

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 6th March 2024 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor N Brock

Councillors: R Ahlawat, A Bradley, R Browne, A Bassett, R Cook, T Maher, and S Matthews.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), M Brown (Operations Manager), two members of the public and a member of the press.

A G E N D A

91. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M De Jong, A Long, B Owen and C Smith.

92. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

93. PUBLIC FORUM

One member of the public, a representative from MERA, informed councillors that a Speedwatch scheme was now up and running in Earley. He advised them that more volunteers were required for the scheme.

The MERA representative also spoke in connection with agenda item 5.1 Canada Geese. He said concerns were originally raised by residents during preparations for a street party. Those concerns regarded droppings left by geese and goslings on the pavements around Lakeside and other roads in the period between May and August each year. The representative stated that while MERA had no appetite for culling the geese, MERA would ask the council to consider dipping the eggs in paraffin or relocating the geese from Maiden Erlegh Lake & Nature Reserve to another location. The MERA representative also voiced concerns about a possible health risk, particularly with children who may come into contact with the droppings, and he requested that the Town Council agree to take responsibility for cleaning the pavements on a weekly basis during the period when goslings may be out feeding.

94. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2024 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** they be signed by the Chair (Minutes 75–90).

95. MAIDEN ERLEGH LAKE AND NATURE RESERVE

95.1 Canada Geese

Members considered the report provided by the Town Clerk, compiled from information and comments arising from the education session previously provided to town councillors. There followed a lengthy discussion covering matters such as the difficulties involved in trying to manage the behaviours of wild birds; the impact the swans' behaviour has on the geese; measures residents can take to discourage geese from accessing their front gardens; the provision of food sources to

encourage the geese to feed on the reserve, and so on. Members agreed a range of points which would form the basis of an Earley Town Council policy on Canada Geese. Some of the points agreed included:

- ETC would not support the culling of, or dipping the eggs of, Canada Geese at MELNR
- ETC recognise that MELNR is a nature reserve and wild birds are an important part of a nature reserve.
- Residents to be encouraged to contact ETC directly with any complaints to help ETC deal with any issues as effectively as possible.
- A wide variety of species should be encouraged at MELNR, expert advice should be sought on how best to achieve such a variety.
- ETC to provide information to residents that will help them understand the nature of Canada Goose behaviour and inform them of simple measures that can be taken to deter the birds from entering their front gardens.
- The pavements are part of the highway and therefore are not the responsibility of ETC. ETC do not have the resources to be able to clean pavements on a weekly basis.

A suggestion was made that a group of volunteers could get together to clean some sections of the pavement for the few weeks that the goslings were out and about, or possibly, that residents could assume responsibility for washing down the pavement outside their own property if they were concerned.

A draft policy on Canada Geese will be provided to Full Council for consideration and adoption.

The two members of the public and the member of the press left the meeting.

95.2 Supervising Engineer - Lake

95.2.1 Members noted that, in accordance with legislation, a new Supervising Engineer has been appointed for the reservoir at Maiden Erlegh Lake.

95.2.2 It was also noted that in addition to the regular annual inspection of the lake, the Supervising Engineer will be carrying out a Section 10 Inspection (Reservoirs Act 1975) before mid- July 2024. This is an enhanced inspection that must be conducted every ten years. The cost of the Section 10 Inspection does not feature in the 2024/25 budget and therefore Full Council will be asked to approve expenditure of £3,995 in this regard.

96. SOL JOEL PARK

The committee noted that the CCTV system at Sol Joel Park and Pavilion is scheduled to be upgraded. As part of the project the storage and monitoring of CCTV footage will be moved to the Council offices.

97. COMMUNITY CENTRES

97.1 Maiden Place Community Centre

It was noted that the floors of the main hall and the function room at MPCC are being refurbished during the Easter holidays but insufficient funds remain in the MPCC Maintenance budget 2023/24 to cover the whole cost (£4,335).

Members of the Amenities & Leisure Committee **RESOLVED** to approve a virement of £1,835 from the Radstock Lane Community Centre Maintenance budget 2023/24 to the MPCC Maintenance budget 2023/24.

97.2 Elizabeth Room, Radstock Lane Community Centre

Members received an update from the Town Clerk on the success of the Elizabeth Room. They were pleased with the number of bookings and variety of groups currently hiring the Elizabeth

Room and acknowledged that the facility was fulfilling its purpose as a space for groups and activities needing a more comfortable, informal setting.

98. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

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

- An update on the cleaning and redecoration of the Bus Shelters as part of the annual maintenance schedule
- Progress on the planning of the Huge Earley Litter Pick on Sunday 24th March
- The renovation of the benches in the Memorial Garden at Mays Lane Cemetery
- Additional surfacing and pothole repairs to the car park at Culver Lane Allotments
- The upgrade of the lighting at the Interpretation Centre to LED
- A new mixed recycling facility for town council activities, housed at the Council Offices

99. EVENTS

99.1 Bric-a-brac ‘Sale’

Two bric-a-brac ‘sales’ were held at the Council Offices during half term, these were promoted on social media. Both events were very successful and lots of stock was rehomed.

99.2 Bird Box Decorating

Members noted that the fully booked Bird Box Decorating event held on 13th February 2024 at Radstock Lane Community Centre had received extremely positive feedback.

Following publicity of the event on the Town Council’s social media page, a local repair café has reached out and expressed interest in working together in the future. A meeting with the organisers to discuss future collaborative working has been arranged.

99.3 Joint Event – Town Mayor and Link Visiting

Members noted that the Earley Town Mayor will be hosting a joint ‘Afternoon Tea’ with her chosen charity, Link Visiting on Friday 19th April 2024. The High Sheriff of Berkshire will be attending and ETC will provide a couple of officers to assist LV with the running of the Tea on the day. Both organisations will be promoting the event and the press will be invited.

100. BERKSHIRE’S LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

100.1 Farmer/Landowners Event – Reading University

The Town Clerk provided a verbal report on her attendance at the Farmer/Landowners event held at Reading University on 6th March 2024 as part of the county wide Nature Recovery Strategy.

100.2 Wokingham Community BLNRS Workshop

A Wokingham community workshop will be co-hosted by the BLNRS team and Bob Collis at Maiden Place Community Centre on 20th April 2024. All parish and town councils in the borough have been asked to nominate one member of their community to attend, ideally someone from a harder to reach group within the parish. The team wish to hear from new voices who will be asked to identify their priorities for nature recovery. Councillors were asked to suggest a suitable attendee for the officers to approach with an invitation.

101. CORONATION TREE AND PLAQUE

The committee noted that the Town Council's Coronation Tree, an oak, had been planted at Paddick Drive, following the line of the veteran oaks at the site. The Town Mayor unveiled the commemorative plaque on 20th February 2024.

102. CEMETERY EXTENSION

Members noted that the Town Council is still awaiting a response from the Diocese in order to proceed with the next steps in this project.

103. PUBLICATIONS

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

Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter 7 th February & 21 st February 2024
MERA	Minutes of Executive Committee meeting – 8 th February 2024
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 9 th February & 17 th February 2024

104. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

It was agreed that once approved by full council, the policy for the geese at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve will be added to the Earley Town Council website.

105. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.20pm.

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Chair, Amenities & Leisure Committee