



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 25th March 2026 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor N Brock

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

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

129. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Holton and H Sarasan.

Councillor A Bassett entered the meeting.

130. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

131. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

Councillor P Jorgensen entered the meeting.

132. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr A Neal commented on Minute Item 120 – Wokingham Borough Council, Town & Parish Questions. He was disappointed that ETC had not received a written response to the question Cllr P Jorgensen had asked on behalf the Town Council at the WBC meeting on 26th February 2026 about the lack of, or poor standard of, communication with ETC on important matters. Councillors noted that the Town Clerk had subsequently received a meeting invite for her and the Leader of ETC, Cllr D Hare, to meet with Susan Parsonage, WBC Chief Executive and Cllr Stephen Conway, Leader of WBC, to discuss the communication issues; the invitation is presumed to have arisen from the ETC question. Cllr P Jorgensen will ask WBC Democratic Services whether a formal answer should be expected to a town/parish question.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 4th February 2025 (Minutes 103 - 128) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

133. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

Councillors received a written report from the Town Mayor detailing the events she had recently attended. These included the Mayor's Reception; 1st Lower Earley Scouts Iftar event; Community Education Trust Community Iftar at Reading Football Club; Magistrates' Court

Mock Trial Competition - Berkshire Heats; and the Centenary Court at the University of Reading.

134. COMMITTEE REPORTS

134.1 Amenities and Leisure Committee

Cllr N Brock presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting (Minutes 68 - 84) held on 4th March 2026. The Council received the draft Minutes.

134.2 Planning & Transport Committee

Cllr A Neal presented the Minutes of the Planning & Transport Committee meeting (Minutes 156 - 173) held on 10th February 2026. The Council received the Minutes.

Cllr A Neal presented the draft Minutes of the Planning & Transport Committee meeting (Minutes 174 - 190) held on 10th March 2026. The Council received the draft Minutes.

134.3 Policy and Resources Committee

Cllr D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting (Minutes 84 - 104) held on 11th March 2026. The Council received the draft Minutes.

Cllr R Ahlawat asked for clarification on Minute Item 90.4 – Earley Cricket Club grant award, as to why a grant for equipment had not been awarded.

Cllr D Hare provided a fuller explanation of why the committee had not awarded this grant. One issue was that the club does not have security of tenure at the ground it uses, its status is just that of a hirer. The club were asking for funding for specialist, expensive equipment which, if the club were to no longer be permitted to hire the pitch, would be difficult for the club to use elsewhere. An example of this was the sight screens the club wished to purchase, these would be hard to relocate and could well end up not being used for the benefit of Earley residents. It was also noted that the cricket pitch this club uses is in Woodley and there was conflicting information on how many of its members were Earley residents.

Cllr Jorgensen asked if this main reason for refusing a grant was consistent with other grant awards and suggested that possible reasons for refusing grants should be added to the Grants policy to avoid potential applicants wasting their time completing an application form. The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that potential applicants could always contact officers for guidance, as some already did. Cllr K Yabsley commented that he was of the view that the reasons for refusing the grant were justified. Cllr Littler suggested that the Grants Working Group could review the ETC Grants policy.

Cllr R Cook, re Minute Item 92 – Work Experience, commented that she was pleased ETC was offering a work experience placement to a student in the summer, such placements were beneficial to young people, but she thought ETC should be offering more of them. The Town Clerk explained that this was the first time the Council had offered such a work experience placement, officers would see how it goes before agreeing to additional placements.

135. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

135.1 WBC's Standards Committee

Members received a written report from Cllr S Matthews on her attendance at a meeting on 10th March 2026. The Deputy Town Clerk noted that the link to the report as provided by the councillor had not been included on the report as it didn't appear to work but that the Standard's Committee Annual Report could be accessed via the WBC website.

135.2 Earleybus

Members received a verbal update from Cllr R Cook on her attendance at a meeting on 24th February 2026. General administration and bus maintenance was discussed. The current finances are healthy and there are plans to purchase a new bus by late Spring.

135.3 Borough Parish Liaison Forum

The Chair noted that Cllr M Smith had circulated to councillors a written report on the meeting of the Borough Parish Liaison Forum held on 12th February 2026.

135.4 Crescent Centre Trustees Meeting

Members received a verbal report from Cllr N Brock on her attendance at the Crescent Centre's Trustees meeting on 23rd March 2026. It was noted that new caretakers have been employed. The budget anticipates a deficit and so the centre is working on promoting its rooms for hire.

136. ETC CHAIRS GROUP MEETING

Councillors received the written notes from the ETC Chairs Group which met on 11th February and 3rd March 2026. Matters discussed included the Cemetery Footbridge, Community Governance Review, Berkshire Association of Local Councils, Sol Joel Pavilion, the Crescent Centre, fly-tipping, WBC's Cleaner & Greener walkabout in Chalfont Park and the green space in Gipsy Lane/Mill Lane.

Cllr S Newton raised concerns that the Chairs group had made a decision rather than referring matters to a committee or Council for decision. He was referring to the meeting that WBC had agreed to have with ETC in relation to the Earley footbridge works and that the Chairs had agreed the most appropriate representatives to attend that initial meeting would be the Town Clerk, Cllr N Brock and Cllr G Littler. The group had also noted that, in their opinion, it would be best not to include dual-hatted councillors at this first meeting. Cllr S Newton added that he supported the choice of attendees.

The Town Clerk informed Members that Cllr M Smith had emailed with similar concerns and both he and Cllr S Newton had been provided with a full explanation of events prior to this evening's meeting. She reminded Members that they had been frustrated by WBC's lack of communication with ETC on this matter, especially as some of the work would probably need to be conducted on Town Council land, and that requests for information from the Town Clerk and the Operations Manager had been ignored. ETC was aware that WBC had allocated funds for the works and had gone out to tender. The Town Clerk added that the Council had authorised the sending of a formal letter to WBC insisting on a meeting between ETC representatives and the WBC officers involved in the project so that ETC could find out what was being planned on its land. WBC had agreed to such a meeting with town council representatives but had expressed disappointment that its officers had not received credit for the information they had previously supplied to Borough councillors. It was apparent that some WBC officers were still not clear about Earley Town Council being a council, separate and independent from Wokingham Borough Council, and that discussions about ETC assets needed to be with ETC and not WBC, hence not including dual-hatted councillors at this initial meeting.

Cllr P Jorgensen expressed a concern that decisions were being made at the Chairs Group meetings. Cllr S Newton added that Chairs Group meeting notes read as if a decision had been made and he was of the view that this should have been a recommendation to Council rather than agreed.

The Town Clerk noted that there had been regular councillor criticism of the Chairs meeting arising from the notes provided to Council and perhaps Council would prefer the Town Clerk to revert to meeting with the committee and Council chairs individually as had been the case in

the past. The new joint meeting format and notes to Council had been intended to improve transparency and inclusivity but did not seem to be having that effect.

Cllr M Smith said that he thought the meetings were important and should continue, Cllr P Jorgensen added that she believed that the notes had not intentionally meant to imply that a decision had been made, so perhaps more careful wording be used in future.

Cllr C Smith referred to the Chairs Group meeting note about the WBC Cleaner & Greener Walkabout saying she had attended and found it very interesting and informative. She encouraged other Town Councillors to attend such events in the future. The Town Clerk clarified that no town councillors had been invited by WBC to attend and that Cllr C Smith had been invited and had attended in her capacity as a Borough councillor. Cllr C Smith agreed that this had been the case.

Cllr A Bassett commented on the Chairs Group meeting note about fly-tipping at Sol Joel Park in the children's playground saying that she was disappointed that the police had not pursued the matter further. The Town Clerk confirmed that ETC had obtained and provided lots of CCTV evidence and were aware of where the fly tippers had come from but neither the police nor WBC, who had also been informed, had taken action against the culprits. Cllr P Jorgensen suggested that the Public Protection Partnership (PPP), of which she was a member, did try to prosecute in such cases and asked that the information be sent to her and the PPP.

137. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Councillors noted that the Annual Town Meeting will be held on 21st April 2026 at Maiden Place Community Centre at 7pm. Councillors were pleased to hear that speakers for the evening have been organised.

138. BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE

Members noted that BALC had asked if a member of Earley Town Council would be interested in joining the BALC Executive, which meets quarterly in Shinfield. Cllr C Smith nominated herself and it was agreed she would contact BALC for further information. The Town Clerk to provide the BALC contact details.

139. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL'S – PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST ON OUR STREETS (SAFER STREETS PROGRAMME)

139.1 Councillors noted that following WBC's adoption of its updated Speed Policy in January 2026, WBC is now asking Town/Parish Councils and members of the public to suggest roads and locations where they think speed limits should be lowered.

139.2 Councillors noted that the Planning & Transport Committee has appointed a working group to develop a response to WBC's Safer Streets Programme consultation. Councillors were asked to send their suggestions of roads in Earley where they think speed limits should be lowered, along with the reasons why, to Cllr A Neal. A draft consultation response will go to the Planning & Transport Committee on 7th April 2026.

140. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS

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

RESOLVED that no questions be raised.

141. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Record of Members' Attendance

Councillors noted the details of councillors' attendance during 2025/26 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

142. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Members noted that no Orders for Payments had been made since the last Policy & Resources Committee meeting.

143. PUBLICATIONS

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

Office of the PCC	E-newsletter February 2026
Friendship Alliance e-newsletter	February & March 2026
ACER e-Newsletter	Spring 2026
MERA	Minutes of Meeting February 2026

144. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

No press releases were requested

145. 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

146. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

147. COMMITTEE REPORTS

148. LOCAL BUS SERVICES

149. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.22pm.

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Town Mayor