**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 11 November 2021 at Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Jonathan Brown (Editor) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| John Saunders (Area 13) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Siyu Smith (Area 2) | Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |
| James Scott (resident) |  |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) | Ryan Yao-Smith (Treasurer) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Paul Medlycott (Area 12) |
| Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |  |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Water leakage at a Lakeside property**

The Secretary advised that Cllr Norman Jorgensen had confirmed that he had requested a progress report on the options available from council officers.

**Brookside General Practice complaints**

The Chairman reported that the article that was agreed with Brookside was now with the publishers for the next MERA Magazine, and it contained an amendment relating to appointments. The original article had stated that telephone appointments would be made for a specific time, but it had been discovered that this had changed and that now two-hour slots only were available.

**Bus service improvement plan**

The Secretary confirmed that the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for 2022-2026 had been published by the council, and this had been distributed to members of the committee. He stated that the Community Transport Manager appeared to have picked up all the principal concerns raised by MERA.

The committee was also advised that the council will publish its Enhanced Partnership on 31 March 2022, which would ensure close co-operation on services provided in the Borough with the bus companies in the area.

The Secretary highlighted that within the text of the BSIP, there was a commitment to work with Reading Buses to increase the frequency of the 4/X4 service, and that as far as the 19 services were concerned, the document stated:

‘The council acknowledges that there are gaps in frequency on the existing 19 services’ and that in a direct reference to MERA’s proposal, it stated that a review of routings through Maiden Erlegh would need to be considered. The report also made reference to the preference of residents to have larger vehicles on these routes and confirmed that an audit of bus stops would be carried out to ensure they provided an environment that felt welcoming, accessible, clean and secure for waiting passengers.’

Finally, and specifically in relation to the 19s, the report stated: ‘Resident feedback is that the direct link to the hospital is welcomed, but more frequent and direct services to Reading and Wokingham Towns is desirable’.

Altogether, the Secretary thought that it was a thorough plan and clearly MERA’s concerns had been noted. However, it needed to be borne in mind that it was not yet known how much funding would be available to make a real difference to services and that expectations should not be too high in relation to what may emanate from these plans next year and beyond.

**Deferred items**

The Secretary advised that Traffic Management, Parking & Road Safety Team Manager had responded to MERA’s request to consider a mini-roundabout at the Gypsy Lane/Rushey Way junction, indicating that surveys to evaluate the concerns raised would be carried out when resources were available. Although the Manager indicated that traffic signal control achieved more for all road users including pedestrians than mini-roundabouts, the Chairman pointed out that a crossing and an underpass were available for pedestrians to use.

The committee was disappointed that no progress had been made since the matter was first raised at the last AGM, and noted the accident that had occurred at this junction on 3 November 2021, as reported in the local newspaper.

**Red kites**

The Chairman reported that the article on red kites had been passed to the Editorial Team for inclusion in the next MERA Magazine.

**Beech Lane/Rushey Way junction roundabout**

The Secretary confirmed that he had reported the obscured road sign on Rushey Way near Beech Lane, and that work to trim the tree would be carried out by the council’s contractors, Tivoli.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that he had now received a response from the new Tree Project Officer, Laura Buck, who appeared to be very positive about the proposal to plant trees on grass verges and she would be looking into the feasibility of the idea. John Saunders commented that residents of The Crescent appeared to be very supportive of the idea.

The committee was informed that a meeting had taken place with the three residents of Aldbourne Avenue to discuss the work that MERA was doing in relation to pavements, roads and grass verges. The possibility of forming a residents’ association was also discussed.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Chairman stated that a report had been received from the Treasurer, who thanked those area representatives who had dropped off their subscription monies. The Treasurer had stated that there were now only four areas outstanding.

**Editorial Report**

The Committee was advised that the next MERA Magazine would be available shortly, and it was anticipated that the Editor would receive them from the printers around 20 November.

**CONSULTATIONS**

**Housing allocations draft policy survey**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the closing date for responses to the housing allocations draft policy was 15 November 2021.

**Local Plan update**

The Chairman reported that the Borough Council was contacting all residents regarding the Local Plan Update, which was likely to be approved for consultation on 12 November 2021. The consultation period would run from 22 November to 17 January and addressed the decision to abandon the original proposal concerning a new development at Grazeley due to the concerns raised regarding AWE Burghfield.

While the Local Plan was unlikely to impact on Maiden Erlegh directly, residents were likely to be concerned about the impact of plans to compensate for the decision to abandon the proposal for a New Town at Grazeley. Concern was expressed about the sheer numbers of new houses that Wokingham was required to accommodate already, with major encroachments on the countryside.

Tim Marsh observed that there was still an absence of any parking policies in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation. The number of developments under the heading of ‘permitted development’ and the lack of control in this area was also of concern.

It was announced that there will be two public meetings held at St Crispin’s School on 22 November and at Arborfield Green Leisure Centre on 30 November between 7pm and 9pm, with two virtual meetings on 2 and 6 December between 6pm and 7pm and between 7.30pm and 8.30pm respectively.

The Secretary stated that he would add an item to the agenda on this subject for the next meeting.

**Petition: Grass cutting contract**

The Chairman stated that the grass cutting contract petition had now closed, with 46 residents’ signatures.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

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

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

The Secretary reported that he had now received a response from the Sports & Leisure Operations Manager regarding the proposed 3G football pitch at Laurel Park. The response confirmed that the proposal included the installation of floodlights and that the lower field had been earmarked for the 3G build. It was claimed that no agreement had been reached on where to locate the additional parking provision, although it was admitted that the field to the west of the pavilion had been considered.

Residents of Instow Road, Sibson and Marefield would be particularly concerned that the proposal envisaged a substantial increase in the use of the lower field, which would lead to traffic congestion on a frequent rather than an occasional basis. The light and noise intrusion from the floodlights and Tannoys could well cause a problem for those living nearby.

The Secretary emphasised that given there would be substantial support for this proposal as well as objections, MERA should adopt a position of relative impartiality at this stage, but ensure that residents were made aware of the consultation period so that they could convey their views.

It was agreed that the Secretary would prepare a draft press release for agreement at the next meeting, and that this would be circulated to committee members well in advance to ensure that if the consultation commenced in the meantime, the press release could be released without delay.

Rosemary Cook requested a copy of the email received from the Sports and Development Team as the Town Council had yet to receive a response regarding their requests for information.

**NEW ITEMS**

*(There were no new items).*

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Earley Orchard Working Party**

The Committee was advised that the next meeting of the Earley Orchard Working Party would be held at 10am on Saturday 13 November. The Secretary reported that the minutes of the Working Party’s AGM on 24 October 2021 had now been received and would be circulated with the minutes.

**Tree register**

Tim Marsh raised his concerns regarding the number of trees disappearing from gardens, particularly when new owners took over properties. His view was that tree protection was important and the register would provide a useful record. He noted that one owner of a property with a very large garden had cut down all his trees apart from one that had a Tree Preservation Order attached to it following a request by a local resident.

**Next meeting**

The Chairman announced that the next meeting would be MERA’s traditional festive meeting and that he would be providing liquid refreshments. Siyu Smith kindly offered to provide nibbles for the meeting.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

9 December 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.10pm.