**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 13 October 2022 at Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Chris Haines (Area 12) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Siyu and Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Elaine Spratling (Area 4)  |  |

**In the Chair: Peter Woodward**

**Apologies received**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Cllr Tahir Maher (Wokingham BC) |

**MINUTES**

It was pointed out that former Treasurer, Ryan Yao-Smith, was now studying at Bristol University (not Southampton University as stated in the ‘Treasurer Vacancy’ item in the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022). There were no other suggested amendments to the minutes.

The Secretary confirmed that the minutes would be amended and signed by the Vice-Chairman after the meeting.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Bus service improvement plan**

The Secretary reported that a reply had been received from the Community Transport Manager in respect of MERA’s proposal to extend the Toutley Road service to Silverdale Road, the Royal Berkshire Hospital and Reading. We have been advised that a decision had been made at the September Executive meeting to continue funding the 19a/c service as well as the 19b, which was no longer commercially viable at the present time. Tenders would be invited in the New Year, on the basis of having the existing level of service on the 19a/b/c routes within the existing budgetary provision. Accordingly, MERA’s proposal would not be considered on this occasion, but the option would be kept on file as a possible option for the future.

In the meantime, the Reading Buses CEO had also responded that he did not consider that linking routes in the manner suggested would necessarily save resources unless a lower frequency was provided, but he confirmed that the company would try to put together an innovative response to the tender when published.

The Secretary also updated the Committee on his correspondence with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Active Travel, Highways and Transport.

**Proposed 3G football pitch at Maiden Erlegh School**

The Secretary confirmed that he and the Chairman had attended the second drop-in session at Maiden Erlegh School regarding the plans for the 3G football pitch, and they walked the site with the Head Teacher to gain an appreciation of the impact of the proposals on the residents of Sevenoaks Road and Avalon Road.

It was clear that the plans for the pitch would severely impact the residents on Avalon Road whose properties were sited on the boundary of the school land. Under the proposals, residents who currently bordered a green field would be able to see only the acoustic fence on ground which would be raised approximately 5ft above its current level. This was clearly unacceptable, and it was apparent during the discussions with residents at the sessions that there was considerable anger about these plans. Accordingly, the Chairman and Secretary had agreed to strengthen MERA’s response to the council in consultation with the Earley Environmental Group and this draft was subsequently circulated to all Executive Committee members for their approval. The Secretary had now sent the detailed response to the council and the survey form was also completed.

The Leaders of the two main political parties from the Borough Council and the Head Teacher were informed of MERA’s response to the consultation. The Town Clerk would also be sent a copy of the response so that this could be taken into account by the Town Council if a formal planning application was made in the future.

**Member review of Brookside surgery**

The Secretary updated the Committee in respect of the draft letter to Sir John Redwood MP regarding the deteriorating service offered by the NHS. He advised that following further comments received from the Vice Chairman, the Chairman had agreed that paragraph 3 would be deleted to ensure that MERA took a politically neutral stance on the matter.

**AGREED: That the draft revised letter be approved.**

**‘The Duck and the World’**

The Vice-Chairman reported that the vegetation directly in front of the viewing area for ‘The Duck and The World’ had been removed, although a tree by the side of the lake partially obscured the sculpture at the western end of the viewing area.

**MERA modernisation programme**

The Secretary reported that he had attended a meeting of ACER on 5 October to discuss MERA’s suggestion that the MERA Magazine could replace or complement the ACER Newsletter. Subject to the outcome of further discussions, both Associations may be recommending acceptance of the proposed arrangement to their respective AGMs in 2023.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Vice-Chairman delivered the Chairman’s Report. It was reported that a focus group for Wokingham Borough Council had been held recently and attended by the Chairman. It was led by consultants and it concerned the best way of ensuring that the council and residents interacted effectively. The meeting was stated to have resulted in a useful discussion and the main points emanating from the meeting were:

* Both of the groups in the discussion wanted to be consulted, and to hear back about what decisions had been made, and why.
* People did not feel like ‘customers’ because they did not have a choice about using council services.
* The way the council made decisions about spending money and the way those decisions were communicated, needed to work better for residents.

It was reported that the strategy had been revised to reflect this feedback and it would be discussed with other groups before being put out for public consultation.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that he was still attempting to arrange for internet banking to be established under his name, but that the bank had been unable to process the initial application. This meant that a new mandate would have to be requested from the bank.

He advised that there was currently £2040.00 in the current account and £836 in the reserve account. There were subscriptions outstanding in two areas. The Secretary confirmed that he would establish the position to establish when these subscriptions were likely to be submitted.

Five advertisers had not yet paid for their entries in the MERA Magazine to date and reminders had been sent.

**Editorial Report**

The Editor advised that the copy date was now close and that all proposed articles would need to be sent to the Editorial Team by 20 October.

In answer to a question from the Treasurer, the Editor confirmed that there was no expectation that the receipts from advertising would necessarily have to meet all the costs of printing the magazine. The Secretary pointed out that subscription monies were available to make up the balance.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Vice-Chairman advised of the following ongoing consultations:

**Local Government Boundary Commission: council wards review** – closing date 7 November 2022. There were no views expressed on any possible changes to the Ward boundaries at the meeting, and the Secretary confirmed that whatever was decided would not impact on MERA’s own catchment area. Accordingly, he would discuss the matter with the Chairman with a view to establishing whether a formal response from MERA would be appropriate. In the meantime, members were reminded that they could submit individual responses to convey their own views on the matter if they wished to do so.

**Survey on improving maths skills for residents** – closing date 6 November 2022.

**Refuse services** – The Borough Council had announced that it planned to reduce the number of blue refuse sacks for general waste to 54 per household. The council had also proposed to reduce the number of collections of general refuse to once per fortnight or even once every three weeks, which would necessitate wheelie bins. The Secretary stated that he would add this issue to the next MERA Magazine to establish whether members accepted this proposal before deciding whether to respond. He stated that the Facebook Earley Residents’ Discussion Board indicated that the proposal was not a popular one. The Secretary advised that he would ensure that this matter was added to the next agenda for discussion on MERA’s stance to this proposal and whether or not a response was required. Closing date 5 December 2022.

**Petitions**

The Committee was informed that MERA’s petition requesting a roundabout to be installed at the Gipsy Lane/Rushey Way junction had now closed and it had received 16 paper signatures as well as one online signature, and with the original proposer, this was 18 signatures in all.

The petition for the proposed the installation of a pedestrian and cyclist crossing on Wokingham Road, opposite Earley Station would be running until 21 October 2022.

A further petition had been submitted protesting about the proposed 4,500 houses at Hall Farm, and this had received 77 responses to date. This petition would expire on 22 December 2022.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Proposed 3G football pitch at Maiden Erlegh School**

The Secretary reported that he had received a number of emails from residents of Avalon Road and Sevenoaks Road expressing their satisfaction with MERA’s response to the proposal for the 3G football pitch at Maiden Erlegh School.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Sevenoaks Road/Radnor Road/Avalon Road staggered crossroads**

The Secretary reported that a complaint had been made by a resident living in Avalon Road that the white lines at the staggered crossroads located at Sevenoaks Road/Radnor Road/Avalon Road were becoming faded and that they should be repainted to avoid an accident. It was pointed out that the junctions were particularly busy at school opening and closing times and the right of way was no longer clear. It was also observed that many vehicles are driven too fast, particularly in the evenings and at night, and the lack of signage caused a hazard. Car parking in this area added to the problem, with some cars parking too close to the junction.

The Area Representative raising the issue believed that the new signage should change from ‘Give Way’ to ‘Stop’ for safety reasons.

After some discussion, it was

**AGREED:** **That the Secretary draw the attention of the Highways Department to the issue.**

**Increased car parking charges**

The Vice-Chairman advised that the Borough Council had decided to increase car parking charges in the Borough, doubling them in some cases. The council claimed that the new charges compared well with other neighbouring councils. The Secretary advised that if Area Representatives became aware of any discontent from their members, they should advise the Secretary, who would pursue the matter.

**New electric charging points for the Wokingham Borough**

The Vice-Chairman reported that government funding had been made available for 38 electric charging points in 19 locations and that these would be placed in residential streets. Some of these would also be located in Wokingham and Woodley car parks.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Earley Orchard**

It was confirmed that the Earley Orchard AGM would be held on 16 October 2022 at the Interpretation Centre.

**Earley Day Centre**

The Committee was advised that due to increased energy costs, the Kenton Road Day Centre charges would be increased in 2023.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

10 November 2022 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.07pm.