



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 15th October 2025** commencing at 7 pm.

Councillors: N Brock (Chair), R Ahlawat, A Bassett, A Bradley, R Browne, R Cook, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews and A Newton

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and M Brown (Operations Manager)

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M De Jong.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

37. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

38. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2025 were approved as a true record and it was **RESOLVED** they be signed by the Chair. Minutes (19-34)

39. CULVER LANE ALLOTMENTS

Members received a report from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the 2025 allotment inspections which have gone very well, with the majority of plots being well maintained. This year interim inspections were introduced to minimise the number of plots becoming an issue between inspections. The final inspection for the year to be carried out in October.

Members noted that the number of vacancies for raised beds appeared high and suggested that the future provision of raised beds and troughs should be reviewed. The Allotments Working Group to meet with the Deputy Town Clerk to discuss this matter and report back to the Committee.

The Allotments Working Group reported that they had completed their judging visits for the annual competition, winners and runners up to be informed and invited to the Mayor's Reception in 2026.

40. SOL JOEL PARK

40.1 Sandpit

Members were pleased to note that ETC's groundsmen had rebuilt the sandpit at Sol Joel Park and it was now back in action.

40.2 Centenary of Sol Joel Park

The Committee received a report detailing proposals for commemorating the centenary of Sol Joel Park. It was agreed that, as one of the first parks to be registered with Fields in Trust and subsequently be granted Queen Elizabeth II Fields status, this was an important milestone.

Members supported all four of the ideas detailed in the report, these will now be developed further and a report presented at a future Council meeting for approval.

A councillor suggested that consideration be given to inviting all Earley schools to the workshop event under discussion. It was agreed that this would not be practical because of the very large number of children that would be involved and the Council did not have the resources to repeat such an event for every school. Members discussed the connection that Earley St Peter's Primary School has with the park in that it uses it already for exercise, education and sports days and the general consensus was that this school should be the one approached and invited to attend.

41. COMMUNITY CENTRES

41.1 CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

41.1.1 Floor

Members considered an officer report stating that the wear layer of the floor at Centrepont Community Centre had worn away and the floor needs replacing. Complaints had been received from hirers on this issue. This work had not been budgeted for, but the Town Clerk confirmed that funds were available in the Dilapidations EMR. The Committee agreed that the work was necessary and that this was an appropriate use of funds from this EMR. To minimise disruption to hirers, the work will be carried out in the school holidays if at all possible.

42. MAIDEN ERLEGH NATURE RESERVE

Members noted the suggestion contained in the MERA minutes of 11th September 2025 that WBC was proposing to use Instow Road as a drop-off point for Laurel Park Football Club and that MERA had drafted a letter to the residents of Instow Road, Squirrels Way and Chelwood Road in relation to this. No information on such a proposal has been received by the Town Council even though such a plan would require people to walk through the Nature Reserve to access Laurel Park.

The Committee agreed that efforts should be made to ascertain the accuracy of the report and Cllr R Cook offered to speak to some of the residents who would potentially be affected to see if these roads were being used for such purposes. Cllr Cook to report her findings to the Town Clerk.

43. PHONE BOX PROJECT

Members received a report on the completion of the refurbishment of the traditional telephone box in Silverdale Road. Staff reported that there had been a lot of resident support and enthusiasm expressed whilst the works were being carried out. The Town Clerk and the Chair to hold another meeting with Reading University to progress the local history/art project. There has also arisen an opportunity to work with Maiden Erlegh School's art department to curate artwork for display in the telephone box.

44. BIODIVERSITY UPDATE

Members received an update on the Town Council's biodiversity work, including reports on botanical surveys, bat surveys, bramble clearance, and tree planting projects.

45. OPERATIONS MANAGER – REPORT

The Committee received a verbal update from the Operations Manager on matters relating to assets and facilities, this included:

- Street asset condition surveys conducted - bus shelters, noticeboards, town maps, benches and bins. Any required maintenance works will be scheduled.
- Mild weather has meant grass cutting tasks have had to be scheduled alongside leaf clearance.

- Servicing of all ETC's specialist vehicles has been arranged, including the tractors, sit on mowers, digger and lawnmowers.
- Play equipment repairs nearly completed, only two items outstanding. The annual play equipment inspections have been brought forward to align with budget planning and a member of staff has been booked on a play inspection course in December.
- Staff training ongoing for the outdoor staff - maintenance team have completed legionella awareness, Park Rangers have undergone confined space training for working in the dam at MENR lake, and all outdoor staff have been booked on vibration awareness and asbestos awareness training.

46. EVENTS UPDATE

46.1 Green Fair

Members received a report on the Green Fair 2025, it was an extremely successful event and one of the busiest Green Fairs to date.

46.2 Fishing Project

Members noted that, over the summer holidays, Reading FC Community Trust teamed up with ETC to provide a free fishing programme for youngsters. Once again, the scheme proved very successful with 30 young people taking part, learning about angling and holding small competitions. Two of ETC's water bailiffs were loaned to Reading FCCT for the duration of the sessions.

46.3 Macmillan Coffee Morning

Members noted that ETC staff will be organising a Macmillan coffee morning on Monday 10th November, further details to follow.

46.4 Carols by the Lake

The committee discussed a possible Carols by the Lake event to be held in the run up to Christmas. Although a local choir had indicated its willingness to lead the singing, some members were concerned as to whether this would be achievable due to the outdoor nature of the event and the time of year. It was agreed that ETC would not proceed with the event this year and that thought should be given to an alternative celebratory event for Christmas 2026.

47. TOWN COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Members of the Amenities & Leisure Committee had been tasked with working up a proposal for the production of an ETC newsletter. After much discussion it was agreed that, although they felt that a newsletter was a good idea in principle, the current focus should be on improving what we've got, ie the website, first.

Councillor Maher suggested setting up a Communications Working Group, this suggestion to go to the next Council meeting.

48. BUDGET 2026/27

Members were asked to put forward their priorities for the 2026/27 budget. Suggestions included installing a new Town Council Offices sign on Beech Lane and to continue to repair and replenish items within the scope of the Amenities and Leisure Committee. All councillors will be invited to attend meetings of the Budget Working Party when they are scheduled.

49. FOOTPATH SIGNAGE

Members noted that WBC had declined to grant permission for Loddon Valley Ramblers to erect footpath signs on its land citing operational reasons. Loddon Valley Ramblers had asked if the Town Council would be able to exert pressure on WBC to change its mind but Members agreed that this would not be appropriate in this case. ETC will, however, inform LVR that it would be happy to publicise their walks on its website.

50. TOWN COUNCIL QUESTIONS AT WBC MEETINGS

No questions were agreed.

51. PUBLICATIONS

Members noted that the following items have been received and are available for viewing from the Council Offices:

Involve Community Services	E-newsletters – August 2025 & September 2025
Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB)	E-newsletter – August 2025 Community Buildings newsletter September 2025
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletters – August & September 2025
Me2 Club	E-newsletter – July & September 2025

52. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

No press releases were agreed.

53. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.55pm

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Chair, Amenities & Leisure Committee