



AMENITIES & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities & Leisure Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Reading on Wednesday, 8th September 2021 which commenced at 7.45pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor A Newton

Councillors: A Bassett, G Bhangra, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews and K Yabsley.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), G Hawker (Senior Park Ranger), R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer) and Councillor D Chopping.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Brock, M Eastwell and D Ireland.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

35. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair (Minutes 16–31).

36. CORONAVIRUS - UPDATE

36.1 Council Facilities

Members noted that many regular hirers have now resumed their bookings at the Town Council's community centres, and that ETC were advising hirers to continue to adopt sensible precautions whilst using the facilities. The Town Clerk reported that the centres were seeing new hirers, and that a fuller picture would be available in due course.

Councillors noted that, in line with current advice, the pavilions were now available for use by the football teams, and that ETC advised precautions around space and hygiene continue to be observed.

It was noted that the Council offices and Helpshop remain open, and that measures previously adopted to minimise the risk of infection remain in place.

37. CULVER LANE ALLOTMENTS

Councillor Bassett reported on her site visit to the allotments on 1st of September, alongside Councillors M & J Eastwell, and relayed the thanks of the Allotment Association to the Deputy Town Clerk and Senior Administration Officer for the efforts and co-operation.

Councillor Bassett attended the 80th Anniversary Celebrations on Saturday 4th September, where she was able to speak with several of the amenity users and had a very enjoyable day.

38. MEADOW PARK

38.1 Replacement Swings Project

Councillors were pleased to note that the new swings were scheduled to be installed during the week commencing 20th September, and that officers would be carrying out preparatory work on site the week commencing 13th September.

39. RADSTOCK LANE SOCIAL CLUB SPACE

Members were pleased to note the Town Clerk's update on the project to create a community space in the area of Radstock Lane Community Centre, which had previously been used as a social club. Councillors expressed an interest in visiting the site to see the works done and noted that the renovations were due to be completed by the end of October.

40. GREEN EVENTS

It was noted that, following the Policy & Resources Committee's approval of a £4,000 budget, the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk had progressed the project. The draft schedule of events was discussed during Part II of this meeting.

41. TREE REGISTER

The Committee received an update from the Town Council's Tree Recording Group. Members noted that the Senior Park Ranger had provided some training in tree identification, and the group had considered methodology and processes. It was agreed that validating the existing Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association database was the correct first step, and that given the number of trees in Earley, this would be an extensive and long running project. Consideration was given to the aims of the project, the correct scheduling of involving the public and how to handle trees on private land.

42. YOUTH ANGLING PROJECT

Members noted that the collaboration with Reading FC Community Trust had been very successful and well attended. The young people had enjoyed their time at the lake, and appreciated the support given by the Town Council water bailiff, and by members of RFCCT. Several messages of thanks had been received from participants and their families.

43. LAKESIDE

The Committee discussed the request from MERA that the height of the hedges abutting Lakeside be further reduced, having been provided with copies of communications on the matter and having conducted site visits. Councillor Chopping commented on the history of this issue, and the Senior Park Ranger noted the biodiversity implications, the costs associated with maintaining a low hedge, and that power tools could not be used during bird nesting season. As a biodiverse environment, the appearance would change constantly and be hard to

predict year to year. Consideration was given to lighting and safety issues, and it was noted that a lit pavement was available within 20' of the path. Members noted their obligations to all residents and users of the amenity, and were mindful of the Climate Emergency, and the increased understanding of biodiversity since the original decision was made.

Members noted the legal obligations imposed by The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which requires that every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

It was **AGREED** that in view of the current climate emergency and need to protect all biodiversity, that the request from MERA to further reduce the height of the hedges abutting Lakeside be refused.

44. PUBLICATIONS

The Committee noted that the following items had been received and were available for viewing from the Council Offices:

Me2 Club	E-newsletters July 2021 & August 2021
MERA	Executive Committee Meeting 12 th August 2021
CCB	E-newsletter August 2021
Berkshire Youth	E-newsletter August 2021
The Friendship Alliance	E-newsletter September 2021

45. PRESS RELEASES

A press release was requested on the Green Events program once it had been finalised.

46. 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

47. GREEN EVENTS

48. LAUREL PARK PAVILION

49. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.26 pm.

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Chair, Amenities & Leisure Committee