



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Earley Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Radstock Lane on Wednesday 6th May 2026 which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor A Neal

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

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

1. ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR

- 1.1 The outgoing Town Mayor, Cllr Nicola Brock, thanked councillors and officers for all their support during her time as Mayor. She said she had been very privileged to attend lots of events and meet so many interesting people. She thanked ETC officer, Joanna Behan for organising her diary and the Town Clerk for all her advice and guidance.

Councillors received the outgoing Mayor's final written report detailing her attendance at SHARE Brookside Church and her charity fund raising event in aid of Pets As Therapy.

- 1.2 The outgoing Town Mayor called for nominations for the office of Town Mayor for the municipal year 2026/27. A nomination for Cllr Alistair Neal was received, this was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. It was:

RESOLVED unanimously that Cllr Alistair Neal be elected to the office of Town Mayor (Chair of the Council) for the municipal year 2026/27.

- 1.3 The newly elected Town Mayor signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Cllr N Brock and assumed the position of Chair.

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

- 2.1 The Town Mayor called for nominations for the office of Deputy Town Mayor for the municipal year 2026/27. A nomination for Cllr Andrew Long was received, this was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. It was:

RESOLVED unanimously that Cllr Andrew Long be elected to the office of Deputy Town Mayor for the municipal year 2026/27.

- 2.2 Due to the late arrival of the former Deputy Town Mayor, the newly appointed Deputy Town Mayor would be presented with the Chain of Office after the meeting.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G Littler. Cllr M De Jong had advised that she would be arriving late.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 25th March 2026 (Minutes 129 – 149) were a true and correct record and could be signed by the Chair.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

7.1 Planning & Transport Committee

Cllr A Neal presented the draft Minutes of the Planning & Transport Committee meeting (Minutes 191 - 210) held on 7th April 2026. The Council received the Minutes.

8. APPOINTMENTS

8.1 Leader of the Council

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Leader of the Council, in accordance with Standing Order 5n (v and vii). One nomination was proposed and seconded. It was:

RESOLVED that Cllr David Hare be appointed Leader of the Council. Six councillors abstained from voting.

8.2 Deputy Leader of the Council

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Deputy Leader of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 5n (vi and viii). One nomination was proposed and seconded. It was:

RESOLVED that Cllr Mike Smith be appointed Deputy Leader of the Council. Six councillors abstained from voting.

9. STANDING COMMITTEES

9.1 It was **RESOLVED that the following Standing Committees shall continue in municipal year 2026/27:**

- Amenities & Leisure Committee
- Policy & Resources Committee
- Planning & Transport Committee

9.2 Membership of Standing Committees

Members noted that in accordance with Standing Order 4(d) the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor shall be ex officio members of all Committees, this being in addition to the number of committee places fixed by Council.

Members considered the membership of the Standing Committees and it was:-

RESOLVED that the following changes be made:

- a) Cllr R Browne to step down as a member of the Amenities & Leisure Committee
- b) Cllr I Khayinza to become a member of the Amenities & Leisure Committee
- c) Cllr D Hare to step down as a member of the Planning & Transport Committee
- d) Cllr A Long to become a member of the Planning & Transport Committee

9.3 Chairs of Standing Committees

It was noted that, under Standing Order (4e.vii), the Committees would appoint their own chair at the first meeting of the committee.

10. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

10.1 Borough Parish Liaison Forum

Members received a written report from Cllr M Smith on his attendance at a meeting on 30th March 2026.

10.2 ARC

Members received a written report from Cllr R Cook on her attendance at a committee meeting on 14th April 2026.

10.3 EarlyBus

Members received a verbal report from Cllr R Cook informing them that EarlyBus would be taking delivery of a new bus on 26th May 2026.

10.4 Kenton Road Day Centre

Members received a written report from Cllr A Bassett on her attendance at a meeting held on 28th April 2026.

10.5 Representation 2026/27

Members considered the current representation on other bodies and it was **RESOLVED** that the following changes be made:

- a) Cllr T Maher to step down as the representative to Neighbourhood Action Group
- b) Cllr D Hare to become the representative to Neighbourhood Action Group
- c) Cllr T Maher to step down as representative to Readibus Management Committee
- d) Cllr M Smith to become the representative to Readibus Management Committee
- e) Cllr R Browne to step down as the representative to Wokingham Borough/Parish Liaison Forum.
- f) Cllr J Eastwell to become the representative to Wokingham Borough/Parish Liaison Forum.

Councillor M De Jong entered the meeting.

11. DEEDS

Councillors noted that the various deeds relating to the Council's interests in land are held by the Town Clerk as Proper Officer and are available for Members' inspection.

12. FINANCE

Cllr D Hare thanked the Town Clerk and Finance Officer, Ian Johnson, for all the hard work that had gone into managing the Council's finances and the year end.

12.1 Financial Statements 2025/26

Members received the financial statements prepared by the Finance Officer, 'Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026'. Members **RESOLVED** that this document be signed by the Chair and the Responsible Financial Officer.

12.2 Internal Auditor's Report

12.2.1 Members received the internal auditor's written report for the year ended 31st March 2026.

Councillor H Sarasan entered the meeting.

12.2.2 Members received the internal auditor's completed Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26, page 3 of the AGAR 2025/26.

12.3 AGAR 2025/26 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Members reviewed 'Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26' and agreed the entries. It was: -

RESOLVED that 'Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26' be completed in the affirmative (except Point 9 – n/a) and signed.

12.4 AGAR 2025/26 – Accounting Statements 2025/26

Members reviewed 'Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26' and it was: -

RESOLVED that 'Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26' be signed.

13. **MEADOW PARK CONTRACT**

Councillors noted that the Council is about to undertake a tender process to appoint a contractor to renew the playground at Meadow Park.

The Project Manager is drawing up a detailed specification following engagement with residents and with staff and pupils at Loddon Primary School. The specification will be sent to at least four suitable companies who will be invited to submit a tender. The budget for the project is c£140k.

ETC's Standing Orders require the tenders to be opened after the deadline by the Proper Officer (the Town Clerk) in the presence of at least one councillor. Tenders are to be considered by an appropriate meeting of the Council, Committee or Sub-Committee with delegated responsibility.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllrs N Brock and S Newton would be present at the opening of the tender envelopes.

It was **RESOLVED** that the tenders will be considered by a Meadow Park sub-committee with delegated powers to make a decision on the award. The sub-committee will report to Council and will be dissolved once the decision has been reported. Sub-committee members will be Cllrs N Brock, P Jorgensen, S Matthews and A Neal.

14. **ETC CHAIRS' MEETING**

Councillors received the notes from the ETC Chairs' Meeting of 1st April 2026. Matters discussed included the cemetery footbridge and youth services. The Chairs were also shown the completed refurbishment work of the toilet facilities in the ETC workshop building.

15. UNIVERSITY OF READING – STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS

Members received a report on the University of Reading's Quarterly Stakeholders meetings which are held to share information on progress of the Loddon Valley Garden Village project with Earley and Winnersh Town/Parish councillors. Information on other local projects is also provided at the meetings.

Several councillors said that they had attended the meetings and it was agreed that, going forwards, Cllr P Jorgensen will provide the Deputy Town Clerk with notes from the meetings, these can then be relayed back to Council.

16. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Record of Members' Attendance

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

17. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Members noted the details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Council (*Vouchers 8642 – 8651, 8652 - 8669, 8670 – 8696, 8697 – 8701, 8702 – 8730, 8730a – 8757b, 8757c – 8757f, 8758 – 8771, 8772 – 8774, 8775 – 8811, 8812 - 8816 and Imprest vouchers 1157 – 1176, 1177 – 1179, 121 - 124*).

18. 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 April 2026
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter April 2026
Connecting Communities Berkshire (CCB)	E-newsletter April 2026
Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter April 2026
Earley NAG	Agenda for meeting 11 th May 2026

19. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

The following press releases/website posts were requested: -

- The election of the new Town Mayor and the new Deputy Town Mayor

20. 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

21. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**
22. **CONFIDENTIAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**
23. **CENTREPOINT LEASE - UPDATE**
24. **FOOTBRIDGE – CEMETERY**
25. **STAFFING MATTERS**
26. **ADVISOR TO THE PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**
27. **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.12pm.

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Town Mayor