MERA Minutes – 8th March 2018

**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 8 March 2018 at the Kenton Road Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Pamela Tames (Treasurer) | Jonathan Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Siyu Smith (Area 2) | Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Peter Woodward (Area 1) | Ray Jones |
| Peter Soul (EASI) | Michelle Stone (ACER) |

**Apologies received**

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| Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) |
| Jean Beck (Area 12) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Vera Box (Area 12) | Sheila Quick (Area 12) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Brian Hackett |
| Mary Bather (ACER) |  |

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2018**

The Chairman stated that an amendment would be made to the last minutes to indicate that Anne Booth had raised the matter of the Maiden Erlegh Library opening hours. Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Silverdale Road bus service consultation**

The Secretary advised the committee that following the issue of a press release that was reported in the Wokingham Paper, Reading Buses responded to the questions raised in relation to the new bus service 22. The company explained that the decision to merge the Caversham and Lower Earley routes was made in an attempt to keep two of its worst performing services viable in the long term. While constructing timetables, the traffic issues were considered, and the northern portion of the route was based on how the Pink 22 ran. There were current issues relating to congestion in Caversham due to the Cow Lane road closure, and although this was only a temporary situation, the company was liaising with Reading Borough Council in an attempt to alleviate this problem.

In respect of the objection raised over the use of the smaller white vehicles on the old 19 route, it was confirmed that bigger buses would be used for the new 22 service. This at least saw one of the MERA objectives resolved on this route.

PT reported that she had used the new service on a number of occasions and on only one occasion was it late. However, RC reported that late running buses were indeed a problem, and one of her residents had complained again about the unsatisfactory service, with buses turning up 30 minutes late or not at all. When this occurred during the morning rush hour, residents were late for work. The Secretary reported that he had witnessed buses running 20 to 40 minutes late, although there were also more services running to time or no more than 10 minutes late than he had expected.

The Committee was asked to monitor the overall reliability of the service over the coming months, and if necessary, the Secretary would contact the company again to request that they put in place measures to improve reliability, without which passengers would lose faith in the service and make alternative arrangements.

In respect of service 12, the Secretary reported that Reading Buses had not yet responded to MERA’s proposed Hatch Farm Estate option. He suggested that if there was no response, he would write to Courtney buses, who operated bus services in the Bracknell and Wokingham areas, to see whether they might be interested in this potentially commercial route. This approach was supported by the committee if Reading Buses failed to respond positively to this proposal.

**Potholes in Maiden Erlegh Drive**

The Secretary reported that the barrier between Maiden Erlegh Drive and the schools had not yet been replaced, but that it was expected that the new railings would be erected within the next few weeks.

PS thought that some of the potholes may have been filled, although there were still many that required attention. SF advised that no significant work was expected until the house building work at the Wokingham Road end had been completed.

**New website for MERA**

The Secretary reported that Sam Chaher had confirmed he was happy with the MERA specification for the construction of the proposed website build and he would be letting us know what information he would need for the first stage in due course. In the meantime, PS confirmed that he should be able to locate some background information on MERA’s history from his store of old magazines.

**Graffiti**

PS reported that Peter Baveystock had confirmed that he would liaise with Customer Services regarding to their response to the request for the removal of graffiti that had appeared between Beech Lane and Lakeside. PS expressed concern that the graffiti needed to be removed before the Green Fair which would be held in August.

**Consultation**

The Secretary reported that the Heathrow consultation reported at the last meeting would continue until 28 March, and the Ambleside Centre at Woodley was carrying out its annual consultation until 30 March. Further details were on the Wokingham Borough Council website.

**Litter at the rear of Silverdale Road shops**

The Secretary reported that he had written to Mike Mackenzie, a school governor at Aldryngton School, to request that a further litter pick be organised by the school to remove litter that had been deposited by the boundary fence at the rear of the Silverdale Road shops.

**Pedestrian hazard at Tesco entrance and exit points**

The Secretary reported that he had written to Cllr Chopping, who confirmed that the works MERA had requested should not pose a problem for Wokingham Borough Council. Cllr Chopping advised that he would check with officers on the progress made.

**Maiden Erlegh library**

The Secretary reported that Anne Booth had contacted him to draw attention to the decision of Maiden Erlegh School to terminate the lease to operate Maiden Erlegh Library. The school wished to have the site vacated by the end of the summer term. The reason for the notice of closure according to the school was to enable them to provide for a wider range of emotional wellbeing and behavioural needs and to provide additional administrative facilities. By closing the library, they have stated that they would be able to strengthen their inclusion work further and enable them to ‘remain true to their values of equality and inclusion’.

The Secretary advised that Wokingham Borough Council were considering the position, but in the meantime, they had pointed out that there were alternative facilities with longer opening hours at Lower Earley or Woodley. The council had also reminded the public that they could make use of library services online, where they could access free downloadable e-books, electronic magazines and audio books.

SF stated that he had contacted Cllr Chopping to express concern about the school’s proposal and suggested that the top floor of the Tesco store could be used as a library instead. However, he was concerned about the likely cost of putting in a lift at Tesco, plus any rent they may wish to charge. Cllr Chopping stated that he would asked for the usage figures at the library so that the level of demand could be ascertained.

In the meantime, Cllr Russell had contacted the Secretary with a view to arranging a meeting to discuss MERA’s ideas on what could be done in response to the announced closure of the library. Both he and the Chairman would meet with Cllrs Russell and Jones in the coming days to convey the committee’s views.

It was agreed that the school was unlikely to change its mind about the termination of the library lease, but PS stated that he would write to the school to protest at their decision. In the meantime, alternative sites for the library should be explored and the Tesco suggestion should be pursued. However, given the limited number of sites in the centre of Maiden Erlegh that were available, it was thought unlikely that an alternative venue would be found. That being the case, the possibility of having a mobile library in its place that the elderly and others who were unable to travel any distance could use, would be explored with the council.

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

The Chairman announced that he would be in the United States when the AGM was held in May, and as there remained a vacancy for the Vice Chairman’s position, there was no-one to Chair this meeting. Accordingly, if anyone wished to be nominated for the position prior to the AGM, they should speak to him or the Secretary with a view to standing for election to this position. The Secretary stated that if no-one came forward, he would Chair the meeting as well as carrying out his secretarial duties.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The Treasurer advised that if regular funding was required to maintain the proposed MERA website, revenue could be increased by raising more money through the cost of advertisements, or alternatively by way of increased subscriptions, although even 50p on top of the existing subscription rate would lead to an excess of funding.

The Secretary stated that there were other things MERA could do to provide facilities for the benefit of the community, including new bus shelters, for example, if excess revenue was collected. Additionally, it should be noted that if more revenue was needed, more advertisements could be inserted in the MERA Magazine rather than increase prices.

As it was likely that the cost of maintaining the website was likely to be very low, it was agreed that no further action be taken on this for the time being.

**NEW CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The Chairman reported that NORA had alerted residents’ associations to an Early Day Motion that was tabled in the House of Commons on 20 February, which drew attention to the nuisance caused by the careless disposal of chewing gum, and called on the government to introduce a specific tax on sales of chewing gum, to be hypothecated to cover the cost to local authorities of chewing gum removal.  
  
NORA had also drawn attention to the fact that the government was to undertake a major review of university funding and student financing.

Finally, associations had also been informed that the government recently launched the Statutory Instrument making mandatory the licencing of homes in multiple occupation where there are five or more residents. Further information would be circulated with the minutes.

**NEW ITEMS**

**New data protection legislation**

The Secretary reported that a response had been received from NORA regarding the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which would come into force on 25 May. It was now clear that residents’ associations were covered by this legislation, and work needed to commence urgently to ensure that MERA was compliant. A document was now being drafted which detailed the data collected, how it was stored, why it was needed and who could view it. All residents who were MERA members would be given a copy of this document and would need to consent to their name and address being stored as part of MERA’s subscription records.

The committee was advised that papers would be ready for comment at the next meeting and further information would be circulated within the next two weeks.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Bus Shelter on Rushey Way**

The Secretary reported that Anne Booth had written to the Deputy Town Clerk to express her continuing concern about the location of the bus shelter on Rushey Way opposite the junction with Beech Lane. The concern was that the shelter was positioned too close to the road, and it was an alarming experience for passengers waiting for a bus there. Unfortunately, the latest response from Earley Town Council was that it was not cost effective to move bus shelters, which were likely to be damaged if moved. Accordingly, although the Town Council would monitor the situation, they were not prepared to take this action at the present time.

There had been a suggestion that the matter could be reported to Wokingham Borough Council as a health and safety risk and the point could be made that it had been installed incorrectly as the seat faced the road.

It was agreed that such a move may result in the shelter being removed altogether and therefore such an approach was not advised at this stage. However, the Secretary agreed to raise this at the next meeting of the Community and Youth Sub Committee on 14 March and he would continue to raise this issue in the objective of ensuring that funding was made available to deal with this matter.

**Plastic recycling**

The Committee was advised that following Sheila Quick’s advice that plastic recycling was to commence from 13 February, all households in the Borough should have received a leaflet to explain the new arrangements by now.

**Parking**

The Secretary confirmed the means by which vehicles parked on footpaths should be reported. He stated that it had been agreed by the police and the council that all parking infringement issues should be reported to both the Parking Enforcement Team at Wokingham Borough Council and Julie Susel of Thames Valley Police so that between them, they could decide the best means of dealing with the problem. Accordingly, if any committee members wished to report violations, they should send the details directly to the council and the police, including the number plate, the time and date of the offence, the location and any other pertinent details. Further information would be despatched with the minutes.

**Public notice boards**

JC was concerned that a notice she had added to one of the public notice boards had been removed shortly afterwards. According to Earley Town Council, this had not been done by their staff. It was suggested that a notice be added requesting that current notices were not removed by members of the public. SF agreed to raise this matter at the next meeting of the Community and Youth Sub Committee.

**McColls**

PW asked whether anyone had information regarding a possible takeover of McColls by Safeway. He had observed that the shop had recently been stocking some Safeway products. However, no further information was forthcoming.

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

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 12 April 2018 at 8pm.