



## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2026

Minutes of the meeting of Annual Town Meeting held in the Function Room at Maiden Place Community Centre, Maiden Place, Earley, Reading on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026, which commenced at 7.00pm.

### Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor N Brock

Present: ETC officers: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and M Brown (Operations Manager); R Cook, D Hare, M Iyengunmwena, S Jordan, A Long, T Mahir, A Neal, A Newton, S Newton, C Smith and M Smith and representatives from Pets As Therapy, Reduce Energy Ltd, Wokingham Waterside Centre and members of the public.

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### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Anne Bassett. & Melanie De Jong.

### 2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Town Electors' Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025 were confirmed as a true record.

### 3. EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for coming and presented her report on the business of the Town Council over the past 12 months. She informed the meeting that over the past year the Council's Park Rangers, the Council's Wednesday Volunteers and Friends of Bulmershe Open Space, along with residents of the community, had planted over 900 trees across Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve, Redhatch Copse and Bulmershe Park.

Another highlight of the year has been the renovation of the telephone box in Silverdale Road which is now home to art displays. Art displays have been exhibited by Maiden Erlegh School pupils and a local group Together One Step at a Time. The Council is currently working with the University of Reading and Austen House Care Home on future displays.

The Town Mayor reported on the work across the Council's parks and open spaces such as improvements to footpaths and bat surveys at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve; the re-establishment of the bluebells, coppicing work and removal of unsafe trees at Redhatch Copse; and the rebuilding of the sandpit at Sol Joel Park. 600 bulbs have also been planted in the flower bed next to the Toby Carvery.

Work at Mays Lane Cemetery has continued in order to extend the cremated remains section which will provide approximately 5 years of plots. Landscaping work and the provision of further areas for the interment of ashes continues.

The Council has set up a new Dilapidations budget to ensure that maintenance work can continue at its Community Centres to keep them in good condition. New flooring and decoration work has been carried out at Centrepoint and cycle rails have been installed at Maiden Place Community Centre. A review of the Council's caretaking provision has also been undertaken resulting in the employment of three new part time caretakers and the transfer of cleaning to a contractor.

Work on energy efficiency improvements continues with Maiden Place Community Centre being identified as the initial site where changes will be made to the heating system, lighting and external doors. Research has been carried out to replace Town Council vehicles with electric vehicles, the first ETC EV van is due to be delivered soon.

The Town Council's Youth Club for 9–11-year-olds which is held on Thursdays 5.00pm – 6.30pm at Centrepoint Community Centre continues to grow and plans are underway for Berkshire Youth and Reading Football Club Community Trust to extend the Town Council's youth provision with additional Youth Club sessions for older age ranges.

The Town Mayor also reported that the Town Council has considered 240 planning applications during the year and had awarded £27,079.80 in grants to local groups, organisations, charities and volunteer groups. A revised Earley Town Plan has been adopted and the Helpshop at the Town Council offices continues to provide in-person services to residents on a daily basis.

The Town Mayor told the meeting of several events the Town Council has held such as the HUGE Earley litter pick, Bric-a-Brac stalls, a Macmillan Coffee Morning, the annual Green Fair, summer holiday fishing project, the Mayor's Reception and the Mayor's Charity coffee morning in aid of the Mayor's chosen charity Pets As Therapy.

Other important work has also been undertaken with the professional cleaning of the Town Council's bus shelters, replacement of some of the older style noticeboards, renovation of damaged benches and the installation of four new Town Maps.

Going forwards the Town Council will be launching a new Bike Workshop at Centrepoint Community Centre in the near future; will continue to work on energy efficiency projects across Council buildings; continue with its biodiversity projects to improve wildlife and habitat across Council sites; and will expand the youth service provided by ETC.

#### **4. PRESENTATIONS**

The following presentations were given to the meeting: -

##### **4.1 Pets As Therapy (PAT) – Steven Wibberley**

Pets As Therapy is made up of 6000 volunteers who are pet owners of mainly dogs and some cat, who visit care homes, hospitals and schools. By visiting with a pet, this helps to improve mental health, offers companionship and surveys show that 86% of people are happier when stroking or sitting with a pet.

Pets As Therapy work with schools on 'Read to a Dog' which encourages children who lack confidence in reading to read to a dog, this helps to improve children's confidence, behaviour and attendance.

Pets As Therapy are always looking for volunteers and PAT dogs. PAT dogs can be any breed, at least 12 months old, not on a raw food diet, in good health, do not jump, lick or paw and who enjoy being with people and being fussed. Volunteers and their pets have visited over 2 million people across the UK and are always carrying out fundraising. Anyone interested in becoming

a PAT volunteer with their pet can visit the Pets At Therapy website at: - [www.petsastherapy.org](http://www.petsastherapy.org)

#### 4.2 Ian Gough – Reduce Energy Ltd

Reduce Energy Ltd conduct tours of the wind turbine which is located at Green Park in Reading. The wind turbine is 120m at its highest point and is now 20 years old.

The turbine is made up of several components including carbon blades which are 35m in length and a hub which has the capability of turning 360 degrees in three minutes. The turbine weighs 250 tonnes and the foundations are 2m deep and 14m in diameter. The lifespan of the turbine is 35 – 40 years.

The turbine took 5 days to construct and cost £1.8 million pounds, the energy produced meant that the turbine paid for itself within 5 years. The turbine provides energy for approximately 1200 – 1300 homes.

The turbine works at wind speeds of 4mph to 67mph, if wind speeds are higher than 67mph the turbine is shut down for safety reasons. Tours of the wind turbine can be booked by contacting: [greeneducation@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:greeneducation@hotmail.co.uk)

#### 4.3 Kelly Leach – Wokingham Waterside Centre

Wokingham Waterside Centre is located at Thames Valley Park Drive and is charity outdoor activity centre, providing paddle sports for all. Paddle sports help to develop skills and promote health and well-being. The Centre has qualified instructors and volunteers.

The Centre offers 104 different activities and services, including dragon boating, paddle boarding, raft building, doggy paddle with actual dogs and has 14 award-based programmes, including accredited courses and explorer awards.

Reading Knights Canoe Club and Wokingham Canoe Club are both based at the Waterside Centre and the Centre offers land activities, youth activities and school holiday programmes. The Centre is also available to hire at weekends and evenings.

Wokingham Waterside Centre is a training facility offering taster sessions and coaching sessions. There are also accessible sessions and the Centre already works with organisations such as Mencap, PALS and Swings & Smiles.

Kelly thanked the Town Council for its grant award in November 2025 that enabled them to purchase 32 new buoyancy aids.

September 2026 sees the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Waterside Centre and there will be events being held throughout the year to help celebrate, along with an open day in July. More information can be found on the Centre's website at: [www.wokinghamwatersidecentre.com](http://www.wokinghamwatersidecentre.com)

### 5. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Town Mayor thanked the guest speakers for their very interesting presentations and everyone for attending. The meeting was formally declared closed at 8.23 pm and attendees were invited to stay for refreshments.

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**Town Mayor**