



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 24th September 2025 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor N Brock

Councillors: A Bassett, A Bradley, R Cook, M De Jong, J Eastwell, D Hare, T Holton, P Jorgensen, S Jordan, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, A Neal, A Newton, S Newton, H Sarasan, C Smith and M Smith.

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

54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Ahlawat and Councillor M Iyengunmwena.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

56. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

57. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 9th July 2025 (Minutes 26 - 53) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

Councillor S Newton entered the meeting.

58. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

Councillors received a verbal report from the Town Mayor detailing the events she had recently attended. These included a visit to the Sikh Centre and attendance at the Service of Institution & Induction of Mark Laynesmith, the vicar of Earley St Nicolas Church.

59. COMMITTEE REPORTS

59.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Councillor N Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 19 - 34) held on 23rd July 2025. The Council received the draft Minutes.

59.2 Planning Committee

Councillor A Neal presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 16 - 33) held on 8th July 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

Councillor A Neal presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 34 - 52) held on 5th August 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

Councillor A Neal presented the draft Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting (Minutes 53 - 71) held on 9th September 2025. The Council received the draft Minutes.

59.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 20 - 42) held on 10th September 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

60. **PROPOSED CHANGE TO COMMITTEE TITLE**

Councillors considered a recommendation made by the Planning Committee at its meeting held on 8th July 2025 that the committee's title be changed to the Planning and Transport Committee to better reflect its areas of involvement.

It was **RESOLVED** that the change be implemented with immediate effect.

61. **REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

61.1 EarleyBus

Members received a written report from Councillor R Cook on her attendance at an EarleyBus meeting held on 13th August 2025.

61.2 Earley Charity

Councillor T Maher gave a verbal report stating that the charity has funds available but receives few requests from groups/organisations in Earley. Councillor Maher agreed to forward information on the funding criteria to the Town Clerk and will ask the charity if it would like ETC to promote this information on Council noticeboards, website and social media.

61.3 Highwood Management Conference

Members received a verbal report from Councillor G Littler on his attendance, with Councillor S Matthews, at a meeting held on 16th September 2025. Members of the conference will be reviewing and hope to broaden the remit of the conference agreement which was established in 1965.

61.4 Earley NAG

Councillor M Smith informed councillors that the invitation to attend Earley NAG meetings is open to all councillors.

61.5 Wokingham Waterside Centre

Members received a verbal report from Councillor S Jordan on her attendance at a meeting held on 19th August 2025. She reported that overall income was down compared to this time last year, even with an increase in the summer sessions due to the good weather. New car park signage had been installed and new equipment purchased. A new member of staff has been recruited for fundraising and marketing. Illegal car meets are still an issue, the police have been in attendance recording registration numbers.

62. **SULV JOINT SUB COMMITTEE**

Councillors received a written report from the SULV Joint Sub Committee who met on

1st September 2025. It was noted that, contrary to the report, Councillor S Jordan had not attended the meeting.

63. AUDIT 2024/25

Members noted that the audit for the year ended 31st March 2025 had been completed. The external auditor confirmed there were no matters of concern. The completed Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2024/25 has been posted on the town council's website in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

64. EAR MARKED RESERVES – P & R COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillors considered the recommendations made by the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 10th September 2025 in relation to two EMR headings that were deemed no longer required in their present form. It was: -

RESOLVED that:

- The £8,705 in the Maiden Place Community Centre – Doors & Windows EMR be transferred to the Dilapidations & Refurbishment EMR.
- The £11,095 in the Radstock Lane Community Centre – Improvements EMR be transferred to the Dilapidations & Refurbishment EMR.

65. ETC CHAIRS GROUP MEETING

Councillors received notes from the ETC Chairs Group which met on 11th September 2025. Councillor A Neal, present at the meeting as Chair of the Planning Committee, clarified the group's remit and confirmed that it was not a decision-making body but discussed certain topics which may then be referred on to committee meetings.

Councillor S Newton raised concerns that, in item 2, the word 'agreed' implied that decisions were being made and suggested that maybe the group should be delegated powers to make decisions. The Town Clerk clarified that this was preceded by a line stating that the Town Clerk had already acted and the councillors were agreeing with her action. Councillor S Newton asked that the notes be more carefully worded in future.

Councillor P Jorgensen disagreed with the suggestion that the group should be awarded decision-making powers and requested confirmation that all councillors are able to make requests to committee chairs and to the Town Clerk for items to be put on an agenda. The Town Clerk confirmed that all councillors are permitted to submit such a request.

The Town Clerk expressed the view that the group was formed to improve communication, previously the Town Clerk had met with the committee chairs on an individual basis but the formation of this group means she now meets the chairs together which allows for better discussions. The Chairs Group were not requesting that it be granted decision making powers and Members agreed.

66. RISK REGISTER 2025

Following recommendations made at the Council meeting on 9th July 2025, Members received the Council's updated Risk Register 2025, which now explains the residual risk score as two separate figures, the probability score and the severity score. Any incorrect scores to be corrected. A councillor suggested that after a period of time in which the mitigations in place had possibly led to a reduction in or prevention of incidents, then the risk element should be reduced. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was a live document, updated during the year, and all entries were reviewed at least annually.

67. TOWN PLAN

Members received the draft Town Plan produced by the Town Plan Working Group. Councillor M Smith, a member of the working group, acknowledged that there had been a delay in delivering the new plan and suggested that, as the current Town Plan is out of date, the new plan be adopted and a new working group be formed to start work on the next version which would reflect the 2026/27 budget.

Councillor A Neal raised concerns about inaccuracies he thought were in the document and recommended that further work be undertaken. Councillor M Smith said that whilst the plan was in need of some formatting and fact checking, the working group would not be willing to change the whole document. It was suggested that councillors' comments on the plan be made to the working group for consideration and the draft to then come back to Council for adoption at its next meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that councillor comments be sent to Councillor M Smith by 10th October 2025, the working group to meet after this date, consider the comments and make any necessary amendments to the current draft. A re-drafted plan will then come before Council for adoption at its meeting on 26th November 2025.

68. LODDON GARDEN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

68.1 Members noted that the University of Reading is holding a drop-in information event for residents at Maiden Place Community Centre on Thursday 25th September, between 3pm and 7pm.

68.2 **ALIGN**

Councillors received a written report on ALIGN, a group made up of representatives from the four Parish/Town Councils who have been discussing the possible impacts of the Loddon Garden Village Development. Councillors received a copy of the group's draft Terms of Reference and were asked to consider if ETC should nominate a representative to attend ALIGN meetings.

Councillors voiced concerns about the complexity of the Terms of Reference suggesting that the development would take several years to build, the impacts on the different parishes would vary but ETC would be bound by these terms. There were concerns over the cost of appointing a monitoring officer and suggestions that a better course of action could be to work directly with planning officers. It was also noted that there was no exit clause. Councillor A Neal reported that a further meeting is due to take place on 2nd October 2025, he is happy to attend and other Councillors are also welcome to attend. Councillors requested that notes from future meetings be provided.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor A Neal will raise ETC's concerns about the Terms of Reference at the next ALIGN meeting on 2nd October 2025. Any further drafts of the Terms of Reference will then be put to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration, before going back to Full Council for agreement.

69. RADSTOCK LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE - LEASE

Councillors received a verbal update on a meeting between ETC and WBC held on 19th September 2025, to discuss the transfer of the Radstock Lane Community Centre lease held by ETC, which WBC plans to transfer to an academy. Councillors G Littler, P Jorgensen, S Newton and the Town Clerk had attended the meeting.

For several months prior to the meeting, ETC had made numerous attempts to engage with WBC about the transfer as it was concerned about the future of the community centre. WBC

had not engaged with the town council in a meaningful way and ETC had subsequently submitted a complaint to WBC's Chief Executive. Councillors were disappointed to hear that ETC's requests to be put in touch with the academy in order to have direct discussions on the future of RLCC had been blocked by a WBC officer.

Councillor G Littler was thanked for his work on reviewing the lease and raising questions around government guidelines on asset transfers to schools and lease clauses. Councillors were concerned that WBC intends to transfer a public asset which is not used by the school, ie the community centre, to the academy.

At the meeting with WBC they agreed to consider the Town Council's comments and concerns about the transfer of the community centre lease and send a response to the Town Clerk. To date no response has been received.

70. SERVICE TO EARLEY AWARDS

Members considered the recommendations made by the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting held on 10th September 2025, following the review carried out by the Service to Earley Awards Working Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that: -

- The name of the awards will be changed to 'Service to Earley Community Awards'.
- A new 'Good Neighbour Award' category will be introduced.
- The revised Service to Earley Community Awards policy be adopted.

71. PROFILE OF EARLEY

Councillors considered the feedback received from all committees on Councillor A Neal's proposals for 'Welcome to Earley' signs and the production of a Town Council newsletter.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The Planning & Transport Committee will investigate costings and possible designs for 'Welcome to Earley' signs. This information will be provided to the Budget Working Party meetings for consideration as part of the 2026/27 budget.
- The progression of a Town Council newsletter will be assigned to the Amenities & Leisure Committee.

72. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – UPDATE

Members noted that Wokingham Borough Council had published its Community Governance Review proposals and is holding a public consultation, open until 13th November 2025. Members were disappointed that ETC's suggestions to the review panel had not been taken up and agreed that a further ETC response was required. It was noted that councillors could also respond to the review as individuals.

It was **RESOLVED** that:-

- The Community Governance Review Working Group will draft a further response to the review, particularly in relation to the number of councillors per town ward. The response will be circulated to all councillors before being submitted to WBC by 13th November 2025.

73. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS

Councillors were provided with a document setting out proposed guidelines for ETC when raising Town & Parish questions at WBC meetings. Following some discussion, it was: -

RESOLVED that the proposed guidelines will be reviewed by the Policy & Resources Committee and brought back to Full Council.

74. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Record of Members' Attendance

Councillors noted the details of councillors' attendance during 2025/26 at meetings of the Council and its Committees. Councillor A Neal's attendance at the Policy & Resources meeting on 10th September 2025 to be added to the record.

75. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Members noted the details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee (Vouchers 8116 - 8137) and Imprest vouchers (1099 - 1103).

76. PUBLICATIONS

Councillors noted that the following publications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices:

Office of the PCC	E-newsletters July and August 2025
Involve Community Services	E-newsletters July and August 2025
Friendship Alliance e-newsletter	July 2025
Earley NAG	Agenda for meeting of 8th September 2025
MERA	Minutes of meeting 10 th July 2025

77. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

The following press releases/website posts were requested: -

- Depending on any response from WBC following ETC's meeting with them, a press release be issued expressing concern for the future of RLCC and the Elizabeth Room should WBC continue with its plan to hand this community asset over to a business, ie an academy. It was also agreed that the Chair or the Leader of ETC could ask a question at a WBC council meeting, asking why WBC had deemed it appropriate to give away a community asset to a business rather than keeping it under local government ownership (borough or town).

78. 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

79. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Confidential Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 9th July 2025 (Minutes 50 - 52) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

80. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.43pm.

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Town Mayor