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

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) |
| Patricia Brown (Editorial Team) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Patsy Collis (Area 8) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Chris Haines (Area 12) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| Cllr Norman Jorgensen (Wokingham BC) |  |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Also present**

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| Stephanie Johnson (Aldryngton School PTA) |  |

**Apologies received**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Siyu and Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Elaine Spratling (Area 4) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |
| Cllr Stephen Newton |  |

**INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman welcomed Patsy Collis, who was elected as Area Representative for Area 8. Stephanie Johnson was also present for the progress report on the council’s proposals regarding The Parade car park and child safety.

Cllr Norman Jorgensen was welcomed to the meeting as one of MERA’s two elected Borough Councillors.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2023 were signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Grass verges**

The Secretary stated that a response had been received from Sir John Redwood’s Parliamentary Assistant and Caseworker, Oliver Greensmith. He advised that ministers were currently considering the public consultation findings in relation to the proposed extension of London parking laws to the rest of the country, and the government would be making an informed policy decision on pavement parking, including parking on grass verges, in due course. Ministers wished to ensure that local authorities had the right powers to deal with pavement parking in an effective way.

**Parking problem at Silverdale Road residence**

The Treasurer advised that there had been no further developments in relation to this complaint. The Secretary commented that it was probably safe to consider the matter closed.

**Preparations for AGM**

The Chairman stated that all the preparations for the AGM had been completed on time, and that the event could be considered a success. He thanked those members of the Executive Committee who helped to ensure that the evening proceeded without any problems.

The Chairman stated that Patsy Collis had been elected as Area Representative for Area 8 in place of Barbara Stansfield, who had decided to stand down. The Chairman proposed that Barbara be presented with a bunch of flowers as a token of thanks for her many years of voluntary service to MERA.

It was confirmed that the rule change had been agreed by the AGM, with a minor alteration to the proposal relating to the catchment area, as was the proposal to extend the offer of the MERA Magazine to ACER members, subject to agreement on the detailed arrangements that needed to be put in place.

The speaker, PC Turnham, had been received well by MERA members and one expression of interest was submitted on the Speedwatch forms that had been made available at the meeting. The Secretary stated that further expressions of interest may have been made directly by interested members, who were advised by the speaker that they could apply directly through the website. It was confirmed that the information requested by the member who had completed the Speedwatch form had been sent.

The draft minutes of the AGM had been prepared and circulated to members of the Executive Committee.

**Proposed changes in The Parade**

The Secretary reported that he had arranged a site meeting with the Highways representative dealing with the traffic management proposals at The Parade and Silverdale Road. He had also invited councillors, the representative of the property owner and PTA representatives. Two residents of the flats at The Parade were also present.

It appeared to be a very productive meeting, and the councillors were very helpful. The property agent was now liaising with the council’s officer on the marking out of parking bays. It was agreed that double yellow lines or a hatched box could be marked out opposite Yan Yan’s on the Silverdale Road side to prevent double parking, allowing vehicles to enter the site, which was narrow at that end.

Additional safety measures would be looked into, including a raised crossing for pedestrians between the two shopping areas of The Parade, the possible re-siting of the telephone box as suggested by the councillors present (subject to the views of the Town Council), which would allow consideration of installing a bollard next to the railings, plus additional measures along the eastern side of Silverdale Road such as an additional pedestrian crossing and a traffic constriction at the Sevenoaks Road junction to slow traffic.

The Highways Officer stated that he was not opposed to Earley Town Council installing a new shelter for the Reading bound bus stop, and the Secretary advised that he would communicate this to the Town Clerk.

A further point put forward was the possible use of the Sol Joel car park at Mays Lane to enable them to be given a safe means to drop off and pick up their children to and from school. This would enable parents to avoid The Parade area altogether.

Councillors also commented on the overflowing litter bin and the consequential litter that was lying over the pedestrian area. The Secretary stated that he would request an update from the council to establish whether they had reached a conclusion on how to deal with the problem. The Chairman commented that the matter could be raised also with EASI, to request that more litter picking be carried out in the area.

The Highways Officer advised that the additional measures that MERA wished to pursue that were outside the scope of the present proposals would need a formal request to be submitted via the council’s reporting forms. The Secretary agreed that he would do this.

**King’s Coronation celebrations**

The Chairman advised that the Lakeside street party had been well received. The Treasurer reported on the activities that had taken place in The Crescent.

**Parking at junctions**

The Secretary reported that NORA had circulated to its members MERA’s request for support regarding the problem of motorists parking too close to junctions.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that he had at last received a response from the council regarding his proposal for tree planting on grass verges on Lakeside. Unfortunately, the proposal was not a viable proposition as the width of the verges in Lakeside was less than 2 metres, which would make them unsuitable for planting due to the close proximity to the roadside. Additionally, a high pressure gas pipe ran underneath the verges, which would restrict the amount of new planting that would be possible in any case. In view of this, it appeared that the only hope of discouraging motorists from parking on the verges would be the proposed new parking legislation, which was expected to be passed later this year.

The Chairman also advised the Committee that he had attended a NAG meeting on 15 May. The police reported some new anti-social behaviour in which eggs were stolen and thrown at cars and around Maiden Place. CCTV cameras had captured the images of the offenders, who were being traced with the assistance of teachers, who were able to identify those responsible.

The Chairman had also informed NAG that one person had expressed interest in signing up to the Speedwatch Scheme following MERA’s AGM, but although disappointing, it was thought that others attending the meeting may have signed up directly via the Speedwatch web site.

The Committee was informed that Tim Marsh would be chairing the Zoom meeting regarding the traffic issues at Laurel Park. The Secretary would provide further details on how to sign up to the webinar on request. There was some concern that the events field off Rushey Way was not being used for football matches, but it was explained that the council had already discounted this option.

The reporting issues relating to road works and street lighting was also discussed, and it had been established that these were regarded as the result of human rather than systematic error and should be rectified soon.

The Lions would not be organising the fireworks event at Laurel Park in November 2023, but instead it would be organised by the Laurel Park charity. Certain changes, including the addition of community based stalls in the top field, would be made compared with previous events.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that only one invoice relating to the last magazine was outstanding, and it was hoped that this would be paid by cheque the next day. He stated that an invoice had not yet been received for the use of the Church Hall for the AGM to date. The Secretary stated that he would issue a reminder to the Church that this was still awaited.

The current account now stood at £1,890.90 and the deposit account at £841.15, which included interest of 82p that had been accrued.

**Editorial Report**

The Editor confirmed that the copy date for the next magazine was 20 June 2023.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Chairman advised of the following ongoing consultations and petitions:

**Responding to the cost of living crisis** – The Borough Council was conducting a survey on how the cost of living crisis was affecting their lives. Clearly, this was a survey designed for individuals rather than organisations, and it was available for residents to complete on the council’s website. Responses were required to be submitted by Friday 9 June 2023.

**Petitions**

One petition was displayed on the Borough Council’s website requesting that the condition of Murdoch Road, Wokingham, to be logged. The closing date to respond was 30 June 2023.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Grass cutting**

The Secretary advised that Cllr Stephen Newton had contacted MERA to advise on the position regarding grass cutting this year. The contractors had explained that the very wet winter and the continuing wet weather in March and April had delayed the start of the work. Due to the need to catch up, they would not be complying with ‘No Mow May’ this year. It was confirmed that this year’s schedule included the planting of wild flowers.

A question was raised regarding roundabout sponsorships and it was commented that they could be made to look very attractive with continued maintenance. It was noted that the sponsored roundabout at Kenton Road appeared no longer to be supported by Martin and Pole. The Secretary drew attention to an idea put to him by Cllr Newton that residents could be invited to plant wild flowers within roundabouts at the end of culs de sac and that he would be seeking further information on this.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Extension of catchment area**

Following the AGM’s agreement to extend MERA’s catchment area within the historical boundaries of Maiden Erlegh as set out in Appendix A of the draft AGM minutes (which were available at the meeting) subject to demand and at a pace considered appropriate, the Secretary put forward the following proposals:

1. That the request from the residents of the Aldbourne Avenue area (Area A) be approved and that they are formally requested to nominate an Area Representative.
2. Given the co-operation received from Marefield residents relating to Laurel Park 3G pitch proposals, the residents be invited to establish whether there was sufficient interest in his area (Area F) to join MERA. If so, MBOS residents would be asked to nominate an Area Representative.
3. That Area 10 representative Pamela Roberts be advised that her request to permit the remaining section of Radstock Lane and Brean Walk be added to the area be approved.

The Secretary undertook to keep the MERA Editor informed of any increase in membership to ensure that sufficient magazines were printed.

**AGREED:** That the proposal be approved.

**MERA Magazine: Closer links with ACER**

The Committee was reminded that the AGM had approved the proposal that ACER members be included as recipients of the MERA Magazine at a cost of 80p per member per annum for the first year and £1 per annum thereafter. This was conditional upon an agreement between ACER and MERA on the detailed arrangements for implementation.

**AGREED:** That a Sub Committee comprising the Chairman, Treasurer, the Magazine Editor and the Secretary from MERA, and the Chairman, Treasurer and one other person if required from ACER be convened, with a view to agreeing the details for the launch of the new arrangements.

**Honorary membership**

The Secretary advised that following agreement at the AGM that both Stephen Newton and Norman Jorgensen, (the Borough Councillors elected to represent Maiden Erlegh) be invited to serve as Honorary Members for the forthcoming year, both had accepted. The Secretary explained that both councillors also had council meetings to attend, and therefore they would not be able to attend every MERA meeting, but that MERA would be working closely with them on any important areas of concern, as had been the case in respect of The Parade proposals.

**Commercial bins to the rear of The Parade shops**

The Secretary had referred a complaint regarding the open lids on two commercial bins to the rear of The Parade shops and the resultant smells and litter to the Cleaner and Greener Team, who then forwarded the matter to Environmental Health. Following their intervention, an additional bin had been ordered, which should resolve the problem.

**eConsult forms to be withdrawn**

The Secretary referred to a meeting attended by the Chairman and himself with the General Manager of Brookside Group Practice and Dr Amit Sharma in September 2021, at which the problems with the eConsult forms was one of the issues discussed. It was explained at the time that the eConsult form was a national form and that the Practice had asked for changes to be made to it, but that this took some time to be actioned.

The Practice had now written to patients to explain that the Anima system would be introduced from 20 June 2023, and that this would be a more user-friendly form. The eConsult forms would cease to be available from 3pm on Monday 19 June 2023.

The new service was described as easy for patients to use and did not require lengthy free text. Requests could be tracked by patients, who would be sent a link to the most appropriate appointment. Area representatives were asked to report any problems with the new arrangements that were drawn to their attention by residents.

**Telephone box**

The Committee was advised that Earley Town Council were still looking at possible uses for the telephone box located at The Parade, which it had purchased for £1. A number of options were discussed including the storage of a defribrillator or use as a little library for book exchanges. However, it was considered that the telephone box contents in that location would be vandalised, and it was noted that it was currently in poor condition, with window panes removed. Committee members were requested to inform the Secretary if any alternative uses for the telephone box came to mind.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Driveway at Redhatch Drive/Radstock Lane**

The Secretary provided information in relation to a new driveway at Radstock Lane, but it was clarified that another driveway was actually the source of the original query. The Committee was advised that although some members of the committee considered the extent of the driveway to be excessive, given that it was porous in nature, this was not a matter that the Town Council could pursue.

**Bus Service Improvement Plan**

The Secretary advised that the government had granted Wokingham Borough Council £401,322 to fund some of the ideas set out in the council’s Bus Service Improvement Plan. It was noted that although welcome, such a small amount would not result in any transformative measures being put into place. It was stated that the subsidy for the 19a/c service alone was over £100,000.

Chris Haines stated that she was impressed with the drivers of the 19a/c bus service. The Secretary agreed, stating that it was a stressful route for them to drive along, with the busy narrow roads and a demanding timetable.

**New order to enforce ban on dangerous driving**

The Secretary advised that Wokingham had introduced a Public Spaces Protection Order that forbade a range of dangerous and nuisance behaviours in its car parks and publicly accessible land. It was hoped that the new measure would help to prevent anti-social behaviours at car meets, noise and dangerous driving within the Borough.

**Winnersh Park & Ride services**

The Secretary announced that despite all the investment and work that had been put into the Winnersh Park & Ride car park, neither the council nor Reading Buses were able to reinstate the bus service into Reading because potential passenger numbers were not believed to be sufficient to make the service viable. Disappointment was expressed that cheaper means of providing the service, such as extending journeys on the 17 service from The Three Tuns to Winnersh Triangle non-stop between the Park & Ride and The Three Tuns, had not been introduced instead.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

13 July 2023 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.20pm.