



ANNUAL TOWN ELECTORS' MEETING 2024

Minutes of the meeting of Annual Town Electors' Meeting held in the Function Room at Maiden Place Community Centre, Maiden Place, Earley, Reading on Tuesday 16th April 2024, which commenced at 7.00pm.

Present

Chair – The Town Mayor, Councillor C Smith

ETC Officers: J Friend (Town Clerk) & E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk)

Present: M Smith, N Brock, D Hare, B Owen, A Neal, T Maher, S Newton, R Ahlawat, R Cook, A Long, G Littler, S Jordan, H Sarasan, P Jorgensen, A Mickleburgh, Y Yang and representatives from Berkshire Youth, Earley Environmental Group, Earley Neighbourhood Action Group, Earley Transport Scheme, Project Salama and members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Anne Bassett and Sheena Matthews.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Town Electors' Meeting held on 21st March 2023 were confirmed as a true record.

3. EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Mayor thanked Town Council officers for everything they had achieved over the past 12 months and for keeping residents at the heart of their work.

The Town Mayor reported to the meeting that the Town Council had successfully set the budget for financial year 2024/2025 and reminded attendees that the Town Council's Helpshop is open every day, offering a variety of services.

The Town Mayor reported on the activities of the Town Council over the past 12 months, these included the replacement of play equipment, holding of various green events, planting of trees and the installation of new benches, noticeboards and defibrillators. Activities also included the continued work on reducing the Town Council's carbon footprint and particular note was made of the installation of solar panels at the Council offices. The Town Mayor also reported that the Council had responded to 239 planning applications over the past year and had awarded over £26,000 in grant money to local organisations and charities.

The Town Mayor said that she had had the pleasure of attending various events and had been a member of the allotment competition judging panel. The Mayor's Reception was held in January 2024, attended by representatives from local groups and charities and where she awarded a trophy and prize to the Allotment Competition winners.

The Town Mayor reported that the Council had seen two long standing members of staff retire, Grahame Hawker, Senior Park Ranger and Diana Humphreys, Senior Administration Officer.

She also informed the meeting that the Town Council had many plans for the coming year, including new services at Centrepont, more green events for local residents, working with the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the growth of the Council's social media.

4. PRESENTATIONS

The following presentation were given to the meeting: -

4.1 Earley Environmental Group (EEG) & EASI – Bob Collis

EEG are a local group whose main aim is to conserve and improve the environment. With 300 members, the group's activities include walks, talks, newsletters and the production of an annual calendar. EEG are looking forward to working with Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and developing the Earley Green Corridor Network.

EASI (Earley Adopt a Street Initiative) which was originally founded by Peter Soul, now has 8 committee members and over 300 members. The group's activities include litter picks, producing newsletters and a new initiative in waste recycling.

4.2 Earley Transport Scheme – Nick Fellows

The Wokingham Volunteer Centre (TWVC) services include volunteer brokerage services, promoting health & wellbeing and supporting the voluntary sector. They also manage transport services and gardening services.

WVC took over the running of local transport services previously run by the Earley Volunteer Drivers Bureau and offer transport to medical appointment, shopping and social events for those who meet their criteria. There are 114 volunteers, 107 drivers and 7 office support staff.

4.3 Project Salama – Jacqui Mukono

Project Salama are a charity and support group for male and female survivors of domestic abuse and abuse. In Earley, the group offer a drop-in session in the Elizabeth Room at Radstock Lane Community Centre. The sessions are informal offering a relaxed atmosphere where people can come and talk and get involved in various art and craft activities. Other services and sessions are offered in Bracknell and Reading and the group work closely with the police, social workers, local councils and courts.

4.4 Earley Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) – Phil Marsh

The group was formed in 2010 and works closely with the police, local resident associations, the Anti-Social Behaviour team at Wokingham Borough Council and local businesses. Its main interests are traffic and infrastructure safety, along with general crime. The group are starting a Community Speedwatch scheme in June and the data captured is recorded at a national data-house, which can lead to persistent speeding drivers being contacted by the police.

4.5 Berkshire Youth – Gareth Mephram

Berkshire Youth is a countywide organisation who work with young people offering programmes which are tailored to their location and to the needs of the young people in those areas. The covid pandemic has drastically affected youth service provision and following a survey carried out in 2023, young people are expressing more concerns about mental health issues and bullying. Gareth pointed out that principal authorities have a statutory duty to provide youth services but many of them do not.

Berkshire Youth offer centre-based groups, detached youth work and work in schools. Youth workers are trained, holding a recognised qualification or working towards a qualification. Gareth told attendees that Berkshire Youth is currently in talks with Earley Town Council, the two organisations hope to work together to develop meaningful youth services in Earley.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending, thanked the groups for their presentations and the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk for organising the meeting. The meeting was declared closed at 8.40 pm.

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Town Mayor