



## **EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 which commenced at 7.00pm.

### **Present**

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor M Smith

Councillors: R Ahlawat, A Bradley, N Brock, R Browne, R Cook, D Hare, T Holton, M Iyengunmwena, S Jordan, P Jorgensen, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, A Neal, B Owen and C Smith.

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk).

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### **62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bassett, M De Jong, J Eastwell, N Jorgensen, S Newton and H Sarasan.

### **63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hare and Councillor Brock declared an interest in agenda item 19 – Service to Earley Award 2024, as one of the nominees is known to them personally.

### **64. PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

### **65. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (Minutes 43 – 61) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

### **66. APPROVAL OF ABSENCE**

Councillors considered the approval of a period of absence from Council meetings for Councillor De Jong on the grounds of ill health (LGA Act 1972, s.85(1) and (2) with a review of the matter at the Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

It was: **RESOLVED** that approval be granted with a review on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

### **67. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION**

- 67.1 Councillors received a written report from the Town Mayor detailing the events he had recently attended. These included the Opening Ceremony of the extension of the Gurdwara on London Road; the official opening of Daisy's Dream's new offices in Chalfont Place; Wokingham Volunteer Centre's AGM; the Berkshire Judicial Service Ceremonial Service; the Royal Berkshire Lord Lieutenant's award ceremony for South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association; the unveiling of the bleed kit and defibrillator at Maiden Place; Earley Crescent

Centre AGM; Earley St Peter's Remembrance Service and a verbal report on his visit to Austen House with Fraser the Therapy Dog.

67.2 Deputy Town Mayor's Communications

Councillors received a written report from the Deputy Town Mayor on her attendance along with the Town Mayor at Earley Crescent Community Association's AGM on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**68. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

68.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Councillor Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 32 - 46) held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The Council received the draft Minutes.

68.2 Planning Committee

Councillor M Smith presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 59 - 72) held 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The Council received the Minutes.

Councillor M Smith presented the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 73 - 88) held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The Council received the Minutes.

68.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 41 - 60) held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The Council received the Minutes.

**69. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

69.1 ARC

Members received a written report from Councillor Cook on her attendance at an ARC meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

69.1.2 Highwood Management Conference

Councillors received a written report from Councillor Matthews on her and Councillor Littler's attendance at the Annual Highwood Conference on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024.

69.1.3 Borough Parish Liaison Forum

Members received a written report from Councillor Browne on his attendance at the Borough Parish Liaison Forum on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

69.1.4 Wokingham Waterside Centre

Members received a written report from Councillor Jordan on her attendance at Wokingham Waterside Centre's Board Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

69.1.5 Meeting of Earley Bus

Councillors received a written report from Councillor Cook on her attendance at the Committee Meeting of Earley Bus on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

#### 69.1.6 South West Rail Stakeholder Conference

Councillors received a report from Councillor Bassett on her virtual attendance at South West Rail Stakeholder Conference on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024.

#### 69.2 Appointment of Town Council Representative

In accordance with Minute 49.2 of the Full Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024, it was:

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Maher be appointed as the Council's representative to the Southwest Railway Stakeholder group.

### 70. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

Councillors considered the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee to refuse a request from Wokingham Borough Council for CIL funds towards the building of an accessible bridge over the River Loddon adjacent to Showcase Cinema. Whilst Members supported the idea in principle, they were aware of WBC's previous plans to improve the existing bridge and queried why these were not being progressed. They were of the opinion that the revised proposal was too costly.

It was **RESOLVED** that the request be refused. WBC to be informed of the reasons and be encouraged to reconsider their original plans and to look at cheaper options for the project.

### 71. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Members considered the notes and observations from Councillors who met on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to discuss the draft Terms of Reference of the Preliminary Stage of the Community Governance Review being conducted by Wokingham Borough Council. They were of the view that the document provided did not actually form a Terms of Reference.

It was **RESOLVED** that the eight points raised by Councillors on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 be submitted to WBC, along with a further comment that the draft Terms of Reference were not considered to be adequate.

### 72. **REMOTE ATTENDANCE & PROXY VOTING – GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

Councillors received a written report on the Government consultation to allow remote attendance and proxy voting at Council meetings, a proposal aimed at modernising democratic engagement, raise standards and widen the range of candidates standing for Council by removing unnecessary barriers.

Whilst Councillors supported the idea that remote attendance at meetings was a benefit for those who were medically or physically unable to attend meetings in person, they were of the view that remote attendance in general was not appropriate or applicable to ETC at this time. In relation to proxy voting, Councillors did not support this, they expressed concerns that it could result in decisions being made by just a few councillors and that there could be issues with predetermination, in that a councillor's decision could be made before any discussion takes place at a Council meeting, they deemed this undemocratic.

It was **RESOLVED** that a response be submitted to the consultation to say: -

- ETC agrees with the principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote meeting in exceptional circumstances only.
- ETC does not agree with the introduction of proxy voting.

**73. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE**

Record of Members' Attendance

Councillors noted the details of Councillors' attendance during 2024/25 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

**74. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

Members noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 7229 – 7273).

**75. PUBLICATIONS**

Councillors noted that the following publications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices:

Office of the PCC	E-newsletter October 2024
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
Friendship Alliance e-newsletter	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2024

**76. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA**

No press releases were requested in this section of the meeting. In Part II of the meeting, it was requested that a statement be made in relation to Mays Lane Cemetery.

**77. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

There were no members of the public or press present. It was agreed that the remaining items on the Agenda be taken under Part II.

**PART II**

**78. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**79. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**80. SERVICE TO EARLEY AWARD**

**81. MAYS LANE CEMETERY**

**82. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.27pm.

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**Town Mayor**