**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee (online) held at 8pm on Thursday 8 July 2021**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Jonathan Brown (Editor) | Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| John Saunders (Area 13) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Tim Marsh (ACER) |  |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | Ryan Yao-Smith (Treasurer) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Paul Medlycott (Area 12) | Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Borough Planning and Design Guide – planting of trees on grass verges**

The Chairman reported that the Lead Member for Climate Change at Wokingham Borough Council had responded positively to the proposal to plant trees on grass verges in Lakeside. The Committee was informed that Cllr Murray wanted to see more trees and an increase in boulevards across the Borough. He stated that there were electricity, gas and communications lines under the grass verges and pavements, and therefore he was contacting the council’s trees and biodiversity expert to ensure there were no risks of severing any pipes or cables. Earley Town Council had provided a letter of support for the proposal.

The Committee was reminded that any further ideas for environmental improvements should be submitted to the Secretary.

**Cycle rack at Tesco**

The Secretary advised that the next MERA magazine would contain information regarding the Tesco cycle rack as agreed.

**Bulmershe allotments**

John Saunders confirmed that he would be prepared to attend the Amenities and Leisure Committee of Earley Town Council to speak on this proposal if required.

**Water leakage at a Lakeside property**

The Secretary advised that an update from the Borough Council’s drainage engineer was still awaited.

**Hedge on Lakeside**

The Committee was advised that the vegetation behind the hedge in Lakeside was in an untidy state and the Secretary confirmed that a site meeting had been held between the Town Clerk and the Park Ranger. A decision on the matter was awaited.

**Planning notices**

Rosemary Cook reported that she had received some responses from Area Representatives but she remained concerned that residents were not always notified of planning applications that impacted on them.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman advised that he had nothing to report on this occasion.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Secretary advised that there was nothing to report on this occasion.

**Editorial Report**

The Magazine Editor advised that the magazine was about to be sent to the printers and would be available for distribution shortly.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Road safety at Loddon Primary School**

The Chairman advised that Cllr Mickleburgh had lodged a petition to introduce additional Traffic Regulation Orders in Silverdale Road ‘to help significantly improve pedestrian and road safety outside Loddon School.’ However, it was not clear what improvements the Town Councillor had in mind. The petition would run until 26 August 2021 and 31 signatures had been obtained to date.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

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

**Sir John Redwood: Planning speech**

The Secretary advised that Sir John Redwood had sent MERA a copy of the speech he delivered in the House of Commons, which set out his views on the government’s proposed housing allocations. His stance on this was that more new building should be concentrated on areas identified for ‘levelling up’ rather than in the more prosperous areas such as Wokingham.

Anne Booth had provided her comments prior to the meeting, and she pointed out that this did not address all the issues relating to the proposed planning changes. However, the Secretary pointed out that Sir John Redwood had already had several private meetings with the Secretary of State regarding the planning proposals, and that there would be more debate on the detail of the planning reforms in the House at a later date.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Bus service improvement plan**

The Secretary advised the Committee that a report proposing to commence work on a Bus Improvement Plan had been approved by Wokingham Borough Council. The new Bus Act enabled councils to work more closely with bus operators and have more influence on the routes. The legislation imposed a mutual duty to co-operate, which was good news for residents.

Following a request for clarification, the Borough’s Community Transport Manager confirmed that MERA had been identified as one of the community stakeholder groups that needed to be engaged. This would enable MERA to pursue its objective of finding ways of protecting the routes running through Maiden Erlegh and improving the service, including better facilities for passengers with more shelters, seats and real time bus information at bus stops.

MERA was informed by the council that the notice of intent to undertake an Enhanced Partnership as defined in the Bus Act had been issued, and the local authority was already working with its consultants on the Local Bus Service Improvement Plan. It was also explained that the National Bus Strategy set out an expectation that the plans should be published by October 2021, so there was a very tight timescale.

**AGREED: The Secretary be nominated to attend any future consultation meetings to put forward the views agreed previously as set out in the report on buses considered by Earley Town Council, and to respond to any further proposals put forward during the course of the consultation.**

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

The Secretary reported that the Borough Council had approved a proposal to create a 3G football pitch at Laurel Park, subject to planning permission being granted. The proposal would include provision for increased parking to relieve the problems at Marefield and surrounding roads.

While the location of the increased parking provision was not clear, it was assumed that the proposals would include a new car park with 60 spaces to be constructed on the field to the west of the Pavilion, which adjoined houses on Instow Road and Sibson. It had been made very clear previously that these residents opposed the siting of a car park on this land, due to the noise and fumes from vehicles entering and leaving the site and because this would become a lost amenity.

Anne Booth had commented prior to the meeting that the 3G pitch may not be good news for residents and pointed out that the proposal could amount to the start of an escalation in facilities at Laurel Park. This could include floodlighting and increased disturbance to the nature reserve and the people living nearby. It was suggested that there should be consideration given to the use of other sites such as Chalfont Park, Kilnsea Drive and Sol Joel Park.

The Secretary reminded the committee that Earley Town Council had promised a consultation on any plans for a car park, but Rosemary Cook advised that this would probably now fall to the Borough Council to carry out because the transfer of land from the Borough to the Town Council had not taken place.

During the ensuing discussion, issues were also raised about possible flooding due to the run off from the artificial turf (which would not absorb water), the number of people expected to make use of the new facilities, how often they would be used and who would be responsible for running and maintaining the facility.

After further discussion, the Secretary confirmed that he would ask for further clarification from Wokingham Borough Council.

**Brookside General Practice complaints**

The Secretary reported that there had been complaints registered on the Facebook Earley Residents Discussion Board regarding the service provided by Brookside General Practice. He noted that the complaints related to individual experiences, mainly in respect of contacting a doctor and the length of the Patient Access form that needed to be completed, even for minor complaints. It was made clear to the committee that most of the posts in respect of the Practice were in praise of the service.

Pamela Roberts drew attention to the problems of booking appointments online. The form listed five different complaints, but there was no box for a complaint which was not listed. Constantina noted that the problems being reported at Brookside were the same as those at other surgeries, and highlighted that this could be a national issue.

Area Representatives were asked to report any cases of resident dissatisfaction to the Secretary so that an assessment could be made of the level of problems being experienced.

**Geese**

The Chairman advised the meeting that complaints had been received from some Lakeside residents who were concerned about the mess caused by geese from the lake, which were depositing droppings on front lawns and driveways. The pavements were in a similar state.

The Committee was advised that this was an annual problem for a few months in the late spring and early summer and that it was now almost the end of the period when this presented a problem. There appeared to be little that could be done in relation to front lawns and driveways other than requesting that the number of geese on the reserve was managed, but it was considered that there may well be even more objections to any suggestion that the geese should be culled.

Rosemary Cook stated that simply having cord around the boundary of the garden would prevent them from entering the lawn.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Earley Day Centre**

The Committee was advised that the Earley Day Centre at Kenton Road would be convening its AGM on 17 August 2021 at 2.30pm. Anyone over the age of 50 was invited to attend as long as they were resident in Earley. Nominations for the Officer and Committee positions would be on the agenda of this meeting.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

12 August 2021. The Chairman confirmed that following the postponement of the easing of restrictions, it had not been possible to meet at the Day Centre as hoped for the current meeting. However, given that the end of most restrictions had been announced as commencing on 19 July 2021, it was now possible to meet at the Day Centre for the August meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.32pm.