



ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2025

Minutes of the meeting of Annual Town Meeting held in the Function Room at Maiden Place Community Centre, Maiden Place, Earley, Reading on Tuesday 29th April 2025, which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor M Smith

Present: ETC officers: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and M Brown (Operations Manager); A Bassett, N Brock, R Browne, R Cook, J Eastwell, D Hare, S Jordan, P Jorgensen, A Long, T Mahir, A Neal, S Newton, B Owen, S Matthews, C Smith and representatives from Age UK Berkshire, Earley Repair Café, European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), Maiden Erlegh Rotary Club, University of Reading and members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Molli Cleaver, University of Reading and Richard Nicholson, Maiden Erlegh Rotary Club.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Town Electors' Meeting held on 16th April 2024 were confirmed as a true record.

3. EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Mayor expressed that he has enjoyed his time as Town Mayor, having the pleasure of attending many interesting events and that this meeting would be his last activity as Town Mayor.

The Town Mayor reported to the meeting that over the past 12 months the Town Council had considered 252 planning applications, had awarded £17,414 in grants to local groups and organisations and had continued with its biodiversity programme to improve wildlife and habitat. He reported that two main highlights of the past year had been the launch of the Earley Repair Café in October 2024 and launch of a Youth Club in January 2025. Another highlight for him had been the work on the nesting boxes which resulted in two tawny owls moving into the owl boxes at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve.

The Town Mayor also reported on other activities of the Town Council over the past 12 months, these included desilting works of Maiden Erlegh Lake, the upgrade of play equipment at Meadow Park, the complete replacement of play equipment at Collins Drive, the replacement of the 69-year-old cricket roller to ensure that high standards at Sol Joel Park are maintained and the installation of new bus shelters, benches and noticeboards.

The meeting was told that the Town Council had continued its work to improve energy efficiency in Council buildings and had installed LED lights in some of the rooms at Maiden Place Community Centre and Radstock Lane Community Centre. Also, that the solar panels installed at the Council Offices continued to save energy.

The Town Mayor told the meeting of several events the Town Council had held such as the HUGE Earley litter pick, bat walks, defibrillator training for residents and the Earley Green Fair. Other events held included the Mayor's Reception and the Mayor's Easter Charity Event in aid of the Mayor's chosen charity Daisy's Dream.

4. PRESENTATIONS

The following presentations were given to the meeting: -

4.1 Maiden Erlegh Rotary Club – Pat Holloway

The Rotary Club has 5 clubs in Reading and 30 clubs across Berkshire, with Maiden Erlegh Rotary Club being one of them. The club is fundamentally a fundraising organisation working to support young people, international causes, local community groups and community food services.

The club has raised over £30,000 for local charities and has worked with SHARE, a local food sharing charity, helping to deliver over 7,000 meals. Members also volunteer their time to make a difference in local communities and over the Christmas period became many Father Christmases at gardens centres in Winnersh and Hare Hatch. The club has also recently worked with Leighton Park School in Reading and will be launching a Youth Art competition during the October half term.

Pat said that Maiden Erlegh Rotary Club were always keen to welcome new members and urged people to consider joining them.

4.2 Age UK Berkshire – Lesley Hoey

After the merging of Age Concern UK and Help the Aged, it became Age UK Berkshire, an independent charity providing information/advice to people over the age of 50 across Berkshire.

Age UK Berkshire has 54 staff and 250 volunteers who can assist in carrying out benefit checks, pension checks and who can offer advice on care and financial services. A Home from Hospital service supports people who have been discharged from hospital, offering 2-3 weeks support with shopping, laundry and cleaning. A Handyperson service is also available to help with small jobs around the home.

Age UK Berkshire also works with other local groups such as the Link Visiting Scheme and made 36 Earley referrals to the Link's Christmas Lunch scheme. Age UK Berkshire also works with the University of Reading and its students, as part of certain courses, work as volunteers befriending those in need.

4.3 University of Reading – Jules Shaw

The University are engaged with local projects in Earley and are currently working with the Town Council on refurbishing the red telephone box in Silverdale Road. The aim is to make the phone box a community point of interest and the plan is to invite students from Maiden Erlegh School to be involved with the project.

Other projects for the University include the management and maintenance of green spaces owned by the University but located away from the University campus. One of these green

spaces being Swallows Meadow in Earley, where the University has worked with the local community groups and the Town Council to improve the accessibility of the site for local residents by clearing pathways, installing kissing gates and signage. The University has also worked with local group Freely Fruity who provided and planted 60 native fruit trees and bushes.

The University's plan is to continue monitoring the site and to work on the developing the site further to enhance it for the local community and link it into an Earley green corridor.

4.4 Earley Repair Café – Andrew Bradley

The original Repair Café was the idea of Martine Postma and the first ever Repair Café was held on 18th October 2009 in Amsterdam. Since then, over 2,500 repair cafes are operating worldwide, with the aim of reducing the amount going to landfill, moving away from a “throw away” culture and passing on repair skills.

The Earley Repair Café opened on Sunday 13th October 2024 and is held the second Sunday of every month at Centrepont Community Centre from 10.00am to 1.00pm. It has 5 organisers and 28 volunteers who help in various roles.

Since it opened, 243 items have been registered, with 53% being fully repair and 15% being partially repaired or due to return. The Earley Repair Café looks to repair items such as clothes, soft toys, bikes, electronics, tools, furniture and anything else that may come through its door and repairers encourage people to sit and watch them, with the aim of passing on their repair skills.

The Earley Repair Café does not charge for repairs but will gratefully accept donations, which help towards running costs and supplies and it welcomes anyone to come along with a repair or to just pop in for a cup of tea and a chat.

4.5 European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) – John Gall

The ECMWF is an independent intergovernmental organisation with 23 member states and 12 co-operating states. It produces weather forecasts, works on climate change models and carries out scientific and technical research to improve weather forecasting, all of its work is of a sensitive nature and requires a high level of security.

Since 1970, the Headquarters have been located at Shinfield Park, but the site is no longer fit for purpose and as the ECMWF accepted the UK's offer to continue as a host nation, the Headquarters will be moving site to the University of Reading's Whiteknights campus.

Photos of the new site were shown to the meeting and attendees were told that the new Headquarters will have 300 members of staff, will have a lecture theatre and a Council Chamber, along with a restaurant. The proposed completion date of the move is Spring 2027.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Town Mayor thanked officers for organising the meeting, thanked the guest speakers for their presentations and everyone for attending. The formal meeting was declared closed at 8.14 pm and attendees were invited to stay for refreshments.

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Town Mayor