



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Wednesday 18th June 2025 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

Councillors: A Bassett, M De Jong, J Eastwell, T Holton, G Littler, A Long, S Matthews and S Newton.

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

1. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

1.1 Councillor Hare called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee for municipal year 2025/2026. A nomination for Councillor Hare was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. It was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Hare be appointed as Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee.

1.2 Councillor Hare called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee for municipal year 2025/2026. A nomination for Councillor Maher was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. It was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Maher be appointed as Vice Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Brock and T Maher.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Newton declared an interest in agenda item 9.1 Town Council Grants 2025/2026 – New Applications, RE-Inspired as his wife is a volunteer for this organisation. Councillor Hare also declared an interest in the same agenda item for Link Visiting Scheme, as he volunteers for them at Christmas.

4. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 12th March 2025 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair. (Minutes 77 - 95).

6. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for February, March and April 2025 had been made available to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee for information.

7. FINANCE UPDATE

Councillors received a written finance update report covering the first two months of the financial year. Councillors also received a copy of the RBS income/expenditure report dated 10th June 2025.

Councillor Newton informed Members that, prior to the meeting, he had raised questions with the Town Clerk regarding the electric/gas credits, the code within the Centrepoint budget for the support of the Repair Café, and the final totals for the Ear Marked Reserves and General Reserves for financial year 2024/2025. Councillor Newton thanked the Town Clerk for her responses.

8. EAR MARKED RESERVES

Members received a written report on the Town Council's Ear Marked Reserves (EMR), these are monies set aside for specific work or projects. The committee is to conduct a review of the reserves and make recommendations to Council should any changes be desired. It was agreed that not all the EMRs could be discussed at this evening's meeting, the focus today would be on the Sol Joel Park Pavilion EMR, other EMRs would be discussed at future meetings of the Policy & Resources Committee.

In preparation for the meeting, Members had been invited to attend a site visit at the Sol Joel Pavilion to gain an understanding of the building and to view the upper floor. The EMR had originally been set up to fund works to expand the pavilion into the upper floor, although no specific purpose for this space had been agreed. During their visit, Members were informed of the major ongoing maintenance issues with the ground floor such as regular water leaks due to substandard pipes and an inadequate boiler/heating system.

Members took part in a lengthy discussion during which they noted the use restrictions on the site arising from the lease and associated charitable trust, and SJP's registration as a Fields in Trust site. The committee were of the view that next door, at Earley St Peters, there was a successful community facility and they were not aware of any requests from Earley residents for additional community facilities. Councillors also noted that the absence of any available on street parking would mean that introducing other services or uses at the pavilion would put additional pressure on the park's already busy car park.

The committee were of the view that the original plan to extend into the upper floor of the pavilion should be withdrawn due to a lack of demand for additional facilities, issues with parking and the constraints of developing the pavilion in view of the terms of the lease and Sol Jol Park's Field in Trust status. It was noted that if circumstances changed and Council, at some time in the future, decided that there was good reason to expand into the upper floor, then a new project could be started. Members agreed that the funds currently in the EMR should be redirected towards resolving the significant maintenance issues which are impacting users of the pavilion, the new focus should be on upgrading the pavilion to better fulfil its function. Councillor Eastwell asked if the possibility of installing a public toilet in the pavilion could be investigated. Councillor Hare raised concerns about the condition of the staff toilet facilities at Radstock House and workshop, suggesting that updating these should be a priority and asking if some of the funds could be directed towards this work as well.

It was **RESOLVED** that recommendation be made to Full Council at its meeting on 9th July 2025, that

- the plan to expand the pavilion into the upper floor be withdrawn
- the Sol Joel Park Pavilion EMR be renamed the 'Dilapidations & Refurbishment EMR' and
- the Dilapidations & Refurbishment EMR be used to address the pavilion's maintenance issues, including replacing the boiler or installing a new heating system. The fund also to be used to upgrade the staff toilet facilities at Radstock House and workshop.

The Town Clerk spoke briefly about the Meadow Park EMR, a fund to upgrade play equipment. She informed Members that whilst some areas of the park are adequate, the junior area is in much

need of work. The Town Clerk requested that this work be made a priority and the EMR considered in future discussions.

9. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS 2025/26

9.1 New Applications

Councillors considered the seven grant applications received in the first 2025/26 grant application period, Tranche 1 – May 2025 intake. It was: -

- 9.1.1 **RESOLVED** that Berkshire Vision will not be awarded a grant on this occasion due to the high level of their general reserves.
- 9.1.2 **RESOLVED** that Keep Mobile be awarded £2,000 to support the costs of providing a community transport service which has seen an increase in service demand.
- 9.1.3 **RESOLVED** that Link Visiting Scheme be awarded £2,000 to support the continued demand for service and the ongoing management of volunteers.
- 9.1.4 **RESOLVED** that Zoom Crochet & Knit Group will not be awarded a grant on this occasion as the applicant had not provided any accounts, had not evidenced any other sources of funding or how the group supports itself.
- 9.1.5 **RESOLVED** that RE-Inspired School Work Project will not be awarded a grant on this occasion as churches and schools are able to draw on other sources of funding. Members were of the view that because ETCs grants are funded using public money, grants should be directed towards local community groups who have limited funding.
- 9.1.6 **RESOLVED** that Aldryngton School PTA will not be awarded a grant on this occasion as schools are able to draw on other sources of funding. Members were reluctant to set a precedent for awarding grants to school building/site projects. In this case, it was noted that a large amount of funds are still to be raised, there is no guarantee the project will go ahead and if it is completed there would appear to be no public access to the facility.
- 9.1.7 **RESOLVED** that Friends of Radstock will not be awarded a grant on this occasion, as schools are able to draw on other sources of funding. It was suggested that the Friends could reach out to organisations such as Freely Fruity for help with their project and also to the academy trust that is scheduled to take over responsibility for this school.

As Councillor Hare and Councillor Newton had declared their interests in Minute Item 3, both councillors abstained from voting.

9.2 Grant Expenditure Reports

Councillors were pleased to note that thank you letters and expenditure reports for grants awarded in 2024/2025 had been received from:

- Berkshire MS Therapy Centre
- Earley Day Centre

10. HEALTH & SAFETY REVIEW

As requested, Members received a copy of the Council's Health & Safety Policy, a short document laying out the Town's Council responsibilities. They noted that there are numerous other health and safety documents, manuals, guidance and risk assessments covering Council operations in place. Councillor Matthews made some suggestions relating to the policy which she will email to the Operations Manager.

Councillor De Jong left the meeting

11. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – SPORTS FACILITIES

Councillors received a report on the Town Clerk's attendance, along with ETC's Chair and Leader, at a meeting with representatives from Wokingham Borough Council to discuss sport facilities.

11.1 Laurel Park

Wokingham Borough Council representatives had confirmed that they accept it is not within Earley Town Council's gift to resolve the parking issues caused by football matches at Laurel Park and that ETC only have rights to parking spaces associated with Maiden Place Community Centre, which are for the use of community centre users. Other parking at Maiden Place does not fall under the remit of ETC and is the responsibility of other companies and organisations. WBC acknowledged that ETC has, in the past, been used somewhat as a scapegoat during discussions addressing football parking issues and confirmed that this would not be repeated.

Councillor De Jong entered the meeting

11.2 3G Pitch in Earley

WBC representatives had confirmed that their Playing Pitch Strategy had identified a need for a 3G pitch in Earley and that Sol Joel Park had been listed as a possible location. The Chair and Town Clerk explained that Sol Joel Park is a Fields in Trust site and that permission for a 3G pitch would have to be sought from them. If permission were to be granted, Fields in Trust would expect an equivalent size of open space land to be made available to counterbalance the 3G pitch. WBC representatives had not been unaware of the Fields in Trust status and agreed that WBC would be unable to provide alternative open space and therefore Sol Joel Park would be removed from the consideration list.

12. YOUTH SERVICES - UPDATE

12.1 Summer Youth Activities

Councillors received a written update on Youth Services and were pleased to hear that Summer Youth Activities, led by Berkshire Youth, will be held at Sol Joel Park on 5th and 19th August and at Chalfont Park on 12th and 26th August, between 2pm – 4pm.

It was **RESOLVED** that a recommendation be made to full council that £1,400 of CIL monies be used to fund the four Summer Youth Activity sessions.

12.2 Longer Term Plans

The Town Clerk spoke about the lack of qualified youth workers, something which would impact ETC's plans to expand its Youth Services. At various collaborative working meetings with Wokingham Borough Council, she had suggested that WBC consider recruiting and training youth workers and allow town and parish councils to buy their services for their own youth service provision within their parishes. The Borough has expressed an interest in this idea and invited the Town Clerk to join a WBC Task & Finish group, the first meeting of which was cancelled. The Town Clerk is waiting on another meeting date, where this idea will be discussed further.

13. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS

Members noted that WBC's new Constitution makes provision for questions from town and parish councils to be submitted to WBC meetings of Council, Executive and other committees.

Members agreed that this new Constitution could benefit town & parish councils and will give them the opportunity to raise questions directly to WBC. The Town Clerk raised some concerns on how the process would be managed by ETC, without it becoming a burden on officer time, as agreeing questions and the spokesperson would have to be done in a timely manner to coincide with WBC meeting dates. Members discussed the idea of power being delegated to ETC's individual Committees and it was agreed that this would be raised at Full Council on 9th July 2025.

14. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 7748 - 7772, 7772a – 7786, 7787 – 7793, 7794 – 7795, 7796 – 7824, 7825 – 7847) and Imprest vouchers 1061 - 1072).

15. PUBLICATIONS

It was noted that the following communications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices:

CCB (Connecting Communities in Berkshire)	E-newsletter April 2025
TVP	Police & Crime Bulletin – April & May 2025 Wokingham North NHPT weekly updates – April & May 2025
MERA	Minutes – April 2025
Me2 Club	E-newsletter April & May 2025

16. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

The following press release was requested: -

- A statement of fact be published on ETC's website regarding WBC's acknowledgement that parking issues associated with football at Laurel Park does not fall under the remit of ETC and that ETC will not be again used as a scapegoat in this matter.

17. 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

18. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Confidential Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 12th March 2025 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signing by the Chair (Minutes 92 – 94).

19. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.52pm.