



**EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting of Earley Town Council held remotely on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 which commenced at 7:30pm.

**Present**

Chairman – The Mayor, Councillor D Hare.

Councillors: A Bassett, G Bhangra, N Brock, D Chopping, J Clark, R Cook, J Eastwell, M Eastwell, R Houlbrooke, D Ireland, C Jones, I Khayinza, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, A Mickleburgh, A Neal, A Newton, R Sangster, M Shaw, C Smith, M Smith and K Yabsley.

In Attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk), R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer) and a member of the public.

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**105. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**106. MINUTES SILENCE**

A minutes silence was observed in acknowledgement of the more than 100,000 people in the UK who had lost their lives to Covid-19.

**107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**108. PUBLIC FORUM**

The member of the public enquired about Earley Town Council's view on schools re-opening in March, and what options parents had if they were concerned about their children returning because of Covid-19. Councillor Hare explained that education was within the remit of Wokingham Borough Council, so WBC would be best placed to answer his queries, but that if any resident still did have concerns, they would be welcome to approach councillors for help and guidance. The member of the public thanked Councillor Hare for his advice.

**109. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council (81-104) held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were a true record and should be signed by the Chairman.

**110. TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Town Mayor reported his attendance at the funeral cortege of Victor Browne, an Earley resident and teacher at Bulmershe School, on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Councillor Hare noted that many people were present along the route to celebrate Mr Browne's life and contribution to the community.

## **111. DEPUTY LEADER POSITION**

It was noted that Councillor A Long had stepped down as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats on Earley Town Council and Councillor C Smith had been selected to that position by the Liberal Democrat members on Earley Town Council. Members discussed the correct method of reporting on party matters to the Town Council.

## **112. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **112.1 Amenities & Leisure Committee**

Councillor A Newton presented the draft Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021. She highlighted Item 55 - Tree Replacement – Milton Road, the Deputy Town Clerk reported that she had been in discussion with an officer at Wokingham Borough Council who was awaiting a response from the Borough's contractors.

The draft Minutes of the Amenities & Leisure Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (Minutes 52-66) were received.

### **112.2 Planning Committee**

Councillor G Littler presented the Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (Minutes 71-86) and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (Minutes 87-104) were received.

### **112.3 Policy & Resources Committee**

Councillor C Jones presented the draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021. He was pleased to note Item 84 – IT Upgrade.

The draft Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 (Minutes 77-95) were received.

## **113. REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES**

### **113.1 Earley Volunteer Driver Bureau**

Members received a written report from Councillor M Eastwell on the virtual meeting of the EVDB held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

### **113.2 Highwood Management Conference**

Councillor A Neal provided a verbal report of the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February where S Bartlam, Countryside Operations Officer, gave an update on progress at Highwood since the previous Conference in January 2020. The Rangers' Report for 2020/21 would be available on the Wokingham Borough Council website.

### **113.3 Borough Parish Liaison Forum**

Councillors received a verbal report from Councillor A Neal on a meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at which agenda items included: WBC's response to Covid; proposed

changes to the planning system; the 2021 Census; and the Borough/Town Parish Charter. The Town Clerk provided some background information on the Charter and informed Members that it would be presented to all 17 towns and parishes in Wokingham borough who would be invited to sign up to it.

#### 113.4 Woodley & North Earley Community Forum

Councillor Shaw reported that she was hoping to restart WANE, and invited input from any councillors who would like to collaborate.

### 114. **BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2021/22**

The Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee introduced the recommendations made by the Budget Working Party, and those made at the Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021. He noted the tremendous contributions of both Officers and Councillors over the last year to ensure the Town Council met the needs of residents in the face of very difficult circumstances, and wished to thank the Senior Operations Support Officer for implementing and making understandable the new finance package. Members discussed the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 and considered this budget a careful and cautious approach to an unpredictable future.

*The member of the public left the meeting.*

#### 114.1 Cemetery Charges

It was **RESOLVED** that a 1% inflationary increase to cemetery charges be approved.

#### 114.2 Town Council Budget 2021/22

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed Budget 2021/22, as detailed in the document supplied to Members at the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and recommended by the Budget Working Party at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021, be approved.

#### 114.3 Town Council Precept 2021/22

It was **RESOLVED** that a 1% increase be applied to the Town Council Precept for 2021/22 and it be set at £988,054 as detailed in the Summary of Draft Budget Figures – Financial Year 2021-22, as supplied to the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

This equates to an increase of 78p per annum for a Band D household, from £81.82 to £82.60 per annum.

### 115. **DELEGATION OF POWERS**

#### 115.1 Full Council

Members considered the continuation of the schedule of delegation of emergency powers to the Town Clerk, plus either the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Leader or Deputy Leader. It was

**RESOLVED** that the schedule of delegation of emergency powers to the Town Clerk, plus either the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, Leader or Deputy Leader continue.

Councillors discussed whether it was still necessary for the Deputies to be included in this list and agreed to consider removing them when the powers were next reviewed.

## 115.2 Planning Committee

Councillors noted that monthly virtual meetings of the Planning Committee were continuing and that the scheme of delegation of powers regarding this committee remain suspended.

## 116. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2021/22

The Town Council considered the proposed Schedule of Meetings 2021/22. Councillor Littler noted that it may be necessary to convene an extraordinary Planning Committee meeting if and when the Swallows Meadow Planning application was submitted.

A suggestion was made that the Council could consider reviewing the number of meeting cycles when considering dates for 2022/23.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed Schedule of Meetings 2021/22 be adopted.

## 117. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Councillors considered the Town Clerk's report regarding the holding of an Annual Town Electors' Meeting in 2021. Members discussed the practical difficulties of holding such a meeting within the legally permitted timeframe in a manner which was both productive and collaborative whilst also observing any Covid-19 social distancing requirements. It was

**RESOLVED** that the Report's recommendations be adopted and the Council would not call an Annual Town Electors' Meeting in 2021. The Chair of Earley Town Council, along with the Chairs of the Standing Committees, Amenities & Leisure, Planning and Policy & Resources, would draft statements outlining the work and achievements of their respective committees over the past 12 months and these statements be published on the ETC website.

Members agreed that the plans for the redesigning of the format of the Annual Town Electors' Meeting be carried over to 2022.

## 118. REVIEW OF TOWN PLAN

The Town Council considered the draft Town Plan (8<sup>th</sup> version) as revised by the Town Plan Working Group. Councillor Jones thanked all those involved in the creation of the document, especially Councillor Mickleburgh. Members discussed how best to enable both residents and resident groups to comment on the revision, the correct sequencing of consultation and adoption, and whether the Town Plan should be considered a live document with regular reviews and amendments. It was

**RESOLVED** that the draft Town Plan (8<sup>th</sup> version) be adopted. Both residents and resident groups to be invited to comment, any comments received shall be considered by the working group at future reviews of the document.

## 119. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Members received a written report from the Chair of the Climate Emergency Working Group, detailing an update on the group's activities and its initial recommendations. It was

**RESOLVED** that the Earley Town Council Declaration of Climate Emergency be adopted.

Members agreed that the Working Group would continue to develop the draft Climate Emergency Action Plan.

**120. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**120.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillors considered issues that the Town Council may wish to submit for consideration by the Wokingham Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Topics to be submitted included: health outcomes for non-Covid-19 patients; communication with residents; dentistry provision in Earley; waste collection and recycling; tree felling; and vehicle parking on corners and junctions.

**120.2 Wokingham Borough Council's Standards Committee**

It was noted that there was a vacancy on the Wokingham Borough Council's Standards Committee for a Town/Parish representative. Any Town Councillors interested in volunteering for the post should contact the Town Clerk.

**121. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCES**

**121.1 Record of Members' Attendance**

Members noted details of Councillors' attendance during 2020/21 at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

**122. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

Councillors noted there had been no further Orders for Payment since those reported to the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

**123. PUBLICATIONS**

It was noted that the following publications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices.

Me2Club	E-newsletter January 2021
Involve Community Services	E-newsletter 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
Citizens Advice Wokingham	E-update January 2021

**124. PRESS RELEASES**

Councillors requested press releases be issued in regard to the adoption of the revised Town Plan and the adoption of the Declaration of Climate Emergency.

**125. 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**

**126. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**127. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

128. UPDATES

129. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.58pm

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**Town Mayor**