

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 5th March 2025 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor N Brock

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

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

65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Browne, A Long and T Maher.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

67. PUBLIC FORUM

A representative from a local interest group, the Friends of Bulmershe Open Space, addressed the committee, explaining that FoBOS have produced plans for a Bulmershe Green Corridor to supplement Earley Environmental Group's original Green Corridor proposal, FoBOS request that ETC support this plan in its response to the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy consultation. The representative requested that ETC be proactive in taking the strategy forward and encouraging other landowners to act.

The Chair thanked the representative for attending the meeting and making his request.

68. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2025 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** they be signed by the Chair (Minutes 47-64)

69. MAIDEN ERLEGH LAKE AND NATURE RESERVE

69.1 Lake Inspection

The committee noted that the annual lake inspection by ETC's appointed Lake Engineer will take place on 4th April 2025.

69.2 Biodiversity Projects

Members received a report on ETC's biodiversity work and associated projects being delivered by the Park Rangers. The report included a schedule for upcoming botanical and species surveys, regenerative restoration of Redhatch Copse, wildflower beds and the creation of a register for all new planting, not just trees. The Town Clerk informed councillors that ETC grounds staff have put special stickers on grass cutting machinery to raise awareness of hibernating hedgehogs as part of an initiative by the Hedgehog Preservation Society. A photograph of the team with these stickers will be sent to the Society and ETC will join the list of 'Hedgehog Heroes' on the HPS website.

70. ALLOTMENTS

The Committee noted that the plot condition inspections are scheduled to restart in March, officers will follow up any issues identified. There are currently two vacant plots, these will be offered to people on the waiting list. The current position is that three of the four troughs are let, as are seven of the eight raised beds.

71. COMMUNITY CENTRES

71.1 CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Earley Repair Café

Members were pleased to note that the Earley Repair Café continues to be well attended by volunteers and visitors. The team of Repair Café volunteers have now looked at 175 items, many of which have been fully repaired and saved from landfill. A second volunteer has received PAT testing training, ensuring electrical items can be tested at every meeting of the Earley Repair Café. Officers continue to promote the facility, new posters have been put up on noticeboards and on social media to increase awareness and promote the sessions.

71.2 RADSTOCK LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Elizabeth Room

The Town Clerk reported that a wide range of support groups are hiring the Elizabeth Room on a regular basis. Officers are careful to ensure that appropriate groups have opportunity to hire the space, so new applicants are invited to meet with us before any agreement is reached. The Town Clerk noted that one significant benefit of the facility had been to bring to Earley services that hadn't operated here before.

72. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

The Operations Manager gave a verbal report to councillors, headlining works recently carried out by ETC, including:

- The ordering of replacement bus shelters for Church Road, these are due to be installed in the spring of 2025
- The upgrading of the heating system at Centrepoint by WBC allowing ETC full control - this will help reduce energy consumption.
- The clearance of vegetation around the Duck and the World statue at MENR to improve visibility from the footpath as well as opening areas up for nesting birds
- The renovation of several benches at Mays Lane Burial Ground
- Improvements to the footpath around Redhatch Copse and ivy banding on the trees adjacent to the path
- The ordering of a replacement cricket roller
- The completion of the replacement lighting in MPCC Function Room, this has been upgraded to LED panels
- The ordering of 8 more noticeboards and some self-healing pinboards for the noticeboards that cannot be replaced due to limited space

73. COLLABORATIVE WORKING

73.1 Silverdale Road Telephone Box

Members received a report on the progress of this project with the University of Reading. This included options for use and potential themes for the phone box on Silverdale Road, ideas discussed at a meeting between representatives from ETC and the University of Reading. Members were keen

to discuss the proposed options and, conscious of the university term dates, suggested that the university be asked to focus on climate as the first theme, followed by a local history project later in the year when their PGCE students could interact with local schools.

74. HUGE EARLEY LITTER PICK

The committee noted that ETC are organising the Huge Earley Litter Pick on Sunday 23rd March 2025, assisted by EEG and EASI. Advertisements for the event had been put out on notice boards with social media posts to follow, and volunteers are encouraged to come along to one of the starting points. The following routes and times are planned:

Interpretation Centre:

10.00- 12.30- Route heading south from Interpretation Centre

10.00- 12.30- Route heading east from Interpretation Centre

14.00- 16.30- Route heading north from Interpretation Centre to Sol Joel

14.00- 16.30- Route heading west from Interpretation Centre

Junction of London Rd/The Drive

10.00- 12.30- Route along London Road

Junction of Pitts Lane/Town Lane

14.00- 16.30- Route towards Bulmershe Park

Maiden Place Community Centre car park

10.00- 12.30- East from Maiden Place Community Centre

Chalfont Park car park-

10.00 – 12.30- Route around Chalfont Park from car park

Additionally, the Operations Manager reported that McDonalds in Earley have committed to sending a team out in the morning and another in the afternoon to cover Lower Earley Way as they have done so in previous years.

75. CONNECTING COMMUNITIES in BERKSHIRE (CCB)

The Town Clerk provided a report on her attendance at the Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB) AGM on 30th January 2025. Following this meeting, further discussions are being had with CCB around arranging a fuel poverty advice session for health care providers, local charities and appropriate community groups and other frontline workers.

In addition to this, the Town Clerk is meeting with CCB officers from the 21st Century Halls project to discuss an energy efficiency survey of one of ETC's buildings, in the first instance, this will inform any remedial works ETC later commission.

76. BERKSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

Members noted that a Public Consultation on the Berkshire LNRS has been launched, closing on 24th March 2025.

The public have been asked to comment on four documents contained within the Berkshire LNRS: The Description of Berkshire; The List of Priorities & Measures; The Local Habitat Map; and The Species Priorities List.

The consultation itself is bulky and not very user friendly, ETC officers will review the documents and submit relevant comments, Members of the Committee were encouraged to consider submitting their own observations and comments.

It was also confirmed that the council would formally support the Green Corridor proposal submitted by EEG.

77. PHARMACEUTICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Committee noted that Wokingham Borough Council is carrying out a survey of pharmacy services in the area to find out how residents access and use local pharmacy services. Details of the survey have been put on the ETC website and social media. Visit <https://engage.wokingham.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/give-us-your-views-on-pharmacies-in-the-borough> for details. Survey closes on 9th March 2025.

78. PUBLICATIONS

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

Involve Community Services	E-newsletter – 18 th January, 31 st January & 14 th February 2025
Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB)	E-newsletter – 7 th November 2024 & 9 th January 2025
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter – 22 nd January & 5 th February 2025
Me2 Club	E-newsletter – 31 st January 2025

79. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

It was agreed that an update on the biodiversity work undertaken by ETC will be made available on social media and the website. Residents will also be encouraged to comment on the Berkshire LNRS consultation prior to the 24th March 2025 deadline.

80. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.21pm