**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 14 October 2021 at Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | Jonathan Brown (Editor) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| John Saunders (Area 13) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |  |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ryan Yao-Smith (Treasurer) | Liz Kerry (Editorial Team) |
| Paul Medlycott (Area 12) | Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |
| Ray Jones (resident) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Water leakage at a Lakeside property**

The Secretary advised that a progress report was awaited and he hoped to be able to update the committee at the next meeting.

**Hedge on Lakeside**

The Chairman reported that Earley Town Council’s Amenities and Leisure Committee had decided at its meeting on 8 September 2021 that the vegetation to the rear of the hedge at Lakeside would be neatened and thinned but would not be cut down to the height of the main hedge. The reasons for the decision were explained to the meeting.

The Chairman conveyed his disappointment by this decision, particularly after residents had been given assurances about the height of the hedge to maintain views of the lake in 2012, some years after the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 had been passed. He stated that while it was agreed that the nature reserve needed to be treated as such, the hedge formed a boundary with a residential area, and residents did not approve of the scruffy appearance of the ‘second hedge’ and the fact that it obscured the lake from the view of the houses opposite.

The Committee was advised that MERA had not asked for the removal of the vegetation at the back of the formal hedge, but simply that it be trimmed back to waist height, and that the cost of doing this was not likely to be more than the Amenities and Leisure Committee had already agreed.

The Chairman stated that residents would be advised to ask prospective candidates at the next Town Council election about their position in relation to the hedge and the 2012 agreement with residents in an effort to have the decision overturned.

**Brookside General Practice complaints**

The Chairman reported that he and the Secretary met with Sarah Rutland (General Manager of Brookside Group Practice) and Dr Amit Sharma (Managing Partner) on 28 September. The Secretary had now written an article for the MERA Magazine to convey the main messages from that meeting, and the article had been agreed with the Practice.

**Bus service improvement plan**

The Secretary stated that local authorities were required to have their Bus Service Improvement Plans submitted later in the month and he would seek a copy of the document if it was to be made available to the public.

The meeting was also advised that the Secretary had met with Grant Kelly from ACER to explain MERA’s proposals for bus services in the area and to reassure him that these proposals were not intended to impact adversely on services to North Earley.

**Deferred items**

The Secretary reported that he would write again to Martin Heath regarding the proposal to install a mini-roundabout at the Gypsy Lane junction with Rushey Way.

**Red kites**

The Chairman reported that the Secretary had written to the Berkshire Ornithological Club to request an article on red kites for the MERA Magazine. This was in response to a resident complaint that some residents at or near Avalon Road were feeding these birds, which resulted in deposits on garden furniture, a danger to children and attracted vermin. The meeting was informed that the Chairman of the Club, Robert Godden, had now responded with an article and this had been forwarded to the magazine editor with a preface to explain the context.

**Beech Lane/Rushey Way junction roundabout**

The Secretary reported that he had inspected this roundabout, and that he had approached it from each direction, but he did not believe that the vegetation in the centre of the roundabout obstructed any sight lines. This conclusion was also reflected in the views expressed at the meeting and accordingly it was decided that no action would be taken. However, the Secretary advised that he would monitor the roundabout and would report any notable change that would be likely to cause a problem for road users.

Rosemary Cook reported that a mini-roundabout sign was obscured by trees at the junction with Carshalton Way. The Secretary agreed to inspect the sign and if appropriate he would report it to Wokingham Borough Council.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that he had still not heard from the officer dealing with his suggestion that trees be planted on grass verges at Lakeside. He stated that while he appreciated it may take some time to establish whether this would be possible due to any pipes or cables underneath the verge, he was disappointed that his proposal had not yet received an acknowledgement from the officer.

In the meantime, a request had been received from a resident of Aldbourne Avenue for a discussion on grass verges, pavements and roads. Although this was outside the MERA area, the Chairman and Secretary had agreed to a meeting to exchange information on the subject as we may be able to learn from each other.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer advised that subscription monies were awaited from six areas. The Secretary observed that it would be advisable to ensure that all remaining subscriptions were collected before the winter weather set in.

**Editorial Report**

The Committee was reminded that the copy date for articles for the Autumn magazine was 20 October 2021.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Housing allocations draft policy survey**

**Secondary school places strategy survey**

The Chairman reported that the Borough Council were currently consulting on its new housing allocations policy and on their proposed secondary school places strategy covering 11 to 16 year-old children . The closing dates for responses were 15 November and 24 October respectively.

**Petition: Grass cutting contract**

The Chairman reminded members that the petition relating to grass cutting ran until 18 October 2021. Accordingly, should anyone wish to add their support, they would need to do this by early the following week. It was stated that 46 residents had signed the petition to date.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The latest correspondence from NORA had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting for information.

**Tree register**

The Secretary reported that Cllr Tahir Maher had requested MERA’s assistance in publicising a tree register which was being compiled as an initiative to further progress on the registering of trees in Earley. The goal was to further assemble a comprehensive and up to date record of trees considered noteworthy in Earley.

The Committee was informed that Tim Marsh had commented that the register did not include trees in private gardens, and he pointed out that this is where the majority of the ‘nicer’ trees visible from the streets were located. However, Anne Booth was of the view that residents may not be happy to have their trees registered and some would refuse to allow an inspection of their trees, possibly fearing that a Tree Preservation Order may be issued as a result. Accordingly, it was not thought that the registration of trees in gardens would be a popular suggestion for MERA’s members.

The Secretary requested that anyone interested in assisting with compiling the register contact Cllr Tahir Maher, or alternatively to let the Secretary know and he would pass on their interest in the project. An article had been written for the next MERA Magazine on this subject.

**NEW ITEMS**

*(There were no new items).*

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Swallows Meadow**

The Secretary stated that consultation on revised proposals for a food store and 43 dwellings at Swallows Meadow was due to end on 22 October. If members wished to submit their views on this proposal and had not already done so, the planning application 211686 appeared on the Borough Council’s website. Rosemary Cook made the point that Earley Town Council had already submitted its objections and these could be found on the Town Council’s website.

**Waterfall restaurant**

The Secretary reported that the Waterfall restaurant had decided to apply for an alcohol licence following the lapse of the previous licence during the recent lockdowns. This was expected to be granted in January, and in the meantime, customers were being permitted to bring their own alcohol to the restaurant, which would be served in glasses with the meal. Soft drinks would have to be purchased in the normal way. The advertisement for the magazine would be altered to reflect this.

**Communities that Care Project**

Rosemary Cook drew attention to the Community that Cares Project organised by Neighbourhood Watch, which would be showcased on 21 October 2021 via Zoom. The Secretary advised that he would forward details of this with the minutes.

Rosemary Cook drew attention to the green events that were being organised by Earley Town Council and stated that she would forward details of these events for Committee members.

**St Nicolas Church**

The Secretary stated that he had received information from Liz Kerry relating to an initiative which would enable the public areas around the café of St Nicolas Church to be used for art shows, and the next event would be entitled ‘Islamic Art Meets British Flowers’. An article on the initiative would appear in the spring edition of the MERA Magazine.

**Proposed 3G football pitch at Laurel Park**

Concerns were raised again about the likely impact of the proposed 3G football pitch at Laurel Park. Rosemary Cook stated that similar football pitches to the one proposed could be found at Cantley Park and at Woodley. Fears were expressed at the impact of floodlighting with its impact on nature within the Nature Reserve and on local residents. Such a development would also lead to the conversion of the field opposite the pavilion into a car park, which would be unpopular with nearby residents of Instow Road and Sibson in particular. The Secretary advised that he had tried to obtain more details from Wokingham Borough Council’s Sports & Leisure Team but so far without success and that attention should be given to the council’s planning site in case an application was submitted that required MERA’s members to be informed.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

11 November 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9pm.