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

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Pamela Tames (Treasurer) |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| Siyu Smith(Area 2) |  |

**Apologies received**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | Jonathan Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) |
| Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Paul Medlycott (Area 12) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |
| David Chopping (Luckmore RA/ETC councillor) | Caroline Smith (Hillside WBC councillor) |
| Mary Bather (ACER) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman reported that Barbara Stansfield’s husband had passed away on 1 November. His funeral would be taking place at 11.30am on 28 November 2019 at Reading Crematorium.

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

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

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Community and Youth Sub Committee**

The Secretary advised that he had written to the Chief Executive Officer of ‘Keep Mobile’ to advise him that confirmation had been received that his voluntary organisation would be welcome to apply for funding from Earley Town Council once a review of the funding criteria and application process was carried out. He confirmed that ‘Keep Mobile’ would be very pleased to apply for a grant when the guidance was published. Shelagh Quick, who first raised the issue with MERA, was also advised and she welcomed the announcement.

**Pavement parking**

The Secretary reported that a query had been received from a resident who expressed concern about parking at the corner of Allendale Road and Silverdale Road. The Secretary had responded that the Borough Council was aware of this problem from the discussion at the last AGM and that Parking Enforcement Officers were now able to issue Parking Infringement Notices where appropriate. The parking issues at this location would be monitored.

**Maiden Erlegh Drive**

The Secretary reported that the Maiden Erlegh Drive resurfacing works had now been completed.

**Climate emergency initiatives**

The Secretary reported that he had inspected the land off Meldreth Way near Paddick Drive and he found that there were many trees there, as well as a fairly large open field that appeared to provide recreational space for local residents. He had subsequently written to the Park Ranger to point out that care should be taken not to diminish this open space without consulting residents of the area first. However, if further tree planting was proposed in the area that did not impact on recreational space, this would be supported.

The Park Ranger advised the Secretary that he had been asked to plant a tree in memory of Sue Smith for her work in the community, and particularly for EASI. The Committee thought this was a good idea and proposed that a tree and a plaque also be put in place to celebrate the work of Peter Soul, who established EASI and ensured that a comprehensive litter picking service was established across Earley.

The Park Ranger thought that trees planted at roundabouts could present a problem, but it would be worthwhile to put the suggestion to Wokingham Borough Council, who would be able to provide a view on the viability of such a decision.

Judy Clark suggested that the Borough Council consider displaying notices in their car parks advising motorists to turn off their engines while parked, and Rosemary Cook expressed concern that cleaning ditches and small streams of blockages should be undertaken to help to protect against floods.

**AGREED:**  1.That the Secretary liaise with the Park Ranger with a view to the planting an oak tree on the land between Piddick Drive and Meldreth Way to commemorate the work of Peter Soul, with a suitable plaque, to be funded by MERA.

2. That the Borough Council be advised of these further suggested measures when responding to the issue of tree-planting in Earley.

**McColls**

The Secretary reported that the new tenant who would be taking over the McColls shop had indicated that the Post Office would be accommodated after all. The original plan that a Postmaster would be sourced in the meantime appeared to have been abandoned but it was confirmed by the Post Office that the Branch would remain closed until the new operator had been processed and approved. It now seemed likely that the new shop would open early in the New Year and within a short space of time, the Post Office Branch would be re-opened as well. The identity of the new tenants remained unknown.

McColls was scheduled to close its doors permanently from 12 noon on 15 November, although it was reported that the doors were locked earlier in the morning of the meeting.

**Report for Earley Town Council**

The Secretary advised that Reading Buses had now sourced an additional vehicle to provide a relief service to the 7.40am Beech Lane 19b journey into Reading and the 3.30pm journey from the town to address the overcrowding issue. The service would run on schooldays only. However, the Secretary had received a complaint from a resident that twice so far, the additional journey had been cancelled in the morning. On the first occasion, Reading Buses explained that the bus would not start and on the second there was not a spare bus available. The Secretary had responded to the resident and it was hoped that this would not happen again.

**Local Transport Plan**

The Committee was informed that the Secretary had not received any additional comments on the response he had passed to the Borough Council on the Local Transport Plan.

**NORA – Relaxation of planning permissions**

The committee was reminded that at the last meeting, he had reported on the new legislation that was proposed which would permit residents to add up to two storeys to their homes without the need for planning permission, which also meant that the occupants of nearby properties would not be able to object to such building work from being carried out. The secretary suggested that not only would privacy be lost in many cases, but sometimes adjacent properties and/or gardens could be thrown into shadow for part or all of the day.

As agreed at the last meeting, the secretary had considered MERA’s means of responding to this issue. It was suggested that NORA should be advised of the concerns raised about this proposal and that Sir John Redwood MP should be made aware of the problems that were envisaged with this proposed legislation. The secretary would also flag up the issue to Earley Town Council at its next meeting of the Community & Youth Sub Committee.

Judy Clark requested a further copy of the proposal forwarded by NORA and the Secretary stated that he would include it with the minutes for information.

**AGREED:** That the Secretary proceed with these actions and report back on the responses received.

**Earley Orchard Group AGM**

The Secretary reported that disappointment was expressed over the Borough Council’s decision to turn down the request for a relocation of the orchard when this was discussed at the Earley Orchard Group AGM on 20 October 2019. However, he advised that the refusal was related to the imminent transfer of assets from the Borough Council to the Town Council and that once this had been completed, the Town Council would be the appropriate authority to determine the request. The Earley Orchard Group minutes would be circulated for information with the MERA minutes.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

There was nothing to report on this occasion.

**Treasurer’s report**

The Treasurer reported that the subscriptions for three areas had yet to be collected. The Secretary suggested that Area Representatives should be requested to collect subscriptions earlier in the year from 2020 to ensure that there was sufficient monies available for outgoings early in the financial year. Area representatives would be reminded to collect any outstanding subscriptions for this year when the autumn edition of the magazine was delivered later this month.

**Editorial Team report**

The Magazine Editor was not present but the Chairman advised that the MERA Magazine would be published around 20 November. MERA’s new website would feature in the magazine and the web address would be displayed with the officer and area representative details in this and subsequent magazines.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Climate emergency**

The Chairman reminded the committee that the climate emergency consultation launched on 26 September and that the closing date for responses was 31 December. MERA’s response had been sent already following the ideas discussed at the July meeting.

**Voluntary and community sector survey**

The Chairman stated that the Borough Council was carrying out a consultation that would help shape its new voluntary sector strategy. The council was looking to deliver a strategy which brought the voluntary and community sectors together and maximise their potential. The deadline for responses was 27 November and the survey could be found on the council’s website.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

**Anti-social behaviour at Maiden Place**

The Secretary reported that given the concerns raised by NAG over anti-social behaviour at Maiden Place, a communication from NORA about the use of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) appeared to be a possible way of dealing with this issue. The committee was advised that PSPOs could deal with a particular nuisance in a defined area where this was having a negative impact on the quality of life for those in that public space and could be in place for three years (although it could be renewed if necessary). Failure to comply with an order could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £100 being issued, or a maximum fine of £1,000.

Although Maiden Place was outside of Maiden Erlegh, it was the case that many residents visited the area and potentially could be affected by the reported anti-social behaviour. It was also important that such behaviour should not tolerated in case this spread into the Maiden Erlegh catchment. It was

**AGREED:** That the Secretary put forward this suggestion at the next meeting of the Community and Youth Sub Committee.

**NEW ITEMS**

**MERA AGM proposed speaker**

The Chairman reminded the committee that it had expressed the wish to invite the CEO of Reading Buses to speak at the MERA AGM, but that he was unavailable when this was requested a year ago. It was suggested that a new invitation be sent with a view to his attendance at the AGM to be held in May 2020. It was stated that should he accept the invitation, it would be necessary to hire a bigger venue, perhaps at Maiden Erlegh School or St Nicolas Church.

**AGREED:** That the CEO of Reading Buses be invited to speak at MERA’s next AGM to be held on 14 May 2020.

**SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS**

The Chairman referred to previous discussions on school travel plans and he drew attention to the paper that had been prepared by the Secretary in relation to the measures that had been taken by Loddon and Aldryngton Primary Schools and Maiden Erlegh School. It was noted that there was little support for the idea of a ‘walking bus’ and that none of the schools considered that sufficient advice had been made available to them about how this could work in the area. In particular, it had been pointed out that the start point for such a proposal was actually outside the immediate locality, which meant that children would have to be driven away from the schools before they could start their journeys. This was considered to be impractical.

The Committee was in agreement that all the local schools were taking the matter seriously and no further suggestions for reducing vehicle journeys to and from the schools located off Silverdale Road were proposed.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**BT telephone box**

Rosemary Cook advised the committee that the BT telephone box at The Parade was due to be decommissioned and Earley Town Council had been asked whether alternative uses for it could be considered.

Given the lack of space within the telephone box itself, there appeared to be little that could be suggested, but one idea put forward was that it could contain a defibrillator. Rosemary Cook noted this idea for future discussion at the next appropriate meeting of the council.

**Bus shelters**

The Secretary reported that Earley Town Council was currently considering the funding of two bus shelters in Earley. In line with previous discussions, it was proposed that suggested sites should be at Reading bound bus stops on Silverdale Road (which currently had only one shelter located at the shops, compared with Beech Lane, which had a shelter at every bus stop for Reading bound buses) and opposite Earley Gate, which some Woodley and North Earley residents used as an interchange to travel to Asda.

The position of the shelter on Rushey Way opposite Beech Lane was raised again as this was thought to be located too close to the road. The Secretary agreed to point this out once more at the next Community and Youth Sub Committee meeting.

**AGREED:** That the Secretary re-inspect the suitability of locations at bus stops on Silverdale Road, identifying which of these would be suitable to accommodate shelters, and the attention of Earley Town Council be drawn to these at the next Community and Youth Sub Committee meeting.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman stated that the next meeting on Thursday 12 December 2019 would be MERA’s festive meeting and as such, refreshments would be available. The Chairman stated that he would arrange for wine and soft drinks to be brought to the meeting and Siyu Smith kindly agreed to arrange to bring the accompanying nibbles. The meeting would commence at 8pm as usual.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.17pm.