**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 8 February 2024 at the Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1)  |
| Steve Feltham (Secretary) | John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) |
| Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) | Patricia Brown (Editorial Team) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Patsy Collis (Area 8) | Chris Haines (Area 12) |
| Celia Smith (Area 6) | Cllr Stephen Newton (Wokingham BC) |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| Bob Collins (Area 14) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Siyu Smith (Area 2) |
| Tim Smith (Area 2) | Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |
| Tim Marsh (ACER) | Cllr Norman Jorgensen (Wokingham BC) |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2024 were signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Roundabout sponsorships**

The Treasurer reported that he now had three sources at Wokingham Borough Council. Shawn Lynch, an officer with the Highways Department, had responded that he was not able to provide a planting licence due to safety concerns regarding volunteers working next to live traffic, and the electricity supply to the roundabout would constitute a possible danger. This was a disappointing response, given that he had previously suggested that a method statement, a traffic management plan and accredited certifications were required before work could commence.

The Treasurer had made clear to another of his sources the determination of the volunteers, and a site meeting with a specialist and his manager would arranged shortly. He advised that he would report back on this meeting in due course.

An insurance quote of £1,220 had been received to date, which was clearly not acceptable.

The sponsors for the project remained on board and a consultation with Earley Town Council declined any involvement.

Cllr Newton commented that he would follow up his initial discussion with Cllr Fishwick, who was supportive of the proposed project. Cllr Newton advised that he would explore whether the council’s own insurance policy could be applied to cover the volunteers working at the roundabout. He made the point that a footpath ran around the entire length of the roundabout, and therefore there was no real traffic risk to the volunteers. John Saunders also suggested that plastic tape could be put in place to ensure awareness of the danger of traffic while the volunteers were working.

**Geese**

The Chairman expressed his disappointment that the Secretary had not received a response from the British Trust for Ornithology or the RSPB. However, the Secretary had now written and circulated an article for the next MERA Magazine based on existing knowledge.

Judy Clark stated that it was revealed at the Earley Environmental Group AGM that geese preferred shortly cropped grass, and therefore they could be discouraged from entering a lawned area if the property owner allowed their grass to grow longer. The Secretary agreed to add this advice for residents in the article.

A discussion ensued regarding the means by which the Town Council should be alerted to concerns raised by residents, and it was

**AGREED: That the Secretary prepare a document that could be signed by those residents who wished to have action taken to deal with the problems arising from the proliferation of geese nesting in the Nature Reserve.**

**Earley Town Plan**

The Chairman stated that the Secretary had drafted an article on MERA’s proposed amendments to the Town Plan for the next edition of the MERA Magazine. The Secretary agreed to provide Cllr Newton with a copy of MERA’s proposed amendments.

**Local Transport Plan**

The Secretary reported that the original views expressed by the Committee in relation to the Local Transport Plan had been submitted when the first consultation was carried out, and most of the points of concern had been addressed, although there were no explicit proposals relating to the financial viability of the Little Oranges 19a/c bus services. Nevertheless, the Borough Community Transport Manager was well aware of MERA’s proposals and further correspondence would take place towards the end of the current three-year contract.

The welcome news was that there were proposals to increase frequencies on other nearby services, including the Lion 4/X4, the Claret 21 and Leopard 3 services, on a future date within the lifespan of the Plan.

It was agreed that it should now be left to residents to have their say on the consultation.

**MERA AGM**

The Secretary referred to the Action List relating to the next AGM and requested that if any Executive Committee member wished to stand down at the next election of officers, they contact the Secretary as soon as possible so that measures could be taken for a replacement to be nominated for election at the AGM.

It was reported that Grahame Hawker would be on holiday on the date of the May AGM and although he would not be able to attend personally, he offered to be present via Zoom. After discussion, it was decided that to avoid technical problems on the day, it would be better to postpone this presentation until the 2025 AGM if Grahame Hawker was happy to agree to this.

The Secretary suggested that Sam Milligan, the Development Director of the charity JAC Outreach, could be contacted to give a presentation about his charity, the animals tended by the organisation and beekeeping, which he covered recently in a presentation he gave in Woodley. It was agreed that this possibility be pursued.

**Parking too close to junctions**

The Secretary circulated his report on the problem of motorists parking too close to junctions and thereby causing a risk to other motorists. The report was agreed and the Secretary was asked to forward the proposals to Wokingham Borough Council. Cllr Newton requested that any concerns relating to parking also be referred to him. It was agreed that the parking issues of concern to Judy Clark be drawn to Cllr Newton’s attention by way of an email to his Borough Council email address.

**Cigarette butts at The Parade**

Following the complaint raised at previous meeting, the Chairman advised that he had spoken to the owner of the shop responsible for the problem, and the matter had been resolved with the agreement that the bins would be used for this purpose in future.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that the NAG Chair was requesting volunteers to participate in the Speedwatch Scheme and that during the week commencing 19 February, he would be hosting a Q&A session. A poster was circulated with the agenda and the MERA Secretary would be issuing a press release to publicise this.

The Chairman gave a report on the issues discussed at the January NAG meeting. It was reported that the university would be organising another Community Festival on Saturday 18 May, and that local organisations would be invited to be represented at the event.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that he had opened a 35 day deposit account with the bank as agreed at the last meeting, but that the 95 day account had proved to be more of a challenge. An application form for this was required and had been completed, but the bank stated that this was ‘being reviewed’. The bank claimed that the difference between the process compared with the 35 day account was that it was new and required a different approach.

Accordingly, the Treasurer had transferred £1,000 into the 35 day account from the existing deposit account and he was holding the £1,000 for the 95 day account in the current account as a decision on whether it could go ahead was not due until 12 February.

The total balances were now £2,502.36 (current account) £5.83 (deposit account) including £2.47 interest for January and £1,000.18 (35 day notice deposit account) including 18p interest for January.

**AGREED: That should the application for the new 95 day notice deposit account be unsuccessful, the Treasurer be authorised to transfer £1,000 from the current account into the 35 day deposit account.**

**Editorial Report**

The copy date for articles in respect of the next magazine was 20 February 2024.

The Chairman reported that the MERA Magazine Sub Committee had met on 22 January to discuss ACER’s views on the magazine and to agree any further changes that may be necessary. The ACER Chairman reported that the magazine had been very well received by his members. The Action List from the meeting had been circulated.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Chairman advised of the following ongoing Borough Council consultations and petitions:

**Local Transport Plan** – closing date 23 February 2024.

**Updating of housing strategies** – closing date 18 February 2024.

**Petitions**

The Chairman advised that a new petition had been submitted in relation to the safety of pedestrians crossing the roads at the Just Tiles roundabout in Woodley. The petition was available to be signed until 18 April 2024.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Speeding**

The Secretary advised that a further letter had been received from a resident of Meadow Road regarding the speeding issue that had been raised by residents. The Secretary had responded to advise him of MERA’s view on the issue and recommended again that residents participate in the Speedwatch scheme. Cllr Newton stated that he had requested speed checks to be carried out on Mill Lane and Meadow Road.

**NEW ITEMS**

*(None)*

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**3G pitches in Earley**

The Secretary advised the Committee that a report on potential sites for sports pitches had been received by the Borough Council, but the local authority had decided to delay further consideration of their recommendations pending the Local Plan Update, the publication date for which was unknown.

It was noted that the Football Foundation was pushing for new all-weather pitches because many of the existing pitches were subject to flooding and that 40% of matches were currently being abandoned due to waterlogged fields.

Cllr Newton clarified the position on the delay to the publication of the Local Plan, which he stated was due to the need for agreement from the government on the request to take account of the housing overbuild in Wokingham in the new housing targets, which unfortunately had not been forthcoming.

**ANPR cameras at Loddon Primary School, Silverdale Road**

It was reported that the ANPR enforcement cameras outside Loddon Primary School and also at The Holt in Wokingham had so far resulted in 250 fines. A breakdown of these figures by individual location had not been provided.

**E-scooters**

It was reported that Thames Valley Police had announced a clampdown on the unlawful use of e-scooters. Cllr Newton asked that any e-scooter hot spots be reported to him.

**Prospective candidates for General Election**

The Secretary advised that the candidates from the three main political parties representing the Earley/Woodley at the next General Election would be Pauline Jorgensen (Conservative), Tahir Maher (Liberal Democrat) and Yuan Yang (Labour).

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**19a/b/c bus timetable changes**

It was reported that Reading Buses had announced timetable changes for the Little Oranges bus services from 19 February. It was explained that most of the changes were minor adjustments to timings but that an additional journey had been added to the Silverdale Road 19c service from Woodley (departing at 8.40am opposite Silverdale Road Shops).

**Refuse collections**

The Secretary stated that the council would be distributing the last batch of blue sacks to residents from the following week. Only 20 bags would be delivered between then and 22 March as the wheelie bin system would come into operation from late May. Cllr Newton stated that any properties not suitable to store wheelie bins should be highlighted for action by himself, Cllr Jorgensen or Cllr Mike Smith.

**Presentations of “The Foxtrot’s Easy” novel**

Anne Booth advised the Committee of a forthcoming visit by the author of “The Foxtrot’s Easy”, a novel which told the story of her husband’s time spent at Maiden Erlegh School for Boys in the 1930s.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

14 March 2024 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

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