



## **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 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025 which commenced at 7pm.

### **Present**

Chair – Councillor N Brock

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

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

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#### **47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **49. PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

#### **50. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** that they be signed by the Chair (Minutes 32-46).

#### **51. ANNUAL FEES & CHARGES REVIEW – 2025/26**

Members considered all the information available to them before agreeing on recommendations to go to Full Council, these to take effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. The information provided included current ETC charges and comparisons with other local service providers.

##### **51.1 Mays Lane Cemetery**

Councillors **RECOMMEND** that all fees increase by 10% across all residencies for 2025/26, except for the following:

- Cremated Remains- no increase for fees relating to cremated remains interments or re-openings.
- Exclusive Right of Burial purchase - no increase.

##### **51.2 Culver Lane Allotments**

Councillors **RECOMMEND** that a small increase be made to fees (50p or £1) to take effect in January 2026.

### 51.3 Hall Hire

Councillors **RECOMMEND** that all hourly fees increase by £2 per hour for 2025/26.

### 51.4 Fishing Permits

Councillors **RECOMMEND** that season pass fees increase by £1 and all other fees increase by 50p for 2025/26.

### 51.5 Sports Pitch Hire

Councillors noted that no increase was applied to football charges in 2023/24 and **RECOMMEND** that sports pitch hire charges increase by 10% for 2025/26.

## 52. **DOG WASTE BAGS**

Councillors agreed that the budget for the purchase of dog waste bags remain the same and that ETC continue the provision of dog waste bags at cost (£1 per pack of 50) to Earley residents in 2025/26.

## 53. **MAIDEN ERLEGH LAKE AND NATURE RESERVE**

### 53.1 Desilting Works

The committee noted that the desilting works at the lake were completed in November 2024. A significant amount of silt was removed from the entrapment pond, this will enable the pond to continue functioning efficiently for several years. Feedback from residents was very positive.

### 53.2 Biodiversity Projects

Members received a report on ETC's biodiversity work and associated projects being delivered by the Park Rangers. This included updates on botanical survey work, the installation of hedgehog houses and owl boxes at MENR, the introduction of species incident reports for injured animals, coppicing and future plans for surveying.

The committee was also pleased to hear that volunteer numbers had risen since the start of ETC's biodiversity project and the Wednesday volunteers are at full capacity most weeks. Officers are of the view that at least some of this rise in interest is due to the increase in press releases and social media updates by ETC showcasing some of the work done by the volunteers.

## 54. **ALLOTMENTS**

Councillors discussed updating the competition guidelines in 2025 to ensure as many plot holders as possible would have a chance of winning. The judging criteria was also in need of updating to encourage plot holders to grow a variety of fruit and vegetables as well as flowers for pollinators.

The committee **RESOLVED** that the guidelines will now state that a plot holder can win no more than once in a 5 year period. The wording in the guidelines will also be adjusted to encourage plot holders to grow a variety of fruit and vegetables as well as flowers for pollinators.

## 55. **COMMUNITY CENTRES**

### 55.1 CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

#### Earley Repair Café

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on the progress of the Earley Repair Café at Centrepoint Community Centre. Four sessions have been held so far and all of them have been well attended.

The range of items residents bring in for repair continues to expand and volunteer repairers have worked on a wide variety of items including garden equipment, an array of electrical goods, wooden chairs, textiles and toys, Christmas decorations, bikes and so on.

Since it opened the Earley Repair Café has saved 150 items from landfill and has taken £579 in donations which will be used to fund the future running costs and improvements of the Repair Cafe. Councillors involved in the project reported that the atmosphere is always busy but everyone is very happy and friendly.

#### 55.2 RADSTOCK LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Members noted that the redecoration of the main hall has been completed, and replacement curtains have been ordered. These will not only improve the appearance of the hall but will help reduce heating costs and ETC's carbon footprint as they are thermal lined.

#### 55.3 MAIDEN PLACE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Deputy Town Clerk provided a report on the car park wall at Maiden Place Community Centre which collapsed in 2022. Whilst ETC Officers had been liaising with WBC's Highway Assets team, WBC's Trees team instructed its contractor to cut down three mature trees at the location, without ETC's knowledge, leaving stumps which posed a health and safety risk for users of the car park.

ETC Officers have established that the wall is the responsibility of the Town Council but as WBC's Highway Assets team referred to there being other unground issues, before rebuilding the wall, ETC Officers have asked WBC to clarify its position that the wall collapse was due to the removed trees and not due to other underground issues.

### 56. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal report on the following:

- The redecoration of the foyer at Centrepont - completed
- The replacement of the TRV's and thermostats at Radstock Lane Community Centre
- Quotes are being obtained to upgrade the lighting in the Function Room at Maiden Place Community Centre to LED.
- The completion of the recent tree surveys carried out by the tree surgeons and Park Ranger Service.
- The installation of the new bench in the memorial garden at Mays Lane Burial Ground.
- Repairs to play equipment ahead of the upcoming annual inspections.
- Repairs and police reports following vandalism to bus shelters and the duck feeding/fishing platforms at MENR lake.

Councillors asked the Operation Manager to pass on their thanks to staff for the speed with which they carried out the repairs at MENR.

### 57. COLLABORATIVE WORKING

#### 57.1 University of Reading

Members noted that the Town Clerk and Cllr D Hare continue to meet with representatives of the University of Reading to explore opportunities for collaborative working and that discussions remain positive.

##### 57.1.1 Silverdale Phone Box

Members noted that the University is approaching several of its departments to gauge interest in working with ETC on a reuse project for the red telephone box in Silverdale Road. Cllr N Brock, chair of the Amenities and Leisure Committee will attend an initial discussion meeting with UoR representatives and report back to the Committee.

### 57.1.2 Swallows Meadow

Councillors were asked to consider a request from the UoR that the Town Council work with them on ways to improve this site for residents' use, The Town Clerk asked the committee to pass on any ideas they may have so these can be taken to future discussions with the university. At this point there is no detail on what help might be required, the Town Clerk reminded Members that ETC would only have limited resources available due to current commitments and responsibilities.

### 58. TOWN MAPS

Members considered a report from the Senior Operations Support Officer on the work to replace ETC's town maps, Members were asked to provide input to officers and from the options provided indicated that they preferred a modern design incorporating icons and possibly including walking distances, The committee agreed that they would like inset maps of the various green spaces around Earley, these insets would be possible due to the shape of the Earley boundaries.

Members agreed that the new maps would not differentiate between Lower Earley and Earley and would be titled as 'Earley'. Officers will conduct a condition survey to confirm whether the existing frames/ boards can be used and will report back with any further updates.

### 59. CORONATION TREE

The committee noted that the King's Coronation Tree at Paddick Drive had succumbed to coral fungus and had been removed. A replacement tree has now been planted and is being monitored and cared for by the Park Ranger team.

### 60. EVENTS

Members noted that the Carols at the Lake event, scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024, had to be cancelled due to staff illness. After consultation with EEG, it was agreed that there were not enough volunteers to be able to hold the event safely.

### 61. BERKSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The committee noted that a Public Consultation on the BLNRS is planned for **3rd February - 10th March 2025**. During this time, there will be an opportunity for the community of Berkshire to review the strategy documents, including adding their thoughts on the Local Habitat Map in a public survey. There will also be drop-in sessions to help people navigate the map and take part in the survey. Further details will be supplied to Members when available.

### 62. PUBLICATIONS

To note that the following items had been received and are available for viewing from the Council Offices:

Involve Community Services	E-newsletter – 6 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> December 2024
Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB)	E-newsletter – 7 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter – 23 <sup>rd</sup> October & 12th December 2024
Me2 Club	E-newsletter - 28 <sup>th</sup> November 2024

### 63. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

No press releases were requested.

**64. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.56pm.

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Chair, Amenities & Leisure Committee