



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 9th July 2025 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor N Brock

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

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and 5 members of the public.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Browne, M De Jong, M Iyengunmwena and C Smith.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. PUBLIC FORUM

Councillors S Matthews & J Eastwell entered the meeting.

Five members of the public were present, one of whom spoke about their concern over Loddon Garden Village, a proposed new development between Shinfield, Arborfield and Sindlesham. The member of the public expressed concerns over what they felt was a lack of consultation by the University of Reading with Earley residents and a lack of information in the public domain, especially in relation to the increase in traffic and how it will affect Earley. The member of the public also asked for the Town Council's view on the development.

The Chair explained that once a formal application and plans have been submitted to WBC then ETC's Planning Committee will discuss the planning application, but until then, the Town Council is unable to express a formal view, as it requires more information.

Councillor M Smith advised the members of the public that there was information in the public domain on Wokingham Borough Council's website as part of the Local Plan and also on the University of Reading's website, adding that public consultations were held earlier in the year. These were advertised on Town Council noticeboards, website and social media. Councillors commented that the University had also delivered leaflets to properties in Earley, but this may not have been to every property.

The residents were informed that the University had arranged a meeting for councillors next week when it was hoped that more information may be available. All town councillors had been invited to attend the meeting and it was agreed that the residents' concerns about the levels of engagement would be raised with the University at this meeting. It was also agreed that ETC would write to the University to pass on the residents' concerns. It was suggested that residents

could express their concerns directly to Molli Cleaver, the community relations officer at the University.

*The members of the public left the meeting.
Councillor B Owen left the meeting*

29. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Owen entered the meeting.

Councillors considered the minutes from the previous meeting. Councillor Holton asked if the meeting would be receiving minutes from the Strategy Group meeting.

The Town Clerk explained that notes are taken at these meetings, there are no formal minutes, and that notes of the most recent Strategy Group meeting have not been included in the agenda pack as items on the agenda cover items discussed during the meeting.

Councillor Owen expressed her discontent with the response and wanted to know what was being discussed at these meetings, adding that she knew these meetings were being held. She asked all councillors if they knew what was being discussed at the Strategy Group meetings and if they knew how many meetings had actually taken place.

Councillor Owen went on to express her dissatisfaction at not being granted her request for an agenda item on tonight's meeting regarding Loddon Garden Village, having sent numerous emails to the Chair and to the Strategy Group. The Chair explained to the meeting that prior to this evening, she had responded to Councillor Owens's request and informed her that a discussion about Loddon Garden Village would not be on tonight's agenda as a planning application and plans had yet to be submitted to WBC, there was no additional information available that hadn't already been discussed and the Town Council was unable to give its formal view on the development. The Chair also referred to next week's meeting for councillors, arranged by the University, at which they hoped further information about the plans may be available.

Councillor Owen disagreed with the Chair's decision, saying she was angry and that the Chair was being undemocratic by not including a discussion on this evening's agenda. She added that the members of the public who had attended this evening's meeting wanted it discussed, these were people she had spoken to and they wanted to know the view of the Town Council.

Councillor M Smith informed the meeting that, as a member of the Strategy Group, he had not received an email from Councillor Owen about this matter. He observed that ETC's Planning Committee had responded to WBC's Local Plan Update in 2020, 2021 and 2024, which refer to the Loddon Garden Village development, and this information is on ETC's website. Councillor Smith also supported the Chair's response that ETC is not in a position to give its view on the development until a formal planning application and plans have been submitted to WBC.

The Town Clerk spoke to clarify that the Chair had informed Councillor Owen that the matter would not be appearing on tonight's agenda in particular, not that it couldn't be on a future one. Councillor Owen objected to the Town Clerk responding. The Town Clerk went on to say that the content of an agenda is discussed by the Town Clerk and the Chair before it is finalised, the Chair has the right to choose items for his/her agenda but that standing orders state that the Proper Officer's (Town Clerk) decision on the agenda is final.

Councillor Holton requested that even if the Strategy Group meeting notes are only a few lines, please could a note of them be provided at Full Council meetings. The Town Clerk agreed and confirmed this would be done in future.

Councillor P Jorgensen entered the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 7th May 2025 (Minutes 1 – 25) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

30. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

Councillors received a written report from the Town Mayor detailing the events she had attended since her appointment as Town Mayor in May 2025. These included the Earley Crescent Community Association's AGM, a visit to the Earley Repair Café, the Royal County of Berkshire & Surrey Armed Forces Briefing and the High Sherriff's summer reception.

31. COMMITTEE REPORTS

31.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Councillor Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 1 - 18) held on 21st May 2025. The Council received the draft Minutes.

31.2 Planning Committee

Councillor M Smith presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 172 - 187) held on 6th May 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

Councillor M Smith presented the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 1 - 15) held on 3rd June 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

31.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor J Eastwell presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 1 - 19) held on 18th June 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

32. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The chair welcomed Councillor Alison Newton to the Council as a newly appointed Town Councillor following the by-election held on 5th June 2025. It was: -

RESOLVED that Councillor A Newton become a member of the Amenities & Leisure Committee and that Councillor B Owen move from the Amenities & Leisure Committee to the Policy & Resources Committee.

33. BUS SERVICES WORKING GROUP

Councillors considered a request from the Chair of the Planning Committee that the Bus Services Working Group be reformed and tasked with formulating a response to WBC's request for information for its transport network review. It was: -

RESOLVED that the Bus Services Working Group be reformed. The members will be Councillors A Bassett, R Cook, A Long and T Maher. The Working Group was tasked with drafting a response to WBC's request for information for its Transport Network Review and will report back to the Planning Committee.

34. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

34.1 ARC

Members received a written report from Councillor R Cook on her attendance at the ARC AGM held on 25th May 2025.

34.2 Borough Parish Liaison Forum Meeting

Councillors received a verbal report from Councillor M Smith on his attendance at the Borough Parish Liaison meeting on 25th June at which councillors discussed integrated transport, play parks, youth services and received a presentation on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 agreements.

35. **BULMERSHE SULV JOINT SUB COMMITTEE**

Members considered a request from Woodley Town Council that an amendment be made to the Joint Sub Committee terms of reference, increasing Woodley Town Council's full member appointments from two to three, i.e. removing the current substitution appointment.

It was **RESOLVED** that ETC responds indicating that it agrees to this amendment but wishes to match WTC's request and increase ETC's full member appointments from two to three, removing the substitution appointment. ETC will also propose that the terms of reference be amended to permit a maximum of 6 voting members at each meeting and a quorum of 4 voting members. ETC members to be Councillors S Jordan, S Matthews and S Newton.

36. **STANDING ORDERS - REVIEW**

Councillors noted that the Town Clerk had reviewed ETC's Standing Orders following the publication of new Model Standing Orders 2025 and some minor amendments had been made.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised ETC Standing Orders be adopted.

37. **RISK REGISTER 2025**

Members received the Council's updated Risk Register 2025. Councillors discussed various entries and agreed that, in places, the residual risk score, calculated using probability and severity, was a little unclear. It was suggested that the residual risk score could feature two separate figures, a likelihood score and a separate impact score. It was agreed that this would make the document clearer.

Questions were asked about safety measures in place specifically with reference to the recent tragedies occurring in an Essex park and a Lancashire cemetery. The Town Clerk confirmed that, as detailed as a control measure on the Risk Register, a rolling programme of memorial safety testing is in place. The Town Clerk also reported that additional inspections of all Lebanese cedar trees on ETC sites had been commissioned.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Risk Register 2025 be signed by the Chair. As this is a live document the agreed change of having a likelihood score and a separate impact score will be made after the meeting.

Councillor Hare entered the meeting.

38. **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

38.1 Councillors considered the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee that £1,400 of CIL monies be used to fund the four youth activity afternoons being delivered by Berkshire Youth in August 2025. It was: -

RESOLVED that the recommendation be accepted and £1,400 of CIL monies be used to fund the four youth activity afternoons.

- 38.2 Councillors noted that the current CIL reserves stand at £46,403, of which £17,959 should be spent or allocated by October 2025. The Town Clerk reported that the junior section at Meadow Park was in poor condition, with pieces of equipment out of action and suggested that CIL monies could be used towards the upgrade of this section of the park. It was: -

RESOLVED that £16,559 of CIL monies be allocated to the upgrade of the junior section of Meadow Park.

39. EAR MARKED RESERVES – P & R RECOMMENDATIONS

Members received a Recommendation Report from the Policy & Resources Committee following the start of its review of ETC's Ear Marked Reserves (EMR), monies which are set aside for specific work or projects.

The first review undertaken was of the Sol Joel Park Pavillion EMR of £184,500 for the expansion of the pavilion into the upper floor. Members of the Policy & Resources Committee had attended a site visit at the pavilion, in order to feedback details of their observations to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 18th June 2025. The general consensus was that the ground floor of the pavilion was in need of remedial works, it experiences regular leaks due to poor quality copper piping; it is being served by an inadequately sized boiler; and the underfloor heating is no longer functioning properly.

The Committee were of the view that the expansion into the upper floor should not be pursued as there was no evidence of need and restrictions contained in the lease agreement for Sol Joel Park limited what the upper floor could be used for. The site is also a Fields in Trust site and therefore subject to additional restrictions.

Sol Joel Park

Members considered the Policy & Resources Committee recommendation that the expansion of the upper floor at the pavilion no longer be pursued and the Sol Joel Park Pavillion EMR be renamed the Dilapidations & Refurbishment EMR, its use refocused to other aspects of the pavilion and of other ETC sites.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Sol Joel Park Pavilion EMR be renamed the Dilapidations & Refurbishment EMR with the first priorities being: -

- Upgrade/improve ground floor of Sol Joel Pavilion with particular focus on the heating and water systems
- Investigate the feasibility of installing a public toilet at Sol Joel Pavilion
- Upgrade the staff toilet facilities at Radstock House and the workshop

40. RADSTOCK LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE - LEASE

Councillors received an update on the matter of the Radstock Community Centre lease. The most recent communication from Wokingham Borough Council suggested that the Orchard Learning Alliance, who are taking over the lease of the site, are willing to engage with the Town Council over the future of the community centre, however to date there has been no communication from them.

Wokingham Borough Council has offered a meeting between WBC members and the Town Council to address any further concerns. It was agreed that a meeting with WBC members will be requested and that Councillors P Jorgensen, G Littler and S Newton will attend the meeting along with the Town Clerk.

41. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS

Members considered how Earley Town Council will implement the introduction of town and parish council questions featuring as a new agenda item on WBC meeting agendas. It was: -

RESOLVED that councillors will be able to put forward suggested questions, including member representation, to any ETC standing committee meetings as well as Full Council meetings. The committee or Council will consider the suggestions and approve those which are to be submitted to WBC for inclusion on its agendas. The approved questions will be sent to the Town Clerk for final review, before being submitted to WBC.

42. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – BUDGET CONVERSATION

Councillors noted that, as part of its consultation around future budgeting, WBC has created a survey for partners and stake holders, including town and parish councils. It was: -

RESOLVED that a Working Group be formed consisting of Councillors P Jorgensen, S Matthews, A Newton and S Newton. The working group will consider the questions and agree responses for the Town Clerk to submit on behalf of Earley Town Council by the 4th August 2025 deadline.

43. GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION RESPONSE – HYBRID MEETINGS

Members noted that the government has published its response to the consultation on the introduction of remote meetings and proxy voting to local councils. The government supports the principle of remote meetings and intends to create guidance to enable town and parish councils to develop their own individual policies on remote meetings, tailored to local needs and context. The government's view is that proxy voting would be permitted for principal councils only. Changes in legislation are required before any of this could come into effect.

The Town Clerk clarified that proxy voting will not apply to ETC and that the Town/Parish Councils will be able to introduce their own policies and practices in relation to remote or hybrid meetings once the legislation is in place.

44. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL'S TREE CITIES OF THE WORLD STATUS

Councillors received a report on WBC's recognition as a 'Tree Cities of the World'. Following the adoption of a Tree Strategy, implementation of a number of tree planting schemes and community engagement, WBC was in a position to apply for Tree Cities of the World status, which it was granted in January 2025.

45. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Record of Members' Attendance

Councillors noted the details of Councillors' attendance during 2025/26 at meetings of the Council and its Committees. One correction is to be made in relation to Councillor Ahlawat's absence due to his attendance at a WBC meeting.

46. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Members noted the details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee (Vouchers 7848 – 7864, 7865 – 7869, 7870 – 7911) and Imprest vouchers (1073 - 1078).

47. 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 June 2025
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter June 2025
Friendship Alliance e-newsletter	June 2025
Earley NAG	Agenda for meeting of 14 th July 2025
ACER	Minutes of meeting 10 th June 2025
MERA	Minutes of meeting 12 th June 2025

48. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

The following press releases/website posts were requested: -

- WBC’s Tree Cities of the World status

49. 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

50. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

51. COMMITTEE REPORTS

52. MAYS LANE CEMETERY

53. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.57pm.

.....
Town Mayor