

EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

**UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Earley Town Council

Explanatory foreword to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

The Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 are set out on the pages attached and consist of the following:

- **The Income & Expenditure Account**, showing income and expenditure on all services.
- **The Balance Sheet**, setting out the Council's financial position at the year end.
- **Notes to the financial statements**, providing information on amounts included

This Foreword provides a brief summary highlighting the more important aspects of the Council's activities and its financial position, and it facilitates a greater understanding of these matters.

Basis of preparing the financial statements

As the Council's income is less than £6,500,000, the Council's financial statements follow the directions for medium-sized councils in the Practitioner's Guidance, which is endorsed by CIPFA and is thus regarded as proper practice. The balance sheet therefore excludes fixed assets such as premises, equipment and infrastructure and any associated external loans, and depreciation is not charged.

Audit opinion on accounts

As the Council falls within the limited assurance audit regime, the statutory accounts are included in Section 2 of the annual return for external audit, as a summary of the year's income and expenditure, reserves, fixed assets and long-term borrowings as detailed in these unaudited financial statements. The external auditors' opinion will be given in due course on the accounts within the annual return, which was approved at the Council meeting on 21 June 2023.

Outturn for the year

The outturn for the year is set out in the Income & Expenditure Account on page 4 and may be summarised as follows:

	£
Net cost of services after income from fees and charges	748,968
Less: Interest received	6,021
Amount to be met by precept	742,947
Precept on the Borough Council	988,054
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	1,355
Net income for the year	246,462
Transfers to earmarked reserves (net)	-115,376
Amount added to General Reserves for the year	131,086
General Reserves balance brought forward	967,520
General Reserves balance carried forward	1,098,606

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Review of the year's activities

In line with most organisations during the year, the Council continued to face financial pressures from the impacts of the pandemic, sky-high utilities costs and high inflation. As public confidence began to return, income from hall hire gradually increased although remaining below pre-pandemic levels however, the lack of government caps on increases to gas and electric charges for businesses meant the Council faced huge increases as existing contracts came to an end. The Council's gas supplier went into administration at the start of the utilities' crisis which, in hindsight, was a positive as it meant the overnight increase to our gas charges was 400%, lower than many other businesses faced later on. For the period 2022/23, inflation was at 10.1% (CPI), the effect of this being that the majority of ETC's suppliers increased their charges, in some cases, multiple times during the year. The Council's cautious approach to budgeting and its on-going adaptive approach to deal with an ever-changing situation meant it was well equipped to handle these significant challenges and continue to deliver high quality services to our residents.

The economic climate remained uncertain, the Council continued to take a proactive approach and plan for the longer term. Existing contracts and expenditure were reviewed to ensure that best value was being obtained in all areas. An example of this was the comprehensive overhaul of insurance requirements, including meeting with providers, to ensure that the right cover was obtained and avoiding the 50% increases other councils were faced with. The Council returned Laurel Park Pavilion to Wokingham Borough Council as the income it was receiving did not meet the costs to ETC of delivering WBC services and there was no longer any reasonable prospect of a transfer of land to the Town Council. Throughout the year Members were provided with financial updates and the budget setting process was transparent and open to all councillors.

Despite these challenges, Earley Town Council continued its drive to improve standards and move forwards with its plans. The transformation of the old social club space at Radstock Community Centre was completed, resulting in the launch of the Elizabeth Room, a unique informal space perfectly suited to use by charities and support groups, especially those tackling social isolation and mental health issues. The feedback from hirers has been hugely positive and the facility has attracted totally new services to Earley. Investment in the Council's assets continued, with an emphasis on modernisation and health and safety. Building access control systems were installed at Radstock Community Centre and Maiden Place Community Centre, improving security of the buildings and the safeguarding of its users. The exit road at Mays Lane Cemetery was resurfaced; a rolling programme of replacing dilapidated bus shelters was started, and a project to replace old wooden notice boards with high quality, covered boards, complete with town council branding, was begun. Two red telephone boxes were adopted by the Council, one, in Wychwood Crescent, was refurbished and a community defibrillator installed. A commemorative tree and plaque were planted at Dinton Pastures marking the 50th anniversary of the Loddon Viaduct disaster. In keeping with the Council's green agenda, tree planting took place at Paddick Drive open space, the wild flower beds around Earley were replanted and the Green Fair returned, bigger and better. Officers updated the lake's emergency plan, lodging the document with DEFRA, and purchased equipment to deal with any flooding, some of which was funded by a £2,100 grant from SSE's Communities Fund. During the year, the Council increased its earmarked reserve funds by £115,376 to provide for some of the significant projects which will be undertaken in 2023/24.

In the year the Council received £1,355 under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) scheme and utilised £11,307 of the fund on replacing bus shelters, purchasing flood emergency equipment and contributing to a community garden scheme, leading to a reduction in the total CIL funds to £58,121

Earley Town Council

Explanatory foreword to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

at 31 March 2023. This fund is to be spent on suitable community projects within five years from receipt.

Throughout the year the Council continued to invest in its staff, appointing a new Operations Manager and an extra maintenance officer and staff training was a priority, ensuring that the Council could carry out work in-house rather than use more expensive contractors and that staff could work confidently and safely.

Progress of two of the Council's major projects, the expansion of Mays Lane Cemetery and the reopening of youth services were delayed due to events beyond our control namely, WBC's published plans to replace the footbridge over the railway and A329, and the requirement by Maiden Erlegh Trust that the Town Council vacate the Silverdale Centre. However, preparatory works have continued and funds for both projects have been ring-fenced by the Council.

Earley Town Council

Explanatory foreword to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

Statement of responsibilities for the financial statements

The Council is required to:

- Make arrangements for the administration of its financial affairs;
- Secure that one of its officers (referred to as the Responsible Financial Officer) is responsible for the administration of those affairs. At this Council, that officer is the Town Clerk.
- Manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and to safeguard its assets

The Responsible Financial Officer is responsible for ensuring the preparation of the Council's financial statements in accordance with proper practices so far as applicable to this Council, to present fairly the financial position of the Council at 31 March 2023 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended. In relation to the preparation of the financial statements, the Responsible Financial Officer has ensured that:

- Suitable accounting policies have been selected and consistently applied;
- That the judgements that were made were reasonable and prudent; and
- Guidance has been complied with.

The Responsible Officer has also ensured that:

- Proper accounting records were kept that were up to date at year end;
- Reasonable steps were taken for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Signed

Chair of the Council

Dated 21 June 2023

Council Offices
Radstock Lane
Earley
Reading
RG6 5UL

Earley Town Council
Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2023

Services	Note	Year Ended 31 March 2023		2022	
		Expense £	Income £	Net £	Net £
Community centres		51,696	-123,079	-71,383	-33,032
Parks and sports pitches		40,621	-15,407	25,214	25,035
Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve		10,576	-2,733	7,843	1,751
Other amenities and open spaces		13,051	-4,078	8,973	4,653
Cemetery		19,846	-85,414	-65,568	-92,616
Help Shop		0	-14,206	-14,206	-14,000
Grants and community support	2	18,191	-2,101	16,090	15,469
Capital expenditure	6	33,119	0	33,119	24,222
General administration		808,944	-58	808,886	757,289
Net cost of services		996,044	-247,076	748,968	688,771
Interest and investment income				6,021	214
Net operating expenditure				742,947	688,557
Precept on the Borough Council				988,054	988,054
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)				1,355	12,721
Net income/expenditure(-) for the year				246,462	312,218
Movement on General Reserves balance:					
Balance brought forward				967,520	770,522
Transfers (net) to earmarked reserves	10			-115,376	-115,220
Net income/expenditure(-) as above				246,462	312,218
Balance carried forward				1,098,606	967,520

The notes on pages 7 to 12 form part of the financial statements.

**Earley Town Council
Balance Sheet at 31 March 2023**

	Notes	31 March 2023		31 March 2022	
		£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible fixed assets	1,6				
Current assets					
Debtors	8	28,909		31,455	
Bank term deposits		330,806		330,712	
Other bank accounts		1,374,756		1,128,829	
			1,734,471		1,490,996
Current liabilities					
Creditors and accrued expenses	9		-21,078		-24,066
Total assets less current liabilities			1,713,393		1,466,930
Capital and reserves					
Earmarked reserves	10		614,787		499,411
General Reserves balance			1,098,606		967,519
			1,713,393		1,466,930

The Council falls within the limited assurance audit regime, and so the external audit opinion will be provided on the Annual Return, which includes a summary of the Income and Expenditure Account, fixed assets and associated long-term loans, and reserves. The audit opinion will be provided and advertised in due course.

These financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2023 and reflect its income and expenditure for the year. These accounts were approved at a meeting of the Council held on 21 June 2023.

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Chair of the Council

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Responsible Financial Officer

Earley Town Council

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

1. Principal accounting policies

Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the directions for local councils in the Practitioner's Guidance, which is endorsed by CIPFA and is thus regarded as proper accounting practice as applied to the accounting statements for local councils.

Fixed assets and associated long-term borrowing

The Council's financial statements do not include the value of fixed assets on the balance sheet or depreciation in the Income & Expenditure Account. The acquisition, creation or enhancement of fixed assets is expensed to revenue each year, and disposal proceeds are credited to a capital receipts reserve if not immediately used to fund capital expenditure.

Fixed assets are stated in the Notes as valued on the bases recommended by CIPFA and in accordance with the statements of asset valuation principles and guidance notes issued by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), subject to a de minimis of £500. The closing balances are stated on the following basis:

Land, operational properties and equipment, infrastructure and community assets are valued at the lower of cost or valuation, less depreciation to 31 March 2011. In accordance with Practitioners' Guidance, depreciation is no longer provided.

Certain community assets are the subject of restrictive covenants as to their use and/or future disposal. Such assets are therefore considered to have no appreciable realisable value and are stated at a nominal value.

Long-term borrowing to finance the acquisition of fixed assets similarly is not included on the balance sheet. Amounts received are credited to capital receipts reserve and then released to revenue when used, and repayments are expensed to revenue when incurred.

Debtors and creditors

The financial statements are prepared on an accruals basis. Amounts due to or from the Council during the year are therefore included whether or not the cash has actually been received or paid in the year.

Reserves

The Council maintains certain operational reserves to meet general and specific future expenditure. The purpose of the Council's reserves is explained in Note 10.

Pensions

The pension costs in these financial statements are the employer's contributions paid to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), which is a defined benefit scheme. These contributions are determined by the Fund's actuary on a triennial basis and are set to meet 100% of the liabilities of the Fund, in accordance with relevant local government regulations.

Earley Town Council

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 (continued)

General administration and support service costs

Central administrative support costs are reallocated direct to the services concerned, so far as they can reasonably be ascertained. The remaining administrative costs, including those relating to the democratic process, are shown as a separate service cost in the Income & Expenditure Account.

2. Grants and support for community organisations

Each year the Council provides grants and other financial support for community organisations. These grants are made using the General Power of Competence which was adopted by the Council at the Annual Meeting held on 17th May 2023.

Grants awarded in the year were as follows:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Transport Services	725	2,475
Youth Work	1,500	1,500
Citizens Advice Bureau	2,750	6,000
Sports Sponsorship	3,150	1,025
Other Donations	10,066	4,469
	18,191	15,469

3. Employees

The number of staff employed by the Council at the yearend was

	Number	Number
Full-time	11	12
Part-time	7	8
	18	20

4. Advertising and publicity

The Council's expenditure on advertising and publicity was as follows

	£	£
Advertising	-	-
Website maintenance	1,950	1,750
	1,750	1,908

Earley Town Council

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 (continued)

5. Pension costs

The Council's staff members are eligible to become members of the Berkshire County Pension Scheme, which is administered by The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, and 17 staff are currently members. The Council's contributions as employer during the year ended 31 March 2023 were £127,787 (2021/22: £111,063). Employer contributions were 26.3% of pensionable salaries (2021/22: 25.3%).

6. Fixed assets

	<u>£</u>
Operational land and buildings (see additional note below)	
Maiden Place Community Centre (long leasehold, peppercorn rent)	601,750
Radstock Lane Community Centre (long leasehold, peppercorn rent)	471,554
Council Offices, Radstock Lane (freehold)	274,200
Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve Interpretation Centre (freehold)	93,851
Paddick Drive open space and BMX track	126,506
Sol Joel Pavillion	572,978
Other land and buildings	128,812
Vehicles and equipment	
Vehicles	94,341
Grounds and general maintenance, and Council administration	157,133
Play equipment in parks	340,161
Infrastructure assets; including street lights (65), bus shelters (50), public seats and noticeboards	76,333
Community assets	
Sol Joel Park (45 year lease from Reading BC) and Meadow Park	1
Open spaces owned freehold or leased over 25+ years (peppercorn rent)	2
Mays Lane Burial Ground (MLBG)	1
Culver Lane allotments	1
Net book value, not reflected on balance sheet	2,937,624

The Council's freehold land and buildings were valued as at 31 March 2007 by independent external valuers, Martin & Pole, Chartered Surveyors, on the basis set out in the accounting policies.

There were additions of £33,119 including £9,307 of expenditure from Community Infrastructure Levy funds and disposals of £7,735 to fixed assets in the year.

Earley Town Council

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 (continued)

Capital receipts in the year were as follows

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) received, transferred to reserves	1,355
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7. Loan from Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

The Council borrowed £350,000 towards the cost of constructing the new Pavilion in Sol Joel Park. The first tranche of £150,000, drawn down in January 2013, is repayable over 25 years in equal instalments of £3,000 every six months and bears interest at 3.4% per annum. The remaining £200,000 was drawn down in June 2013 and is repayable over 25 years by instalments of £4,000 every six months and bears interest at 3.53 % per annum.

The movement on PWLB indebtedness over the year is as follows:

	£
Indebtedness at 1 April 2022	228,000
Repayments	14,000
Indebtedness at 31 March 2023	214,000

8. Debtors and prepayments

	2023	2022
	£	£
Debtors for Council services	17,090	23,936
Other debtors	-	-
Value Added Tax	9,641	4,296
Prepaid expenses	2,178	3,223
	28,909	31,455

9. Creditors and accrued expenses

	2023	2022
	£	£
Trade creditors and accruals	19,083	23,521
Income in advance	1,995	545
	21,078	24,066

Earley Town Council

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 (continued)

10. Earmarked reserves

	31 March 2022 £	Transfers	31 March 2023 £
Community Infrastructure Levy			
<i>These funds are held until specific projects are identified but must be used within five years</i>	70,167	-10,527	59,640
Bus Shelters	20,000	10,000	30,000
Cemetery Extension	85,000		85,000
Elections	18,250	6,000	24,250
Environmental Projects	10,263	19,737	30,000
IT Upgrade	-	5,000	5,000
Laurel Park Enhancements	7,000		7,000
Laurel Park Pitch Income	9,769		9,769
Meadow Park Playground	20,000	10,000	30,000
Other Projects	6,945		6,945
Sol Joel Pavilion Project	130,000	34,500	164,500
Vehicles	40,000	20,000	60,000
Youth Projects	5,000		5,000
Radstock Lane Community Space	3,819	-1,831	1,988
Green Events	3,265	-3,265	-
Radstock Lane Community Centre Improvements	5,000	-1,295	3,705
Allotments Improvements	600		600
Maiden Place Community Centre Doors and Windows	10,000	-1,295	8,705
Silverdale Improvements	4,000	-4,000	-
Pathways	799	-633	166
Phone Box Project	-	3,485	3,485
Benches/Seats	-	4,500	4,500
Maiden Place Community Centre Heating System	-	15,000	15,000
Radstock House Council Office Flat Roof	-	5,000	5,000
Website Upgrade	5,000	5,000	10,000
Recovery Fund	44,533		44,533
	499,411	115,376	614,787

11. Tenancies

The Council's community centre at Maiden Place has a resident social club that is a tenant under a repairing lease paying £16,200 annual rental. Last year, due to the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, the

Earley Town Council

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 (continued)

social club was closed to customers for the first 2 months of the year and monthly rental was charged at 50% that reduced the annual rent to £14,850. (2021/22 £14,850).

12. Contingent liabilities

The Council had no contingent liabilities at 31 March 2023 (2021/22: none).

Claire Connell MA, ACA, CTA

Chartered Accountant and Chartered Tax Adviser

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Earley

Reading RG6 7LT

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The Councillors
Earley Town Council
Council Offices
Radstock Lane
Earley
Reading RG6 5UL

6th June 2023

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

Internal audit – year ended 31st March 2023

Further to my post year-end visit, I am pleased to report that I have now completed my internal audit review and have signed off the internal audit section of the AGAR for 2022-23 with no comments.

My internal audit was based on the guidelines included in the JPAG Governance & Accountability for Smaller Authorities: A Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices ("PG"). This includes an assessment of risk and a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation.

I attach a summary of my findings in Appendix 1 which includes those reported in my interim visit. You will note that the wording of assertion K has changed from the wording included in my interim report as the AGAR for 22/23 (published in late March 2023) has updated wording for this assertion. I am now required to consider whether the Council provides all the information required by legislation on its website.

Overall conclusion

The financial records have been well maintained during the year and appear complete and fit for purpose. I did not identify any significant weaknesses in the control systems and procedures and it is clear that the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously.

Yours faithfully



Claire Connell

Appendix 1: Summary of internal audit findings in 2022-23

<u>Annual Internal Audit Report Section</u>	<u>Objective met?</u>	<u>Comments</u>
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the year	Yes	ETC uses an accounting package which is specifically designed for parish and town councils. There is a linked Bookings package for invoicing hall and pitch hire.
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for	Yes	Testing and review of systems shows that expenditure is properly incurred, payments approved and VAT appropriately accounted for. No large contracts were entered into during the year.
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	Yes	Minutes, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, insurance cover and the Risk Register indicate that there are proper risk assessment and management procedures. Updated Standing Orders were approved in May 2022. The Financial Regulations were re-adopted in July 2022. I understand that an updated Risk Register will be taken to the June 2023 Council meeting.
D. The precept resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	Yes	The budget was set in February 2023 and is calculated using detailed spreadsheets which incorporate reserve movements. Financial updates are regularly provided at the Policy & Resources meetings (and are emailed to all councillors).
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes	No issues arose regarding income during my testing.
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	Yes	Amounts paid out of petty cash were few in number and low in value.
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	Yes	The payroll is run by an external payroll company. One issue regarding the payment of backpay was identified at the interim audit and this was subsequently rectified during the year.
		/continued overleaf

Appendix 1: Summary of internal audit findings in 2022-23 (continued)

<p>H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>An adequate fixed assets register is maintained in Excel. This has been updated to reflect additions and disposals of the assets this year.</p> <p>Due to the rules for accounting for fixed assets in town councils, the loss of the Silverdale Centre and Laurel Park has not made a significant difference to the asset register.</p>
<p>I. Periodic and year-end bank reconciliations properly carried out</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Monthly bank reconciliations are reviewed by the Town Clerk and the Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee.</p>
<p>J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis, agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>These assertions have been met.</p> <p>The accounts are prepared on an income and expenditure basis and debtors and creditors are properly recorded.</p>
<p>K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Not covered – the Council had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR</p>
<p>L. The authority published the required information on a free to access website up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with any relevant legislation.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>*** The wording of this objective has changed this year ***</p> <p>AGARs for the past five years are available on the website as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</p> <p>Councils are also encouraged to comply with the Transparency Code 2015 (<i>PG 5.73: Parish and town councils with annual turnover in excess of £200,000 should as best practice comply with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015</i>). This Code includes a list of information which should be published on a council website.</p> <p>Much of the information listed in the Transparency Code is already provided on the Earley Town Council website, additional information has been listed in the past year and I understand that it is intended that the few outstanding items will be added during the next year.</p>
		<p style="text-align: right;">/continued overleaf</p>

Appendix 1: Summary of internal audit findings in 2022-23 (continued)

M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for the period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Yes	Proper opportunity was provided and this was correctly advertised.
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	Yes	The correct documents were published before the relevant deadlines.
O. The Council met its responsibilities as a trustee	N/A	Not applicable

Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23

Earley Town Council

<https://www.earley-tc.gov.uk/>

During the financial year ended 31 March 2023, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2022/23 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2021/22, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2021/22 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2022-23 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2021-22 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

23/11/2022

24/01/2023

23/05/2023

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

Claire Connell

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

06/06/2023

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

We acknowledge as the members of:

Earley Town Council

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

and recorded as minute reference:

Chairman

Clerk

www.earley-tc.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

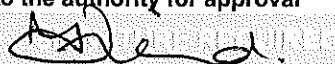
Earley Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	1,154,713	1,466,931	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	988,054	988,054	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	245,650	254,452	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	604,956	656,247	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	22,288	21,802	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	294,242	317,995	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	1,466,931	1,713,393	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	1,459,541	1,705,562	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	2,912,240	2,937,624	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	228,000	214,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (Including charitable)		✓		The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (Including charitable)			✓	The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date

14/06/2023

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:



as recorded in minute reference:



Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

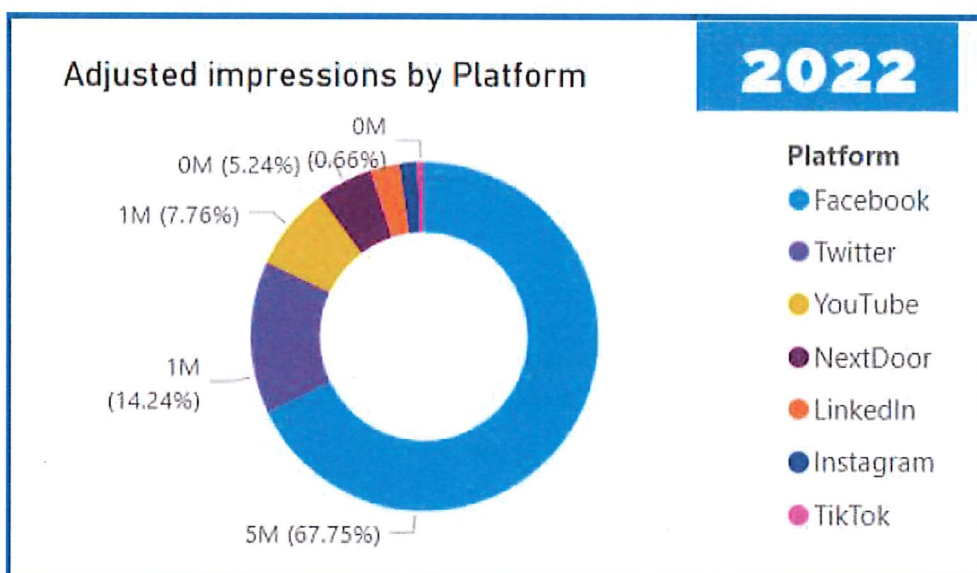
Report for Policy & Resources Committee Meeting on 7th June 2023

Introduction

The introduction of social media would enable the Town Council to improve the way it communicates with the community and would allow the Town Council to share and publicise its work, news, services and achievements.

Which Social Media Platform?

The Deputy Town Clerk and Senior Operations Support Officer attended a social media webinar in March delivered by the Communications Team at Wokingham Borough Council. The webinar demonstrated that Facebook remains WBC's most popular platform, as demonstrated in the infographic below, and therefore Facebook seems the most sensible starting point for ETC. Starting with one platform will allow officers to focus on building up a following and improving engagement.



(impression = number of times a piece of content has been seen)

Social Media Policy

A Social Media Policy has been drafted for approval.

Who Will Be Responsible?

Social media will be monitored by delegated trained officers and only officers who the Town Clerk has expressly given permission to will be allowed to post on the Council's social media. Initially, this officer will be the Senior Operations Support Officer, with a plan to train the Committees Officer to monitor the account in their absence.

Councillors must not act or respond on behalf of the Council or the Council staff and must ensure that their posts represent only their role as an individual councillor.

What Will ETC Post?

Earley Town Council will use Social Media to:

- Publicise ETC's news and events
- Share notices of council meetings
- Publicise the hard work of our officers which may otherwise go unnoticed e.g. cemetery working parties, sports pitch preparation, works at MELNR
- Update residents on issues and what we are doing to resolve them e.g. fallen branches
- Promote our assets
- Share photos of our assets e.g. our open spaces, the wildlife they attract etc.
- Share different activities, events or campaigns happening in the community
- Share information relevant to our residents

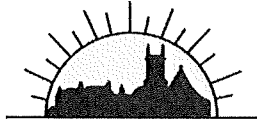
How Will We Monitor Social Media?

Social media will only be monitored during office hours. As officers have multiple responsibilities, it would be unrealistic for them to monitor social media constantly throughout the day however they would aim to address any comments or queries made in a timely manner.

Acceptable Use / Site Rules

A list of site rules setting out acceptable behaviour for people interacting with our social media can be found in the Social Media Policy.

Report prepared by: Jess Friend (Senior Operations Support Officer)



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The use of social media enables the Town Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website, Facebook and Twitter and over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

The Council's social media intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Town and promote our community positively.

This policy sets out how social media will be used, the standards which must be upheld when using social media and the action that will be taken if there is a breach of this policy.

Scope

All staff and councillors are expected to comply with this policy and must protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services, employees, stakeholders and community. Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and could result in consequences as set out in this document.

Principles

To publish and promote information about the work and services of Earley Town Council to a wider audience and provide community information.

Responsibility

The Town Clerk has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy. All staff and Councillors are responsible for ensuring that they comply with this policy.

The Council's social media will be monitored by delegated trained officers. Only officers who the Town Clerk has expressly given permission to will be allowed to post on the Council's social media.

Councillors must not act or respond on behalf of the Council or the Council staff and must ensure that their posts represent only their role as an individual councillor.

How we will use social media

We will use social media to:

- Publicise our news, events and decisions
- Share notices of council meetings
- Promote our assets and the work of our officers
- Provide information about service changes and any disruptions
- Support campaigns and initiatives that are in line with the Town Council's priorities

- Repeat information from trusted sources which is relevant to our residents e.g. events, campaigns, news, surveys etc.
- Enhance the reputation of the local authority and local democracy

We will not use social media to:

- Engage in personal conversations
- Debate our decisions and policies
- Provide an emergency or out-of-hours response
- Support any specific political view or party
- Provide an alternative route for enquiries, questions or complaints that should be directed our main communication channels

Content

The Town Council is responsible for using social media appropriately and must be mindful of the legal implications of inappropriate use, in particular, when posting content, the team will be mindful of:

- defamation (ie libel)
- copyright
- discrimination and victimisation
- contract
- human rights
- protection from harassment
- criminal law and the administration of justice
- data protection
- breaches of confidence

Times of monitoring

The Council's social media is not monitored 24/7 and delegated officers will not be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, they will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful information are passed to relevant people or organisations.

The Council will not engage in conversations via comments on social media and will impose a one response maximum rule.

Sending messages/posts via social media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council is not obliged to monitor or respond to request for services or information through social media channels. Such requests should still be directed directly to the Council Offices.

We may on occasions direct those contacting us to our website to see required information.

Acceptable use / site rules for members of the public interacting with our social media

We require that all those commenting on our social media channels:

- Are civil and polite
- Avoid posting any message that is unlawful, libellous, racist, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or otherwise offensive

- Are not abusive about any individual, including council staff and elected councillors
- Avoid posting content copied from elsewhere for which they do not own the copyright
- Do not discriminate or use discriminatory language
- Do not post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once
- Do not post comments or questions that are not relevant to the original post
- Do not publicise their, or anyone else's, personal information, e.g. contact details
- Do not advertise products or services
- Do not impersonate someone else
- Do not post spam or post off-topic content (persistent negative and/or abusive posts in which the aim is to provoke a response)
- Do not seek to promote the views or opinions of a particular political party

We will remove, in whole or in part, posts that we feel contravene these rules. The Council may choose to issue 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed' statement. Anybody repeatedly contravening them will be blocked and/or reported to the associated social media platform or other authority. We will not tolerate or respond to abusive messages.

We will remain politically neutral at all times on social media which is why council officers are unable to reply to, endorse or engage with, any content that is of a party-political nature.

Breach of this policy

Any reports of a breach of this policy by officers or councillors will be fully investigated by the Town Clerk. Breach of this policy by staff could be treated as gross misconduct. Breach of this policy by councillors could be treated as a breach of the Code of Conduct and may result in a referral to the Monitoring Officer.

The below list identifies what is classed as a breach (this list is not exhaustive): -

- Disclosure of personal, confidential or private information about the Council, staff or others.
- Posting content which is abusive, obscene, discriminatory, criminal or that may cause embarrassment to the Council, staff, Councillors or customers.
- Posting a statement which could cause criminal or civil liability to the Council or yourself.
- Posting material which is in breach of copyright laws.
- Posting pornographic or obscene material such as photos, pictures, writing, films or video clips.

Don't post online what you wouldn't say in person. If in doubt, don't post.

Date of policy: June 2023

Policy effective from:

Date for next review:

Earley Town Council

Full Council Meeting – 21st June 2023

Agenda Item 12

Town Councillor Remuneration

Members to consider this report on Town Councillor Remuneration and to **RESOLVE** upon Earley Town Council's position.

Introduction

Principal authorities are required to convene a Parish Remuneration Panel to consider the payment of allowances by parish/town councils to their members. Wokingham Borough Council convened such a panel in March 2023, this is a report of the panel's findings.

The Guidance issued under the regulations for Parish Allowances for Members of Parish or Town Councils is:

*“91. Parish councils may choose to pay their members an allowance, known as ‘parish basic allowance’, to recognise the time and effort they put into their parish duties. **There is no obligation on parish councils to pay such allowances.** Each parish council may make an allowance available to its chair only, or to each of its members. Where all members receive an allowance, the amount payable to the chair may be different to that paid to other members, but otherwise the amount paid to each member must be the same. Parish basic allowance is a discretionary allowance. It may be paid in a lump sum, or at intervals throughout the year.*

92. If a parish council wishes to pay a basic allowance, it should have regard to a recommendation from its parish remuneration panel. This is a panel set up to make recommendations to parishes in its area. The membership of a parish remuneration panel will be the same as the independent remuneration panel of the district or county council within whose area the parish is situated. The panel will make a recommendation as to whom basic allowance should be paid, and the level of the allowance.”

Panel Process

The Parish and Town Independent Remuneration Panel comprised of five independent people (they also serve on the Independent Remuneration Panel for WBC) and were provided with guidance from a WBC officer, a democratic and electoral services specialist.

All parish and town councils in the borough were invited to provide their views through a questionnaire (September 2022) and two parish/town councillors met with the Panel.

Earley Town Council – Current Position

To date, ETC has not chosen to pay an allowance to any councillors. The Town Council does pay for any training councillors may undertake and councillors may claim travel expenses to attend such training courses if they so wish. In addition, the Town Mayor may claim expenses (up to a maximum of £500 pa) for expenses incurred in the course of their duties as Town Mayor.

In the September 2022 consultation, ETC responded that it did not wish to start paying allowances but would want to continue with its current scheme of expenses.

Panel's Recommendations

The Panel has made it clear that it is solely at the discretion of Parish and Town Councils as to whether they wish to pay a Basic or Chair's Allowance. The recommendations as set out below are the *maximum* levels that can be paid to each town councillor if an individual authority wishes to do so.

Basic Allowance - £400 per annum

Chair's Allowance - £1,200 per annum

Travel & Subsistence – Paid at same rates as WBC Members. Mileage in line with HMRC recommendations.

Dependent & Carers Allowance – not permitted under the regulations.

Further information

- An allowance is a no-strings attached payment of money to a town councillor, made purely on the basis that they are a councillor. They do not have to spend it on anything in particular nor do they have to report what it has been spent on.
- The legislation restricts allowances to be paid to elected councillors only, co-opted councillors are not eligible.
- Council may agree for the Chair (Town Mayor) to receive the basic allowance in addition to the chair's allowance.
- A town councillor may choose not to receive all or part of any allowance agreed. They must give written notice of opting out to the Town Clerk.
- Should a Member be suspended or partially suspended, all or part of their allowances should be withheld. This also applies to any travel & subsistence allowance.
- Any allowance scheme adopted by the Council should be publicised.
- If remuneration is paid to town councillors it must be paid through ETC payroll and is taxable.

Jo Friend
Town Clerk
June 2023

RECORD OF COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCES – 2023/24

NAME OF COUNCILLOR	COUNCIL											AMENITIES & LEISURE					PLANNING											POLICY & RESOURCES				
	05	06	07	10	11	02	03	05	07	09	10	01	03	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	01	02	03	04	06	07	09	11	01	03		
R. AHLAWAT	✓							✓																								
A. BASSETT								✓																		✓						
A. BRADLEY	✓							✓																								
N. BROCK	✓							✓						✓																		
R. BROWNE	✓							✓						✓																		
R. COOK	✓							✓						✓																		
M. DE JONG	✓													✓																		
J. EASTWELL	✓																															
D. HARE	✓																															
T. HOLTON	✓																															
M. IVENGUNWENA	✓													✓																		
S. JORDAN	✓													✓																		
N. JORGENSEN	✓																															
P. JORGENSEN	✓													✓																		
I. KHAYINZA	✓																															
G. LITTLER	✓																															
A. LONG	✓							✓																								
T. MAHER	✓							✓																								
S. MATTHEWS	✓							✓																								
A. NEAL	✓																															
S. NEWTON	✓																															
B. OWEN	✓																															
H. SARASAN	✓																															
C. SMITH	✓													✓																		
M. SMITH	✓													✓																		

R = Representing Town Council

B = Attending Borough Meeting

A = In Attendance

shaded cell denotes non-representation on Committees

ORDERS FOR PAYMENT - BY DIRECT DEBIT

April 2023

Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
5825	Allstar Business Solutions	Fuel 22/3 MX19WFV & 27/3 YJ60UUJ	£189.66
5826	BT	SJP CCTV Qtr to 31/5/23	£43.20
5827	Castle Water	Water IC Apr 23	£108.50
5828	Elavon	Credit Card terminal rental Apr 23	£22.80
5829	Focus Group	SD & RH Telephone line rental Apr 23 & calls Feb 23	£193.94
5830	O2	Mobile phones Mar 23	£179.12
5831	Regent Gas Ltd	RH Gas Mar 23	£251.74
5832	Regent Gas Ltd	RLCC Gas Mar 23	£708.71
5833	Regent Gas Ltd	SJP Gas Mar 23	£331.17
5834	Regent Gas Ltd	MPCC Gas Mar 23	£1,030.27
5835	Smartest Energy	Refund to close account (switched to SSE 10/10/22)	-£60.43
5836	SSE	Electricity RLCC 7/2/23-7/3/23	£434.20
5837	SSE	Elect Street Lighting Mar 23 Dawn to Dusk	£661.15
5838	SSE	Elect Street Lighting Mar 23 Continuous	£54.54
5839	Virgin Media	RH Broadband Apr 23	£31.80
5840	Waterlogic	SJP Water Cooler Mar 23	£44.79
5841	Waterlogic	RH Water Cooler Mar 23	£89.58
5842	Wokingham Borough Council	Cem Rates Apr 23	£903.63
5843	Wokingham Borough Council	RH Rates Apr 23	£1,570.50
5844	Wokingham Borough Council	MPCC Rates Apr 23	£227.18
5845	Wokingham Borough Council	RH Maint Depot Rates Apr 23	£120.02
5846	Wokingham Borough Council	RLCC Rates Apr 23	£469.60

Total Direct Debits**£7,605.67**

Date Prepared: 19th May 2023

April 2023 Barclaycard

ORDERS FOR PAYMENT - BY BARCLAYCARD

Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
5847	Zoom	Zoom April 23	£15.59
5848	X2 Connect Ltd	Glazing Frame Phone Box	£55.44
5849	Royal British Legion Industries	King Charles III Coronation Lamp Post signs & Flag	£241.45
5850	City Plumbing	Cem. Drains/Plumbing	£53.86
5851	Adobe	Annual Acrobat Licence to Apr 24	£13.03
5852	The Insulation Shop	MPCC Insulation jackets - Plumbing/Heating	£147.52
Total Barclaycard			£526.89

Date Prepared: 22nd May 2023

ORDERS FOR PAYMENT - BY BACS TRANSFER

Number	Supplier	Purchase Description	Amount
5853	2468 Limited	MPCC Annual Water heater service to 30/6/24	£106.14
5854	ABRDN Financial Planning & Advice Limited	Group Death In Service scheme Annual Admin. To 31/3/24	£600.00
5855	Air IT Ltd	RH Microsft 365 May 23	£843.34
5856	Air IT Ltd	RH Managed IT Support May 23	£719.58
5857	Arco Limited	Hi Vis Small Jackets re MELNR Emergency Plan (CIL)	£108.62
5858	Avoncrop Amenity Products	SJP Grass seed	£1,208.00
5859	Bowak Ltd	Caretaker supplies various centres	£307.00
5860	Bracknell Pest Control	Allotments Bait traps 18/5/23	£54.00
5861	CDS Group	Cem Ground Penetrating Radar Survey	£4,590.00
5862	Frasers Office	RH Ring Binders/paper/ink	£249.78
5863	Gem Tec Security Systems Ltd	Intruder Alarm Tractor Shed	£756.00
5864	Glasdon UK Ltd	Bench Carshaton/Meldrith Way	£805.27
5865	Glasdon UK Ltd	Bench above agreed credit	-£40.26
5866	GLS	Caretaker supplies various centres	£266.32
5867	Greenbarnes Ltd	4xNoticeboards 2 MELNR, RH. Allot.	£7,494.14
5868	Lighting Electrical Distribution Ltd	Light fittings MPCC	£48.00
5869	Lister Wilder	Ransome Mower Blades	£217.02
5870	McVeigh Parker	Cem Gravel stakes	£28.80
5871	McVeigh Parker	SJP Gravel Boards	£26.78
5872	Premier Office Supplies	RH Binding Combs	£16.19
5873	Select Environmental Services	MPCC Waste Apr 23	£155.89
5874	Select Environmental Services	General Litter Apr 23	£530.45
5875	Select Environmental Services	RH Waste Aor 23	£13.34
5876	Select Environmental Services	RLCC Waste Apr 23	£42.46
5877	Select Environmental Services	CP Waste Apr 23	£40.25
5878	SLCC Enterprises	Social Media seminar Jess F (Cancelled - Credit to come)	£42.00
5879	SLCC Enterprises	Managing Social Media Jess F	£42.00
5880	Thake Signs	Past Mayors' and Earley Award Honours Board update	£206.40
5881	Thake Signs	Cem Aluminium Signboard	£310.80
5882	Tradepoint - B&Q	RH Yellow Hammerite	£26.00
5883	Tradepoint - B&Q	Bench Anchor Bolts	£12.84
5884	Tradepoint - B&Q	Angle Grinder Disks & Toilet floats Maint Depot	£40.96
5885	Tradepoint - Screwfix	MPCC/RLCC Stepstools	£39.98
5886	Travis Perkins	Bench Ballast/Cement	£254.17
5887	Web Marketing Matters	RH Website support May 23	£216.00
5888	William Luck	Professional Planning Services May 23	£314.44
5889	Wokingham Borough Council	CP Rent May 23	£293.50
5890	Woodley Town Council	Half share of Bulmershe Open Space 12/5/23	£85.80
5891	Woodley Town Council	Half share of Bulmershe Open Space 23/5/23	£85.80
5892	X-Tern Services	Window cleaning various sites 19/5/23	£185.00

Total: £21,342.80

Date Prepared: 6th June 2023

IMPREST ACCOUNT - Reimbursement Vouchers 826 -827

Vouchers between 19th May and 6th June 2023

Number	Details	Amount
826	Refund of Allotment fee to CM (Paid twice in error)	£26.00
827	Refund of Green Fair fee to Trinity Concert Band Unable to provide setup	£8.00
	Total Payments	£34.00