**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 13 January 2022 at Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Jonathan Brown (Editor) | Patricia Brown (Editorial Team) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| John Saunders (Area 13) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Tim Marsh (ACER) | Cllr Taher Mayer (ETC) |

**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) | Siyu Smith (Area 2) |
| Tim Smith (Area 2) | Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |

**MINUTES**

The Secretary reported that Barbara Stansfield had requested that the minutes of the last meeting be amended to state that the service she had received from ASAP Locksmiths on Silverdale Road had been excellent. The Secretary stated that he was in agreement with the request, and the minutes had been altered accordingly.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Water leakage at a Lakeside property**

The Chairman advised the Committee that a response from Cllr Norman Jorgensen was still awaited. The Secretary stated that the Christmas and New Year period may have contributed to the delay, but he would chase this before the next meeting if no further information was submitted in the meantime.

**Bus service improvement plan**

The Secretary advised that a further consultation on bus services was being carried out by Wokingham Borough Council. This related to bus services proposed to serve new developments in the Wokingham area.

It was agreed that MERA should again highlight that the Hatchmill Estate still remained unserved, and that the proposed new service for North Wokingham could be extended to Hatchmill and then on to Lower Earley Way, Gypsy Lane, Silverdale Road, the Royal Berkshire Hospital and Reading. This would not only ensure that a housing estate was served by public transport for the first time, but it would also provide a connection with the hospital and Reading for new residents in North Wokingham. Maiden Erlegh could benefit from being part of the journey into Reading and this could supplement services 19a/c to provide a more frequent service for residents on that section of route.

**AGREED: That the Secretary respond accordingly to Wokingham Borough Council as part of the consultation.**

**Local Plan Update**

The Chairman reported that the Secretary had responded to the Borough Council to provide MERA’s views on the Local Plan Update as discussed previously.

**Overflowing bins**

The Secretary reported that the complaint he submitted to the council in relation to overflowing bins at The Parade and in Kenton Road was being considered by the street cleansing specialist and contract manager, and he hoped to be able to report back on this at the February meeting.

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

The Secretary reported that the press release issued following the last meeting was not reproduced by the local press. However, he had been in touch with the residents of Marefield and Sibson, who were galvanising support to oppose the plans for the 3G football pitch to be located at Laurel Park.

The Committee were informed that there was now a discussion on the Earley Residents Discussion Forum of Facebook, and this had succeeded in bringing the proposals to the attention of the public. It was also reported that the Chairman and Secretary had attended a virtual meeting of the Amenities & Leisure Committee on 12 January to make the main points of objection known to the Town Council. The issue of the untidy hedge at Lakeside was also raised at that meeting.

The Secretary stated that he had received an email from a resident of a Lower Earley resident who lived close to Laurel Park, who had concerns that bats would be disturbed by the floodlights when using their flight path across the lower field at night. This would be raised as one of MERA’s objections in relation to the impact on the nature reserve.

The Secretary also pointed out that Cllr Pauline Jorgensen had stated that she did not expect any planning proposals to be submitted before 2023. That being the case, the Secretary proposed to prepare MERA’s formal objection over the coming weeks and to put this formally to the AGM in May for endorsement by MERA’s members. This would go some way to ensuring that those residents of Maiden Erlegh likely to be impacted by the proposals would have their say.

It was noted that the Borough Council had sent out a consultation letter to 100 residents living closest to Laurel Park, but it did not appear that these letters had been distributed to Maiden Erlegh residents, despite the fact that they would also be impacted, although to a lesser extent. The Secretary stated that he would seek to obtain a copy of that letter and he would circulate it to committee members when it was received.

A discussion ensued in respect of the likely effectiveness of a having a fence around the field to reduce the sound travelling outside of the intended area; the impact on the nature reserve and the desirability of an impact assessment by English Nature in assessing matters such as the heavier footfall that could be expected around the reserve; and the positioning of the floodlighting to minimise visual intrusion to residents. It was suggested that Jean Hackett be approached to secure the involvement also of the Earley Environmental Group.

**AGREED: That:**

1. **The Secretary prepare the letter of objection to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council at the appropriate time, for comments by the Executive Committee and then to put before the AGM for final agreement;**
2. **Should a planning proposal be put forward in the meantime, the Secretary be authorised to agree with the Chairman an appropriate response in line with the views expressed by this Committee;**
3. **The Secretary contact Jean Hackett with a view to involving the Earley Environmental Group in the proposed MERA response.**

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that a ‘thank you card’ had been received from the owners of the missing bicycle that had been recovered for them. It was also stated that no reply (other than an acknowledgement) had yet been received to the proposal to plant trees on grass verges in Lakeside.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer was unable to attend the meeting, but submitted a written report to confirm that the main account was in credit by £2,260.00 and that the annual payment to NORA was made the previous week.

**Editorial Report**

The Editor reported that the copy date for the next MERA Magazine would be 20 February 2022.

**CONSULTATIONS**

The Committee was advised of the current consultations that were currently taking place:

Local Plan Update – closing date 24 January 2022.

Schools admissions – closing date 17 January 2022.

Thames Valley Police budget – closing date 18 January 2022.

Wokingham Town Centre regeneration – closing date 17 January 2022.

There was also a consultation taking place on the climate emergency, and the Borough Council was inviting peer groups to contribute to the discussion. It was

**AGREED: That Colin Mair be nominated to attend the peer group discussions to represent MERA.**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The Secretary reported that he had just received the NORA newsletter, which contained information relating to parking on pavements, as had been discussed by the Committee previously on a number of occasions. This would be circulated with the minutes.

**NEW ITEMS**

**AGM**

The Secretary announced that he was commencing preparations for the next AGM, which was to be held at St Nicolas Church on 12 May 2022. The change of venue was necessary owing to the anticipated increase in the number of members expected due to the likely interest that would be generated by the guest speaker, Robert Williams, CEO of Reading Buses.

The Committee was informed that as well as the paper he would draft on MERA’s proposed objections to the 3G football pitch at Laurel Park (assuming that the planning proposal had not been received before then), any change in the rules (Constitution) proposed should be raised in good time so that this could be first debated at the Executive Committee before a paper was drafted for the AGM.

The Secretary reported that an auditor had yet to be found to prepare a statement of accounts, but he intended to discover whether anyone contributing to the Earley Residents’ Discussion Group on Facebook had any recommendations. If that failed, it was likely that we would have to pay for the service. It was suggested at the meeting that Wokingham Borough Council might offer an auditing service for small organisations, but the Secretary advised that he had already written to the Borough Council and had received no response. However, he would try again to establish the position.

Members were asked to let the Secretary know as soon as possible if they wished to cease carrying out their roles so that a search could commence for a replacement.

The Secretary stated that he would draft an article for the next edition of the MERA Magazine to ensure that the membership was aware of the date of the AGM and its revised location for this year.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Membership: The Crescent**

John Saunders advised that he had 10 houses left to canvass in The Crescent. He had suspended canvassing due to the omicron restrictions, but he would resume canvassing shortly. He promised to forward the GDPR forms to the Secretary when the task was completed.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

10 February 2022.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.35pm.