



## **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 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026** which commenced at 7pm.

### **Present**

Chair – Councillor D Hare

Councillors: A Bassett, J Eastwell, G Littler, A Long, S Matthews S Newton and K Yabsley.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk) and Councillor A Neal.

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### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs T Holton and T Maher.

### **2. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIR**

- 2.1 Cllr D Hare called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee for municipal year 2026/2027. A nomination for Cllr D Hare was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. It was:

**RESOLVED** that Cllr D Hare be appointed as Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee.

- 2.2 Cllr D Hare called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee for municipal year 2026/2027. A nomination for Cllr J Eastwell was proposed and seconded. There were no other nominations. It was:

**RESOLVED** that Cllr J Eastwell be appointed as Vice Chair of the Policy & Resources Committee.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr D Hare declared an interest in Item 10 – Town Council Grants. He stated that he attends the Link Visiting Scheme's Christmas Lunch in his capacity as a volunteer for Pets As Therapy and that his wife is a volunteer at the Salvation Army Lower Earley Cafe. Cllr D Hare confirmed he would not take part in discussions or vote on either of these grant applications.

### **4. PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

### **5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair. (Minutes 84 – 104)

### **6. BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for February, March and April 2026 had been made available to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee for information.

## 7. **FINANCE**

### 7.1 **Debtors**

Councillors noted that the Town Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer, and the Finance Officer have reviewed all debtors and no concerns have been raised.

### 7.2 **CIL**

It was noted that ETC received £29,289 in CIL funds in April 2026, the total uncommitted funds now stand at £49,285, with the earliest spending deadline of 2029. Councillors expressed thanks to officers for their sound management of the Council's finances.

### 7.3 **Temporary Fuel Surcharges**

Councillors noted that many of ETC suppliers and contractors have introduced a 'temporary fuel surcharge' as a result of the current high fuel prices, this will increase the Town Council's costs, especially in areas such as waste disposal and heavy deliveries.

### 7.4 **HMRC Mileage Rate**

Councillors noted that as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, HMRC increased the approved mileage rate paid to casual users from 45p per mile to 55p per mile. It was:

**RESOLVED** that ETC will adopt the new mileage rate of 55p per mile and this will be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

## 8. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Members received the draft Treasury Management Strategy created by the Town Clerk, following guidance by the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government and in accordance with the Local Government Act 2023. The draft strategy also complies with guidance within the Practitioner's Guide 2026/27.

The strategy outlines how the Town Council manages its liquidity, cash flows and financial risks and ensures that it has the necessary funds to meet financial obligations whilst optimising surplus cash and mitigating market risks.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Treasury Management Strategy be recommended to Full Council for adoption at its next meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026.

## 9. **TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS 2025/26 – TRANCHE 3**

It was noted that letters of thanks for earlier grants had been received from First Days Children's Charity, Loddon Valley Ramblers, Readibus, The Cowshed and Together: One Step at a Time.

## 10. **TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS 2026/27 – TRANCHE 1**

Councillors considered the eleven grant applications received for 2026/27 grant application period Tranche 1 – May 2026 intake. It was: -

10.1 **RESOLVED** that Berkshire Muslim Arab Community Association would not be awarded a grant as no safeguarding policy had been provided by the applicant, as is required under ETC's Grants Policy.

10.2 **RESOLVED** that Community Chess for Wellbeing would not be awarded a grant. However, councillors agreed to offer them 6 x 2hr sessions in the Elizabeth Room at Radstock Lane

Community Centre at no charge to support them in finding out if the sessions are viable. These sessions would be for adults only as no safeguarding policy had been provided by the applicant.

- 10.3 **RESOLVED** that The Cowshed would not be awarded a grant as the required monitoring report had not been received following their grant awarded in financial year 2025/26, in addition councillors were of the view that it was not appropriate for the Town Council to fund the salary of a paid position.
- 10.4 **RESOLVED** that Earley Community Bus would be awarded £850 to support office administration costs of providing their service.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED** that Earley Cricket Club would not be awarded a grant. Reasons for the decision included the fact that the ground at which the club play is situated in Woodley and within the grounds of a Woodley school, which in turn benefits from Earley Cricket Club maintaining their cricket ground. In addition, the club has no security of tenure as it remains an annual hirer and councillors were not satisfied that suitable safe storage was in place for the sight screens the club wished to purchase. A recommendation that the club approach the ECB for funding would be made.
- 10.6 **RESOLVED** that Epilepsy Berkshire would be awarded a grant of £500 towards equipment and would be advised that it may wish to consider hiring the Elizabeth Room at Radstock Lane Community Centre for some of its meetings.

*Cllr Eastwell left the meeting.*

*Cllr Eastwell entered the meeting.*

- 10.7 **RESOLVED** that Heal Harmony England CIC would not be awarded a grant. Reasons for the decision included the fact that this was a newly formed CIC closely connected to a limited company and the CIC has no independent track record. Councillors would wish to see evidence of its activities and development before a grant could be considered.
- 10.8 **RESOLVED** that Keep Mobile would be awarded a grant of £3,000 to assist towards service provision costs.
- 10.9 **RESOLVED** Laurel Park Netball Club would not be awarded a grant as the club's activities fall outside of Earley and the majority of its members are not Earley residents. It was noted that the club had not appeared to have made funding applications to the parish and town councils where it did carry out its activities.
- 10.10 **RESOLVED** that The Link Visiting Scheme would be awarded £2,500 towards the funding, management, monitoring and supervision of volunteers.

*Cllr Hare left the meeting*

*Cllr Hare entered the meeting.*

- 10.11 **RESOLVED** that the Salvation Army Lower Earley would be awarded £2,000 to purchase chairs and tables to improve the seating facilities in its community garden.

## **11. TOWN COUNCIL POLICIES**

- 11.1 Members noted that the following Town Council's policies had been reviewed and that no amendments had been made: -

- Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy
- Credit Management Policy
- Sickness Absence Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the above policies be re-adopted.

11.2. Members noted that the following policies had been reviewed and the following amendments had been made: -

11.2.1 Staff Recruitment & Retention Policy

- Para 2 – addition of “and Social Media”
- Final Para – addition of “Employment Rights Act 2025”

It was **RESOLVED** that the policy with amendments be adopted.

11.2.2 Whistleblowing Policy

- Para 2, list – addition of “sexual harassment”

It was **RESOLVED** that the policy with the amendment be adopted.

11.2.3 Annual Leave Policy

- Para 2 – basic leave entitlement increased from 22 to 23 days, rising from 25 to 26 after 5 years’ service
- Additional section – Public Bank Holidays, in line with staff contracts

It was **RESOLVED** that the policy with the amendments be adopted.

**12. YOUTH SERVICES**

12.1 New Youth Club

Councillors were pleased to note that ETC has commissioned Reading FC Community Trust to deliver a weekly, Friday night youth club at Centrepont Community Centre, this started on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2026. The new youth club is aimed at young people aged 13+ and will operate throughout the year, except for 2 weeks at Christmas. The club has been promoted via both ETC and RFCCT social media and ETC’s website and notice boards.

12.2 HAF Sessions

Councillors noted that Berkshire Youth has been commissioned by WBC to run weekly HAF sessions during August and it has been agreed that the sessions will be run from Centrepont Community Centre. HAF is the government funded Holiday, Activities and Food programme run in school holidays for children in receipt of free school meals.

**13. MEETING EXTENSION**

As the duration of the meeting had reached 2 hours, councillors **RESOLVED** to extend the meeting by a maximum of 30 minutes.

**14. DEVOLUTION**

The Chair led a discussion on general ideas around devolution to gauge whether ETC would have the appetite and resources to take on additional responsibilities if Wokingham Borough Council were to consider devolving some elements of its assets and services to town and parish councils.

The Committee raised the following points: -

- ETC should keep an ‘open mind’ and not an ‘open door’ when considering any such requests
- The assets/services would need to be considered on merit and assessed on how any transfer of responsibilities would benefit Earley residents
- The importance of there being a good relationship with WBC, including the need for transparency from WBC when communicating possible additional responsibilities
- ETC should not feel forced into taking on additional responsibilities if WBC chooses to cut or cease certain operations

- The impact on ETC's budget especially in terms of ongoing and future costs

**15. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – TOWN & PARISH QUESTIONS**

The committee were asked to consider any councillor requests for specific questions to be submitted to WBC meetings and to also agree the WBC meeting to which the Town Clerk is to submit the question. No questions were raised.

**16. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 8817 – 8836, 8837 – 8843, 8843a – 8874, 8875 – 8899, 8900 - 8922), Imprest vouchers (1181 - 1188).

**17. 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 April & May 2026                            |
| TVP                                       | Office of the PCC Bulletin – February, March & April 2026 |
| MERA                                      | Minutes – March & April 2026                              |
| Involve                                   | E-newsletters March, April & May 2026                     |
| Me2 Club                                  | E-newsletter March 2026                                   |

**18. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA**

No press releases were requested.

**19. 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**

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

The Confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair. (Minutes 100 – 103)

**21. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.23pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee