**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 13 September 2018 at the Kenton Road Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) – in the Chair | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) | Jean Beck (Area 12) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Siyu Smith (Area 2) | Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Ray Jones |

**Also present**

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| Judith Church (resident) |

**Apologies received**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Pamela Tames (Treasurer) |
| Jonathan Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) |
| Edwin Trout (Magazine/Editorial Team) | James Barr (Area 13) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Brian Hackett | Peter Soul (EASI) |
| Mary Bather (ACER) | Cllr David Chopping (Wokingham BC) |

The Secretary reported that Brian Hackett had indicated his intention to reduce his level of attendance at MERA meetings in future. The committee was informed that Brian’s work over the years both as secretary and more recently in flagging up issues around the area and at meetings was valued, and his contribution at Executive Committee meetings would be sorely missed.

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 9 AUGUST 2018**

Ray Jones commented that he had given his apologies for absence for the last meeting. This was agreed, and the Secretary stated that the minutes would be amended accordingly.

Apart from this amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 August 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Silverdale Road bus service consultation**

The Secretary stated that the new 19a/b/c services began operations on 3 September 2018. He drew attention to two gaps that remained in the timetables, these being between the 8.04 and 9.52am (19c) from the Silverdale Road Shops, and between the 3.07 and 5.12pm (19b) from Meldreth Way into Reading. Nevertheless, it was noted that the new service was a big improvement over the previous 12 and 22 services, and the afternoon timetable gaps on the former 12 service had been eliminated.

It was reported that the two morning rush hour 19b services were inadequate because the buses were full before reaching the end of Beech Lane, and passengers were unable to board. The Secretary agreed to raise this issue with Reading Buses.

There was discussion regarding the size and type of the vehicles used, with disappointment that MERA’s request for more suitable vehicles to be provided to accommodate passengers who were elderly and/or infirm had not been granted. Several complaints had been received that these bus users experienced difficulty in negotiating the two steps in the centre of the bus, beyond which the majority of the vacant seats were to be found. It was possible that Reading Buses was unable to change the vehicles at this stage if they would incur a penalty in changing them at this stage. However, MERA would continue to urge Reading Buses to provide better vehicles for the 19a/b/c routes when the next change of vehicles was to be considered.

The Secretary reported that Steve Tames had contacted him to express concern about the vehicles being used on the 19b route and had suggested that the money raised in any congestion charge in the future be used to support public transport.

**Graffiti**

The Secretary confirmed that he had written to Virgin Media to request that they remove the graffiti on their telecommunications box sited by the Lakeside/Beech Lane cycleway.

**Consultation**

The Secretary confirmed that he had responded to the grass cutting consultation as agreed at the last meeting. It was also noted that ACER had provided a detailed response to the council.

The meeting was reminded of the ongoing consultations regarding the Minerals and Waste Plan and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service draft Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan.

**Pedestrian hazard at Tesco entrance and exit points**

The committee was advised that the Secretary had attended a site meeting with a Highways Inspector and Cllr Chopping on 5 September to discuss the Tesco entrance and exit issue and also the list of safety measures recommended for the section of Silverdale Road between Allendale Road and Sevenoaks Road as well as The Parade.

It was reported that the inspector was satisfied that pedestrians using the path past the telephone box next to the Coral betting shop needed to be protected from reversing cars to prevent a similar accident as occurred in 2017, when two children were pinned against the telephone box by a car. It was agreed at the site meeting that the erection of two concrete posts would be considered to prevent such an accident from happening again.

The Highways Inspector explained also that the position of the zebra crossing near The Parade was the only place available on that section of road, because the driveways to houses between the shops and Allendale Road prevented it from being sited elsewhere. It was agreed that a better solution to avoid the problem of cars turning right out of The Parade onto the crossing might be a one-way system around the car park to prevent vehicles from using the Yan Yan exit out of the car park. The Highways Inspector stated that this would be discussed with the shop owners, although this possible solution could introduce other issues.

The Secretary was unable to persuade the inspector of the need to take any additional measures at the entrance and exit of Tesco. The inspector pointed out that if a kerb was to be installed, vehicles would have priority over pedestrians, which was not the case at present. He advised that the existing entrance and egress points were similar in design to other shopping areas and they did not appear to create problems. He understood the concerns that had been raised, and although there were no indications of a higher number of accidents in the two locations, he confirmed that he would be monitoring the situation.

The Highways Inspector was not in favour of installing railings because these would be unsightly and tended to cause other problems where installed, such as pedestrians jumping over them and falling into the road. The point was made that although the railings were a visual barrier, they were not strong enough to protect pedestrians from vehicles mounting the kerb.

**Maiden Erlegh library**

The Committee was advised that Cllr Grandison had emailed the Secretary to confirm that he had spoken to the Libraries Department regarding the idea of having a pop-up library located at St Nicolas Church, but he had not yet received a response. He promised to chase this and to visit the church the following week to explore their reaction to the idea.

**Lakeside subsidence**

The Secretary confirmed that he had chased the council for a response and this had been passed to the relevant Highways Inspector for action.

**Tesco**

It was reported that Tesco had not responded to date on MERA’s complaint that some of its delivery vehicles were using Sevenoaks Road, Avalon Road and Radnor Road to exit the area in violation of the planning consent granted by the council. The Secretary requested that any future violations should be reported to him, with the date, time, and preferably the registration number of any offending vehicles. If there was no improvement, he would write to the council.

The Secretary also advised that he had received a response from the Head Teacher of Maiden Erlegh School and that she had reassured MERA again that they were taking the issues raised with them seriously. The Head Teacher reiterated that it would be very useful if MERA could include in its next magazine a reminder to parents about their parental responsibilities to encourage their children not to drop litter.

The school also expressed its disappointment over the negative tone of the letter appearing in the Woodley & Earley Chronicle on 9 August under the Secretary’s name. The Secretary explained to the Head Teacher that he had not written this letter, but that the newspaper had taken an extract of MERA’s minutes and turned them into a letter, rather than use this as a news story. He forwarded the email he had sent to the editor of the newspaper to the Head Teacher so that she would be satisfied that this was indeed the case. No response had been received from the Chronicle to date.

**Street lamps and wi-fi**

It was reported that the council had been provided with a list of properties known to be affected by interference from the new street lighting system to their burglar alarms. The company stated that if the council addressed this problem, it would be the first to do so.

**Travellers**

The Secretary confirmed that he had written to John Redwood, MP in support of Cllr Pauline Jorgensen’s approach on changing the law relating to travellers and gypsies. The meeting was informed also that NORA had drawn attention to a petition relating to this problem, which negated the need to draw their attention to MERA’s concerns regarding this issue.

**REPORTS**

The Vice Chairman advised that no reports had been received from the Chairman, Treasurer or Editorial Team.

**CONSULTATIONS**

It was reported that Wokingham Borough Council had requested views from residents on the draft Borough Plan, which set out the council’s proposed vision for the future, the values and principles it would follow, and the priorities on which it would focus. Feedback was requested by way of a questionnaire, available online. Residents who wished to provide feedback could also talk to council staff and members about it at roadshows being conducted at various locations. The next events would be held between 11am and 3pm at:

Twyford Waitrose on Saturday 15 September

Wokingham Town Centre on Friday 21 September

Lower Earley Asda on Saturday 22 September.

The committee was also reminded that the Minerals and Waste Plan and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue plans were still in the process of consultation.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The Secretary reported that correspondence had been received on three separate issues from NORA since the last meeting.

* **Parking across driveways.** Further advice had been received from NORA relating to the problem that some residents faced from motorists blocking access to their driveways by parking across them. It had become apparent that this was a problem for some Maiden Erlegh residents, including those occupying properties in Silverdale Road near The Loddon Primary School. NORA recommended that residents’ associations with issues such as these contact their MPs with a view to changing the legislation to provide for a universal law across the country prohibiting unauthorised parking in front of driveways.

It was observed that whilst such a law would be welcome, the problem for residents was likely to be enforcement. It was noticeable that there were no parking problems when parking enforcement officers were visible near the Loddon Primary School, and when they were not, motorists continued to park inappropriately.

The Secretary advised that he would speak to the Chairman on his return from holiday to determine how MERA should respond and this would be reported back to the next meeting.

* **Occupation of land.** In a second communication, NORA drew attention to a petition which sought to make entering and occupying land without permission a criminal offence. The Secretary stated that he would provide a link to the petition with the minutes.
* **National Planning Policy Framework.** An email received from NORA advised residents’ associations that it had received positive feedback from the Government to its response to the National Planning Policy Framework proposals. This included more emphasis on protection of habitats, involvement of communities in formulating plans and protection of local green spaces.

**Earley Town Council**

It was reported that Jo Friend had been appointed as Town Clerk from 28 August 2018.

**ACER - grass cutting response**

The Secretary reported that a copy of ACER’s grass cutting consultation response had been provided. Most of the points MERA had raised with the council were covered in ACER’s detailed report back to the council, and other issues specific to North Earley were also listed.

The Committee was informed that ACER had also suggested setting up a database to record issues relating to grass, weeds, debris and whatever was of local concern, and that this could cover Woodley and Earley. Having discussed this with the Chairman, the Secretary agreed with him that this would be administratively burdensome and would need to involve all Area Representatives, EASI litter pickers as well as requiring some onerous administration to be dealt with by the Secretary. It appeared easier to simply report issues as they arose. It was considered that the Cleaner and Greener Team would be unlikely to spend their time analysing detailed spreadsheets given the constraints under which they were operating, and therefore MERA would not participate in this project for the time being.

However, it was also agreed that MERA would follow the success or otherwise of ACER’s plan, and if successful, the matter would be considered again at a later meeting.

**NEW ITEMS**

*None.*

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**NAG Meeting: 3 September 2018**

The Committee was advised that Jean Hackett had attended the NAG meeting held on 3 September. There was much discussion regarding police responses in relation to traveller incursions, and NAG members were advised as to what the police could and could not do in line with legislation.

It was reported that there had been an upsurge in burglaries, anti-social behaviour and cycle thefts during July. It was noteworthy that there appeared to be a deliberate campaign to destroy bicycles completely, with saddles, wheels and spokes being removed.

In relation to the Maiden Erlegh orchard, the police and the orchard group members wanted Peter Baveystock to consider relocating the trees to the original site chosen in 2014, and he had been contacted in the hope that he would now agree to this.

The new managers of the Lower Earley MacDonalds wished to sponsor waste bins in the area around their outlet and would send staff out to clear up any debris emanating from their operations in Chalfont Park and the bowling club car park.

It was stated at the NAG meeting that there would be a ‘Have Your Say’ session as Asda between 10am and 12 noon one Saturday shortly, but a date had not been agreed at the time of the meeting. Members of the NAG Committee and possibly the Police would be on hand to answer any questions from the public.

**Loddon Primary School crossing**

The Secretary reported that the Loddon Primary School pedestrian crossing with traffic lights had now been installed on Silverdale Road. Although some complaints had been made about the siting of the crossing, the Highways Inspector had responded that the location of the crossing was the only one available, given the various driveways on that part of the road.

**Reporting at Police Reception Desk**

The Secretary reported that Rosemary Cook had contacted him regarding a resident who had complained about the lack of privacy in reporting crime at the Loddon Valley Police Station. The resident had been asked for her name, address and telephone number when reporting a drug dealing incident, but she was in full hearing distance of other members of the public who were present. The Secretary reported this unsatisfactory situation to Julie Suzel, who stated that where confidential issues were being discussed, the member of the public reporting the incident should be taken to the side office, which is next to the duty office. An apology was given, with the reassurance that the SDO staff would be asked to ensure that this happened in the future.

**Liberty of Earley Care Home**

The Secretary reported that the Liberty of Earley care home was likely to close in the near future. Residents and families were invited to a meeting on 13 September to be advised that closure was almost inevitable as the establishment had been operating on only 80% capacity over the last two years. It was thought that the lack of residents was due to the fact that nursing facilities were not available at the home.

**Shelagh Quick and Vera Box**

The Secretary reported that Shelagh Quick had emailed him to thank MERA on behalf of herself and Vera Box for the bouquets that were presented to them last month.

**Mass Rapid Transport system**

The Committee was informed of some unease expressed on Facebook regarding bus services that could be diverted to use the Mass Rapid Transport system if approved. The concern was that Wokingham Road would no longer be served by the 4/X4 service, which had been mentioned specifically in the information provided by Reading Borough Council. It had also been speculated that the 13/14 service could be diverted, severing connections between parts of Woodley and the hospital.

**St Nicolas Church**

It was reported that a new community hall was to open at St Nicolas Church on 22 September.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.58pm.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 11 October 2018 at 8pm.