropriate documentation has been posted on the Town Council's website in accordance with the legislation. The Chair thanked those Officers involved.

47. INSURANCE RENEWAL

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulation 15.1, the Town Clerk had renewed the Council's insurance policies, with effect from 1st September 2023. The Town Clerk reported that she and the insurance broker reviewed the policy in depth and had removed Silverdale Centre and Laurel Park pavilion from the policy and had added the public spaces at Sibly. The Town Clerk also reported that there had been a general increase in premiums nationwide and that the Town Council's premium had increased by £500 per annum.

Cllr Matthews entered the meeting.



48. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Members received an update on the Town Council’s CIL funds. The Town Clerk reported on spend to date and on funds with a spending deadline of 24th April 2024. The Town Clerk highlighted that some CIL funds had been allocated to WBC’s Flood Relief Project but that no information had been received from WBC about the project. Following clarification from the Town Clerk that CIL funds can be spent on a wide range of projects benefitting the local community, Members recommended that all Committees need to consider possible projects to be put forward for CIL funding.

49. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS

49.1 Councillors received an update on the Town Council’s Grants budget 2023/2024, spend to date and considered the suggestion of advertising that some grant monies are still available. Councillors noted that only a small percentage of applications had been received for environmental projects or work during the 2023/2024 application process. Councillors also discussed reviewing the current Grants Policy and application process. It was: -

RESOLVED that it would be publicised that grant monies are still available in 2022/23 for local organisations/groups to apply for.

It was also **RESOLVED** that all Councillors would be invited to form a Grants Working Party, with a maximum of five members, to review the current Grants Policy and application process and submit their recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee.

49.2 Councillors considered two grant applications which had been received mid-cycle of the application process and it was: -

RESOLVED that Kenton Road Earley Day Centre would receive £1,000 towards toilet refurbishments to enable them to provide facilities for the disabled.

RESOLVED that Lower Earley Salvation Army would receive £2,000 towards their community garden, to develop an area for a kitchen garden to grow fruit and vegetables.

50. TOWN PLAN

Councillors noted that the Town Plan working group had held an initial meeting. Councillor C Smith reported that the group are in the process of arranging another meeting to draft the Terms of Reference of the working group, which would be provided to a future meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee for approval.

51. SIBLY – COLLINS DRIVE

The Committee received a report on the progress made on the Town Council’s management of the site, which had recently been acquired. The Town Clerk reported that some general maintenance work had been carried out and that officers had met with playground providers on site and were working on a plan to replace the current playground equipment which was in a very dilapidated state.

The general feedback from residents on ETC’s maintenance of the site has been very positive and officers will now assess the site to develop a long-term management plan in order that a maintenance budget can be established for different areas of the site, such as the ancient woodland, play-area, stream, and other general areas.



Councillor N Jorgensen proposed that the remaining CIL monies with a spending deadline of 24th April 2024, be allocated to new play equipment planned for the site and it was: -

RESOLVED that this proposal be put forward to Full Council at its meeting on 11th October 2023.

52. BUS SHELTER ADVERTISING

Councillors considered an offer made by Wokingham Borough Council for parish and town councils to be included in its tender for bus shelter advertising. Councillors raised general concerns that ETC would have no say in the locations of where the advertising bus shelters would be placed and that advertising could have a detrimental visual impact on the local area. A motion was put forward that that the Town Council decline the offer to be included in the tender. It was: -

RESOLVED that ETC would decline the offer of being included in WBC's tender for bus shelter advertising. The vote on the motion was - five councillors in favour, three against and one abstention.

53 WBC LITTER & GRASS CUTTING CONSULTATION AND PROPOSAL

53.1 Members noted that the Town Clerk had submitted the Town Council's comments, as directed by the Amenities and Leisure Committee, to WBC's consultation on proposed reductions to litter bin emptying, grass cutting, street cleansing, etc.

53.2 Members received a written report on WBC's proposal that parish and town councils fund the emptying of the litter bins identified for removal. The report detailed discussions held at a meeting on 7th September 2023, between town and parish clerks and Richard Bissett, WBC Lead Specialist, Place Clienting.

Members considered the report and raised concerns about the accuracy of WBC's asset map which had been used to identify the location of bins as part of the consultation and the fact that it was WBC's sub-contractor who had identified the bins suitable for removal. They noted that Earley appeared to have a disproportionate number of litter bins nominated for removal compared to other towns and parishes, approximately 24% of the 150 bins identified were in Earley. Concerns were raised over WBC's contract costs for emptying each individual bin, Members were of the view that these were excessive. Members felt that litter bins in local areas were important and agreed that WBC should be looking at other ways to cut costs to ensure that funding remains available for essential services, such as the provision and emptying of litter bins. It was unanimously

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee to Full Council at its meeting on 11th October 2023, be that Earley Town Council decline WBC's request to fund the emptying of the WBC litter bins identified for removal.

54. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment made since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 5977 – 6002, 6003 – 6035, 6036 – 6059, 6060, 6061 – 6067, 6068 – 6085, 6086 – 6088, 6089 – 6104 & 6105 – 6121)) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 846 – 863 & 74 – 76).

55. PUBLICATIONS

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



Connecting Communities in Berkshire	E-newsletter September 2023
NAG	Agenda and E – Newsletter 4 th September 2023

56. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

It was agreed that the remaining grant funds should be advertised.

57. 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

58. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

59. CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

60. STAFFING COMMITTEE

61. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.29pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee