



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 16th October 2024 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor A Long

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

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and M Brown (Operations Manager)

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bassett, N Brock and B Owen.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

35. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2024 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** they be signed by the Chair (Minutes 18–31).

36. CULVER LANE ALLOTMENTS

It was noted that the members of the ETC Allotments judging panel had concluded their visits to Culver Lane allotments and agreed on the winners of Best Plot and Runner-Up Best Plot. This year a new category, Best Raised Bed/Trough, had been introduced. The winners will be notified and invited to the Mayor's Reception where they will be presented with their awards.

37. MAIDEN ERLEGH LAKE AND NATURE RESERVE

37.1 Penstock Valve Exercise - Lake

Members noted that the annual penstock valve exercise was carried out by ETC officers on 10th September as part of ETC's emergency plan operations. Members of WBC's emergency planning team re invited to observe the exercise so they would be aware of ETC's procedures when they reviewed the borough council's emergency plan. The WBC officers were very interested in the measures ETC take to ensure the dam's safety and commented on the professionalism of ETC officers.

37.2 Desilting Works

Members of the committee received a report from the Deputy Town Clerk on planned works to remove silt from the silt entrapment pond at MELNR.

Following a meeting with the contractor who carried out the works previously, and at which two options were presented, officers recommended that the same contractor be instructed to carry out the works as detailed in option two. This will entail removing a smaller area of vegetation and laying the silt along the hedge line in the Green Fair site. This would be fenced off to prevent people walking on it and, once dried, the nutrient rich silt could be used for planting. This method will reduce the risk of silt re-entering the lake. The contractor has assured officers that there would be no smell from the silt, and it would pose no harm to members of the public or wildlife if left to dry in this manner.

It was **RESOLVED** that the works be carried out as detailed above and that the Environmental Projects budget be used to fund it.

Officers expect the work to be carried out in early November and will then plan for them to be repeated approximately every eight years. It was agreed that information and safety notices will be posted around the site and on social media to advertise the nature of the works to residents.

37.3 Biodiversity Projects

Councillors received a written report. The Town Clerk reported to members that a working group of officers had been set up and a statement of intent produced to clarify the aims of the ETC biodiversity project.

Since the project began in August 2024, the new Park Ranger team have already organised a botanical survey, installed two hibernacula, introduced species incident records, successfully reinstated owl boxes and taken preventative action to reduce injuries to animals from fishing line. Councillors were also informed that the team had established an oak tree nursery at the allotment site which should produce numerous saplings for planting out in due course. Press releases have followed each project as they have been delivered and regular updates will be provided to the Committee.

38. **COMMUNITY CENTRES**

38.1 CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

38.1.1 Repair Café for Earley

Members were pleased to hear that the first Earley Repair Café session held on Sunday 13th October was a great success. It was attended by 19 volunteers in addition to the 5 organisers and 47 items were brought in by members of the public for repair. The Town Clerk, who attended the event as one of the organisers, said that she was extremely happy with the day, impressed by the positive attitudes and supportive nature of the volunteers and felt that that the session could not have gone better. The Earley Repair Café will be held on the second Sunday of each month at Centrepont Community Centre.

38.2 RADSTOCK LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE

It was noted that the fitting of replacement/new thermostatic radiator valves and temperature controls in all rooms at RLCC had been delayed due to an error from the supplier. The work has been rescheduled for early November and once completed will help reduce heating costs and ETC's carbon footprint.

39. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

The committee received a verbal update from the Operations Manager which included:

- The redecoration project of the main hall in Radstock Lane Community Centre, scheduled for October half term, will include repainting the walls and radiators, sanding and re-staining of the wooden features, new thermal-lined curtains and upgrading the lighting to LED ceiling panels.
- The re-installation of the noticeboard on Church Road near the junction of High Tree Drive has been completed.
- ETC are awaiting revised quotes for the replacement of the two missing bus shelters at the top of Church Road. A new contractor is being used following several issues with the previous supplier.
- ETC have reached out to WBC for advice on preventative maintenance at Maiden Place Community Centre. This is due to an increase in water leaks at the centre, caused by the poor quality of the copper pipes used during construction of the building.
- A replacement memorial bench for the Memorial Garden at Mays Lane Cemetery has been ordered and due to be delivered soon.

40. EVENTS

Members noted that the following events had been held:

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| • Defibrillator Training for Residents | 19 th August at MPCC – well attended |
| • Wind Turbine Tours | 8 th , 11 th & 12 th August – fully booked within days of advertising so an extra 3 dates added |
| • Bat Walk | 4 th September at Bulmershe Park - fully booked |
| • Bric a brac ‘sales’ | 3 rd & 4 th October |

It was also noted that a Macmillan coffee morning, organised by staff, will be held in the Council Chamber on Monday 28th October 2024.

41. LAUREL PARK

Members noted that officers had met with WBC officers to discuss how the Town Council could support the borough council's efforts to reduce the impact on residents of vehicles associated with the large number of football matches being played at Laurel Park. It was agreed that, whilst ETC could be supportive, Laurel Park is a WBC asset and LPFC are WBC hirers, so it was down to the borough council to agree on a solution to this long-standing issue.

42. SILVERDALE RED PHONE BOX

Members were asked to put forward ideas for the red phone box in Silverdale Road, noting that the project is due to be revisited now that closer relations with the University of Reading have been established. Departments at the University will be asked if they are interested in converting the traditional red phone box into something else for residents to enjoy and the ideas from the committee would be fed into these discussions.

The committee made several suggestions, including a history project showing photos of old Earley and an art installation. Their preference would be to keep the phone box closed to reduce the potential risk of vandalism.

43. EVENTS FIELD

The committee considered two suggestions submitted at the Council meeting of 17th July 2024 by a resident regarding the Events Field, a Wokingham Borough Council site. Both requests involved ETC commissioning works at a site that it neither owns nor has any degree of control over. The Committee agreed that the correct process for requesting new facilities at any site was to contact the owner or manager of the site in the first instance. The resident to be informed of this.

44. PUBLICATIONS

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

Involve Community Services	E-newsletter - 27 th September 2024
Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB)	E-newsletter – 11 th September 2024
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter - 25 th September & 9 th October 2024
Me2 Club	E-newsletter - 30 th September 2024

45. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

It was agreed that there would be publicity advertising the desilting works, informing residents of what was happening and why.

46. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.37pm