**Draft Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 14 February 2019 at the Kenton Road Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| Pamela Tames (Treasurer) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Jonathan Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| Peter Soul (EASI) | Jenny Lissaman (ACER) |

**Apologies received**

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| Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | James Barr (Area 13) |
| Jean Beck (Area 12) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Siyu Smith (Area 2) |
| Tim Smith (Area 2) | Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Brian Hackett (resident) |
| Ray Jones (resident) | Mary Bather (ACER) |

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 10 JANUARY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2019 were accepted and signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Maiden Erlegh Library**

The Secretary informed the meeting that Cllr Grandison had indicated that the proposal to create a ‘pop-up’ library at St Nicolas Church was currently under consideration. He stated that he would seek to clarify whether an article in the MERA Magazine would be helpful at this time.

**Lakeside subsidence**

The committee was advised that the dip in the road in Lakeside had now been patched.

**Community & Youth Sub Committee**

The Secretary reported that Earley Town Council was now providing notice of the subject matter for each Community & Youth Sub-Committee well in advance of each meeting. The theme for the March Sub-Committee would be ‘Children and Young People’, and a discussion would be held on this subject at the next Executive Committee. In the meantime, members were asked to consider any issues that they would like to have raised with the Sub-Committee.

**MERA Constitution**

The Chairman stated that the draft Constitution had been re-circulated with the amendments suggested at the last meeting, and this included the appendix which listed all the roads currently served by MERA, as requested.

Pamela Roberts made the point that there were some households currently subscribing to MERA that were not on the list, but it was agreed that the existing boundaries should be preserved. However, those currently subscribing would be permitted to remain members while residing at their current addresses.

Peter Soul suggested an amendment to the second sentence under the heading ‘Honorary Membership’ to read ‘Such honorary members shall have no vote…’ This was agreed.

**AGREED:** The suggested amendment be made to the Constitution, which would be submitted to the next meeting with a recommendation for adoption by the AGM on 9 May 2019.

**Earley Town Council – Readibus**

The Secretary stated that he had received a response from Cllr Grandison, who had stated that Wokingham residents would continue to benefit from using their bus passes on the Readibus service.

**AGREED:** That the Secretary confirm with Wokingham Borough Council’s officers that there would be no implications for Wokingham residents should the Readibus proposal be approved by Reading Borough Council.

**Speaker for AGM**

The Chairman stated that Robert Williams, CEO of Reading Buses, was happy to meet with MERA members but was unable to attend the next AGM as this clashed with a conference that he was attending. He did confirm that he was very happy to be able to attend a future meeting, however.

In the light of this, the Secretary had written to Geoff Hislop, Wokingham Borough Council’s Parking Manager, who had agreed to attend our next AGM with Martin Heath, the Traffic Management and Road Safety Officer, to address the meeting on the subject of parking enforcement in Earley.

**Complaint**

The Chairman reported that a further email had been received from a second person regarding the Travellers article in the winter edition of the MERA Magazine. The email appeared to have been sent from the same household. The Secretary had responded to the points made and the individual had now replied to state that he was satisfied with MERA’s answers to his questions.

**Maiden Erlegh – new polling station**

The Secretary advised that no further ideas had been received for a new venue to replace Aldryngton School in respect of the Maiden Erlegh polling station after 2019/20.

**Beech Lane**

The Secretary provided a report of his inspection of the issues raised in respect of Beech Lane. The committee was advised that a vehicle had been seen attending to the drains in Lakeside on the day of the meeting and that it was speculated that all the drains in Maiden Erlegh might be cleared of leaves shortly. The traffic lights at the pedestrian crossing were not working, but a temporary ‘out of action’ sign had appeared, confirming that the council were aware of this.

**AGREED:** 1. A further discussion on the trees overhanging Beech Lane be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

2. The Secretary carry out a further inspection of the drains within the next two weeks, in the expectation that these will be cleared by the council by that time. Should this inspection reveal that the drains remain blocked with leaves, the matter be reported to the council.

3. The council’s attention be drawn to the restricted line of vision at the junction of Springdale and Beech Lane due to the growth of the trees impairing the view of the road.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman provided an update in relation to a property on Silverdale Road. The committee was informed that two planning officers had been dealing with separate issues in relation to this property. One was found not to require planning permission, which was the cause of the confusion, and the other involved the enclosure of public amenity land, which did require permission. Accordingly, an enforcement notice would be issued requiring the removal of the structure that had been erected without permission within 28 days of the notice.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that Don Box had agreed to audit MERA’s accounts for the period 2018/19. There had been some problems with the payment of an invoice, but this was being addressed.

**CONSULTATIONS**

The Chairman reported that a consultation was being carried out by the Post Office regarding the proposal to close Wokingham’s main post office in Broad Street in favour of opening a new post office within the W H Smith shop. The secretary advised that this proposal was causing some controversy because the Wokingham Branch of W H Smith was comparatively small and the amount of room available appeared to be inadequate. Responses to the proposal were invited through the online site at [www.postofficeviews.co.uk](http://www.postofficeviews.co.uk) by 27 February 2019.

The Secretary stated that Wokingham Borough Council was currently consulting on its Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy and the deadline for responses was 9 March 2019.

In respect of consultations notified at the previous meeting, the deadline for the Local Plan Update was 22 February 2019 and comments on the Wokingham Borough News should be submitted by 31 March 2019.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Parking on pavements**

The Secretary announced that Sir John Redwood had replied to our request to raise the issue of parking on pavements raised with the Government and in a letter from the Minister of State, Jesse Norman, it was confirmed that evidence on the effectiveness of current pavement parking laws was being carried out. However, the Secretary cautioned that progress on this was likely to take some time.

**Home for rent aimed at students**

The Secretary stated that an email had been received from Elizabeth Trout, drawing attention to a property in Allendale Road that was being advertised as a six-bedroom student house available for rent. The concern expressed was that estate agents and developers were looking to buy properties in Maiden Erlegh for student lets.

The Committee was advised that there appeared little that could be done to prevent owners from using their properties for this purpose, but the Borough Council would need to issue an HMO licence and any neighbourhood problems would have to be notified to the local authority.

**AGREED:** 1.The Secretary would write to Wokingham Borough Council to establish whether parking issues could be taken into account before issuing an HMO licence.

2. Information on HMO legislation be distributed to members for information.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Review of parking**

The Secretary requested views on whether the matters covered in the letter to Sir John Redwood on parking issues were fully comprehensive for the purpose of any response given to Wokingham Borough Council in respect of their proposed review of parking.

In the ensuing discussion, Judy Clark expressed concern that a growing number of households were applying for extended dropped kerbs in relation to expanded driveways, and this was restricting the amount of parking space available on the roads. Jenny Lissaman suggested that it might be worthwhile to raise this issue in a letter responding to the local plan update. This was agreed.

**Asda increasing rents for shops in Lower Earley arcade**

The Committee was advised of reports that Martin’s the Newsagent opposite the Asda store had announced that it would close in July 2019 following Asda’s decision to double the rents charged for shops within the arcade. This meant that the post office would also close, which was particularly worrying for Maiden Erlegh residents due to the range of services provided in that Branch. Boots the Chemist was also rumoured to be considering its position, although when asked by the local press, they responded that they had no plans to close.

**AGREED:** The Secretary would write to Asda to convey its concerns about the impact of its rent increase on these important amenities.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Street lamps in Lakeside**

The Chairman advised the meeting that the three lamps in Lakeside that had failed to light up for the last few weeks were reported to the council and that SSE had advised that power would be restored by no later than 26 February 2019.

**Water leak in Lakeside**

The Chairman reported that water leak from certain Lakeside driveways of properties opposite the lake had been reported to the council and the drainage maintenance specialist was dealing with the matter.

**NAG meeting: 14 January 2019**

The Secretary reported that Jean Hackett had attended the NAG meeting on 14 January 2019. The main point of interest was stated to have been telephone scams and the police asked local organisations such as EASI and MERA to convey warnings, particularly for the elderly and vulnerable, about not giving out bank details over the telephone when unsolicited calls are received.

The Orchard Group had heard nothing further regarding an alternative orchard site before Christmas, but having been chased, the council advised that the whole area around the children’s playground would be the subject of public consultation. After the meeting, an email was received dated 6 February 2019 asking for comments on the proposed new location for the orchard from interested parties by 28 February 2019. This consultation was limited to the proposals regarding the orchard.

**Community & Youth Sub-Committee: 30 January 2019**

The Secretary reported that the theme of the last Community & Youth Sub-Committee was ‘The Environment’. He raised the concerns about Ash Disease which was spreading in the south of England, but the Senior Park Ranger stated that the disease had not been detected in the reserve to date. However, the position was being monitored closely.

There had been no further news on the negotiations for the proposed transfer of land at Laurel Park to Earley Town Council, but these negotiations were said to be ongoing. Jim Willis confirmed that the football club intends to pay for a gate to be installed at the entrance to the Laurel Park field.

The Senior Park Ranger announced that South West Trains were looking for someone to ‘adopt’ the grassed areas of Earley Station. It was stated that Earley Town Council were minded to take up the challenge.

Jim Willis stated that the orchard might be retained in its existing location and a new orchard might be planted in the field opposite the pavilion. He also raised the concerns regarding the level of thefts and wanton destruction of bicycles in the area, stating that the community needed to support the police in preventing such acts wherever possible. Parking issues emanating from the police station had become a problem on local residential roads, and Jim Willis was actively pursuing this matter.

**Planning issues**

Judy Clark raised a question on whether any consideration was given by the council to the tidiness of builders during the construction process. The Chairman stated that generally, the emphasis of the planners was to ensure that the site was left in an acceptable condition at the conclusion of the works.

**Front gardens**

Jenny Lissaman was concerned that a growing number of households were failing to retain their grass areas at the front of their houses, and instead were converting these areas into driveways. She emphasised the need for residents to ensure that new driveways had porous surfaces. The Secretary agreed to make these points in response to the local plan update.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.30pm.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 14 March 2019 at 8pm.