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

**Present**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) | Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Patsy Collis (Area 8) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Chris Haines (Area 12) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |
| Cllr Norman Jorgensen (Wokingham BC) |  |

**In the Chair: Peter Woodward**

**Apologies received**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Vivien Canning (Area 14) | Bob Collins (Area 14) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Siyu Smith (Area 2) |
| Tim Smith (Area 2) | David Chopping (Luckmore Drive RA) |
| Tim Marsh (ACER) | Cllr Stephen Newton (Wokingham BC) |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Proposed changes in The Parade**

The Secretary updated the Committee regarding the painting of one way arrows, the double yellow lines and additional wording at the exit of The Parade car park warning motorists not to enter at that point. The Secretary stated that the contractors had omitted to carry out this work when they painted the white lines on Silverdale Road. However, now that the work had been completed, drivers appeared to understand the new arrangements better than before.

The Committee was informed that Vivien Canning had reported the journey she made into the car park ‘an awful experience’, with cars parked at the wrong angle, making it difficult to get into the spaces between the cars. The Secretary stated that confusion had resulted in vehicles being directed to enter the car park at the Yan Yan end rather than adjacent to Coral’s as before, but that the hope was that motorists would adjust over time.

**Grass cutting: roundabout sponsorships**

The Treasurer stated that the application for permission to plant perennial flowers on the Kenton Road roundabout was submitted on 13 September, but he did not receive a response from the council within the prescribed period. Accordingly, he submitted a request for an update on the progress of the application and he had now received a reply from the Customer Relations Officer, who advised that he was seeking views from concerned teams and would provide updates. The last update was dated 10 October and the Treasurer awaited further information.

The Committee discussed having an article drafted to describe the residents’ initiative to plant flowers at the Kenton Road roundabout for the MERA Magazine. There could be two articles, a second one appearing in the summer edition of the magazine, showing the result of the work that had been carried out. Alternatively, just one article could be written about the whole process for the summer edition.

Cllr Jorgensen stated that he had spoken to officers regarding the application process for obtaining permission to plant flowers on council land.

**Geese**

The Secretary advised that a response on the geese problem had now been received from Edwin Trout, who acknowledged the growth in the number of geese since 2009 and the substantial increase in the number of goslings that had arrived this year.

Edwin Trout observed that the geese were grazing on front lawns much further afield this year, and as far away as Lancaster Gardens and Radnor Road. He speculated that it could be that with more goslings to feed, they needed to travel further to keep the goslings nourished. He thought the aggressive swan on the lake may have contributed to this, and also pointed out that the amount of scrub by the hedge next to the road at Lakeside meant that there was less grass available in that area, and as geese liked to graze on shorter, well-maintained grass, the front lawns would be more attractive to them.

In terms of concerns raised that the geese could return to the lake for the breeding season in the spring, he stated that at least some of the geese were likely to return to the lake. However, he acknowledged that we should prepare for the worst, that is that all the geese would return and the number of eggs hatched would increase exponentially.

The Secretary stated that he was currently in discussions to come up with a plan to deal with resident concerns and that he would report back when he had further information.

Cllr Jorgensen stated that he thought that safety would be a concern, and the health threat to children playing on front lawns and paths as well as the possibility of the geese spreading bird flu to domestic birds such as chickens were amongst the items raised by members.

Rosemary Cook thought that the RSPB may be able to advise on measures that could be taken, including the provision of advice to residents and visitors not to feed the geese.

The Secretary stated that he was looking into all these matters and would report back to a later meeting.

**Royal Mail**

The Secretary reported that he had received a response from the Royal Mail in respect of the erratic frequency of mail deliveries in the area. Customer Services confirmed that there was a problem in the area and that they were ‘trying hard to fix it’. He further reported that Ofcom had now become involved and were investigating the absence of deliveries in the Earley and Woodley areas. It was hoped that this would result in more reliable deliveries in the future.

**School streets and speed restrictions**

The Secretary reported that he had written an article for the next MERA Magazine inviting residents’ views on the council’s proposals to trial the school streets initiative and the speed limit proposals on residential streets, although it now looked likely that government guidelines on these matters would be updated to deter blanket restrictions in the future.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Vice-Chairman reported that the Chairman had been unable to attend the meeting to deliver the Chairman’s Report. The Secretary stated that he was able to provide an update on some of the matters he raised at the last meeting.

The meeting was informed that there was still no sign of the report relating to the survey of possible 3G sites that was originally expected in June this year, and then by 28 September. The Secretary thought that this might be because all the sites looked at would be likely to encounter objections from householders living nearby. It was also thought that the cost of the council’s contribution to any development would be regarded as unaffordable by the council’s current administration.

The Secretary also confirmed that unfortunately, MERA’s nomination of Vice-Chairman Peter Woodward to become a member of the Reading University’s Community Engagement Strategy Committee had not been agreed, although he had not heard who had been appointed in his place. The Secretary thanked him for putting his name forward for this role.

Finally, the Chairman reported at the last meeting that charities and community groups would be able to set up a stall free of charge at this year’s fireworks event. The Secretary stated that if anyone was interested in setting up a stall free of charge at this year’s fireworks event, they should let him know without delay, as there was now little time left before the event was due to take place.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that most Area Representatives had now handed in their subscriptions for the year, with only one now outstanding.

The bank balances currently stood at £2,537.81 in the current account and £844.86 in the deposit account, with 97p interest in September.

The Treasurer stated that the Branch at Woodley had closed and that he was now using the Reading Branch in the Oracle.

**Editorial Report**

The Editor confirmed that the copy date for the next MERA Magazine was 20 October.

The Vice-Chairman stated that the MERA Magazine Sub Committee was convened as stated in the minutes of the last meeting, and he was able to report that MERA and ACER were on track to launch the first collaborative edition of the magazine with ACER in November. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 22 January 2024, when a review of the first joint issue would take place.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Secretary advised of the following ongoing Borough Council consultations and petitions:

**Shaping how the council involves residents in planning issues** – closing date 16 October 2023.

**Constitution review** – closing date not stated.

**A329 Reading – Wokingham Road cycle and pedestrian improvements** – closing date 22 October 2023.

**Developing a vision for Wokingham Borough** - closing date 6 November 2023.

**Budget engagement** – closing date 3 November 2023.

Cllr Jorgensen also drew attention to a new consultation in respect of the plan for the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) to relocate from its existing premises at Shinfield Road, Reading to the Reading University campus at Earley Gate- closing date 30 October 2023. *Comments may be submitted to* [*https://wokingham.gov.uk/planning/existing-planning-applications*](https://wokingham.gov.uk/planning/existing-planning-applications) *and by entering planning application no 232475 when prompted to do so.*

**Petitions**

There were no current e-petitions.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Red kites**

The Secretary advised the Committee that a member had complained about the red kites which frequently lurked in trees beside his garden, eating lumps of raw meat and often screaming for long periods when they were hungry. The Secretary pointed out to the resident that an item had already appeared in the magazine, and he had copied the relevant pages to him. He was advised that an article on Canada Geese would be appearing in the spring edition of the MERA Magazine and that a reminder not to feed the red kites would appear within that article.

**NORA**

The latest edition of the NORA newsletter had been circulated to members with the agenda. The NORA Chairman had explained in a covering email that there had been few newsletters recently because changes of Prime Ministers and of government ministers, and so little progress had been made on new planning legislation recently.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Earley Town Plan**

The Secretary stated that MERA had been asked for its comments on the existing Town Plan, which was last revised in 2021. The plan had been circulated with the agenda.

The Secretary outlined a small number of changes he would suggest were made to the Plan when it was revised and stated that the item would be included on the next agenda for a more detailed discussion.

The initial views of the committee related to community centres, climate change and simplifying language so that all members of the community could understand the content. A discussion ensued on the undesirability of paved areas replacing front lawns and the need to ensure that any paved areas laid were porous in an effort to prevent flooding.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**Buses**

The Secretary drew attention to the enhanced partnership arrangements the Borough Council had entered into with local public transport operators and the government’s extension of the £2 maximum fare until December 2024.

**Bins**

The Secretary reported that the plans to reduce the number of litter bins in the Borough may now be scrapped following the decision by the Community and Corporate Overview Committee not to proceed with the proposal. This decision is subject to the views of the Executive Committee, which will next meet on 26 October 2023 to decide the matter.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Fly tipping**

Judy Clark stated that she had proposed a new form of wording on bins to deter fly tippers to Wokingham Borough Council. This wording was seen in Wales, and it was her opinion that this would be better understood by the whole community than referring to ‘fly tipping’. *The wording suggested was ‘It is an offence to dispose of household or business waste in or around this bin. Failure to comply may result in a fixed penalty notice and/or prosecution.’*

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

9 November 2023 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.56pm.