5. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

Berkshire Vision AGM

The afternoon of 2nd October I was at Wokingham Cricket Club for the Berkshire Vision AGM. It is always a pleasure meeting not just the Trustees of the charity but the residents of Berkshire who use their services every day. I really enjoy hearing firsthand the great job they are doing to improve the lives of residents with sight problems which, in this world we live in today, is difficult to cope with even for sighted people.

One of the clients, Chris Owen (AKA 'Blind Man with Backpack') did the Pembrokeshire walk to raise money for the charity and was a guest speaker talking about his experience. It was fascinating and I must admit I would not do such a long walk. I was sat at the same table as Chris and whilst making the acquaintance of his quite young dog, we talked about daily life of being a father and both working and traveling by train to get to work and the difficulties to be overcome. We mostly talked about public transport particularly traveling by train and how important a manned station is to him (he travels from Tilehurst Station). He made a point that the staff there have got to know him, and it is an important part of his day to meet with nice friendly and helpful staff and I am sure he not alone in this.

High Sheriff Reception

This was held in the garden of High Sheriff's own property in Binfield on Wednesday 6th September and the weather did not disappoint - the evening was lovely with a fabulous sunset. The evening's highlight was a display by a police dog searching in the large and beautiful garden for drugs and weapons (hidden earlier). These were found very quickly by Luna a lovely dog and to make everyone's' hearts melt even further, they bought in an Alsatian puppy who was just about to start his training.

The evening had many dignities from around Berkshire including many Mayors. The High Sheriff gave a speech, and the time went very quickly because it was so enjoyable,

His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire Awards 2023

The evening was a ceremony to recognise the achievements of some of the Services' reservists from our armed forces along with the relevant cadet forces. This was held on Thursday 28th September at Sandhurst Military Academy in the Indian Room which is stunning. The evening started with the Lord Lieutenant presenting British Empire Medals to Ms. Victoria Robertson BEM for services to victim of domestic abuse in Wokingham and founder of Kaleidoscopic. Her citation was amazing as it describes just how much Victoria does for her community. The award was an extremely well-deserved honour. The other medal went to Mr. Clive Waterman BEM for services to music and he was integral part of WASMA. Having been to a couple of the WASMA events he organised, directed and conducted, he did a great job and another well-deserved award.

This then led onto awards to the various adult volunteers assisting the cadet force - eight awards in all from reservist to civilian and an important award to the reservist Corporal Joshua Southwell of the 73 Military Intelligence Company. This was His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant's Meritorious Service award. Corporal Southwell gave a talk on his experience which for a very young man was long and read like something from a novel by John le Carre. But he did make the point that, as a reservist it

had helped in his civilian life gaining valuable experience to help with his career. After graduating from university, he was working in a call centre but now works for the National Crime Agency.

Along with the awards, was the announcements of His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant Cadets 2023 to 2024 - the four named cadets, one each from the 4 areas of cadets (combined, sea cadets, armed forces and air training), will accompany the Lord-Lieutenants at his various functions. The present Lord Lieutenant, Mr Puxley, is retiring soon after 13 years of service. Leading Cadet Daisy Ashley, one of the chosen four from last year gave a speech about her life in the cadets and she was also part of the Kings Coronation and said what a great day it was that she will never forget.

This was followed a meal and then home.

Cllr Caroline Smith

Earley Town Mayor

7.1 Representatives on Other Bodies

Wokingham Waterside Centre (WWC) Meeting on 8 August 2023

Report by Sheila Jordan

Having been appointed as Earley Town Council Liasion, I was given a tour of the Centre and became a Trustee/Director. Andy Croy was also newly appointed on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council.

A Board meeting was held at the Wokingam Waterside Centre on Tuesday 8 August. The Centre Manager reported that they had had a very successful quarter of bookings, with income and profits improved from the previous year.

The Earley Town Council grant enabled a number of young people to engage with the after school clubs. Additional needs sessions continued year-round. John Willis, Power2Inspire, paddled from Cricklade to Eton raising disability awareness, and the WWC supported him with equipment storage. Both ITV and BBC visited the site to speak to him about his journey.

Whilst there is an industry wide shortage of qualified experienced staff members, the WWC has a strong youth leader base who are being trained and devopled in house to progress into instructor postions.

Summer holdiay activities (just started at the time of the meeting) had been well received with more customers choosing a full week of activities than in previous years.

One problem for the Centre is the anti social car meets at the Park and Ride car park, just by the centre. Some groups, including Scouts, had returned to camping behind the Centre after covid, but say they will not camp there again as they are concerned about the noise and saftey issues. Various residents (including some from Reading across the river) have complained about the noise from the car park and the car racing along the road outside the Centre. The Anti Social Behaviour Team in WBC, and the police, must be given dates and precise times to facilitate viewing of CCTV footage.

Cllr Sheila Jordan Earley Town Council

7.2 Representatives on Other Bodies

Report re. the Annual Highwood Management Conference

The Conference, held on 17 August, was attended by representatives of Woodley Town Council and Earley Town Council (Councillors Geoff Littler and Sheena Matthews), and by Stephen Bartlam, WBC Countryside Ranger.

As last year, the Conference was preceded by a site visit of Highwood and Southlake during which Stephen Bartlam pointed out various aspects of the work that had been undertaken in the previous twelve months (and which would be referred to in his Report to the Conference later) – such as making safe dangerous trees, dealing with ash die-back, ditch clearance, footpath improvements, litter picking, and removing fly tipped garden waste.

At the Conference, Stephen Bartlam presented and expanded upon his Report. Of particular significance is the work – that is close to finalisation – on the design of Information Boards that will be installed in coming months at a number of sites around Highwood, that will provide details of the flora and fauna that are to be found in the woods. The Conference recommended, and Mr Bartlam agreed, that when finalised, copies of Information Boards be circulated to local schools.

The ETC representatives asked whether any action had been taken on the suggestion raised last year, that a directional sign be installed in Church Road – pointing towards Highwood, as there may be many residents in Earley that are unaware that access can be obtained to the woods from Church Road. Mr Bartlam responded that that hadn't been pursued, but that he would now take it up with WBC's highway service.

Although termed 'Highwood Management Conference', the ambit of the Conference (and the site visit) has now expanded to cover the work done by the Ranger Service at Southlake.

7.3 Representatives on Other Bodies

Borough Parish Liaison Forum

On 26th July 2023 I attended a meeting of the Borough Parish Liaison Forum, representing Earley Town Council amongst representatives from Woodley, Wokingham Town, Arborfield, Twyford, Sonning and other local councils.

We agreed for Cllr Mike Smith (WBC) to chair the meeting, with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) being represented by Cllr Stephen Conway and several council officers.

The first discussion was about waste management and highlighted the concerns around bins. Cllr Conway assured all present that what had already happened was a mistake; a consultation is due to take place in Aug/ Sept and our respective Councils were all encouraged to 'get the word out'.

We had presentations by WBC's Highways teams, with positive feedback on issues such as potholes and speeding. WBC has had fewer reports of potholes than this time last year (a positive metric as Spring is when potholes are mostly likely to develop). The team wanted to stress that the app Fix My Street was not an ideal way to report potholes, and every effort should be made to use Wokingham Borough Council's own website.

Local residents are also being encouraged to sign up for the SpeedWatch scheme, where they can undergo some online training and volunteer to use speed capturing machines to help keep our roads safe. Cllr Andrew Mickleburgh (WBC) has more information on this if anyone is interested.

Lastly, Cllr Stephen Conway and officers have asked for input into the Community Vision programme. This is a scheme to bring together community stakeholders to better inform and understand future policy. I am in the process of trying to get more information for this.

These Borough Parish Liaison Forums are hoping to meet quarterly in the future.

Cllr Ryan Browne

Earley Town Council

7.4 Representatives on Other Bodies

Councillor report

Meeting with MoreArts Trustees 23 August 2023

Background

MoreArts 'more arts.' - promoting More Arts for Wokingham is the working name of The Cultural Partnership, a registered charity whose object is to build community through creativity. Its 6 trustees work with volunteers on projects in Wokingham including the Children's Book Festival; Wokingham Town Christmas singalong 2023; Wokingham living advent calendar (pre-covid); local art loans; pop up galleries and hands-on arts at local fetes and carnivals. Their legacy arts fund aims to support vulnerable young people. A summary fact sheet is available.

The charity was once funded by WBC but has been self-supporting for the last 15 years. It survived shut down during the Covid-19 pandemic but now has a declining cash flow. Schools don't have the time to work with them on art projects. Businesses are no longer 'hiring' artworks; some art loans are provided for care homes.

More arts is represented on WBC's Arts Business and Culture (ABC) group which purports to promote arts and culture across all parishes and towns in the Borough. How this connects with the Borough's published strategy for arts and culture 2020-30 isn't clear.

I advised More arts that ETC had an annual grant fund for projects and organisations that benefited Earley residents and told them about the potential of the Elizabeth room for voluntary organisations and pop-up events.

They are a committed group facing a challenging future. Quite what my involvement with them is has yet to be defined!

Cllr Sheena Matthews

Earley Town Council

7.5 Representatives on Other Bodies

The Queen Victoria Institute Fund

The Queen Victoria charity is changing, it no longer provides a foot care service and is in the throws of selling its property in Reading. It is also looking at the trustees as, apparently, the charity commission no longer encourages trustees nominated from local Authorities. They would therefore like to remove the nomination rights of Reading BC and Earley Town Council. Both of us are prepared to remain on the charity board, at least until we decide the best direction for the charity to take, and this has been welcomed.

The charity is still not sure how it will change but it looks as if, instead of providing a podiatry service, which is what it used to do but no longer does, it will become a grant making organisation for medical need (this might be tightened) for other charities to use.

Cllr David Hare

Earley Town Council

8. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Background

At the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 27th September 2023, Members received an update on work carried out so far by Earley Town Council since the transfer of the Collins Drive (Sibly) open spaces from Persimmon Developers.

As part of that update, the Committee were informed that the condition of the toddlers' play area is so poor that nothing can be salvaged, ETC will need to start from scratch to provide a useful and compliant play area for the local children.

Officers have met with play equipment providers to scope out what could be possible in what is a relatively small space and an initial consultation will soon be held with Sibly residents to gauge their preferences in terms of appearance and types of play equipment, ie climbing, imaginative, slides and so on. Residents will be consulted again once draft plans have been drawn up. It should be noted that whenever ETC officers visit the site, local residents have been keen to engage and have been very positive about the work ETC is doing there. Once a final play scheme has been agreed, the project will go out to tender before a decision on play equipment provider is made.

The play equipment providers have been assisting officers with creating the consultations (FOC) and will also assist with the tender process. New fencing, signage, seating and planting will form part of the project.

Costs

£35,000 of the original S106 monies were dedicated in the agreement to the 'Play Area'. Whilst, at the point of transfer, ETC also received some index linking on top of this sum (£19,752), the Town Council will be responsible for this site in perpetuity and no further funds for upkeep will be received. Although we do not have an exact cost for the replacement of this facility, it is expected to be in the region of £50,000. This will cover the new equipment, safety surfacing, replacement fencing and seating. It is envisaged that ETC staff will do as much of the preparatory work in-house to keep costs down.

Policy and Resources Committee - Recommendation

That the remaining Town Council's CIL monies with a spending deadline of April 2024, a sum of £22,184.53, be used to part-fund the replacement toddlers' playground project at Collins Drive. This will reduce the amount of S106 monies ETC will need to spend on the initial replacement of the facility.

Councillors have been provided with an up-to-date schedule of Earley Town Council's Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

Members to discuss and to **RESOLVE** accordingly.

9. Solar Panels - Radstock House

Background

As part of Earley Town Council's focus on the environment and the climate emergency, officers have been looking at ways in which we can make our energy consumption more sustainable. The Council has a budget for environmental projects which could be used for such works.

Officers registered Radstock House, the council's office building, with Wokingham Borough Council's community solar panel scheme, Solar Together, to explore whether solar panels would be suitable for this site. A desk top survey and a site survey have now been carried out by the scheme's approved contractor, Home Smart Energy (MCS accredited) and a proposal has been received.

The proposal

Total number of solar panels: 14

2x arrays:

- 8x panels on the flat roof (above the Chamber), installed flat on weight disbursement blocks aligned to joists (non-penetrative mounts to preserve the integrity of the flat roof).
- 6x panels on the Radstock Lane facing roof, rosemary tile is replaced for rubber mounting tile.
- Inverter connecting the 2 arrays in the loft Wire from inverter, externally mounted to feed into fuse board.
- No planning permission required due to limiter, location and positioning of panels.
- 25-35yr life expectancy

A grid connected system- any excess goes to the grid and we can be paid an export tariff (feed in tariff). In winter or periods of less power generation we will still be using from the grid- just less than before.

The recommendation is for us **not to have a battery** to store excess power. It was deemed by the surveyor not worth the additional expense involved in view of the pattern of our usage (ie unlike a domestic property, we have no regular evening, nighttime or weekend usage. When the panels are generating but we are not using, ie weekends, the power will be exported to the grid).

To incorporate **optimisers**. These enable individual panels to generate independently in shade rather than reducing output of all to lowest level. The nature of the building means there are various features which could cause shade at various times of the day and year. Examples are chimney stacks and roof pitches.

The system will have a **3.68kw limiter** applied. This is standard for domestic schemes and restricts the amount of power that can be supplied back to the grid at any one moment (the grid infrastructure is such that it cannot cope with unlimited amounts of power being transferred to it). At peak production, our system could produce up to 5.6kw but this is likely to be during very sunny conditions when we will be working in the office and using power directly from the system.

We enquired about installing an EV charging point as part of the system but this was advised against as the power generated will not be sufficient (even with a large 14 panel system) and the vehicle battery would drain it instantly before tapping into grid. ETC does not currently have any EVs in its

fleet but there are plans to invest in these in the future. An EV charging point can be integrated at a later date, it was advised that the best solution would be to incorporate it into a special overnight slow charging tariff so the ETC fleet could be charged overnight.

Costs

In addition to the cost of the panels, inverter and installation, there will be additional costs involved. These include:

- Tile & Flat roof installation surcharge (for weight distribution panels and rubber tiles) £30 per panel- £420 total.
- Scaffolding £500 x 1 (one scaffold tower is included in the price but our system requires two because of the two separate areas identified as suitable for panels)
- Obstacle fee (construction of the building, porch at front and raised lip around flat roof, means tower cannot lean straight against building) £300 x 2.
- Optimisers (see above) £700 these can take 3-4yrs to recoup but worth it over 25-35 yr life.

The total cost of the project will be £8,097 (inc VAT)

Benefits

At the time of writing, we are awaiting Home Smart Energy's final report, hopefully this will be received in time for the meeting, but their initial calculations indicate the project will save ETC approximately 33% on its electricity costs plus generating income through the export tariff. There will also be a reduction in ETC's carbon emissions of approximately 1,000kg.

Next steps

Once the final report is received, ETC will inform Home Smart Energy if it agrees to the quote for the system as detailed. A 20% deposit will then be payable, the balance is payable once installation has taken place. The installation itself will take 4-5 hours and it is expected to take place before the end of 2023.

ACTIONS

- Councillors to discuss this report and, if agreeable, to <u>RESOLVE</u> that the work be commissioned.
- 2. Councillors to **RESOLVE** that funding for the project be taken from the Environmental Projects ear marked reserve (balance £30k)

If councillors are minded to approve the above Resolutions, then the following to also apply:

3. Councillors to <u>RESOLVE</u> that the requirement to obtain 3 quotes, Financial Regulations 10.3 and 11.1(h), be suspended, in accordance with Financial Regulation 11.1(d). The reason being that Wokingham Borough Council has carried out best value evaluations when awarding Home Smart Energy with the contract for this community Solar Together scheme.

10. WBC LITTER BINS

At the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 27th September 2023, Members discussed a request from Richard Bissett (WBC) that all parish and town councils consider agreeing to fund the litter bins within their parish which WBC are proposing to remove as part of its cost cutting exercise. The request had been made at a meeting between Richard Bissett and parish and town council clerks on 7th September 2023.

Councillors considered the proposal and raised several concerns, including some about the accuracy of the WBC asset map which had been used to identify the location of bins as part of the consultation. They were also concerned that WBC had confirmed that it was WBC's sub-contractor who had identified the bins recommended for removal, not WBC officers.

The Committee 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 and would therefore incur a far higher bill for emptying such bins than would other towns and parishes.

Of significant concern was WBC's contract costs for emptying each individual bin (£533 per bin per annum; an approximate cost to ETC of £19,000 per annum), Members were of the view that these were excessive and appeared bloated. 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.

Policy and Resources Committee - Recommendation

That Earley Town Council refuses the request from Wokingham Borough Council that the Town Council funds the emptying of the litter bins identified for removal in Earley.

Members to discuss and to **RESOLVE** accordingly.

RECORD OF COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCES – 2023/24

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August 2023 Barclaycard

ORDERS FOR PAYMENT - BY BARCLAYCARD

Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
6122	Dunelm	Blind Helpshop	£21.95
6123	Fire Protection Online	IC Wind up Fire Alarm	£32.33
6124	Asda	Green Fair Refreshments - Staff	£35.50
6125	Zoom	Zoom Subscription August	£15.59
6126	Rawlins	SJP Graffiti Remover	£86.85
6127	Country Supplies	Cem Topsoil for Reseeding Row M449	£626.40

Total Barclaycard £818.62

Date Prepared: 7th September 2023

Prepared by: Ian Johnson

Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
6128	Allstar Business Solutions	Fuel 06/07 YK60UTY, 11/07 MX19WFV	£179.47
6129	Allstar Business Solutions	Fuel 14/07 YK60UUJ	£79.94
6130	Allstar Business Solutions	Fuel 25/07 YS06BSO	£101.28
6131	Allstar Business Solutions	Fuel 01/08 EN65HDF, 01/08 MX19WFV	£141.07
6132	Castle Water	Water RH July 23	£136.99
6133	Castle Water	Water CEM July 23	£35.15
6134	Castle Water	Water IC Aug 23	£79.41
6135	Castle Water	Water Allot July 23	£225.91
6136	Culligan	RH Water Cooler July 23	£89.58
6137	Culligan	SJP Water Cooler July 23	£44.79
6138	Elavon	Credit Card terminal rental August 23	£22.80
6139	Focus Group	RH Telephone line rental Aug 23 & calls June 23	£189.89
6140	O2	Mobile phones July 23	£317.40
6141	PHS Group	Qtr to 01/12/23 RH	£10.58
6142	PHS Group	Qtr to 01/12/23 MP Social	£10.58
6143	PHS Group	Qtr to 01/12/23 IC	£5.29
6144	PHS Group	Qtr to 01/12/23 MPCC	£370.55
6145	PHS Group	Qtr to 01/12/23 RLCC	£331.64
6146	PHS Group	Qtr to 01/12/23 SJP	£76.16
6147	Regent Gas Ltd	SJP Gas July 23	£125.18
6148	Regent Gas Ltd	RLCC Gas July 23	£4.55
6149	Regent Gas Ltd	MPCC Gas July 23	£264.92
6150	Regent Gas Ltd	RH Gas July 23	£40.04
6151	Regent Gas Ltd	RH Gas July 23 Credit note	-£6.66
6152	SSE	Electric May 23 RLCC	£1,220.20
6153	SSE	Electric June 23 RLCC	£376.20
6154	SSE	Electric July 23 RLCC	£1,207.48
6155	SSE	Electric May 23 RLCC Credit note	-£1,698.57
6156	SSE	Electric 02/02 - 01/05 MPCC	£1,517.75
6157	SSE	Electric 02/02 - 01/05 MPCC Credit note	-£1,480.84
6158	SSE SSE	Electric 01/04 - 11/05 23 RH	£1,152.50
6159 6160	SSE	Electric 01/04 - 11/05 RH	£1,087.26
		Electric 01/04 - 11/05 RH Credit note	-£1,087.26
6161 6162	SSE SSE	Electric 12/05 - 01/06 RH Electric 12/05 - 01/06 RH	£569.78 £538.11
6163	SSE	Electric 12/05 - 01/06 RH Credit note	-£538.11
6164	SSE	Electric 02/06 - 04/07 RH	£583.80
6165	SSE	Electric Feb & April 23 SJP	£1,095.42
6166	SSE	Electric Feb & April 23 SJP Credit note	-£1,067.74
6167	SSE	Electric Feb & April 23 Tractor shed	£90.43
6168	SSE	Electric Feb & April 23 Tractor shed	-£90.05
6169	SSE	Electric Feb & April 23 IC	£747.07
6170	SSE	Electric Feb & April 23 IC Credit note	-£730.83
6171	SSE	Elect. Street Lighting July 23 Continuous	£48.59
6172	SSE	Elect. Street Lighting July 23 Dusk to Dawn	£581.59
6173	Virgin Media	RH Broadband Aug 23	£51.60
6174	Wokingham Borough Council	RH Rates Aug 23	£1,572.00
6175	Wokingham Borough Council	RLCC Rates Aug 23	£469.00
6176	Wokingham Borough Council	MPCC Rates Aug 23	£228.00
	3		

Total Direct Debits £9,319.89

Date Prepared:

15/09/2023

ORDERS FOR PAYMENT - BY BACS TRANSFER

Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
6177	A1 Locksmiths Berkshire Ltd	SJP Pavillion Key cut x 2	£10.90
6178	Alan Hadley Ltd	Yard Skip Hire Cem September	£288.00
6179	Air IT Limited	Microsoft 365 September	£915.40
6180	Air IT Limited	Managed IT Support September	£758.71
6181	Arkell & Hurcombe	CEM Aluminium Grave Markers	£774.00
6182	Creating Technical Solutions	YK60UUJ Service and MOT + Rear Light Assembley	£402.86
6183	Lister Wilder	Brush Cartridge for Mower SJP	£617.60
6184	Mixamate	Concrete CEM September	£720.00
6185	PKF Littlejohn LLP	External Audit-Limited Assurance review of Annual Governance	£2,520.00
6186	Premier Office Supplies	Office Chairs x 2	£405.00
6187	Select Env. Services	CP Waste August	£40.43
6188	Select Env. Services	MPCC Waste August	£156.91
6189	Select Env. Services	General Litter August	£591.57
6190	Select Env. Services	RLCC Waste August	£42.64
6191	Select Env. Services	RH Waste August	£13.34
6192	Seton	Keep out Barricade Tape for general use	£69.53
6193	Steve Tilbury Consulting	Planning Training Session Councillors	£415.00
6194	Staysure Ltd	Tyre Repair Maintenace vehicle MX19 WFV	£39.00
6195	Tradepoint - Screwfix	Fibre washer set Maintenance	£19.99
6196	Tradepoint - B&Q	Fan & light MPCC September	£46.55
6197	Tradepoint - B&Q	Adblue Transit Maintenance	£15.20
6198	Wokingham Town Council	Chairing Skills Training	£42.00
6199	X-tern Services	Window cleaning various sites 30/08/23	£160.00

Total: £9,064.63

Date Prepared: 25/9/23

IMPREST ACCOUNT - Reimbursement Vouchers 864 -867

Vouchers between 12th September 2023 and 27th September 2023

Number	Details	Amount
864	Charity Fishing Match Donation - Swan Lifeline	£120.00
865	Damage Deposit Refund GD	£50.00
866	Damage Deposit Refund JLM	£50.00
867	Damage Deposit Refund LH	£50.00
	Total Payments	£270.00

IMPREST ACCOUNT

ORDERS F	OR PAYMENT - BY DIRECT DEBIT		July - August
Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
	May and June 23		
77	SGW Payroll	June Payroll	£66.48
78	SGW Payroll	July Payroll	£66.48
79	DVLA	YK60UUJ Road Tax Year to July 24	£320.00
80	DVLA	YK60UTY Road Tax Year to July 24	£320.00
81	DVLA	YS06BSO Road Tax Year to July 24	£320.00

Total Direct Debits £1,092.96

Date Prepared: 18/09/23