



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting for the Members of the Policy & Resources Committee held remotely on Wednesday 2nd June 2021 commencing at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor C Jones

Councillors A Bassett, D Chopping, J Clark, J Eastwell, D Hare, S Matthews, and A Mickleburgh.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk), and R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer).

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Maher.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **PUBLIC FORUM**

No members of the public were present.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 17th March 2021 were confirmed a true record and recommended for signature by the Chair.

4.2 Councillor Bassett requested updates from the Town Clerk on the IT upgrade (Minute 103) and the Service to Earley awards. The Town Clerk reported that issues with Virgin were ongoing, but it was hoped they would soon be resolved, then the IT upgrade could be progressed. It was noted that the Service to Earley sub-committee membership would remain as previously constituted (Minute 5 – P&R 5.6.2019) and a meeting scheduled for after the nomination closing date of 12th June 2021.

5. **COVID-19 - UPDATE**

5.1 **Community Centres**

Members noted that the Town Council was not successful in its application for a coronavirus Restart Grant for two of its community centres. WBC had now informed the Town Clerk that parish and town councils were ineligible for this funding, having failed to indicate this fact previously.

It was noted that the Town Council's community centres had reopened to hirers, and that occupancy levels remained low as a result of numerous regular hirers remaining cautious and opting for a return later in the year. Councillors discussed how income compared to forecasts and noted that, whilst it was too early to have clear information, the predicted income figure



for this financial year had been substantially reduced from previous years' income figures owing to the continued impact of the pandemic.

6. COVID – RECOGNITION PLAQUE

Members discussed Councillor Clark's suggestion that the Town Council install a plaque at its offices in recognition of the outstanding contributions made by many Earley residents during the Coronavirus pandemic. Councillors were sensitive to the timings of any such memorial but were keen to recognise the efforts of residents and to remember those who had died. Consideration was also given to other types of memorial, possibly something which could be sited elsewhere in the town, and a discussion of ideas being planned around the country was had. It was

RECOMMENDED that a Working Party be set up to explore the issue and report back to the Policy & Resources Committee. The Working Party to comprise of Councillors J Clark, S Matthews, and A Mickleburgh.

Members requested that an updated Town Guide be made an Agenda Item for a future meeting of the Members of the Policy & Resources Committee.

7. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for March and April 2021 had been made available to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee for information.

8. ADVISOR TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members considered a recommendation from the Planning Committee, made at its meeting on 4th May 2021, that the contract between Earley Town Council and the Planning Advisor be renewed for a further 12 months, with effect from the end of April 2021. A review of the position to be held after 6 months. It was

RECOMMENDED that the contract between Earley Town Council and the Planning Advisor be renewed for a further 12 months, with effect from end of April 2021, with a review after 6 months.

9. BALC MEMBERSHIP

Members received a report on the Town Council's membership of the Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC), the annual subscription for which was due for renewal on 4th June 2021. Councillors were pleased to note the free training that BALC had been offering to officers and councillors in recognition of previous poor service delivery, the Town Clerk reported that some councillors had attended training session and encouraged others to take advantage of the training opportunities on offer. It was noted that membership of BALC was required for access to NALC (National Association of Local Councils). It was

RECOMMENDED that Earley Town Council renew its annual subscription to the Berkshire Association of Local Councils due on 4th June 2021.

10. CIL UPDATE

10.1 Members noted that the Town Council's current CIL funds stands at £83,449.



- 10.2 Councillors noted that a detailed report was provided to members of the Amenities and Leisure Committee on 26th May 2021, regarding the CIL funded project to replace swings at Meadow Park. They were pleased to note that this would ensure that monies with a deadline during 2021 would be spent in accordance with CIL guidelines.

11. CHALFONT WOODS

Members discussed the motion submitted by Cllr C Jones, that the Town Council should formally seek ownership of Chalfont Woods from Wokingham Borough Council. Cllr Mickleburgh explained that the purpose of the proposal was to protect the site from future development and would be to seek for the area, a designation as a formal nature reserve. The Town Clerk asked for clarification that the proposal was seeking an asset transfer from the borough as such transfers were usually limited to a 30 year term. Cllr Jones suggested a longer term could be negotiated. Discussions were had about how the Town Council could organise the management of the site and whether there would be public access to it. Cllr Mickleburgh confirmed that the priority would be the protection of habitat and it was not proposed that there would be public access to the site. A suggestion was made that WBC's current management plan for the woods could be requested as this may give an indication as to the condition of the site. Concern was expressed that increased protection for this site may decrease the protection for other sites in Earley and it was suggested that a professional report be commissioned to determine any costs or potential issues with the area. Members also discussed the benefits for the public of Town Council control of the site, especially if no public access was to be provided. It was

- 11.1 **RECOMMENDED** that the Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Full Council that Earley Town Council formally seek the transfer of Chalfont Woods (also known as Area DD) from Wokingham Borough Council with the intention that ETC maintain the woods as a legally designated nature reserve, and that the Town Council approach WBC to begin discussions as to how such a transfer can be achieved.

- 11.2 A second motion that Earley Town Council obtain a quote for a professional report on the site to determine if there are any unknown costs or issues relating to the land was not successful.

12. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS

It was noted that the grants agreed at the Council meeting of 31st March 2021 had been paid, and that letters of thanks had been received from many of the grant recipients.

13. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment made since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 3861 – 3886, 3887 – 3912, 3913 – 3915, 3916 – 3956, 3957 – 3983, 3984 – 3989, and 3990 – 4038) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 28 – 31, and 565 – 591).

Councillor Clark requested an update regarding Voucher 3880 – Sports Pitch Renovation Works. The Town Clerk provided a detailed description of the works carried out at Sol Joel park.



14. **PUBLICATIONS**

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

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| Earley Neighbourhood Action Group | Electronic newsletter – 26 th April 2021 |
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15. **PRESS RELEASES**

No press releases were requested.

16. **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

17. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

18. **DELEGATED POWERS**

19. **STAFFING MATTERS**

20. **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.30 pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee