MERA Minutes – 8th February 2018

**Minutes of the Maiden Erlegh Residents Association Executive Committee held at 8pm on Thursday 8 February 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) |
| Constantina Ainsworth (Area 7) | Anne Booth (Area 9) |
| Rosemary Cook (Area 11) | Sheila Quick (Area 12) |
| Pamela Roberts (Area 10) | Barbara Stansfield (Area 8) |
| Peter Woodward (Area 1) | Brian Hackett |
| Peter Soul (EASI) | Mary Bather (ACER) |

**Apologies received**

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| Patricia Brown (Magazine/Editorial Team) | Liz Kerry (Magazine/Editorial Team) |
| Jean Beck (Area 12) | Vera Box (Area 12) |
| Judy Clark (Area 5) | Celia Smith (Area 6) |
| Siyu Smith (Area 2) | Tim Smith (Area 2) |
| Ray Jones |  |

**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2018**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**Silverdale Road bus service consultation**

The Secretary reported that he had written again to Reading Buses, this time to promote the Hatch Farm/Silverdale Road route directly to them in the hope that they would realise the benefits of starting such a route as outlined. Although a standard acknowledgement had been received, as with other communications MERA has had with the company, no considered reply had yet been forthcoming.

In the meantime, Wokingham Borough Council had approved a proposal relating to the tendering process to be carried out in the spring. This suggested an hourly service between Culver Lane, Chequers, Hurricane Way, Vauxhall Drive, Drovers Way, Silverdale Road, Royal Berkshire Hospital and Reading town centre. The 983 school bus service would be provided by a different vehicle, enabling morning and afternoon services to be restored. There would be no requirement to provide a link between Woodley and Earley as this was little used, but it could be regarded as the most effective routing of these services. However, this would not restore the connection with Church Road. The estimated cost would be between £100,000 to £150,000.

Although the council was promoting this decision as the result of consultation, this arrangement merely encouraged tender bids along the lines of the existing no 12 route but with rush hour and afternoon services restored. However, the public meeting in Woodley last year showed clearly that the public was of the view that the existing service was not fit for purpose, and that they wanted the 19a/c service restored. The secretary stated that restoration of that service would not necessarily be the best solution for Woodley but it would be better than simply bolstering the 12 service.

The Secretary went on to provide an account of Earley Town Council’s Planning Committee held on 6 February, at which Cllr Armstrong gave an impassioned response to the Borough Council’s decision. His view was that the council had given priority to the need to serve GP surgeries in Woodley while ignoring the need to connect Maiden Erlegh with the Chalfont surgery. This could have been achieved with the MERA proposal to divert the Silverdale Road service via Toseland Way, Kilnsea Drive, Rushey Way and Chalfont Way.

SF stated that he had spoken to Cllr Pauline Jorgensen about MERA’s proposals and whether some guidelines could be included in the tender documentation as examples of how the tender requirements could be met with less need for a subsidy. A copy of MERA’s proposals have been sent to the councillor, who advised that she would ensure that the Lead Member was provided with a copy.

The Executive Committee was of the view that Reading Buses was not listening to residents and disappointment was expressed that recent communications with them had not elicited any response. Concerns were also voiced over the likelihood that the new no 22 service to be introduced along Beech Lane from 19 February 2018 would be subject to unacceptable delays due to the new connection with Caversham Heights.

The Secretary expressed the view that there were two advantages that would emanate from the revised timetable. These were firstly that vehicles with more capacity would be used on this route, and secondly, the joining of the current 19 with the 22 service and the severing of the link to Whitley Wood was likely to increase revenue and reduce expenditure for Reading Buses, which may at least help to secure the long term prospects for this service. However, against this, too many delays on this hourly route due to congestion in the Caversham area could actually drive passengers away from this service within the Earley area.

**Potholes in Maiden Erlegh Drive**

The Secretary reported that he had received a response from Jonathon Peck, the Director of Finance and Operations for the Maiden Erlegh School Trust, who confirmed that new barriers to separate Maiden Erlegh Drive from the Maiden Erlegh School car park would be installed within the next few weeks.

He also confirmed that no meaningful progress had been made yet with Wokingham Borough Council. The legal advice he had received was that the council had a shared responsibility and he was pursuing that avenue with them. He added that a replacement dwelling at 26 Maiden Erlegh Drive was likely to hold up progress on this project as they would not wish to commence any resurfacing work while the building was in progress, due to the volume of heavy traffic that would be associated with this development.

**New website for MERA**

The Chairman referred to the draft specification for the construction of the proposed MERA website that had been circulated to officers and which was also available at the meeting. BH had suggested that a requirement be included to ensure that the site was compatible with mobile phones as well as desktops and laptop computers.

The specification and the proposed amendment were agreed.

**ACTION: The Secretary to liaise with Sam Chaher at Reading University with the objective of commencing this project in line with the specification requirements as soon as possible.**

**Asda parking restrictions**

The response of Asda to MERA’s concerns regarding the new parking restrictions within their car park had been received. The Secretary reported that their view was that three hours was adequate time for customers to spend in their store, including the café. They stated that there was no reason to believe that the cameras used would not recognise the number plates of all vehicles using the car park.

In answer to MERA’s specific question, Asda stated that if on a rare occasion, a customer believed they would spend more than three hours at the store, they should warn the customer service desk in advance.

**Graffiti**

Peter Soul confirmed that he had reported to the council the presence of graffiti between Lakeside and Beech Lane.

**The Orchard**

JB confirmed that pruning of the trees at The Orchard was undertaken on 16 January.

**Consultation**

The Secretary reported that there were five current consultations being carried out at present:

1. Bulmershe Leisure Centre – proposed new multi-million pound state of the art facility (Wokingham Borough Council: closing date 2 March).
2. Proposed removal of school crossing patrol services and replacement with safe permanent crossings where appropriate (Wokingham Borough Council: closing date 2 March).
3. Children in Care – 2 surveys (Wokingham Borough Council: closing date 18 February)
4. New homes residents’ survey for those occupying a new home within the borough (Wokingham Borough Council: closing date 9 February).
5. Heathrow expansion and airspace principles consultation (Heathrow: closing date 28 March).

It was agreed that this would be a standard item for future meetings. The public notice of the Heathrow Expansion item would be forwarded to officers with the minutes.

**Speaker for AGM**

The Chairman reported that Peter Baveystock had agreed to speak at the AGM on 10 May 2018. It was agreed that Emma Pilgrim should also be invited to attend if she was available.

**New taxi firm**

The Chairman reported that although Wokingham Borough Council had sent a notification that this application had been approved, it was now clarified that this was a mistake, and that the application had in fact been refused.

**MAGAZINE REPORT**

JB confirmed that the closing date for the receipt of articles for the MERA Magazine was 20 February 2018. Officers were advised that further articles for this edition would be welcome.

**NEW CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

**NORA**

The Chairman reported that the NORA AGM would be held at The Friend’s House, Euston Road, London on 1 March and there was a £20 charge for refreshments.

Should anyone wish to attend, they were advised to notify the Secretary.

**NEW ITEMS**

**Litter at rear of Silverdale Road shops**

The Secretary reported that he had received a complaint about the litter returning behind the Silverdale Road shops. He advised that he would be taking the matter up with the principal owners’ representative, although there were difficulties in gaining the interest of shop owners in respect of the maintenance of this area.

It was pointed out that much of the litter appeared to emanate from the school children, and in the light of this information, the Secretary agreed to investigate whether the school litter pickers could be requested to remove the litter from this area.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Community and Youth Sub Committee**

The Secretary reported that BH had raised on behalf of MERA the issues of car parking, graffiti, the new bus timetables and vandalism at Laurel Park Orchard at the meeting of the Community and Youth Sub Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2018. ACER had also raised similar concerns, together with small businesses being run from homes and creating parking problems, issues relating to Marks and Spencer Food Store parking on residential roads and grass cutting of verges.

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

Judy Clark had raised a problem regarding vehicles turning into Tesco across the pavement on Silverdale Road, which incidentally was similar to the problem at the exit as well. The Secretary stated that he had already flagged this problem with Cllr Chopping, who was speaking to council officers about this.

**Waste collection**

There was a brief discussion on waste collection and the problems of mixing blue bags with recycling containers by refuse collectors. The Secretary advised that from 2019, the waste collection services would include food waste recycling.

**Maiden Erlegh library**

RC advised the committee of the changed library opening hours at Maiden Erlegh School library. This was thought to be related to new safeguarding measures being introduced at the school.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.04pm.

**DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 8 March 2018 at 8pm.