**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 12 January 2023 at the Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) | Patricia Brown (Editorial Team) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Chris Haines (Area 12) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Elaine Spratling (Area 4) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Siyu and Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Cllr Tahir Maher (Wokingham BC) |

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman conveyed the sad news that the body of Donald Box, who was MERA’s auditor for many years until he stood down in 2020, had been found after having gone missing on 5 January. He proposed that a bereavement card would be sent on behalf of MERA to his wife, Vera, and her family.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 were signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Protective stones on grass verges**

The Secretary reported that he had written to Cllr Paul Fishwick to establish the current position regarding the missing council policy on protective stones. The Committee was advised that the problem of parking on grass verges may diminish considerably when the new legislation on parking was introduced later in the year, although the implementation date may delay its introduction.

A discussion ensued on the likelihood of the new legislation being enforced. The Secretary stated that the new law should make a difference because it would mean that Parking Enforcement Officers could issue tickets to offenders, and this would generate much needed income for the council.

**Tesco cycle racks**

The Secretary confirmed that he had written to the Manager of Tesco regarding the unsatisfactory condition of their bicycle rack. He pointed out that the provision of a facility for cyclists was one of the conditions of the planning consent obtained when Tesco took over the premises.

It was suggested that the council could be notified that this condition was not being fulfilled, but the Committee was advised that it would be better to pursue this initially with Tesco, who were helpful in the past in responding to a similar issue. If no response was received, the Secretary confirmed that he would contact the council about the matter.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that he would attend the next NAG meeting due to be held on 16 January and he advised the Committee of the agenda items that would be discussed. He stated that the Speedwatch scheme was of particular interest, given that MERA would be looking into setting up arrangements in Maiden Erlegh, with a speaker on the subject currently being contacted to speak at the next MERA AGM. The Committee was asked to consider which roads specifically needed monitoring for speeding motorists. Tim Marsh advised on how the scheme worked, and each site had to be approved as being safe before speed monitoring could take place. He stated that three people would be required for each occasion to ensure that all information could be collected satisfactorily.

The Chairman also referred to the Neighbourhood Watch item that appeared on the NAG agenda. He advised that these arrangements were no longer confined to the streets in which people lived, and it was now possible to set up groups covering whole villages or towns. The Secretary advised that if MERA was to become involved, a volunteer to co-ordinate such an arrangement would have to be established, and there would need to be additional volunteers to cover the various streets within the Watch scheme. The Chairman commented that he set up a scheme in part of Lakeside, but he was not sure about whether the benefits of joining actually made a difference as the scheme seemed to have been scaled down. Rosemary Cook pointed out that it would be appropriate for all volunteers co-ordinating such schemes to report to NAG.

The scheme in The Crescent was said to be popular with the residents there, and John Saunders agreed that he would ask the co-ordinator if she would like to write an article on the subject for the next MERA Magazine.

Rosemary Cook thought it would be a good idea to obtain the names of all those co-ordinating Neighbourhood Watch schemes and bring them together. Accordingly, she would discuss the matter with Pat Svensen to establish whether this could be done.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that the balance in the current account currently stood at £2,379.00 and the reserve account balance remained at £837.24. There was one outstanding advertisement payment yet to be paid, and the Treasurer stated that he would be visiting the restaurant to request payment shortly.

The annual subscription of £25.00 had been paid to NORA by standing order. The deposit account had attracted interest of 55p in December 2022.

The Treasurer, Chairman and Secretary had now logged into the NatWest internet banking system, although they were currently at various stages of access.

**Editorial Report**

The Editor advised that the copy date for the next magazine was 20 February 2023. It was agreed that an item would appear in the next magazine on the recent passing of Don Box, and the Secretary agreed to write to former Area Representative Shelagh Quick to see if she would like to write a brief article on her dealings with him.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Chairman advised of the following ongoing consultations and petitions:

**Policing budget** – Residents have been asked where they would like to see the 2023/4 budget focussed. Closing date – 13 January 2023.

**Gypsy and traveller pitches –** As part of the Local Plan, the council would like to hear of any potential land that could be suitable as gypsy and traveller pitches. Closing date: 17 February 2023.

**Tree strategy** – Views have been requested on the council’s Tree Strategy. Closing date: 22 January 2023.

**Petitions**

There were 3 petitions appearing on the Borough Council’s website. These related to the removal of the one-way system at Evendons, the removal of bollards on the A327 at Arborfield, and an objection to the specified parking charges at School Green, Shinfield.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Staggered crossroads: Sevenoaks/Avalon/Radnor Roads**

The Secretary reported that there had been some further correspondence from a local resident who now suggested that double yellow lines could be painted at the Sevenoaks Road / Avalon Road / Radnor Road junctions to deter motorists from parking too close to these junctions. The relevant Borough Council forms had been submitted to confirm that MERA would like to see all the proposals submitted to be implemented.

**Levelling Up Bill - Housing**

The Secretary reported that further information had been received from Sir John Redwood’s Office detailing the submissions he had made in his efforts to drive down the number of houses that the Borough Council was obliged to build. A pdf document would be circulated with the minutes.

**Parking problem at Silverdale Road residence**

A resident of Area 12 had reported a parking problem on Silverdale Road. The issue related to the difficulty in pulling out of the complainant’s drive when a vehicle next door was parked on the grass verge. The Secretary advised that he would carry out a site inspection and take photographs to highlight the problem, following which he would make a recommendation to the next meeting.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Preparations for AGM: 11 May 2023**

The Secretary reported that he was commencing work on the preparations for the next AGM planned to be held on 11 May 2023. He referred to the proposed report he had circulated on expanding MERA’s catchment area and requested comments. It was agreed that a list of possible new areas to be served by MERA should be included in the report, and it was suggested that a map of Maiden Erlegh roads could be produced to accompany the report.

The Committee was advised that a reservation for the use of the Church Hall at St Nicolas Church had been submitted, and the Secretary was currently awaiting confirmation. The speaker was also being contacted by Karen Collins of Thames Valley Police, and it was hoped that confirmation of his attendance could be given at the next meeting.

It was stated that an action list would be prepared and circulated for the next meeting so that the Committee could be aware of the progress being made on preparing for the AGM.

The Secretary requested that anyone wishing to step down from their existing positions notify the Secretary as soon as possible because some time would be required to find replacement volunteers. He also reminded members that if they wished to submit any proposed rule changes to the AGM, it would be useful to debate these at an Executive Committee first so that a decision could be made on its support for the proposal before being debated at the AGM.

The Secretary would draft a flyer for the meeting and this would be submitted to the February meeting, provided that the speaker and the room booking were confirmed by that date. It was suggested that although the agenda will contain fewer items that at the previous AGM, and fewer numbers than expected in 2022 were likely to attend, it would be useful to use the same printers to produce the necessary papers and the flyer. This would be discussed further at a later meeting.

A draft agenda would be produced for the next meeting.

**Electoral registration: voter ID**

The Chairman reported that under revised legislation, all voters at the next and subsequent elections would be required to provide an ID document when they arrive to vote. The Elections Act 2022 listed the types of documentation that would be acceptable, which included a passport, photographic driving licence, biometric immigration documents, blue badges or some defined concessionary travel passes. Voter authority certificates, which could be used if the voter did not possess any of these documents, would be available from the Borough Council later in the month. The Secretary would add an item, that would include the alternative option of voting by post, to the website.

**Closure of main Post Office at Chalfont**

The Secretary reported that the main Post Office in Earley had now closed and that he had written to the Post Office to ask whether a replacement facility was proposed. They responded that they would undertake a review of the local area and would be informing the community on what was to be done to ensure residents could continue to access Post Office products and services. The Committee was informed that he would also write to Asda to establish whether they were able to accommodate a main Post Office elsewhere on their property.

**Neighbourhood Watch**

*This item was covered in the Chairman’s Report earlier in the evening.*

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Exhibition of photographs of Earley**

The Chairman reported that Liz Kerry had requested that the Committee be made aware that Art Space at St Nicolas was showing an exhibition of photographs submitted for the Earley Environmental Group 2023 calendar on the theme of ‘Winter’. All photographs were of the Earley area and had been taken by members of the Earley Environmental Group. The exhibition would be held until 31 January with an open ‘Meet the Artist’ session between 2 and 4pm on Saturday 28 January.

**Tawny owl**

It was reported that a tawny owl had been spotted in one of the boxes around the nature reserve.

**Proposed changes in The Parade**

The Vice Chairman reported that he had received a notification from the Borough Council that they intended to make some changes around The Parade site and on Silverdale Road. After a brief discussion during which doubts were expressed about the plan, the Secretary advised that he would look at the proposals and put forward a response to the council at the next meeting.

**Planning issues**

Rosemary Cook advised that the lack of enforcement of the planning rules was of concern to the Town Council. She drew attention to the link on the Town Council website that could be used to make an enforcement complaint. A list of Earley planning applications could also be found on the site.

**Coronation celebrations**

A question was raised about whether there were any plans to celebrate the King’s Coronation. However, it was not known whether any government initiatives were to be made such as the ability to close roads free of charge to enable street parties to be planned. The Secretary would add an item for the next meeting.

**‘Have Your Say’**

The Secretary advised the Committee that a ‘Have Your Say’ event was to be held at The Parade, Silverdale Road between 12 midday and 3pm on 27 January 2023. The police would be available to hear resident concerns in the area.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

9 February 2023 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.10pm.