



AMENITIES & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities & Leisure Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley on Wednesday 17th January 2024 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor N Brock

Councillors: R Ahlawat, A Bassett, A Bradley, R Browne, A Long, S Matthews, B Owen and C Smith.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), M Brown (Operations Manager), G Hawker (Senior Park Ranger).

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Cook, M De Jong and T Maher.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

77. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

78. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2023 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** they be signed by the Chair (Minutes 57–74).

79. ANNUAL FEES & CHARGES REVIEW – 2024/25

Members considered all the information available to them before agreeing on recommendations to go to Full Council, these to take effect 1st April 2024. The information provided included current ETC charges and comparisons with other local service providers:

79.1 Mays Lane Cemetery

Councillors **RECOMMEND** that there is no increase to fees for 2024/25, except the following:

- Transfer of EROB – increase from £62 to £100 (across all residencies)
- 10 year extension to EROB – increase from £40 to £100 (across all residencies)

79.2 Culver Lane Allotments

Councillors **RECOMMEND** that the fee for raised beds is increased by 50p (to £14), and fees for other plots are increased by £1 (to £35/£42/£53/£62 depending on plot size). The fee for membership of the Horticultural Society to increase by £1 (to £38). All changes to take effect from 1st January 2025.

79.3 Hall Hire

Members noted that income from hall hire was approximately 80% of pre-Covid levels and there was some availability at the centres. Councillors agreed to **RECOMMEND** that hall hire fees remain unchanged for 2024/25.

Members also **RECOMMEND** that a 'party' rate of £22 per hour be introduced to bring ETC more in line with other providers.

79.4 Fishing Permits

Councillors noted the changes to HMRC VAT rules in relation to fishing permits. They agreed to **RECOMMEND** that permit prices remain unchanged for 2024/25.

79.5 Sports Pitch Hire

Councillors noted that maintenance costs of sports pitches, especially cricket, are significant and that, compared to other grounds, ETC's cricket pitch hire fees are on the lower end of the scale. The Committee agreed to **RECOMMEND** that football pitch fees would remain unchanged but that cricket pitch fees would be increased by 20% (to the nearest 50p).

80. DOG WASTE BAGS

Councillors agreed to **RECOMMEND** that dog waste bags continue to be sold from the Helpshop at £1 per pack of 50 (at cost) and that a budget for the purchase of the bags remain at £1,000 for 2024/25.

81. MAIDEN ERLEGH LAKE AND NATURE RESERVE

81.1 Carols at the Lake

Members expressed their thanks to everyone involved in the organisation and running of the Carols at the Lake event held on 16th December 2023. The event was considered to have been a success, with a good turnout on the day and positive feedback received from attendees.

81.2 Supervising Engineer - Lake

Members noted that ETC's appointed Supervising Engineer is retiring this quarter after many years' service. The Deputy Town Clerk is corresponding with those on the list of approved Supervising Engineers and will appoint a replacement.

82. CULVER LANE ALLOTMENTS

Councillors noted that the awards for the annual Allotments Competition were presented at the Mayor's Reception on 4th January 2024.

83. BENCH REQUEST

Members considered a request for a bench and a memorial tree to be installed at Sol Joel Park and officers provided a map indicating suitable locations. Councillors agreed that both the bench and tree could be installed, officers to obtain the appropriate goods and invoice the resident. Installation will be carried out by ETC staff.

84. BERKSHIRE’S LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

Members recieved an update on Berkshire’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy from the Senior Park Ranger. The RBWM lead is planning an engagement session in Earley, incorporating a presentation on the proposed Earley Green Corridors.

85. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal report on matters relating to assets and facilities. This included:

- Flooding issues at Mays Lane Cemetery following a period of torrential downpours.
- The arrival and planting of the Coronation Tree at Paddick Drive open space.
- Tree work carried out on the Lebanese Cedars at Sol Joel Park.
- The damage and subsequent removal of the recently installed bus shelter on Church Road.
- An update on the delayed installation of the bus shelter on Chalfont Way.
- Floor refurbishment works at Maiden Place Community Centre to take place during the Easter holidays.

86. CEMETERY EXTENSION - UPDATE

Members noted that ETC is still awaiting agreement from the diocese that the legal effects of consecration can be lifted on a section of the cemetery extension land in order that an additional Muslim burial area can be created. Additional information had been requested and the matter was now with the Archdeacon.

87. DEFIBRILLATORS

Members noted that defibrillators have been ordered for Maiden Place Community Centre and Sol Joel Park Pavilion. Installation dates to be confirmed.

88. PUBLICATIONS

The Committee noted that the following items had been received and were available for viewing from the Council Offices:

Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter 13 th December 2023
MERA	Minutes of Executive Committee meeting – 9 th November 2023 and 14 th December 2023.
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 18 th December 2023

89. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

It was agreed that a social media release be issued, promoting any current availability at the community centre halls.

90. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.53pm.