**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 14 September 2023 at the Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) |
| Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Bob Collins (Area 14) |
| Patsy Collis (Area 8) | Chris Haines (Area 12) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Siyu Smith (Area 2) |
| Tim Smith (Area 2) | Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |
| Tim Marsh (ACER) | Cllr Norman Jorgensen (Wokingham BC) |
| Cllr Stephen Newton (Wokingham BC) |  |

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman announced that Linda Bassett, a former Area Representative for Area 1, had sadly died.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2023 were signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Proposed changes in The Parade**

The Secretary confirmed that a copy of MERA’s request to the Borough’s Highways Officers for additional child and pedestrian safety measures in The Parade/Silverdale Road areas had been sent to Cllrs Stephen Newton and Norman Jorgensen. The Secretary had also submitted a formal request to the councillors regarding the litter bins in The Parade. The meeting was informed that additionally, a suggestion had been forwarded by the Chair of NAG that advertising on the bins could generate income that could offset the costs of replacement and could also be a method of avoiding a general reduction in bin collections across the Borough due to budget restrictions. Both councillors had been very helpful in responding to these issues, and the Secretary stated that he was grateful for the assistance they had provided.

The meeting was advised that although the road markings on Silverdale Road had now been completed, the no parking area and the arrows had not yet been marked out in The Parade car park. The new signage had appeared, however, although the ‘No Entry’ sign adjacent to Coral’s was likely to confuse motorists as it was not clear that this only related to the car park and not the driveway into the schools. The Secretary would seek clarification from the council that these matters would be addressed.

The council had now decided to leave the bus stop for west bound services opposite the shops where it was, and therefore the issue with the shelter is no longer a problem. However, the Secretary had hoped that one of Earley Town Council’s new bus shelters could replace the existing shelter, which was not suitable for the elderly who needed to sit down due to the sloping seats. Unfortunately, the Town Clerk had now advised that priority had to be given to replacing bus shelters that required attention before consideration could be given to the Silverdale Road stop. The Secretary was asked to continue to press for new shelters to be provided on Silverdale Road.

**AGREED: That the Secretary provides further reports on progress as appropriate.**

**Grass cutting: roundabout sponsorships**

The Treasurer confirmed that he had provided the email correspondence between residents and the council regarding the planting of wildflowers at the Kenton Road roundabout connecting with The Crescent and Finch Road. He stated that 15 volunteers had come forward to participate in the project to take over the planting and maintenance of the roundabout, comprising 3 from Kenton Road, 6 from Finch Road and 6 from The Crescent.

Following a meeting of the volunteers held on 6 September, the Treasurer submitted a second application to Highways for a licence, as the deadline for the first application had expired. The measurements, which took account of the fact that the roundabout was oval in shape, were not submitted at that stage, but were available if requested.

The garden centre near the Showcase Cinema had offered a contribution of £50 together with 20% of the plants. Additionally, the East Reading Horticultural Society had agreed to assist with compost and provide financial assistance pending the finalisation of the application. It was believed that the volunteers might find a lot of rubble when digging started and the soil quality may not be good.

The Chairman congratulated the Treasurer and all the volunteers for making good progress with this project.

The Secretary informed the meeting that Cllr Norman Jorgensen had raised with council officers the suggestion that the application process be simplified. The Secretary also confirmed that he had written to the Park Ranger to establish whether he was able to give any tips on the preparation of a planting plan for the Borough Council. However, the Park Ranger stated that he had not been required to plant flowers on council land and therefore was unable to assist with this matter.

**Parking too close to junctions**

The Secretary confirmed that the list of sites to be inspected to establish whether vehicles were parked too close to junctions stood as follows:

Kenton Road/Silverdale Road (extension required)

Ramsbury Drive/Wilderness Road

Aldbourne Avenue/Wokingham Road

Beech Lane/Wilderness Road

Squirrels Way/Beech Lane

Lind Close/Squirrels Way

Repton Road/Silverdale Road

Finch Road/Silverdale Road

The Secretary was asked to include Avalon Road/Silverdale Road on the list.

The Secretary advised that it was important not to include any proposals that were considered not to be a highway safety risk because the council was under a great deal of pressure on both workload and budgets, and so he would undertake some random inspections of these roads and report back on which areas appeared to be facing safety problems of concern. These findings would be brought to a later meeting for further discussion.

**Wokingham Borough Council budget**

The Secretary reported that he had sent a copy of the response from Sir John Redwood regarding government grant support for the Borough Council to Cllrs Newton and Jorgensen as requested at the previous meeting.

**Geese**

Following the discussion at the last meeting, the Secretary was asked to approach the Chair of the Earley Environmental Group for his comments before proceeding with any further actions. His response had now been received, in which he stated that the EEG would not encourage the culling of birds or the oiling of eggs, and he felt that such moves would alienate the public. He was of the view that the number of geese may have reached its peak, particularly if food and nesting resources were limited.

The EEG Chair had copied Edwin Trout into his email for comments, and a response was awaited.

A discussion ensued, and the point was made that although the geese were protected in law, Earley Town Council could apply for a licence to oil the eggs of future nests but were choosing not to do so. Nevertheless, a solution to the problem raised by residents had to be addressed and one suggestion was that residents should be discouraged from feeding the geese.

The Secretary was asked to contact both the Borough and Town Councils with a view to finding a solution. If any response proved to be unsatisfactory, consideration would be given to issuing a press release to draw public attention to the issue. The Secretary was requested to draft an article on the problem for the spring edition of the magazine.

**Maiden Place community corner meeting**

The Secretary reported that dates had not yet been provided in relation to the Maiden Place community corner meeting mentioned by Cllr Newton at the previous meeting.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman confirmed that he attended the NAG meeting held on 4 September. He summarised the police report including the fact that there had been only one residential burglary during the period. The police also reported that the older and unused speed cameras on various sites in the area would be retained due to their deterrent effect. The Chair of NAG expressed frustration at the lack of take-up for Speedwatch, and he would be looking for ideas to encourage more interest from residents.

The Chairman stated that he had brought NAG up-to-date with the work that MERA was carrying out on parking and litter bins at The Parade.

The meeting was informed that the report on Leisure and the identification of possible suitable locations for 3G football pitches was likely to be available by 28 September.

The NAG Chair was pleased that Peter Woodward had volunteered to represent MERA at the university’s Community Engagement Steering Committee and the Chairman thanked him for stepping forward. Peter Woodward was asked if he would also draw to the Committee’s attention issues raised by ACER and NAG, which he agreed to do.

The Chairman stated that the firework event organisers would be encouraging local groups to set up stalls on the upper field this coming year to provide an opportunity for community organisations to advertise their services to a potentially large group of people. Charities and groups such as MERA would not be charged, but commercial organisations would be charged a small fee.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that all the advertising invoices relating to the last magazine had now been paid. The subscriptions in respect of 7 Areas had now been received, which did not include the monies handed over at the meeting.

The current account now stood at £2,244.80, excluding the subscriptions just received, and the deposit account balance was £843.89, which included interest of £1.

**Editorial Report**

It was confirmed that the copy date for the next MERA Magazine was 20 October.

The next meeting of the MERA Magazine Sub Committee was scheduled for 18 September. The Editor was requested to identify the particular issues he needed to raise in terms of outstanding information so that these matters could be discussed with ACER at the Sub Committee meeting.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Chairman advised of the following ongoing consultations and petitions:

**Shaping how the council involves residents in planning issues –** The council was consulting residents on how they consulted residents on planning issues. A draft Statement of Community Involvement had been produced and views were requested by 16 October 2023.

**Petitions**

There were no current e-petitions.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

The Secretary confirmed that there was no new correspondence to report on this occasion.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Royal Mail**

The Secretary drew attention to the fact that a number of areas seemed to be having problems with their Royal Mail deliveries recently. There had been occasions when some local residents had not received any post for a week. The meeting was informed that reports had been received of some Woodley residents who had not received any mail for several weeks and when they attended the Sorting Office, a large amount of mail awaited them.

**AGREED: That the Secretary write to Royal Mail to convey the expectation of residents that their mail deliveries should be delivered consistently every working day.**

**School streets and speed restrictions**

The Chairman reported that according to the Reading Chronicle, ‘school streets’ were to be trialled across Woodley and Earley. This would mean temporary restrictions would be imposed at opening and closing times of schools in designated areas. The Borough Council claimed that there had been public support for measures to reduce traffic and improve public safety.

It was also noted that a 20mph speed limit was proposed for introduction in towns across the Borough and that new or improved walking and cycling routes would be developed. A consultation period was expected in relation to these proposals in due course, and in the meantime, an agenda item would appear on the next agenda to discuss these ideas in more detail. In the meantime, Area Representatives were asked to report any concerns about such measures being introduced that they established from the members in their respective areas.

The Secretary expressed the hope that time permitted an article to appear in the magazine before any consultation ended, to invite member views.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**NatWest Bank**

The Treasurer confirmed that the closure of the NatWest Bank in Woodley would not be a major problem as there was also a bank in Reading that he could use instead.

**Buses**

The Secretary drew attention to the revised times that were implemented for the Little Oranges from 4 September. He stated that unusually, roadside timetables had not yet been updated.

**Post Office for Lower Earley**

The Secretary reported that he had asked the Post Office for an update on a possible replacement for the main post office at Lower Earley following the closure of McColls. He had received a stock answer that any updates would appear on their community information page. Unfortunately, it appeared that there would be no replacement for the foreseeable future, but they pointed to the fact that alternative facilities were available at Maiden Place and Woodley.

**New ANPR cameras**

The Chairman reported that new automatic number plate recognition cameras had been installed at Loddon Primary School. The cameras were in place to monitor compliance with the ‘School Keep Clear’ markings. The council stated that if the trial was successful, the authority would look to roll out ANPR cameras to other schools in the Borough.

**Shute End offices**

The Chairman stated that it had been revealed that the Borough Council was reviewing the suitability of the Shute End offices for the conduct of its business, and was seeking to identify smaller and more modern premises in the town.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Fly tipping**

Judy Clark observed that some migrant families in the area might not understand the meaning of ‘fly tipping’ which was the wording appearing on bins to deter such practices.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

12 October 2023 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.05pm.