**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 12 August 2021 at Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| Ryan Yao-Smith (Treasurer) | Jonathan Brown (Editor) |
| Patricia Brown (Editorial Team) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Paul Medlycott (Area 12) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| John Saunders (Area 13)  | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Siyu Smith (Area 2) | Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |
| Jenny Lissaman (ACER) |  |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| --- | --- |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record. The Chairman stated that he would sign off the minutes of the meetings that were held virtually during the Covid emergency measures.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Bulmershe allotments**

The Secretary stated that the Town Clerk was liaising with Woodley Town Council regarding the precise boundary line between Woodley and Earley to confirm the claim that the allotments were located within the civil parish of Earley rather than Woodley. MERA was advised that it was very unlikely that the Town Council would be prepared to take responsibility for this site because the work could not be accommodated by an existing member of staff or the existing labour force and the waste collection costs would be substantial. The Town Clerk confirmed that she would write again to MERA when she had clarified the exact position of the Earley/Woodley boundary.

**Water leakage at a Lakeside property**

The Secretary reported that the Borough Council’s Senior Drainage Engineer had indicated that there was little that could be done to address the leakage problem at Lakeside. However, the Committee was advised that there appeared to be a possible solution in that a pipe could be laid to capture the water from the spring, directing the water underground into the drainage system. It was agreed that the current position was unsatisfactory, and the Secretary confirmed that he had now written to the two Maiden Erlegh Borough councillors from the ruling political group in an effort to have the decision reviewed.

**Hedge on Lakeside**

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Town Clerk acknowledged MERA’s argument that the hedge by the roadside should be trimmed, but the vegetation behind it would be allowed to grow. The committee was informed that this was most unsatisfactory because it was not in the spirit of the 2012 agreement or indeed the resolution of the Amenities and Leisure Committee in 2006, due to the view of the lake being blocked by this vegetation. The committee agreed that if the Secretary’s email to the Town Clerk dated 6 August 2021 failed to elicit a satisfactory response, he would write to elected councillors on this matter when the result of the latest survey being conducted by the Chairman was known.

**Planning notices**

There was further discussion regarding the complaints being received that residents were not being notified of planning applications relating to neighbouring properties. The Borough Council’s response was that residents are always notified by way of the cards that are sent out, but residents say that they have not received these cards. Rosemary Cook pointed out that certain building work fell under the umbrella of ‘permitted development’ and no longer required planning applications.

**Road safety at Loddon School**

It was reported that Cllr Mickleburgh had now withdrawn the petition for road safety measures to be taken at Loddon School, as yellow lines had now been installed and there were regular inspections to ensure compliance by Parking Enforcement Officers.

**Proposed 3G football pitch at Laurel Park**

The Secretary advised that he had written to the Sports and Development team for further information and was awaiting a response.

**Brookside General Practice complaints**

In view of the complaints about the service provided by Brookside General Practice on the Earley Residents Discussion Board, it was agreed that the Secretary would write to the Practice Manager to obtain further assurances about booking appointments. It was suggested that Dr Sharma could be asked to provide a further video explaining the process for booking an appointment and what residents who had difficulty in booking via the website should do.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman advised that he had nothing to report on this occasion.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer advised that subscription monies could be handed in at Executive Committee meetings or dropped off at his home. Invoices had been sent out to advertisers in relation to the summer edition of the magazine and payments were expected over the coming weeks. Expenditure during the 2020 calendar year was £1,616 and income was £2,020, providing an excess of income over expenditure of £404.

**Editorial Report**

The Magazine Editor advised that the copy date for the next magazine was 20 October. Siyu Smith suggested that an article related to the problems experienced by victims of social media would be of interest to residents.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Statement of Licensing Policy Principles under s349, The Gambling Act**

The Chairman reported that the Borough Council was consulting residents on the council’s approach to applications under the Gambling Act 2005. The closing date for comments was 29 September 2021.

**Carnival Hub Library survey**

The Chairman advised that the Borough Council was inviting ideas for new options to enhance what was currently on offer at the new library at the Carnival Hub, Wokingham. The closing date for completion of a survey was 29 August 2021.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The latest correspondence from NORA had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting for information.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Bus service improvement plan**

The Secretary reported that an invitation had been received for a meeting between the Community Transport Manager and a small number of MERA members. The purpose of the meeting would be to collect information on the local bus network and the extent to which this met residents’ needs.

The Secretary stated that he wanted to ensure that the committee supported the possible routeing solutions he would be suggesting to deal with existing issues before the meeting. The proposals had been modified from the initial suggestions following discussions with Earley Town Council. He clarified that the most important issue was the financial viability of the routes serving Silverdale Road and Beech Lane.

The existing 19a/c service was not likely to be profitable because the Earley section of the route was too short, and the link between Earley and Woodley was poorly used. Although some residents found the link useful, the fact remained that the bus was often empty by the time it entered Mill Lane, and rarely carried more than two or three passengers on this section of the route. For this reason, it was suggested that MERA should be prepared to accept the cessation of services to Woodley in favour of a more frequent and financially viable service connecting Silverdale Road to the rest of Earley. This would not need to affect the Woodley section of this service, which could terminate at Coppice Road or even Toseland Way, as originally suggested by Reading Buses.

The new routes that would be put forward with the Committee’s agreement were:

1. A revision of the 21 Claret service, which would entail a re-routing of the service from the Kilnsea Drive/Rushey Way loop into Gypsy Lane, Silverdale Road, Wilderness Road, Pepper Lane, Reading University, Elmhurst Road to Royal Berkshire Hospital and then to Reading Station. Buses would travel in both directions between Kilnsea Drive and Toseland Way. It was hoped that this would enable a half-hourly service to be established along Silverdale Road. Alternate buses could continue to use the existing 21 route. The cost of this arrangement would be offset by discontinuing the 21a service, because the overall frequency of services to Lower Earley would be increased. A further saving would be yielded from the cessation of the Earley section of the 19a/c route, although this was heavily subsidised by the Borough Council at present. This solution would provide Silverdale Road residents with access to all the popular areas in the locality, including a link to Chalfont Surgery and Asda for
the first time.
2. The Beech Lane service was regarded as adequate in terms of its routeing, but the hourly frequency was an issue. However, given that the service was barely breaking even at present, it was thought that Reading Buses would not wish to increase the frequency to half-hourly, although that was likely to produce increased usage of the service. The favoured solution was to introduce a new service to complement the 19b, which would connect Beech Lane with the Hatchmill Estate and Wokingham (either via Wokingham Road or Bearwood Road), or alternatively to serve the Danywern Drive estate at Winnersh. This was MERA’s original suggestion for the Silverdale Road service, but it now appeared that the Beech Lane solution was preferable.
3. While this would resolve the main issues of concern to Maiden Erlegh residents, it was noted at a meeting of Earley Town Council’s Bus Working Party that a half-hourly service was also required along the Carshalton Way section of the 19b route. This could be provided by diverting one Claret service each hour via Beeston Way, Lower Earley Way, Cutbush Lane, Meredith Way and Carshalton Way, returning to serve the Rushey Way/Kilnsea Drive section of the route.

The Secretary pointed out that other solutions may also be acceptable to MERA, or at least an improvement on the existing services in Maiden Erlegh, and that alternatives would need to be considered if put forward in the discussions.

**AGREED: The Chairman and Secretary be nominated to attend the meeting with the Borough Council’s Community Transport Manager to put forward the suggestions that were conveyed to the meeting, and to respond to any further proposals put forward during the course of the consultation.**

**AGM May 2022**

The Secretary reported that following the cancellation of the last two AGMs due to the emergency Covid measures imposed by the Government, it was not possible to pursue the original decision to invite the Chief Executive Officer of Reading Buses to speak in 2020 or 2021. It was proposed that the speaker be invited to the next AGM to be held in May 2022, (provided that new measures were not imposed in the future) and that the venue would be St Nicolas Church to take account of the increased numbers expected to attend.

**AGREED: That the CEO of Reading Buses be invited to speak at the May 2022 AGM, and that St Nicolas Church be used as the venue for that meeting.**

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Grass cutting contract**

The Secretary advised that the Borough Council had expressed its dissatisfaction with the operation of the current grass cutting contract and that the contractor had been asked to provide an action plan to improve the service.

**Deferred items**

The Secretary reported that some items had been consciously delayed due to the pressures under which the Borough Council had been working with the pandemic emergency, but that now normality was being restored, the outstanding matters would be followed up with the local authority. This included the proposal for a mini-roundabout at the junction of Gypsy Lane and Rushey Way, and the parking issues at Squirrels Way at the junction with Beech Lane.

**‘Green Week’**

Rosemary Cook announced that a ‘Green Week’ would be held in September, organised by Charlotte Allchin. Earley Town Council would be convening one event relating to the Town’s Climate Initiative Workshop and Discussion Group. Anne Booth expressed interest in attending.

**Constitution: The Crescent**

John Saunders proposed that the residents of The Crescent be permitted to join MERA, as this road was surrounded by the MERA catchment area and comprised privately owned housing.

**AGREED: That:**

1. **The proposal be accepted and The Crescent be added to Area 13**
2. **The AGM be requested to amend the Constitution accordingly.**

**New members**

The Secretary agreed to revise the forms and letters for new members and email these to committee members.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

9 September 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.20pm.