



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, **Wednesday 8th November 2023** which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

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

In attendance: Emma Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk), Max Brown (Operations Manager) and a member of public.

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M De Jong and S Newton.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Matthews declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 - Town Council Grants, owing to her involvement with Friends of Bulmershe Open Space.

Councillor Bassett declared an interest in the same agenda item in relation to her husband's involvement with Earley Adopt a Street Initiative.

64. PUBLIC FORUM

A member of the public was in attendance to hear Agenda Item 8 – Town Council Grants in relation to the Friends of Bulmershe Open Space application but did not have anything they wished to raise with the committee.

65. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 27th September 2023 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair. (Minutes 41 – 61).

66. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for August and September 2023 have been made available to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee for information.

67. FINANCE

67.1 Councillors noted that the Finance Officer has reported that there are currently no bad debts.

67.2 Finance Update

Members received a financial update on income and expenditure. Councillor Maher questioned the current spend on electricity at Maiden Place Community Centre, the Deputy Town Clerk explained that this was due to high energy prices and that ETC would be on a lower rate as of

1st October 2023. Members agreed that monies could be transferred if this particular expenditure budget was going to be exceeded.

Councillor Jorgensen asked about the budget for Sol Joel Park improvements and was advised by the Deputy Town Clerk that this covered the possible installation of an artificial cricket wicket. The Operations Manager confirmed that he had started to meet providers and was currently looking into the Town Council's options. Councillor Jorgensen also questioned the low sports pitch income, the Deputy Town Clerk explained that there had been the loss of a regular booking which had impacted the income.

The Deputy Town Clerk noted that Sibly would have a more detailed expenditure breakdown for the next financial year. She also pointed out that the current spend for bus shelters and noticeboards was showing as low because invoices for products ordered had not yet been received. Councillor Matthews asked if a further report could be provided to Councillors, once payments had been made.

67.3 Subscription

Members considered a request from the Town Clerk that ETC subscribe to Canva-Pro which would assist officers with the production of Town Council communications.

It was **RESOLVED** that ETC would subscribe to Canva-Pro at an annual cost of £99.99.

68. **2024/25 BUDGET – IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

68.1 Members discussed ideas or projects to put forward for the budget setting process for action in the 2024/25 financial year. Members suggested updating the Earley Town Guide, which could feature more up-to date information. The Chair was mindful that this project would be quite time consuming for officers and that there were other large projects already underway.

68.2 CIL Expenditure

Councillors discussed ideas which may be suitable for the current unallocated £17,000 CIL funds to spent in 2025/2026. It was suggested that new play equipment or history information boards could be installed at Sol Joel Park to coincide with the upcoming centenary of the park.

69. **TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS**

69.1 Members noted that a thank you email had been received from Lower Earley Salvation Army for the grant awarded towards their community garden. These funds will help develop an area for a kitchen garden where fruit and vegetables will be grown.

69.2 Applications

Councillors considered three grant applications, one of which had been received after the agenda had been issued, following the Town Council's advertisement that 2023/24 grant monies were still available.

It was:

69.2.1 **RESOLVED** that Earley Adopt a Street Initiative would receive £75 towards a new waterproof banner to enable them to increase their profile in the community and aid in recruitment at the Green Fair.

69.2.2 **RESOLVED** that Friends of Bulmershe Open Space would receive £492 towards the cost of surfacing materials to improve the quality of the permissive path between Bulmershe Park and Bulmershe Field.

The member of the public left the meeting.

- 69.2.3 **RESOLVED** that Earley Environmental Group would receive £400 towards the cost of printing three 2024 additions of their newsletter for members who prefer printed copies and for use at events throughout the year.

69.3 **Grants Working Party**

The Committee received a report and recommendations from the Grants Working Party on proposed changes to the current Grants application process, which would see an increase in the number of application intake periods. Members discussed the recommendations and agreed that the section on 'Priority' be removed. The remaining recommendations from the Grants Working Party to be presented to Full Council at its next meeting, with a Committee recommendation that they be adopted.

70. **TOWN PLAN**

Members considered the draft Terms of Reference from the Town Plan Working Group. It was:

RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference be adopted subject to the following amendments:

- Target for completion of the Town Plan – 2024/25
- Working group to work collaboratively with ETC officers
- Removal of the sentence beginning “This will be done on a regular basis.....”.
- Corrections be made to the numbering on the ToR document

71. **BUS SHELTER ADVERTISING**

As requested by Full Council, councillors reconsidered the offer by Wokingham Borough Council for Earley Town Council to be included in its tender for bus shelter advertising. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that WBC had confirmed that the supplier would need to submit any proposals to WBC's Planning department and also that there is no guarantee that new sites would be identified.

It was **RESOLVED** that ETC be included in the tender on the condition that the Town Council can refuse proposal sites should it not agree with them.

72. **WBC CONSULTATION – POLLING STATIONS**

Members noted that Wokingham Borough Council is currently consulting on proposed changes to polling stations following the recent electoral boundary review. Members acknowledged the consultation and agreed that no response to the consultation was required.

73. **ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 6200 - 6225, 6226 – 6244, 6245 – 6256 and 6257 - 6276 and Imprest Account (Vouchers 868 – 876).

74. **PUBLICATIONS**

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

Wokingham Volunteer Centre	E-newsletter 18 th October 2023
TVP	Police & Crime e-bulletin 25 th October 2023

MEIRA	Minutes of meeting 12 th October 2023
NAG	Agenda 13 th November 2023

75. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

No press releases were requested.

76. 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

77. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

78. STAFFING – UPDATE

79. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.17pm.