



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 5th February 2025 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor M Smith

Councillors: R Ahlawat, A Bassett, N Brock, J Eastwell, D Hare, T Holton, M Iyengunmwena, S Jordan, P Jorgensen, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, A Neal, S Newton, B Owen, H Sarasan and C Smith.

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

83. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bradley, R Browne, R Cook, M De Jong and N Jorgensen.

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

85. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

86. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 27th November 2024 (Minutes 62 – 82) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

87. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

- 87.1 Councillors received a written report from the Town Mayor detailing the events he had attended since the last meeting. These included a carol singing and fund-raising event for Daisy's Dream; taking part in the annual Reading Toy Run; an Advent Service at Earley St Peters Church; Wokingham Borough School's Carol Concert; and A Service of Nine Lessons & Carols also at Earley St Peters Church.

The Town Mayor also thanked ETC Officers for organising the Mayor's Reception at Radstock Community Centre on 9th January 2025 which raised over £200 for his chosen charity Daisy's Dream.

88. COMMITTEE REPORTS

88.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Councillor Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 47 - 64) held on 15th January 2025. The Council received the draft Minutes.

88.2 Planning Committee

Councillor M Smith presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 89 - 106) held on 10th December 2024. The Council received the Minutes.

Councillor M Smith presented the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 107 - 120) held on 7th January 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

88.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 61 - 76) held on 22nd January 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

89. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

89.1 University of Reading

Members received a written report from the Town Clerk on her and Councillor D Hare's attendance at a meeting on 27th November 2024.

89.1.2 More Arts

Councillors noted that More Arts is closing on 31st March 2025 and that there will no longer be a need for a Town Council representative.

89.1.3 Queen Victoria Institute Fund

Members noted that that the QVIF is in the process of registering as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and dissolving the old charity QVIF. The Trustees have decided that they will no longer ask the Town Council for a nomination to the board of the new charity, therefore ETC will no longer provide a representative to QVIF. Members also noted that ETC's current representative, Cllr D Hare, has agreed with QVIF that he will stand in a personal capacity as a Trustee of the new charity.

90. ANNUAL FEES & CHARGES REVIEW 2025/26

Councillors considered the recommendations of the Amenities & Leisure Committee in relation to the annual fees and charges for 2025/26.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the following increases will be applied as of 1st April 2025, except the increases at Culver Lane Allotments, which will be applied as of 1st January 2026.

90.1 Mays Lane Cemetery

There will be: -

- No change to charges for services related to Cremated Remains
- No change to charges for Exclusive Rights of Burial (EROB)
- A 10% (rounded up) increase is applied to all other charges

90.2 Culver Lane Allotments

There will be an increase of £1 to each type/size of plot and an increase of £1 to the Horticultural Society fees.

90.3 Hall Hire

There will be a £2.00 increase to all hourly hall hire charges.

90.4 Fishing Permits

There will be an increase of £1.00 to adult season permits (both Earley and Woodley) and a 50p increase to Junior, Over 60s and concessions season permits. There will also be a 50p increase to the cost of all day tickets.

90.5 Sports Pitch Hire

There will be a 10% (rounded up) increase to all sports pitch hire charges.

91. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2025/26

91.1 Town Council Budget 2025/26

Councillors received a copy of the proposed Budget and a report detailing discussions at the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 22nd January 2025 and further discussions at the meeting of the Budget Working Party on 27th January 2025.

There was a lengthy discussion during which councillors considered the report and proposed Budget for financial year 2025/26. Councillors voted (16 – for, 4 - abstentions) in favour of the proposed Budget.

It was **RESOLVED** that £10,000 be transferred from the Sibly ear marked reserve to the general fund to support the recruitment of an additional grounds person.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed Budget 2025/26 be approved.

91.2 Town Council Precept 2025/26

Councillors discussed and considered the precept for 2025/26. A motion for a 4.99% increase to be applied to the Town Council Precept for 2025/26 was proposed and seconded. Councillors voted (14 – for, 6 – against) in favour of the motion and it was

RESOLVED that a 4.99% increase be applied to the Town Council Precept for 2025/26. The precept for 2025/26 to be set at £1,058,105.

92. SERVICE TO EARLEY AWARD 2024

Councillors noted that at the Mayor's Reception on 9th January 2025, the Service to Earley Award 2024 was presented to Liz Kerry for her work organising the Earley One Square at a Time patchwork as well as her involvement on other community works around Earley

Councillors also noted that a Special Recognition Award was presented to Fraser, a Pets as Therapy dog, for his work supporting residents at Austen House Care Home.

93. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members received an updated Community Governance Review paper as provided by Wokingham Borough Council. It was agreed that a Working Group be formed, consisting of Councillors A Bassett, P Jorgensen, A Neal, S Matthews and C Smith. The Working Group will convene to consider the review and make recommendations to Full Council at its meeting on 26th March 2025 regarding a proposed submission by ETC to the review.

94. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2025/26

Councillors considered the proposed meeting schedule for 2025/26 and it was: -

RESOLVED that the proposed meeting schedule for 2025/26, with no changes, be approved.

95. CONSULTATION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF SANCTIONS

Councillors noted that the Government is consulting on proposals for the introduction of sanctions on Councillors in local government found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct, a move which is being supported by NALC and SLCC.

The Town Clerk reported that bullying was still an issue around the country and that the Government aims are to improve standards overall. Councillors P Jorgensen and S Matthews reported that they had responded to the consultation and all Councillors were encouraged to view the consultation and submit their individual responses by the closing date on 26th February 2025.

96. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Record of Members' Attendance

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

97. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Members noted that no Orders for Payment had been issued since the last meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee.

98. 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 November & December 2024
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 6 th & 20 th December 2024
Friendship Alliance e-newsletter	8 th January 2025

99. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

The following press releases/website posts were requested: -

- ETC's agreed precept for 2025/2026.
- The launch of a Youth Club at Centrepont, once an update and photos had been received from Berkshire Youth.

100. 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

101. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

102. COMMITTEE REPORTS

103. MAYS LANE CEMETERY

104. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.04pm.

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Town Mayor