



## **EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 which commenced at 7.00pm.

### **Present**

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor C Smith

Councillors: R Ahlawat, A Bassett, A Bradley, N Brock, R Browne, R Cook, J Eastwell, M De Jong, D Hare, 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) and E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk).

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### **81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Jorgensen.

### **82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **83. PUBLIC FORUM**

No members of the public were present.

### **84. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council (Minutes 62 – 80) held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

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

85.1 Councillors received a written report from the Town Mayor detailing the events she had recently attended. These included the Volunteer Bureau AGM, Berkshire Judicial Service, Woodley & Earley Lions Charter Night Dinner & Dance, Rainbows visit to Council Chamber, Earley Crescent Community Association AGM and the Remembrance Service at Earley St Peter's Church.

85.2 Councillors noted that the Mayor's Reception would be held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024, time to be confirmed. The event will include a presentation to the winners of the Allotment Competition.

*Councillor Neal entered the meeting.*

### **86. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

86.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Councillor Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 57 - 74) held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023. The Council received the draft Minutes.

86.2 Planning Committee

Councillor M Smith presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 60 - 73) held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023. The Council received the Minutes.

Councillor M Smith presented the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 74 - 90) held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Councillor Smith suggested that councillors wishing to comment on the Reading Transport Strategy consultation should contact the working group.

86.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 62 - 79) held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The Council received the draft Minutes.

**87. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

87.1 Crescent Resource Centre

Councillors received a written report from Councillor Brock on her attendance at the Crescent Resource Centre AGM held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

87.2 ARC

Councillors received a written report from Councillor Cook on her attendance at the ARC Management Meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

87.3 Sonning & District Welfare & Education Trust

Councillors received a written report from Councillor Owen on her attendance at the Sonning & District Welfare & Education Trust Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

87.4 The Link Visiting Scheme

Councillors received a verbal report from Councillor De Jong on her attendance as Deputy Town Mayor to the Link Visiting Scheme to celebrate their 25 years in operation. Councillor De Jong encouraged members to become a volunteer for Link, as she has now done.

87.5 Wokingham Waterside Centre

Councillors received a verbal report from Councillor Jordan on her attendance at the Wokingham Waterside Centre Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023. The centre had reported that income for April to September 2023 was significantly less than the previous year and that quotes were being sought for replacement dragon boats. The centre is experiencing issues with 'car meets' in the park and ride car park, which are being reported to Wokingham Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

**88. BUDGET 2024/2025**

Members noted that all Committees had been asked for ideas/projects to be put forward to the Budget Working Party for consideration for 2024/2025 financial year.

Members added further suggestions for consideration: -

- Pull down projector screens at the Community Centres.
- Solar lighting along dark paths.
- More replacement Bus Shelters
- Tree planting
- Solar panels at Maiden Place Community Centre

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that ETC could only instal lighting on its own land and that any impacts on wildlife would need to be addressed before consideration could be given to installing any lights at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve. The Town Clerk reported that over 150 trees had recently been planted on ETC land and that the Coronation Oak Tree was due to be planted at the end of the year.

#### **89. REMOTE MEETINGS**

Members noted that the government has refused to pass legislation permitting town and parish councils to hold remote meetings. Despite amendments being submitted by the House of Lords which would have enabled town and parish councils to hold some meetings remotely, the House of Commons rejected the submissions. All Council and committee meetings must continue to be held in person.

#### **90. CEMETERY EXTENSION - UPDATE**

Members received a written update on the cemetery extension project and were provided with a plan showing the layout and number of proposed plots per section. Councillors thanked the Town Clerk and the working party for their work. A question was asked about consultation with the Muslim community about the plans, councillors were reminded that Cllr Maher was a member of the working party and was in regular communication with the Mosque.

A councillor queried whether all the extension land was consecrated land. The Town Clerk confirmed that the whole area had been consecrated some years ago, hence the request officers had submitted to the Diocese requesting that an area of the extension land have the legal effects of consecration removed in order that it may be used for Muslim burials. Officers confirmed they were in regular communication with the Diocese to try to move the project on as quickly as possible.

#### **91. GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS**

Councillors considered the recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee on amending ETC's grant application process. It was: -

**RESOLVED** that the frequency of application intake be increased to three times a year: June, November and March. This provides more flexibility and will result in a controlled rolling intake throughout the year, fitting in with the Policy & Resources Committee's meetings schedule. It will also enable payment awards to be made within the financial year.

**RESOLVED** that the new process will start in June 2024. ETC will promote the fact that there are still grant funds available for financial year 2023/2024.

**RESOLVED** that application forms be updated as an administrative action by an ETC Officer.

**RESOLVED** that the Grants policy be updated as an administrative action by an ETC Officer and presented for approval at the next Policy & Resources Committee meeting in January 2024. Adoption of the new policy will take place at the Full Council meeting on 7th February 2024.

**92. SOLAR PANELS**

Members noted that the solar panels at Radstock House, the Council offices, had been installed on 21st November 2023.

**93. BUS SHELTER ADVERTISING**

Councillors noted that Wokingham Borough Council had been informed that the Town Council now wished to be included in its tender for bus shelter advertising. This was on the proviso that ETC could refuse proposal sites if it deemed them inappropriate. Councillor Bassett expressed her dissatisfaction with the decision and her hope that any proposals put forward are not accepted by ETC.

**94. CAROLS AT THE LAKE**

Councillors noted that the Lantern Making & Carols at the Lake event will be held on Saturday 16th December and were provided with details of the event. Both EEG and ETC had agreed to keep any promotion of the event low key in order to prevent the carol event becoming too large. Councillor Basset confirmed that she and some members of her choir will attend to help with the singing.

**95. FOODBANK COLLECTION POINT**

Members noted that officers are promoting the Reverse Advent Calendar scheme at its Foodbank collection point in the Council's Helpshop, Radstock Lane. Councillors were advised that the Wokingham Borough Mayor also would accept financial donations if people were finding it difficult to purchase all the food items.

**96. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE**

Record of Members' Attendance

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

**97. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

Members noted the details of Orders for Payment (Imprest vouchers 877 – 887).

**98. PUBLICATIONS**

It was noted that no publications had been received since the last meeting.

**99. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA**

The following press releases and posts were agreed:

- Installation of the new bus shelters.
- Installation of the solar panels at the Council offices.
- Tree planting undertaken, including the Coronation Oak when it is planted.
- Change to the Councils' Grant application process and the fact that 2023/24 funds were still available.

**100. 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**

**101. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**102. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**103. CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**104. STAFFING**

**105. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 7.56pm

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**Town Mayor**