**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 8 August 2019 at the Kenton Road Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Pamela Tames (Treasurer) |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | Jonathan Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Caroline Smith (Hillside WBC councillor) |
| David Chopping (Luckmore Residents’ Assoc) | Jenny Lissaman (ACER) |
| Judith Church (resident) | Ray Jones (resident) |

**Apologies received**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) |
| Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Paul Medlycott (Area 12) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| Siyu & Tim Smith (Area 2) | Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |
| Tim Marsh (ACER) | Brian Hackett (resident) |

**Also present for part of meeting**

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| Pauline Jorgensen (WBC councillor) (Guest) |  |

**PRESENTATION: CLLR PAULINE JORGENSEN**

The committee was advised that Cllr Jorgensen would arrive later than expected due to a meeting at Wokingham Borough Council, which was not expected to finish until 8pm.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019 were accepted and signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Community and Youth Sub Committee**

The Secretary confirmed that he had asked the Town Clerk to look into the circumstances behind the reasons for refusing to support ‘Keep Mobile’ with a view to exploring whether it would be permitted funding from the council in the future. Cllr Chopping’s recollection was that the issue related to employment issues but he thought it likely that funding could be restored if these matters had since been addressed.

**Pavement parking**

The Secretary advised that he had written to Julie Susel regarding the proposal that the leaflets produced previously by Wokingham Borough Council could be used to put under the windscreen wipers of vehicles parked on pavements. He hoped to receive a response to this before the next meeting.

**Membership update**

The meeting was advised that the Secretary had sent out revised membership lists to those Area Representatives who had notified changes. He reminded the committee that he should be informed of all new members and also those who no longer paid a subscription.

**Climate emergency initiatives**

The Secretary confirmed that he had forwarded the ideas put forward at the last meeting to Cllr Murray at the Borough Council, who was leading on this issue. A very positive response had been received, which confirmed that many of the ideas suggested would be included and form a large element of the plans the council intended to take forward. He stated that if MERA was able to identify any areas of land suitable for planting oak trees, he would be pleased to receive a note of the possible locations.

The committee was reminded that the idea of green rooves and the adverse impact of paving over front lawns were also discussed at the last meeting. The Secretary confirmed that these matters were discussed and stated that he would put these ideas forward as well when a response was given on the possible location for the planting of trees in Maiden Erlegh. It was also acknowledged that motorists running their engines while stationery was also a problem causing concern to residents.

Cllr Smith confirmed that Earley Town Council had also responded to the Borough Council on this matter.

**Planning applications**

The Secretary confirmed that the concerns of MERA and ACER over notifications to neighbours advising of planning applications affecting them going astray had been drawn to the attention of the council and this matter was now being investigated.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that the Green Fair held on 3 August appeared to have been very successful and was well attended.

**Treasurer’s report**

The Treasurer commented on the difficulties encountered in ensuring that some invoices relating to advertisements placed in the MERA Magazine were received. Celia Smith offered an explanation of the problem in the example quoted and a solution was agreed.

**Editorial Team report**

The Magazine Editor reported that the MERA magazine would benefit from becoming a full colour magazine and that he was happy to make such arrangements if the committee agreed. The Treasurer accepted that provided the cost could be covered by the increased charges for colour advertisements, there would be no objection to this.

However, some concern was expressed that not all current advertisers would necessarily want to pay more for colour advertisements. It was confirmed that if existing advertisers wished to retain black and white advertisements, they should be permitted to do so, but it was more likely that they would be willing to pay the small increase in price to convert to colour. All new advertisers would be offered only the colour advertisement charges.

**AGREED:** That the MERA magazine be produced in full colour in future.

**PRESENTATION - CLLR PAULINE JORGENSEN: ROAD WORKS CO-ORDINATION**

Cllr Pauline Jorgensen was welcomed to the meeting. The Secretary explained the background to MERA’s request for her to attend, which centred on the frustration of residents with the sheer volume of road works in the Borough, particularly when alternative routes were also subject to road works.

Cllr Jorgensen reassured the committee that in considering road works to be carried out in the Borough, a careful balance was struck between the interests of residents and the need for the work to be carried out. Statutory undertakers were required to carry out works within a reasonable timescale, but it needed to be recognised that emergency work always had priority and could not be programmed. Interestingly, the committee was informed that utilities were now using pavements rather than roads to lay their pipes and cables, which would ensure that disruption was minimised in the future.

The committee was advised that the Borough Council had a Facebook page which contained up to date information on road works in the area, and information was also available on [www.roadworks.org](http://www.roadworks.org).

Cllr Jorgensen stated that traffic congestion was one of the most concerning areas and making sure that all roads were zoned appropriately to ensure the continuing flow of traffic was extremely important. Cllr Chopping made the point that officers were very conscientious in carrying out their work to keep vehicles moving, but there were sometimes problems with over-runs, and when there were four or five elements to the works being carried out, there were often knock-on effects. There was a charge applied where works over-ran. Large projects could be very disruptive, and one example of this was the work being carried out by Thames Water on the Nine Mile Ride, which would take a year to complete.

The problem caused by malfunctioning traffic-controlled road works was addressed and the phasing delay caused by just one vehicle passing through red traffic lights was highlighted as one reason for lights taking longer to change. The Secretary suggested that lights that had broken down would be more likely to be reported by motorists if a telephone number to contact was displayed at the road works. Pauline thought that this would be an idea worth pursuing.

The committee was advised that a new street works inspector appointed by the council would assist the council to manage road works more effectively.

Judy Clark asked whether proposals for road works could be delayed to ensure that other works had been completed first. Cllr Jorgensen stated that this was possible, but there was a statutory obligation to be reasonable. Emergencies would always need to be dealt with more quickly and there was little scope to delay these works.

Pamela Tames drew attention to the time it took to fill potholes. Cllr Jorgensen responded that a local company (Volkers) had now taken over this work and they appeared to be dealing with this problem more efficiently. The potholes were graded in relation to how bad they were, and a new system of micro-asphalting would ensure that potholes would be less likely to appear in the future. The good news was that £1.177m had now been granted to the council by the government and there would be a massively increased budget for this work next year.

In answer to a question raised by Jenny Lissaman, Cllr Jorgensen emphasised that if road works were not completed properly, members of the public could report this fact to the council.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Jorgensen for attending the meeting and for addressing the concerns that had been raised regarding the co-ordination of road works in the Borough.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Housing Target Survey**

The Chairman advised that the Housing Target Survey had received more than 40,000 responses to the consultation. The council intended to use these results to argue with the government that future housing needs calculations should be within the demographic growth of the Borough.

**Installation of double yellow lines: Gypsy Lane and Culver Lane**

The Chairman reported that the Borough Council was currently consulting local households only on proposals to install double yellow lines in Gypsy Lane and Culver Lane. Those residents directly affected had received a letter from the council explaining the proposal. The deadline for responses was 16 August 2019.

Jenny Lissaman queried the exact location of the proposed double yellow lines. Cllr Jorgensen stated that the details were to be found in the consultations section of the council website and on the Facebook page.

**Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan**

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the deadline for responses was 19 August 2019.

**Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

The Committee was reminded that the deadline for responses to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan was 26 September 2019.

**Heathrow Airport Expansion**

The Chairman stated that this period of consultation was due to end on 13 September 2019. The remaining consultation events were being held nearer to London itself, but the closest of these to Earley were at The Square, Camberley (13 August), Ascot Racecourse (21 August) and Windsor Youth & Community Centre, Alma Road (24 August 2019). Additionally, members could visit their website, call their freephone number or send an email. Details would be circulated with the minutes.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The Secretary advised that a number of emails had been received from NORA, including information on the response of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in respect of free television licences for over 75s expressing disappointment at the BBC’s decision to abolish this concession.

Another email highlighted a query from one residents’ association concerned that their practice of providing advice to neighbours on planning applications could lead to legal action against them, for which their insurance company would not provide cover. The Committee was advised that any questions raised with them regarding matters of this nature should be referred to the planning authority, and only advice on how to raise objections or find out further information should be offered to residents who requested MERA’s assistance.

Information relating to an interim report from the Government’s Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission had been received and this would be circulated with the minutes.

A further email in which a residents’ association had drawn attention to car parking near schools being a problem for them had been received. This appeared to be a common problem for residents around the country.

**Responses from local primary and senior schools**

The Secretary advised that he had written to Aldryngton, Maiden Erlegh and Loddon schools relating to parking problems near their schools and requested information about their travel plans. It appeared that Maiden Erlegh and Loddon schools had considered these matters seriously and had travel plans which were available to read on their websites. However, the Secretary had been unable to find a travel plan on Aldryngton Primary School’s platform and a reply was awaited.

Cllr Chopping stated that a compromise on the use of school land opposite Brookside Close to provide parking to ease congestion on Silverdale Road near Loddon Primary School was still being sought. It was also hoped that more Parking Enforcement Officers would be recruited in the near future. He welcomed the introduction of competitions in schools to increase the number of pupils who cycled to school, thereby assisting with efforts to reduce the number of vehicle journeys in the future.

The matter would be discussed again once a response from Aldryngton Primary School was received.

**NEW ITEMS**

**McColls**

The Chairman advised the meeting that following the news of the closure of McColls next November, the Secretary had written to the property agents working for the owner of the property to seek their help in keeping the Post Office open when the new tenants were installed. The response received was that it would be for a future tenant to decide whether they were happy for the Post Office to remain on the premises, but the Secretary stated that at least the point had been made that retention of this service would benefit the community, which he hoped would be taken into account. The agent added that if MERA were able to identify a tenant who would be able to take over this shop when McColls vacated it, they would be happy to consider them.

The Secretary had also written to Tesco Customer Services to establish whether they would be prepared to consider accommodating the Post Office in their Express store. He then wrote to the Store Manager on their advice, who responded that there were no plans to accommodate any further Post Office branches either now or in the near future. The Customer Services office then suggested their property team could be contacted as they may have a different perspective, and the Secretary had agreed to do so.

Our local councillors had also been approached in the hope that they would help to ensure that Post Office services continued to be made available in the area. The Secretary thanked Cllr Caroline Smith for her offer of assistance and for drawing this problem to the attention of Cllr Clive Jones.

The Secretary asked members to consider the type of shop that residents would welcome into the area, such as WH Smith. It was suggested that with Martin’s closing in Asda, such a shop might be attractive to this chain. The Secretary stated that he would pursue this avenue of inquiry.

Cllr Chopping drew attention to the fact that the Rt Hon Sir John Redwood, MP had been contacted by the Post Office with an update on their Maiden Erlegh Branch. He had been assured that the Post Office was looking for an alternative operator to provide a service and would share an update when a proposal was confirmed. They, too, asked that if any retail businesses in the area may be interested in running a branch, they should be advised of this to enable them to follow up any opportunities. The Secretary thanked Cllr Chopping for this information.

**Report for Earley Town Council**

The Secretary reminded the Committee that at the last Community & Youth Sub Committee, he had made a case for considering the future of secondary bus services in Earley to ensure that when existing contracts were due to come to an end (or were terminated unexpectedly), local authorities were in a better position to consider alternative services in the area. The objective would be to implement smoothly any revised arrangements and avoid the emergency measures that had to be introduced when the temporary bus route 12 was brought in to replace the 19a/c service in 2017. The Community & Youth Sub Committee agreed that this would be an appropriate measure to take and it was decided that a working party would be set up to consider the options. Accordingly, he had been asked to provide some history behind recent adjustments to bus services in the area and set out some proposed options.

A draft report for Earley Town Council was circulated and comments were invited. Following a debate on the options available, it was agreed that the recommendations for alternatives to the 19a/c service should be put forward, on the understanding that one of these options could be adopted on its own, or there could be a combination (mix and match) of solutions based on these ideas that would be supported by MERA.

Jenny Lissaman was concerned that although the solutions set out in the report might work for Maiden Erlegh, there would be knock-on effects for North Earley and Woodley if any of these proposals were adopted. The Secretary stated that there was no intention to disadvantage these areas at all, but the proposals were concentrated on Maiden Erlegh as MERA’s remit was to serve its own residents. However, to address this issue, he was happy to add a further appendix to the report to deal with the point made and he clarified that the adoption of any one the options listed in the report did not have to affect the 19a/c service at all, particularly if the alternative services could be run commercially.

**AGREED:** 1.That the report as drafted by the Secretary be submitted to Earley Town Council.

2. That a separate appendix dealing with North Earley/Woodley services be submitted to the next meeting.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**New website**

The Secretary reported that he expected the new MERA website to be up and running shortly, but before it was launched, he needed to receive signed forms from all officers indicating how much contact information they wished to have displayed on the site.

The Magazine Editor suggested that the askmera email address might be used for all member contacts rather than their personal email addresses, and this was agreed.

**Wokingham car park machines**

The Secretary advised that the new car park pay machines referred to by Geoff Hislop at the AGM had now been installed in Wokingham car parks. Cllr Chopping explained that the new machines provided further options for payments to be made.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.40pm.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 12 September 2019 at 8pm.