



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting for the members of the Policy & Resources Committee, held remotely, on Wednesday 26th January 2022 commencing at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor C Jones

Councillors: A Bassett, D Chopping, J Clark, J Eastwell, D Hare, R Houlbrooke, T Maher, and S Matthews.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk), E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk), R Fryer (Democratic Services Officer), Councillors C Smith, M Smith, and A Neal.

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Mickleburgh.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

78. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public were present.

79. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 10th November 2021 were confirmed as a true record and **RECOMMENDED** for signature by the Chair (Minutes 59-75).

Councillor T Maher entered the meeting

80. FINANCIAL MATTERS

80.1 Draft Budget

Members noted that Budget Working Party meetings had been held on 23rd November 2021, 6th December 2021 and 17th January 2022. The Chair thanked the Town Clerk for the papers provided to the working party. Councillors noted funds allocated for environmental projects, recycling bins, Meadow Park, and replacement bus shelters beginning in North Earley. Councillors considered the recommended budget arising from the Budget Working Party meeting of 17th January 2022 and it was

RECOMMENDED that the draft budget agreed by the Budget Working Party on 17th January 2022 be put to Council for approval at its meeting of 9th February 2022.



80.2 Precept 2022/23

The recommendations arising from the Budget Working Party meetings for the Town Precept for 2022/23 were discussed. Councillors discussed the case for increasing the precept in 2022/23, mindful of the significant cost of living increases forecast for the year ahead that would impact both residents and the council. Members were keen that planned projects and improvements could be funded without leaving a shortfall that would require significant future increases in the precept but wished to balance this against the possible financial impact on residents. They agreed that, because of careful financial management and good housekeeping, any increase for 2022/23 could be kept to a minimum. Members discussed and voted on two proposals and it was

RECOMMENDED that a 0% increase be proposed for the Town Precept for 2022/23, to be put to Council for approval at its meeting of 9th February 2022.

81. **BANK RECONCILIATIONS**

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

82. **EARLEY HELPSHOP – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

Members were pleased to note that Wokingham Borough Council had agreed to extend the SLA with Earley Town Council for services provided via the Helpshop from 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2024, terms and conditions remain unchanged. The Town Clerk reported that she had requested WBC give thought to the possibility of expanding the range of WBC services provided by the Helpshop.

83. **TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS**

Councillors noted that applications for Earley Town Council Grants 2022 were now being invited, that promotional information had been posted on the Town Council website and noticeboards and that previous recipients had been contacted by email. Members noted that the closing date for receipt of applications was 31st January 2022, and that a report on applications received would be submitted to the next Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 16th March 2022 for consideration.

84. **COMMUNITY SPACE – RADSTOCK LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

The Committee discussed a charging schedule for the new community space created by ETC at Radstock Lane Community Centre. The intention is for this space to be made available for use by local charities and community groups rather than commercial hirers. Consideration was given to the squeezed funding of many local charities and it was noted that there should not be significant additional costs to the town council once the space is fully opened. It was agreed that the officers would continue to manage this project and the Town Clerk would communicate with local charities and community groups to gauge interest levels and how they may wish to make use of the space. The Town Clerk will agree appropriate charges with hirers of the space and the situation will be monitored. The project to be reviewed in 12 months.

85. **CENTREPOINT COMMUNITY CENTRE**



Earley Town Council

85.1 Earley Volunteer Drivers Bureau

Members noted the decision taken by the Earley Volunteer Drivers Bureau at its Special General Meeting on 10th January 2022 to close the Bureau and to transfer its assets to the Wokingham Volunteer Centre who had agreed to incorporate Earley into its transport scheme.

85.2 Hire Charges

Councillors discussed a request from the EVDB that ETC waive the office hire charge with effect from 1st January 2022 as the charity would soon be vacating the centre. It was noted that they were contractually required to provide two months' notice, which they wished to waive, and that that they had paid for the previous 18 months hire despite limited use due to the impacts of Covid-19. It was

RECOMMENDED that the EVDB office hire charge be waived with effect from 1st January 2022.

85.3 Queen's Award

The Committee considered a request from the EVDB that ETC take possession of the EVDB's Queen's Award and display it appropriately. Councillors were keen to ensure the award remained publicly visible in the town. It was

RECOMMENDED that ETC take possession of EVDB's Queen's Award and display it in the Helpshop reception area.

86. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

86.1 Climate Emergency Working Group

Councillor C Smith introduced the notes from the Climate Emergency Working Group meeting of 10th January 2022, and thanked Councillor Mickleburgh for drafting the Earley Green Infrastructure Plan.

86.2 Draft Earley Green Infrastructure Plan

Members discussed the Earley Green Infrastructure Plan (3rd draft) and discussed the next steps for this document. Councillor M Smith noted that it was currently an action plan, rather than a policy document, that it was intended to serve as a live document and that it was not yet complete. Members agreed that the plan should be formally adopted as a policy but noted that it would need to be completed before that could happen. The Town Clerk reported that parts of the action plan were being implemented by Officers prior to formal adoption, and that the accompanying policy proposal, covering both the Earley Green Infrastructure Plan and the Climate Emergency Action Plan, need not be complex. It was agreed that the formal adoption of the Draft Earley Green Infrastructure Plan be put on the agenda for the Council meeting scheduled for 30th March 2022.

86.3 Wokingham Borough Council – 'Let's Talk Climate'

Councillors noted that information on WBC's 'Let's Talk Climate' project was available on the Engage Wokingham Borough platform. They discussed the benefit of a member of the Climate Emergency Working Group joining the project and Councillor C Smith volunteered.



87. PUBLICITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Councillors discussed the creation of a working group to examine the Town Council's use of social media and to consider how communications with residents could be improved. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that a social media policy was in the process of being drafted but had been delayed due to the need to focus on the Covid response. She noted the many complexities associated with social media, including political sensitivity, the plurality of platforms and the need for dedicated officer time to monitor and implement. Members considered the social media output of neighbouring local councils and a desire to update the town council website. The Town Clerk noted that there was money allocated to updating the website in the budget. Councillors agreed that publicity and communications should be officer led, that a working party was unnecessary and that officers would return with a proposal at the next Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 16th March 2022.

88. EARLEY STATION FOOTBRIDGE

The Town Clerk reported that there had been further communications with Wokingham Borough Council on this issue, and that WBC had postponed the date of the next meeting until March to give themselves an opportunity to provide information around areas of concern raised by the two town councils. Councillor Littler had drafted comments and questions arising from the last meeting to be submitted to WBC on Friday 28th January. These were observations, not a formal response, as WBC had yet to provide a definitive position to formally respond to.

89. COVID RECOGNITION PLAQUE

The Committee received a recommendation from the working group, following a meeting on 20th January 2022, that a cast aluminium plaque be ordered and displayed on the outside of the council offices. Councillors discussed how best to unveil the plaque, and who to invite to the ceremony as Members were keen to involve the local community. The working group agreed to return with proposals for the unveiling. It was

RECOMMENDED that the working group's recommendation for a cast aluminium plaque with the agreed design be accepted and the item ordered once quotes had been received.

90. LODDON BRIDGE VIADUCT

Councillor Neal introduced a briefing document on proposals to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the Loddon Bridge Viaduct disaster, which caused the death of three construction workers, and injured ten others on 24th October 1972. Members were mindful of the impact this could have on those with painful memories of the tragic event and were keen that the wishes of survivors and next of kin should be considered. Councillors were divided on how best to suitably memorialise the disaster. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would arrange a meeting with representatives from Woodley Town Council and Winnersh Parish Council to further consider the proposal.

91. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment made since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 4466 – 4502, 4503 – 4534, 4535 – 4568, 4569 – 4571, 4572 – 4574) and Imprest Account (Vouchers 622-639).

Councillors D Chopping and A Neal left the meeting



92. PUBLICATIONS

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

CCB	Action for All e-bulletin January 2022
MERA	Minutes of meeting 13 th January 2022

93. PRESS RELEASES

No press releases were requested.

94. 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

95. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

96. EMPLOYEE MATTERS

97. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.31pm.

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Chair, Policy & Resources Committee