**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 9 August 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) |
| Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | James Barr (Area 13) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Rosemary Cook (Area 11) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Siyu Smith (Area 2) |
| Peter Soul (EASI) | Cllr Guy Grandison (Wokingham BC) |

**Apologies received**

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| Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) | Jean Beck (Area 12) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| Brian Hackett | Ray Jones |
| Mary Bather (ACER) |  |

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 12 JULY 2018**

Peter Soul observed that his name appeared in the list of those attending the last meeting, but he had not been present. The Secretary agreed that his name should have appeared under the Apologies for Absence table and he stated that the minutes would be corrected.

Apart from this amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Silverdale Road bus service consultation**

The Secretary advised the meeting that the new timetable for the reintroduced service 19b was not yet available, but it was expected that it would provide an hourly service throughout the day. It was not yet known whether additional buses would be available during either the morning or evening rush hours.

It was observed that although Reading Buses had already advised stakeholders that the 22 service would be withdrawn from the Lower Earley to Reading route in favour of the 19b, Caversham residents were still protesting about the reduction in their level of service, which might well include the withdrawal of their direct connection to the hospital. Accordingly, it was possible that Reading Buses might re-think their proposed truncation of the 22 route, which could mean that the 19b service might not launch after all.

It was noted that there were only just over three more weeks until the new timetables were due to be operational.

**Graffiti**

The meeting was advised that Peter Baveystock had indicated that MERA might be well advised to contact Virgin Media regarding the graffiti on their telecommunications box situated next to the Lakeside/Beech Lane cycleway. The Secretary asked members if there were any other telecommunications boxes in the area that required attention. Cllr Grandison requested that he be copied into any correspondence with Virgin Media on this matter.

**Consultation**

The Committee was informed that there were three consultations currently being carried out which members might find of interest.

1. **Grass cutting**. The Secretary stated that Wokingham Borough Council was requesting views from residents, community groups and local authorities about the frequency and timeliness of grass cutting, the quality of the work, disposal of grass cuttings, impact of wild flower areas, information on the council’s website, complaints handling or any other issues in connection with grass cutting. There appeared not to be a closing date, but witness sessions would be held during the autumn, and therefore early responses were advised.
It was agreed that the Secretary would write to the council on behalf of MERA to reflect the widely held views of the areas of dissatisfaction with the current service. The Committee drew attention to the weeds that were allowed to grow between the road and kerb and the long grass had the Highfields playground. Members were asked to submit any other specific matters they wished to have raised to the Secretary by 14 August.
2. **Minerals and Waste Plan.** Further public meeting dates and venues had been announced in addition to those presented to the previous meeting:
4 September from 4-8pm at St Peter’s Church, 4 Bath Road, Knowl Hill
10 September from 4.30pm to 8pm at Three Mile Cross Church Centre, Mitford Close
19 September from 4-8pm at Arborfield Green Community Centre, Sheerlands Road.
3. **Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.** The Fire Authority was inviting public comments on its draft Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan. These contained the Authority’s key commitments to the public and explained the way it intended to deliver services over the next four years. There was also a proposal to provide the Authority with flexibility to increase the annual tax charge by £5 per annum to maintain vital emergency services. Comments were requested by 5pm on 28 September.

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

The Secretary advised that Matt Gould, Lead Specialist for Highways and Transport, was dealing with MERA’s proposals to address safety issues on Silverdale Road, which included the entrance and exit points at Tesco. Mr Gould was currently on holiday, but following his return on 15 August, the Secretary stated that he would contact him to establish progress.

The committee was also advised that a new pelican crossing was being constructed near Loddon Primary School to replace the school crossing patrol service. The Secretary stated that although the end of the school crossing patrol service was disappointing for some residents, it was difficult to recruit them, and continuity of service could not be guaranteed to ensure safety at the school, whereas a pelican crossing would be available at all times.

Rosemary Cook was concerned that a crossing would also be useful at Beech Lane for school children of Radstock School, particularly in the mornings.

**Maiden Erlegh library**

The Secretary advised that as only one item for each community group was permitted by the new Chairman of the Community and Youth Sub Committee of Earley Town Council at its meeting on 18 July, he had chosen to highlight problems with vandalism at The Orchard, as it now seemed clear that Maiden Erlegh Library would not be replaced, given the numbers using it as their sole library.

It was observed that a ‘pop up library’ was available in Arborfield and a question was raised as to whether something similar could be established in Maiden Erlegh. Cllr Grandison stated that the problem with establishing such a facility in Maiden Erlegh was the lack of any suitable location. After some discussion, it was suggested that St Nicholas Church might be a suitable venue. It was agreed that this possibility should be investigated.

**New data protection legislation**

The Secretary requested that any outstanding forms be returned to him when they were received, having first ensured that the information provided matched their records. He reminded members that all new members would also need to complete the form, and the Secretary would make available to all members an introductory letter to accompany the form.

**Retirement of Town Clerk**

The Chairman advised the committee that Philip Truppin’s retirement card and cheque had been lodged with Earley Town Council’s main reception and the Deputy Town Clerk had acknowledged receipt of it.

**Lakeside subsidence**

Peter Soul confirmed that he had not received any update on the subsidence issue at Lakeside. The Secretary advised that he had only been informed that an inspector would look at it, but to date no indication of the findings had been received. The committee was advised that the council’s inspector would be chased if an update was not received within the next few weeks.

**Involvement of councillors on MERA Executive Committee**

The Chairman reiterated the purpose of inviting elected representatives to MERA Executive Committee meetings and welcomed Cllr Guy Grandison to the meeting. He stated that normally, only one of the six representatives would be present, which appeared to be a sensible arrangement.

**Tesco**

The Secretary advised that the installation of wooden posts on the grass verge opposite the Tesco exit at the request of MERA may have had unintended consequences, as there had been an increase in the number of vehicles driving down Sevenoaks Road, in breach of the planning consent issued in January 2017. It was agreed that Tesco would be approached before any complaint would be made to the council.

The committee noted the letter MERA had sent to the Maiden Erlegh School Executive Headteacher in response to her letter to MERA dated 25 June 2018.

**Street lamps and wi-fi**

The Secretary advised that the officer at Wokingham Borough Council dealing with the wi-fi issue had requested the addresses of the homes affected by interference on their burglar alarms from the frequency used by the street lamps. The burglar alarm company had been asked to provide these addresses to the council as the adjustments would be made area by area according to the interference reported.

**The Orchard**

The Committee was advised that Jonathan Brown had written a letter to the Town Clerk and councillors regarding vandalism at The Orchard. The Secretary stated that he had raised the issue at Earley Town Council’s Community and Youth Sub Committee on 13 July and that Jim Willis supported the need for action to be taken. The police were alerted to the problem and would step up patrols in the area as well as look at what other measures could be taken to secure The Orchard.

Jonathan Brown stated that he and other members of The Orchard group met with Deana Humphries, the Community Engagement Lead for Wokingham Borough Council following the letter he had sent to Earley Town Council, which had been copied to the Borough Chief Executive and councillors. The group learned that the police would be unlikely to take any action without a crime number, which was obtained when an incident was reported on the 101 telephone line. It was stated that Deana Humphries would liaise with Peter Baveystock with a view to improving the situation, including the reduction in the height of the hedge between The Orchard and the residential estate opposite. Rosemary Cook was concerned that improved lighting in the area would also help to deter vandalism and would be safer for schoolchildren walking to and from school during the winter.

The Secretary advised that the vandalism which had taken place at The Orchard should be reported on the 101 number, and all subsequent damage should be reported similarly. The frequency of these reports might ensure that the police looked at the matter more seriously.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The Treasurer reported that the payment for the printing of the Data Protection letters and privacy notices had been taken from the reserves. There was also a discussion about the cost of printing colour advertisements in the MERA Magazine.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**NORA**

The Secretary stated that notification from NORA had been received that the revised National Planning Policy Framework had been published and was accessible on the NORA website. There was also a consultation paper on the Review of the Planning Appeal system and a proposal to impose VAT on rents charged to market traders.

In a further notification, NORA drew attention to the following bills being presented to Parliament soon:

* **Planning (Agent of Change) Bill.** This required specified planning controls in relation to developments likely to be affected by existing noise sources.
* **Green Belt (Protection) Bill.** A national register of green belt land in England would be established, the ability of local authorities to de-designate green belt land would be restricted, and provision about future development of de-designated green belt land would be made.
* **Clean Air Bill.** This would require the Secretary of State to set, measure, enforce and report on air quality targets; make provision about mitigating air pollution, including through the use of clean air zones; to make provision about vehicle emissions testing; and to restrict the approval and sale of vehicles with certain engine types.
* **Expert Advisory Panel on High Streets.** This panel had been set up to advise on the future of the high street, diagnosing issues that affect the health of high streets and advising on the best practical measures to help them thrive. There would be a call for evidence later in the summer, asking what consumers and local communities wanted from their high streets. The Secretary suggested that members may wish to start thinking about this and talking to residents about it so that a debate could take place when the consultation begins.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Travellers**

The Secretary confirmed that MERA alerted the authorities to the lack of security at the field opposite the Pavilion at Laurel Park some weeks ago, and as feared, the travellers invaded the field on 19 July. He stated that Wokingham Borough Council wasted no time in issuing a notice requiring that the travellers leave the field within 24 hours, but when that failed, they applied for a Court Order on the next working day, and the travellers moved on voluntarily the following Friday, when the Court Order was obtained.

MERA had issued a press release regarding its concerns for the security of the field and the Reading Chronicle published a large article about the problem. Peter Baveystock’s team had now put in place concrete blocks to deter future incursions, but the Committee would continue to look for a longer term solution to this problem, including the reinstatement of the hedgerow if the field was not to be used as a car park in the future.

Rosemary Cook repeated her view that she did not want to see the field converted into a car park, but rather that it should be used as a picnic area that families could use and observe their children playing in the adjacent playground. The Secretary reminded the Committee that MERA’s current policy was to continue to oppose the suggestion that the field was used as a car park until such time as a public consultation was carried out. If the majority of those responding agreed with that proposal, MERA would attempt to convince the local authority to apply netting on the field to protect it from the damage that would otherwise be caused by vehicles.

The Secretary went on to observe that there had been a number of other sites in the Earley area that had seen travellers force their way onto public amenity areas and that one thing that could be done was to press for a change in the law. It was noted that Cllr Pauline Jorgensen planned to speak to John Redwood MP on this very suggestion, and it was proposed that MERA should support her initiative. Additionally, the Secretary would write to NORA in an attempt to gain their support.

**AGREED:** That the Secretary be authorised:

1. To write to Cllr Pauline Jorgensen in support of her decision to urge John Redwood to press for a change in the law relating to gypsies and travellers who trespass onto land with the aim of enabling their eviction from the land more expeditiously; and
2. To request that NORA agree to embark on a campaign for a change in the law

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Redhatch Drive**

The Secretary announced that MERA’s request to resurface the section of Redhatch Drive that had been damaged by construction vehicles had been agreed by the council and work was due to commence within the next few weeks. Parking problems towards the top of Redhatch Drive near to the junction with Elm Lane was also discussed and noted.

**Retiring Area Representatives**

The Chairman stated that he and the Secretary presented flowers and a card to Shelagh Quick and Vera Box to thank them for their past services to MERA.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.21pm.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 13 September 2018 at 8pm.