



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, on **Wednesday 21st January 2026** which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

Councillors: A Bassett, N Brock, J Eastwell, G Littler, A Long , S Matthews and S Newton.

In attendance: E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and M Brown (Operations Manager)

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs T Holton, T Maher and Town Clerk, Jo Friend.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

65. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

66. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor D Hare requested two amendments to the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 12th November 2025. Minute item 44 should read Shinfield Cricket Club and not Earley Cricket Club. Minute item 50.6 should read being and not binge.

The Minutes were confirmed as a true record and with the above amendments **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair. (Minutes 43 - 62).

67. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for October and November 2025 had been made available to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee for information.

68. FINANCE

- 68.1 Members received a financial update and had been provided with an income and expenditure report prior to the meeting. Councillor S Newton queried 110/4225 - Radstock Lane Community Centre/Rent and that this cost did not show on the budget papers. The Deputy Town Clerk said she would look into this, as she did not have the information to hand and would provide an answer.

Councillor G Littler asked if the Sol Joel Pavilion roof works would be completed this financial year. The Operations Manager advised that he has been trying to ascertain if the roof is still under guarantee but this information has not been forthcoming so he is now looking into contracting the work with the aim to complete it this financial year.

- 68.2 Members were pleased to note that there are no bad debts outstanding.

69. REVIEW OF FEES & CHARGES 2026/27

Councillors considered the recommendations from the Amenities & Leisure Committee following its review of Town Council fees and charges for 2026/27 at its meeting on 14th January 2026.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations be accepted.

70. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS 2025/26 – TRANCHE 2

70.1 Councillors were pleased to note that letters of thanks had been received from ARC, Wokingham Job Support Centre, Me2 Club and Wokingham Volunteer Centre following the Tranche 2 grant awards.

70.2 Councillors noted that Tranche 3 for Town Council grants is now open and would be closing on 31st January 2026.

71. LOCAL BUS SERVICES

Councillors received a written report in relation to a presentation given by WBC's Community Transport Manager to the Planning & Transport Committee at its meeting on 13th January 2026 about WBC's Transport Network Review. The review is taking into consideration improvements to transport connections between Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell, improved connections to medical centres, schools, local developments and increased evening and weekend services. The report also contained detail on the, in principle, funding requests being made by WBC which would be for a 5-year period starting April 2027.

Councillors noted that in December 2025, the Bus Working Group met to discuss questions which had been directed to ETC by WBC, as part of its review. The questions covered current services in Earley, a proposed new route from Earley to Wokingham and the willingness of the Town Council to fund, in principle, future proposed bus services. The Bus Working Group drafted a response to the questions which went to the Planning & Transport Committee on 13th January 2026. The Planning & Transport Committee comments to the Bus Working Group's draft responses were that the funding amounts being requested were very high and concerns were raised about if there was any real demand for a bus service from Earley to Wokingham. General thoughts were that Earley is already well served and that the 4/4a services already provide a service from Earley to Wokingham.

Members discussed the Bus Working Group's draft response to WBC questions and it was agreed that the following recommendations be made to Full Council in relation to the report provided.

- 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 contribution

The recommendation is that ETC agrees in principle to fund this request.

- 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)

The recommendation is that 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, in order for ETC to agree, even in principle, to fund this option.

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

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

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

The recommendation is that ETC expresses an interest to fund this option in principle, as it would provide transport to the Royal Berkshire Hospital on a Sunday, which is now delivering medical appointments, scans etc on a Sunday. However, WBC will need to provide a business case and provide evidence that there is a demand for this service.

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

The recommendation is that ETC does not fund this option in principle, as providers are able to apply for grants.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Policy & Resources Committee's recommendation be made to Council at its meeting on 4th February 2026.

72. TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES

Members noted that the following Town Council policies had been reviewed and updated by officers. It was:

72.1 **RESOLVED** that the Whistleblowing Policy be adopted.

72.2 **RESOLVED** that the Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) Policy be adopted.

72.3 **RESOLVED** that the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy be adopted.

72.4 **RESOLVED** with an amendment - deletion in the section Formal Grievance Procedure of the line 'If appropriate, an investigatory meeting will be held to gather all relevant facts and evidence' - that the Grievance Procedure be adopted.

72.5 **RESOLVED** with the amendments below, that the Child Protection & Vulnerable Persons Policy be adopted:

Aims - to now read 'The aim of this policy is to guide staff, volunteers and members of Earley Town Council should any child or vulnerable adult protection issue arise during their work or when carrying out of their functions.'

The Designated Person (2nd bullet point) - the wording 'from children or adults' to be changed to 'relating to children or vulnerable adults'

Declaration (1st paragraph) – the wording 'members' to be changed to staff, volunteers and members.

Declaration (2nd paragraph) – the wording 'the Council's Child Protection Policy' to be changed to 'this Child Protection & Vulnerable Persons Policy'.

72.6 **RESOLVED** that the Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy be adopted.

73. MAIDEN PLACE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Councillors were pleased to note that the work to repair that damaged wall at Maiden Place Community Centre would be starting on 26th January 2026. The Deputy Town Clerk informed

Members that officers are also planning to install barriers and cycle stands to prevent cars from parking alongside the new wall once the repair work is completed.

74. BALC/NALC MEMBERSHIP

Members received a report on the benefits of membership of BALC and NALC, the Town Council is currently not a member due to previous issues with the level of services offered.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that not being a member often makes it difficult for officers to access information such as templates and guidance on the Model Publication Scheme. Also, in light of Assertion 10, the new mandatory declaration which will be part of the AGAR for 2025/26, the Information Commissioner's Office is directing Town/Parish Councils to NALC for access to guides, templates and toolkits.

Members agreed that it was important that officers have access to the information they need in order to carry out their work and it was: -

RESOLVED the Town Council rejoin as a member of BALC and NALC.

75. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS

No questions were raised.

76. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 8334 – 8344, 8345 – 8381, 8382 – 8400, 8401, 8402 – 8408, 8409 – 8431, 8432 – 8438, 8439 – 8461, 8462 – 8493, 8494 – 8516, 8517 - 8524), and Imprest vouchers (1122 - 1141).

77. PUBLICATIONS

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

CCB (Connecting Communities in Berkshire)	E-newsletters December 2025
TVP	Police & Crime Bulletin – December 2025 Thames Valley Updates – November & December 2025
MERA	Minutes – November & December 2025
Involve	E-newsletter December 2025

78. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

It was requested that a press release be issued once the work on the wall at Maiden Place Community Centre had been carried out.

79. 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

80. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

81. **STAFFING**

82. **CENTREPOINT**

83. **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.15pm