



EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Members of Earley Town Council held on Wednesday 6th October 2021 which commenced at 7.30pm.

Present

Chair – The Mayor, Councillor A Bassett

Councillors: G Bhangra, N Brock, R Cook, J Eastwell, M Eastwell, D Hare, R Houlbrooke, 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), and R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer).

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Chopping, J Clark, D Ireland, and C Jones.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

73. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public in attendance.

Councillors R Houlbrooke & G Bhangra entered the meeting

74. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr S Matthews provided an update on Minute 57 ‘Bulmershe Park – Town Green Proposal’ to note that Woodley Town Council had agreed to support the proposal at its meeting of 28th September 2021.

Cllr A Neal provided an update on Minute 58 ‘Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan’ to note that a response was still to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Minutes of the meeting for the members of the Town Council (46-70) held on Wednesday 28th July 2021 were a true record and could be signed by the Chair.

75. TOWN MAYOR’S COMMUNICATIONS

The Town Mayor reported that she had enjoyed a busy September attending events across Earley and the local area. She noted her visits to:

- the Youth Angling Project at Maiden Erlegh lake in August
- a very informative 80th anniversary lunch at the Earley Allotments - Saturday 4th September

- attendance at the Berkshire High Sheriff's Summer Reception - Thursday 9th September
- the impressive Berkshire Vision AGM - Thursday 16th September
- her participation in the ETC Volunteers Thames Waterside Litter pick - Wednesday 22nd September
- McMillan Coffee Mornings at Austin House - Fri 24th September and at the Interpretation Centre, Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve - Friday 1st October
- Opening the St Nicolas Church Fete - Saturday 25th September.

Councillor A Newton entered the meeting

76. CHRISTMAS RECEPTION

Members considered arrangements for the annual Town Mayor's Christmas Reception. It was agreed that the Council Chamber would be too small to host the event this year as consideration would still need to be given to minimising the risks of Covid infections. Radstock Lane Community Centre was considered a more suitable location however, available dates would be limited due to the existing bookings of regular hirers. Councillors were keen to be able to have the opportunity to present the Service to Earley awards but were mindful that some people may not be comfortable mixing in social gatherings. It was agreed that all staff and town councillors should be invited but their decision whether to attend or not must be respected.

It was agreed that the presentation for the annual awards for allotment holders should be made at the start of the next Amenities and Leisure Committee meeting rather than waiting until the Christmas Reception.

Cllr Bassett suggested that a small group of councillors could get together to sort out the details for this year's Town Mayor's Christmas Reception, although any arrangements would be dependent on the coronavirus situation at the time.

77. COMMITTEE REPORTS

77.1 Amenities & Leisure Committee

Cllr A Newton presented the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities & Leisure Committee held on Wednesday 8th September. She highlighted Minute 37 'Culver Lane Allotments' and noted that there would not be a 'most improved' award this year, as there was no data from last year, so instead the Town Council would offer prizes for the 2 runners-up.

Cllr Newton requested an update on Minute 38.1 'Replacement Swings Project', the Town Clerk confirmed that the installation had been completed and they were waiting for the area to settle before opening the equipment to the public. Members were pleased to hear that the new apparatus had received a post-installation inspection on Monday 6th October.

Cllr Newton mentioned Minute 40 'Youth Angling Project' which she noted had proven very successful.

Cllr Maher informed Members that he was seeking to organise a group for training in relation to Minute 41 'Tree Register'.

A correction was noted that for Minute 43 'Lakeside' the Minutes should read "biodiverse" environment, not "biodynamic" environment.

The draft Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities & Leisure Committee held on 8th September 2021 (Minutes 32-49) were received.

77.2 Planning Committee

Cllr G Littler presented the Minutes of the meeting for the members of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 3rd of August, and the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 7th September. He noted a small omission on page 4 of the draft September Minutes, which had been corrected in the official Minutes.

The Minutes of the meeting for the members of the Planning Committee held on 3rd August 2021 (Minutes 57-69) and draft Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7th September 2021 (Minutes 70-83) were received.

77.3 Policy & Resources Committee

Cllr D Hare presented the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Wednesday 22nd September. He drew attention to Minute 44.1 'Completion of External Audit' and wished to express the Committee's thanks to officers for their efforts in achieving such a positive return.

Cllr Hare highlighted Minute 49 'Green Events 2021 – 26 to COP26' and commented on the very positive feedback that had been received from residents so far and wished to express the Committee's thanks to the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk for their efforts on this project.

The Town Clerk, in response to a Member's question, provided an update on the IT upgrade to confirm that the project was within budget, and that some items of equipment were still awaited due to national shortages.

The draft Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 22nd September 2021 (Minutes 40-58) were received.

78. REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BODIES

78.1 Earley Volunteer Driver Bureau

Cllr M Eastwell reported her attendance at a recent Earley Volunteer Driver Bureau meeting on 20th September 2021. She noted that they were not currently operational due to a shortage of drivers and office staff but were in the process of recruiting more volunteers. There was currently no set date for a return to service.

78.2 Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum

Cllr Long provided a verbal report on a meeting of the Cleaner Air & Safer Transport Forum held on 19th August 2021. The Committee discussed the requirement for collaboration with Reading Borough Council for transport links given the shared border.

78.3 Woodley and North Earley Community Forum

Cllr Shaw reported on the WANE meeting of 28th September 2021. She noted the next meeting was scheduled for 18th January 2022.

The Chair, Cllr Bassett, reminded Members that it would be useful in future, if reports could be sent to the Town Clerk for inclusion on the agenda, thus giving others an opportunity to read and digest such reports.

79. BOROUGH PARISH LIAISON FORUM

Members received an update from Cllrs Littler and Neal on the Borough Parish Liaison Forum meeting held on 4th October 2021. They reported that other parish councils in the borough had agreed that the displaying of planning notices was an issue, but as no officer from Wokingham Borough was present, it was decided by the BPLF that the issue would be revisited at the next meeting.

A lack of Wokingham Borough officers in attendance at the meeting of 4th October meant that the matter of tree protection and planting would also be revisited at a later meeting.

Members noted WBC's decision to withdraw from the Public Protection Partnership with effect from 1st April 2022.

80. DELEGATION OF POWERS

80.1 Use of Delegated Powers

Members received a report detailing any use of delegated powers since the last meeting of the Council on 28th July 2021.

80.2 Full Council

Members considered the continuing impact of the pandemic on the Council's ability to hold all meetings face to face whilst ensuring the safety of all participants. The Chair noted that whilst members were keen to return to normal and there was no direct legal requirement for social distancing, the Council needed to be aware of changing conditions and recognise its responsibility to protect officers, councillors and residents. The Town Council's current practice of holding committee meetings in person but Full Council meetings remotely (due to the lack of an appropriately sized venue) had been working well. In response to a question on advice from BALC, the Town Clerk reported that individual councils were dealing with this issue in a variety of ways, depending on their respective circumstances and that ETC's position was not unusual. After discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that the schedule of delegated powers detailed in Minutes 7, 7.1 and 7.2 'Delegated Powers' at the Annual Meeting of the Council, 4th May 2021, be continued for Full Council meetings, whilst meetings of committees should be held in person if possible. The continued adoption of the scheme to be reviewed again at the next meeting of Full Council.

81. EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL GREEN EVENTS 2021

Councillors noted that the details of the events and activities being organised now featured on a dedicated page on the Town Council's website: *Green Events 2021 – 26 to COP26*. They were pleased to note that posters had been displayed on Town Council notice boards, and on councillors' social media channels. The events were proving to be highly successful and popular with residents, the Chair herself had attended several.

Members thanked officers for all their work in the organisation and running of the events and activities and were keen that consideration be given to repeating some of the events at a later date.

82. MAYS LANE CEMETERY

It was noted that Wokingham Borough Council had finally agreed to consult with Earley Town Council on the plans to replace the footbridge at Earley train station. The Town Clerk

reported that an information pack had been sent to all Councillors in advance of a meeting for councillors on 13th October. Members requested that a plan marking the boundaries of Town Council land and the planned cemetery extension be sent out. A further meeting with WBC was scheduled for 1st November. Councillors discussed the proposed Mays Lane extension and expressed their desire to complete the extension as quickly as practicable. Members thanked the Town Clerk for her efforts in taking the initiative and getting WBC to start communicating with the Town Council on what was an important matter.

83. SIBLY TRANSFER

Councillors noted that the transfer of open space from the developers of the Sibly estate, Persimmon Homes, to Earley Town Council was being handled by the respective parties' appointed solicitors. Cllr Hare read out a statement from Cllr Jones which sought to lay out the facts surrounding the history of this transfer. Members thanked Cllr Hare for providing the timeline of events.

The Town Clerk informed Members that she had worked with the solicitors to ensure that the assets that Persimmon were transferring were the correct ones and she hoped the Town Council would soon have a clearer idea of timescales until completion.

84. COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

84.1 Record of Members' Attendance

Members noted details of Councillors' attendance during 2021/22 at meetings of the Council and its Committees and at remote meetings held for members of Council and its Committees. It was noted that Cllr Littler had attended the Council Meeting of 17th June 2021, the record would be amended to reflect that. Councillors were pleased to note that all Members were compliant regarding Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, also known as the '6-month rule'.

85. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors noted the details of Orders for Payment (Vouchers 4272 – 4321), and that there were no Imprest Account vouchers to report.

86. PUBLICATIONS

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

MERA	Minutes of Executive Meeting – 9 th September 2021
ACER	E-newsletter – Autumn 2021

87. PRESS RELEASES

Councillors requested the following press releases be issued:

- 87.1 A further press release on the '26 to COP26' events once the programme entered its later half.
- 87.2 A press release on the new Earley Tree Walk.

88. 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

89. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

90. COMMITTEE REPORTS

91. LAUREL PARK PAVILION

92. YOUTH SERVICES

93. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 9.30pm.

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Town Mayor