**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents’ Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 9 March 2023 at the Earley Day Centre, Kenton Road, Earley**

**Present**

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| Colin Mair (Chairman/Area 3) | Peter Woodward (Vice Chairman/Area 1) |
| John Saunders (Area 13/Treasurer) | Steve Feltham (Secretary) |
| Chris Haines (Area 12) | Pamela Roberts (Area 10) |
| Tim Smith (Area 2) |  |

**Also present**

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| Stephen Newton |  |

**In the Chair: Colin Mair**

**Apologies received**

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| Jonathan Brown (Magazine Editor) | Patricia Brown (Editorial Team) |
| Anne Booth (Area 9) | Judy Clark (Area 5) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Siyu Smith (Area 2) | Elaine Spratling (Area 4) |
| Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) | Tim Marsh (ACER) |
| Cllr Tahir Maher (Wokingham BC) |  |

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 were signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Protective stones on grass verges**

The Chairman reported that following Cllr Fishwick’s clarification that residents no longer had the council’s permission to place stones on their grass verges, the Secretary had requested that the councillor ensured that those previously allowed to do so be advised that this agreement was no longer in place. A response to this request was awaited.

The Committee was also advised that Tim Marsh had notified the Secretary that the Chief Executive of the council had advised him that only the delegated Highway Authority was authorised to place objects on the grass verges and that existing permit holders had not had their permits revoked. However, the Secretary remained concerned that these residents may be exposed to legal claims from motorists who damaged their cars on the stones. Accordingly, clarification from the councillor would be helpful.

**Tesco cycle racks**

The Chairman advised that following the lack of response by Tesco regarding the dilapidated condition of the cycle rack, he had contacted the council about the breach of the planning consent. The Committee was informed that Planning Enforcement had now responded that it was unable to take the matter forward as it considered the issue to be a civil matter.

The Secretary stated that he would report further to the next meeting.

**Parking problem at Silverdale Road residence**

The Committee was updated on the current position, and concern was expressed regarding developments at the premises. The consensus was that the matter should be raised with the Borough Council.

**Preparations for AGM**

The Secretary reported that the agenda papers for the AGM were almost completed, with only the audit of accounts and the Treasurer’s Report remaining to be finalised. This was in line with the timetable to ensure that all actions in preparation for the AGM in May were completed on time. The up to date Action List was circulated for information.

It was confirmed that all the necessary actions were being taken to audit the accounts, and Siyu Smith had kindly offered to undertake this task on this occasion.

It was proposed that there would be no increase to the annual subscription fee put forward to the AGM, subject to the views of the Treasurer, who confirmed at the meeting that he had no objection to this proposal.

To date, only one member of the Executive Committee had announced that they would be standing down, and the Secretary advised that since the last meeting, he had identified a resident who wished to volunteer to put her name forward. The Chairman and Secretary would meet with her within the next few weeks and invite her to attend the next meeting of the Executive Committee to be introduced to members prior to the election at the AGM.

The Secretary stated that the printers of the MERA Magazine had provided costings in relation to the proposals to increase the number of magazines produced and to add four pages to the magazine. Unfortunately, the cost of adding to the number of pages as envisaged would be prohibitively expensive as the printers would need to use a new plate for this purpose and therefore the Secretary proposed to leave the number of pages unchanged. The costings were now incorporated in the revised report on this rule change, and this had been circulated to members.

The speaker was confirmed as PC Turnham, who would provide a presentation on Speedwatch. The speaker had been requested to advise the Secretary on his requirements for any visual aids. The Church Hall at St Nicolas was now booked and confirmation had been received. It was confirmed that the Chairman would bring some wine and fruit juices to the meeting. Tim Smith confirmed that he and Siyu would provide the nibbles, disposable plates and cutlery, and the Secretary expressed his gratitude to them for volunteering to do this.

Any further matters relating to the AGM would be finalised at the April meeting.

**Proposed changes in The Parade**

The Secretary circulated the council’s final proposals regarding the Parade and Silverdale Road following consultation. He stated that most of MERA’s points had been taken into account, but that further measures to improve safety for school children proposed by MERA would be considered separately. Additionally, there had still not been a satisfactory conclusion regarding the bus stop shelter opposite the shops. The Secretary stated that although an initial response received from the Deputy Town Clerk did not bode well, he still hoped to bring about an agreement on the matter over the next few weeks. A further report would be made to the next meeting.

**King’s Coronation celebrations**

The Chairman advised that residents who wished to organise a street party to celebrate the King’s Coronation would need to start planning now, particularly as any road closures needed to be requested from the council by no later than 16 April. The council had now confirmed that such arrangements would be free of charge on the three designated days only. Members were reminded that the weather in early May might not be clement and gazebos may need to be arranged.

**Bus Service Improvement Plan**

The Secretary stated that the Borough Council had now formally agreed to extend existing bus contracts until this autumn. In the meantime, tender bids would be invited to run the Borough’s subsidised services for three years from September 2023. The Committee was also advised that the Editor had questioned why the Lead Member was concerned with the number of buses that would be needed to run the proposed Wokingham/Toutley/Reading service that MERA had proposed. The Secretary advised that this was likely to be the information provided to him by Reading Buses.

The Secretary thought that it might be possible to resolve the number of buses required if MERA’s proposal was implemented, particularly given that the 19a/c service would no longer be required along Silverdale Road, which would save one bus. Other existing services including the 122 Thames Valley service would provide a second vehicle. Over the next few years, it was hoped that MERA could produce a proposal that would overcome this problem.

**REPORTS**

**Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman reported that he would attend the NAG meeting on 13 March, and he confirmed that he had added an item for discussion on the problem of motorists who parked too close to road junctions. He stated that subject to the comments received about this at NAG, he would ask the Secretary to contact NORA to establish whether there is national support to increase the distance vehicles can park in front of a junction from the existing 10 metres to 20 metres.

Other items on the NAG agenda included parking issues at Laurel Park, street lighting, Neighbourhood Watch local schemes, the University of Reading Community update and the Woodley and Earley Lions Firework event. These discussions would be reported to the next meeting.

Members were advised that the MERA Chairman would be attending the Annual Town Electors’ meeting to be held at 7pm on 21 March and to give a short presentation on the work MERA carried out in the area.

The Chairman stated that he was still awaiting a response from the Borough Council on his request to plant trees on grass verges.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer reported that the year end accounts had been prepared and were ready for inspection by the Auditor. The bank balances stood at £2275.90 for the current account and £838.96 for the deposit account. The interest accrued was 58p and was included in the bank balances provided.

**Editorial Report**

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Editor had sent the magazine for printing. The publication date would be about 20 March.

Area Representatives were asked to circulate the magazines to their members as soon as possible to ensure that members had notice of the AGM in good time.

**CONSULTATIONS & PETITIONS**

The Chairman advised of the following ongoing consultations and petitions:

**Local Transport Plan for Wokingham Borough** – As reported previously, the Council was carrying out a survey as part of their updating of the Local Transport Plan, which would guide future work on improvements to footways, cycle lanes, roads and other transport networks. Closing date – 12 March 2023.

**Local Government Boundary Commission** – The Commission was consulting on its latest recommendations for new Ward boundaries across Wokingham. Closing date: 10 April 2023.

**Keeping our community safe –** It was reported that the Council was conducting a survey on keeping our community safe. Residents had been asked to communicate the needs and concerns they had so that the authority could take the necessary action. There was no closing date listed on the website.

**Petitions**

One new petition had appeared on the Borough Council’s website. This related to the need for continued support to Home Start, which provided support to families including those having to contend with mental health problems and for families with SEN children. 8 people had signed the petition to date.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**MERA’s stance on speeding vehicles**

The Chairman introduced Steve Newton, prospective Borough councillor for Maiden Erlegh, to replace Cllr Tahir Maher, who had decided to retire at the next election.

Stephen Newton had written to MERA to highlight a matter that had been referred to him relating to the desire of some residents to impose a 20mph limit and other traffic management measures when speed humps were no longer installed anywhere. He wished to obtain MERA’s views before taking the matter further. The Chairman pointed out that Mill Lane was outside MERA’s present catchment area and so the Association did not have a firm view on this at present because there had been no consultation with its members.

Stephen Newton outlined his thoughts to the Committee. After some discussion, the consensus was that 20mph signs were unlikely to be obeyed by those motorists who were failing to keep to the 30mph limit, unless that limit was enforced. It was noted that the old analogue cameras appeared not to be working on grounds of cost. However, signs indicating to motorists their speed compared with the actual speed limit on the road were likely to slow down many speeding drivers. Volunteers carrying out their Speedwatch duties could be encouraged to monitor the speeds in Mill Lane and this could be effective in reminding drivers to be aware of their speed on this road.

Speed humps were not favoured due to potential damage to vehicles and the discomfort some people experienced with the jolt to the vehicle as it negotiated the speed hump. Chicanes were not universally favoured either, and in fact those installed in Arborfield were regarded as dangerous. A recent consultation on having similar chicanes in Shinfield had been widely rejected by local residents.

The Secretary stated that given Mill Lane was a wide road, any new signs imposing a 20mph limit were likely to be ignored unless rigorously enforced because it was such a slow speed. Frustrated motorists would be more inclined to overtake vehicles that were being driven at that speed, causing a bigger danger to pedestrians and other road users.

In conclusion Stephen Newton stated that the existing 20mph limits in Wokingham and Reading were unenforceable because they had not been introduced in line with statutory requirements. He stated that he would find out more about what lay behind the request for increased speed restrictions before considering his course of action. Cllr Newton thought the problem area was the short stretch of road between Gipsy Lane and Toseland Way.

The Chairman thanked Stephen Newton for contacting MERA and stated that he looked forward to working with him in the future.

**NEW ITEMS**

*(There were no new items).*

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Huge Earley Litter Pick**

The Chairman drew attention to the Huge Earley Litter Pick, which would be held on Sunday 26 March at 10am to 12.30pm and 2pm to 4.30pm. The meeting point for both sessions was the Interpretation Centre.

**Booking of Day Centre**

The Chairman stated that the Secretary had booked the Day Centre for the forthcoming year, starting on 8 June 2023. The April meeting had been booked already.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

13 April 2023 at Kenton Road Day Centre.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.50pm.