



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 23rd July 2025 commencing at 7 pm.

Councillors: N Brock (Chair), R Ahlawat, A Bassett, A Bradley, R Cook, M De Jong, A Long, S Matthews and A Newton

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and M Brown (Operations Manager), Councillor A Neal and one member of the public.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Maher.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21. PUBLIC FORUM

The member of the public present, a member of Loddon Valley Ramblers (LVR), said they were interested in listening to the discussion on agenda item 11 - Footpath Signage Request.

22. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2025 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** they be signed by the Chair. Minutes (1-18)

The Chair proposed that Item 11 – Footpath Signage Request be brought forward. It was **RESOLVED** that the item be brought forward and discussed.

23. FOOTPATH SIGNAGE REQUEST

Members discussed the request from Loddon Valley Ramblers for permission to erect a footpath sign at Paddick Drive open space as part of a larger project to install signage along a green and traffic-free walking route from Loddon Bridge to the Shinfield Arms Roundabout, passing through Pearmans Copse, Swallows Meadow and Wood of Eagles.

A councillor queried how this footpath signage project differed from the Lower Earley Way Footpath project and the LVR member confirmed they were in fact the same project. It was also confirmed that LVR would not be seeking Public Right of Way status for the route because the majority of the land involved is owned by public bodies and therefore continued public access is more likely.

It was **RESOLVED** that Earley Town Council would agree in principle to grant Loddon Valley Ramblers permission to erect a footpath sign at Paddick Drive.

The member of the public left the meeting at 7.09pm.

24. CULVER LANE ALLOTMENTS

The committee received a written update from the Deputy Town Clerk. This stated that the majority of plot holders were cultivating and maintaining their plots to a high standard and several new allotment holders had made an exceptional start to their plots. Allotment holders have been reminded to ensure that grass borders are maintained between plots as well as ensuring that the back of the plots are being kept clear from vegetation. Regular inspection visits are being conducted by officers.

25. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Members received a verbal report from the Operations Manager following the latest ash dieback survey at MENR, carried out by ETC officers. Members were informed that the condition of the ash trees within the survey areas had worsened this year, probably due to drought stress as well as the presence of ash dieback fungal spores. The disease causes leaf loss, crown dieback and can eventually lead to the death of the tree, however, officers had been pleased not to find any examples of the lesions which can be present when infection levels are high.

ETC officers are following current guidance which recommends landowners carry out a survey to monitor the effects of the disease as well as carry out works to remove dangerous trees. The Operations Manager confirmed to the meeting that any trees posing a hazard to visitors at the Reserve had been, or would be, felled. The committee was informed that there is currently no cure for the disease and the advice is to manage what is already there and to replace lost trees with other species until further options become available. ETC will look at options for replanting to replace lost trees as part of its biodiversity work.

26. MEADOW PARK

The committee noted that the Senior Operations Support Officer is working up proposals to update the junior section of the play area at Meadow Park. Site visits have been held with two playground providers and a consultation activity will be held on the Town Council's stall at the Green Fair. When the information on what equipment would be possible and the associated costs has been obtained, officers will refer to councillors for input and a decision on the final budget.

27. TOWN MAPS

Members noted that the new Town Maps had been printed and three of them installed at the Mill Lane roundabout, on Lower Earley Way and at Pitts Lane/London Road. Due to an error by the supplier, the map for Elm Lane was delayed but it has now arrived and will shortly be installed.

28. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal report on matters relating to assets and facilities. This included:

- Graffiti on the spillway at MENR which has been painted over due to concerns over the use of graffiti remover so close to a water source. The incident was reported to the police and members discussed reaching out to WBC's ASB team as well.
- An update on play equipment and repairs that have been completed or are in progress
- The continuation of the levelling, topsoiling and seeding of various rows at Mays Lane Burial Ground to improve safety as well as maintaining the visual appearance of the site.
- Preparation works carried out by officers to the Green Fair site
- Areas of brambles and weeds have been removed in key locations in Redhatch Copse to improve biodiversity and encourage the regrowth of the bluebells in the spring of 2026
- Positive updates on the progress of new members of staff
- An additional inspection of ETC's Lebanese Cedar trees to assess their condition and safety following this season's dry conditions

- An update on the installation of the new noticeboards noting that 5 more locations have been surveyed and deemed suitable for replacement, bringing the total to 20 replacements.
- Cllr Matthews raised a question about the recent wildfire at Bulmershe Open Space which had severely damaged many trees including the community orchard planted by volunteers. The Operations Manager observed that he was aware of it because of social media reports of the incident. It was explained that the organisation responsible for managing the maintenance of Bulmershe Park is Woodley Town Council and therefore it would be for them to decide on what actions should be taken following the incident.

29. GREEN FAIR – SATURDAY 2nd AUGUST

The committee noted that preparations for this year's Green Fair on Saturday 2nd August are well under way with over 50 stalls booked. Councillors noted that they had seen lots of posters advertising the event around the town.

30. TOWN COUNCIL QUESTIONS AT WBC MEETINGS

Members were asked if they had specific questions to be submitted to WBC meetings.

Councillor A Newton said she wished to ask Wokingham Borough Council what plans they have for future burial provision in the borough. It was suggested that this question would be asked at the WBC Overview and Scrutiny meeting in November by Councillor A Newton. This was **RESOLVED** by the committee, Councillor A Newton to provide the written question to the Town Clerk for review and submission to WBC.

Councillor A Newton also said she wished to ask Wokingham Borough Council about their policies around planting up roundabouts. It was suggested this question could be broadened to ask about WBC's strategy for improving the visual appearance of public spaces especially in relation to highways. It was suggested the question be submitted to a meeting involving Highways or Cleaner and Greener, Councillor Matthews offered to ask the question. The committee **RESOLVED** that Councillor Matthews submit the question to the Town Clerk for review and submission to WBC.

31. PROFILE OF EARLEY

Councillor Al Neal requested Council considers implementing measures to raise the profile of both Earley and Earley Town Council. His request is to be provided to all three standing committees who will feed back their views to Council for consideration at the next full Council meeting.

Councillor Neal has suggested a dual approach of improving the presence of Earley as a town by installing signage, as well as increasing the community's knowledge of the Town Council and the services ETC provides, by producing a newsletter. The suggestion with regards signage is to replace the current Earley boundary signs with 'Welcome to Earley' signs and to install such signage on other major routes into Earley.

His second suggestion was for ETC to produce a newsletter. There was much Member discussion around this including the need for an editorial policy to ensure the newsletter fulfilled its intended purpose and differences of opinion on whether such a document should be electronic or in hard copy, or a mixture of both.

Members discussed the various options and

It was **RESOLVED** that the Amenities and Leisure Committee would put forward the following suggestions to the next meeting of full council:

- Recommend improving on what we have first, ie increase social media presence, focusing on informative posts about the services ETC provides.
- Agree with improving signage at each of the vehicle entrances into town to establish an Earley presence

- Further research and discussions should be conducted before Council decides to produce a newsletter.

32. PUBLICATIONS

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

Involve Community Services	E-newsletter – 6 th June 2025 & 4 th July 2025
Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB)	E-newsletter – 3 rd June 2025 Community Buildings newsletter 8 th July 2025
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter – 25 th June & 9 th July 2025
Me2 Club	E-newsletter – 1 st July 2025

33. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

It was agreed that a press release promoting the new town maps would be issued when all four maps had been installed.

34. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.20pm