



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 4th February 2026 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor N Brock

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

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

103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bassett and S Newton.

104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

105. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

106. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 26th November 2025 (Minutes 81 - 102) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

107. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

Councillors received a written report from the Town Mayor detailing the events she had recently attended. These included Christmas Carols at Loddon Valley Leisure Centre on 14th & 20th December 2025 and the LINK Lunch on 25th December 2025.

108. COMMITTEE REPORTS

108.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Cllr A Long presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 54 - 67) held on 14th January 2026. The Council received the draft Minutes.

108.2 Planning & Transport Committee

Cllr A Neal presented the Minutes of the Planning & Transport Committee meeting (Minutes 112 - 130) held on 9th December 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

Cllr A Neal presented the Extraordinary Meeting Minutes of the Planning & Transport Committee meeting (Minutes 131 - 137) held on 16th December 2025. The Council received the Minutes.

Cllr A Neal presented the draft Minutes of the Planning & Transport Committee meeting (Minutes 138 - 155) held on 13th January 2026. The Council received the draft Minutes.

108.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Cllr D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 63 - 83) held on 21st January 2026. The Council received the draft Minutes.

109. COMMITTEE VACANCY

The Chair invited nominations for the vacancy on the Policy & Resources Committee. One nomination was received and seconded and it was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Keith Yabsley be appointed a member of the Policy & Resources Committee.

110. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

110.1 Kenton Road Day Centre

Members received a written report from Cllr A Bassett on her attendance at a meeting on 26th January 2026.

110.2 Wokingham Waterside Centre

Members received a verbal report from Cllr S Jordan on her attendance at a meeting on 3rd February 2026. The Waterside Centre will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year. Finances are improving and the centre is currently reviewing its lease with Wokingham Borough Council which is due to be renewed in a few years' time.

110.3 Cleaner Air & Transport Committee, Reading

Members received a verbal update from Cllr A Long who informed Members that there will soon be electric buses on the No 21 bus route.

111. INTERNAL AUDIT

Councillors received the interim internal audit report and were pleased to note that the Town Council's finances continue to be well maintained. Cllr D Hare thanked officers for the work that has led to such a good report.

112. FINANCE

112.1 Fees & Charges 2026/27

Councillors received the Amenities & Leisure Committee's recommendations for amendments to fees and charges in 2026/27: -

- Mays Lane Cemetery – 5% increase on all charges
- Culver Lane Allotments – All charges to remain unchanged
- Hall Hire – 5% increase on Fri/Sat after 6pm (non-regular) bookings and all other charges to remain unchanged
- Fishing Permits – Adult permits to increase by £1- Child permits to remain unchanged.
- Sports Pitch Hire – All charges to remain unchanged

It was **RESOLVED** that the Amenities & Leisure Committee's recommendations be accepted in full and applied for 2026/27.

112.2 Mays Lane Cemetery

Councillors received a written report on a discussion had by the Amenities & Leisure Committee at its meeting on 14th January 2026 relating to the current charging structure for new burials at Mays Lane Cemetery for Earley, Woodley and Out of Area residents and the limited space available. The Town Council is unable to provide additional new burial space at the cemetery due to site constraints (ETC statement 25th July 2025) and limited new burial space is available so the Amenities & Leisure Committee had discussed the possibility of restricting new burial plots to Earley and Woodley residents only and to not accept 'out of area' applicants. This would apply to the provision of new burial plots only, all other services, such as second burials; the interring of cremated remains (new plots and second interments) etc would remain open to all, including out of area applicants.

Councillors considered the report and agreed with the Amenities & Leisure Committee discussion. It was **RESOLVED** that: -

- New burial plots will be offered to Earley/Woodley residents only and that people are considered as such if they were living in Earley/Woodley at the time of their death, or
- If they have lived in Earley/Woodley for most of their lives but moved into care no more than 2 years prior to their death

113. **BUDGET & PRECEPT 2026/27**

113.1 Town Council Budget 2026/27

Members discussed the 2026/27 draft budget which has been thoroughly considered at meetings of the Budget Working Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations of the Budget Working Group be accepted and the draft Budget 2026/27 be adopted.

113.2 Town Council Precept 2026/27

Members discussed and considered the Precept for 2026/27.

A motion for a 0% increase to be applied was proposed, seconded and voted on. Members voted 6 – in favour, 15 - against and 1 – abstention.

A motion for a 1% increase to be applied was proposed, seconded and voted on. Members voted 15 – in favour, 6 – against and 1 – abstention.

It was **RESOLVED** that a 1% increase be applied to the Town Council Precept for 2026/27.

The precept for 2026/27 to be set at £1,068,686.

114. **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2026/27**

Councillors considered the proposed meeting schedule for 2026/27 and it was: -

RESOLVED that the proposed meeting schedule for 2026/27 be approved.

115. ETC CHAIRS GROUP MEETING

Councillors received the written notes from the ETC Chairs Group which met on 9th December 2025 and 22nd January 2026. Matters discussed included Budget & Precept; WBC's request for Bus Services funding; Centrepoint; the Crescent Centre; the Borough Mayor's Walk; ETC's Climate Emergency Action Plan; the station footbridge; Declarations of Interest at meetings; and a request from MERA.

116. LOCAL BUS SERVICES

Councillors received a report on Wokingham Borough Council's Transport Network review and a copy of the response drafted by the Bus Working Group to questions raised by WBC to the Town Council about current bus services in Earley and the possible future funding of new services.

The draft response had previously been discussed by both the Planning & Transport Committee and the Policy & Resources Committee. Both Committees had raised concerns about the amount of funding being requested and agreed that more information would need to be provided by WBC before any decisions on possible funding for new services could be made by ETC.

Councillors considered the recommendations of the Policy & Resources Committee in relation to the funding requests (questions 9 a/b/c/d/e) made by WBC, in principle, for a 5-year period, starting April 2027. Councillors agreed the following responses: -

- a. Bus service contracts for 19 a/b/c are due to end in 2026 and WBC is looking to extend the contracts between September 2026 & March 2027.
Request = £754.37 one off cost

ETC will require more information before it is able to make a decision on funding.

- b. Option to jointly fund a new Lower Earley to Wokingham service
Request = Up to £120,000 per year (subject to tender and other funding partner requests to Wokingham Town Council, Winnersh Parish Council)

ETC is unable to comment on funding this in principle, as no evidence has been provided to show that there is a demand for such a service and there are already services that run from Earley to Wokingham. A breakdown of how the £120,000 has been calculated has also not been provided. As such, no real business case from WBC has been presented. Such a business case is required in order for ETC to consider this request.

- c. Option of additional evening journeys on the 19b service between 8pm – 11pm
Request = Up to £50,000 per year (subject to tender)

ETC does not agree to fund this option, in principle, due to low uptake of people already using current evening services.

- d. Option of funding a Sunday service on 19b service
Request = Up to £80,000 per year (subject to tender)

ETC is unable to comment on funding this option, in principle, as not enough information has been provided. WBC will need to provide a business case and provide evidence that there is a demand for this service before ETC could consider this request.

- e. Contribution towards enhancing community transport from Earley
Request = Up to £85,000 (one off capital contribution)

ETC does not agree to fund this option, in principle, as providers of community transport are able to apply for grants.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above responses to questions 9 a/b/c/d/e be accepted.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Bus Working Group's draft response be amended with the accepted responses for questions 9 a/b/c/d/e.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Bus Working Group's draft response with the amendments to questions 9 a/b/c/d/e be accepted in full and submitted to WBC.

117. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Members considered a request from Cllr A Neal for the Town Council to review the current Climate Emergency Action Plan, which was last updated in 2022. It was: -

RESOLVED that the Climate Emergency Working Group be reappointed, its members being Cllrs R Cook, M Iyengunmwena, A Neal and A Newton. The remit is to review and update the Town Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, to also include the Green Infrastructure Plan.

118. TREE PRESERVATION ORDER

Councillors received a report on the Planning & Transport Committee's recommendation for the Town Council to consider applying for one or more Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on trees at Mays Lane Cemetery, which are located near to the footbridge.

Councillors agreed that whilst ETC did not want to impede any remedial works planned by WBC for the footbridge, WBC has not been forthcoming with any information about its planned works to the footbridge despite repeated requests from the Town Council. Concern was expressed that WBC had previously cut down trees belonging to the Town Council at Maiden Place Community Centre without informing or obtaining permission from ETC and councillors did not want the same thing to happen at ETC's Mays Lane Cemetery site.

Cllr P Jorgensen noted that when a TPO is in place, WBC's Tree Officer will consider any application for work to TPO trees, so a TPO would not necessarily stop or impact planned works on the footbridge. It would just mean that if TPOs were in place, an application would have to be submitted to the WBC's Tree Officer to cut or fell any trees at the location.

The Town Clerk reported that a formal letter on behalf of the Town Council, as the legal landowner of land occupied by the footbridge, had been sent to WBC requesting information about the works planned for the footbridge and giving WBC 14 days to respond.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr A Neal and ETC's Operations Manager will identify the trees requiring TPOs near to the footbridge and will draft the TPO application ready for submission to WBC. If no response is received from WBC to ETC's letter by the 14-day deadline, the TPO application will be submitted and WBC informed of ETC's actions.

119. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - UPDATE

Members noted that the Community Governance Review panel has submitted its final recommendations to WBC for approval.

120. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS

Members discussed possible questions to be raised to WBC. It was: -

RESOLVED that Cllr P Jorgensen will draft a question for the Town Clerk to submit to WBC in relation to the repeated lack of communication from WBC in response to letters/emails sent by ETC on important matters.

121. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Record of Members' Attendance

Councillors noted the details of councillors' attendance during 2025/26 at meetings of the Council and its Committees. Cllr P Jorgensen advised that she was absent from the Planning & Transport Committee on 13th January 2026, due to a WBC meeting. The attendance record to be amended.

122. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Members noted the details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee Imprest vouchers (1142 - 1147).

123. 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 December 2025 & January 2026
Involve Community Services	E-newsletters December 2025 and January 2026
Friendship Alliance e-newsletter	December 2025
MERA	Minutes of meeting December 2025 & January 2026

124. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

The following press releases were requested:-

- Budget & Precept decision
- ETC's plans to raise a question at a WBC meeting regarding the repeated lack of communication from WBC in response to ETC's letters/emails

125. 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

126. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

127. COMMITTEE REPORTS

128. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.34pm.

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Town Mayor