

ERITH TOWN FORUM

Notes of the 87th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 3rd October 2012 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
Joan Armitage (Bexley Civic Society), DJ (Erith Riverside Residence Association), Fred Finck (Erith Yacht Club), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Terry Middleditch (Disabilities Group), Barry Owen (Erith Riverside Shopping Centre), Rena Papa (Bexley Pensioners Forum), Rev. Robert Radcliffe (St Johns Church), Alec Tapper (Forge), Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

L. Finch, D Brodie, E Brodie, B Abrahams, J Baxter, The Rev. J Conalty, C Wakeman, J Baker, M Davies, K Hadley, M Beadle, J McCarthy, R Durrant

Speakers: James Frost and Tim Lynch - Strategic Planning, Bexley Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Chris Betts, Chris Broadbent, Bill Brookes, Alison Fisher, Dennis Roberts, Cllr.Chris Ball, Cllr. Edward Boateng

Others:

2. PRESENTATION ON STRATEGIC PARKING REVIEW - BEXLEY COUNCIL

The Chair welcomed Tim Lynch and James Frost from Bexley Council. Tim thanked the Chair for the invitation to come to talk at the Forum meeting. He introduced himself as the Team Leader for Transport Planning and informed the meeting about a consultation exercise which is taking place from mid September to the end of November to find out what people think about the parking and issues arising within the Borough. He said the consultation is being carried out because they want to listen to what people have to say. A paper was handed out "Issues and Options paper" and he encouraged those present to complete the form. He continued to say for the review process they want public opinion and need data for all car parks and said they are trying to put together a good viable strategy. He emphasised that no decision had already been made at this stage. He continued to say parking is important in Bexley because the car is the main way of getting about in the Borough. He said there is a questionnaire on the website for people to email comments. He informed the meeting that they will be holding some events in the Borough (detailed in the leaflet handed out) and urged people to have a look at the dates and go along. He said they were particularly keen to hear back from those under 40 because this group often do not participate in consultations. He said the consultation ends on November 30th. He continued to say that there will be a Draft Strategic Review in the New Year and by the summer of next year they will have set the context for car parks, parking enforcement etc. A member of the public asked that once they have the ideas in writing will your people go to the particular spot to survey. Tim said yes if that's what needs to be done, they will come and look at the issue. The Chair asked if all parking was to be considered. Tim confirmed that all off street parking, where Bexley have some sort of influence. The Chair urged anyone completing a questionnaire not to hesitate about stapling any extra comments/information they may want to add. Tim Lynch agreed. A member of the public asked if there will be any charges for disability people etc. Tim replied saying they do not know yet because no decisions have been made. Rev. Radcliffe referred to Qu. 10 regarding charging for disabled parking bays. Tim Lynch replied saying it is an option, we need to know people's views. Mr Lynch said that he was not an expert on disabled bays. Terry Middleditch suggested it would be useful if Bexley had someone from a disabilities group on their panel. Tim Lynch welcomed that idea and said he would take that idea away with him. There were a number of questions and discussions on parking issues and Mr Lynch urged people to have their say and complete the questionnaire. The Chair said demographics need to be taken into account because of the new Bexley College, new houses etc. The Chair said we all start off thinking Bexley are trying to get more money and said we need to be constructive and helpful. She said one of their events is on 2nd November at the Shopping Centre so go along and have a chat with the team. Doreen said it was nice to have a Council Officer addressing the meeting again, reminding people that Seb Salom and Judith Houghton were always part of the Forum meetings in the past. She thanked Tim Lynch and his colleague for attending the Forum.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Doreen opened by welcoming the new Vicar of Christ Church, Rev. Julie Conalty. The Chair informed the meeting that since Rosemary White is no longer a member of the Management Committee, there is a vacancy for 1 member. She said maybe members could reflect and if anyone would like to join the Committee then let her know. She said it cannot be a Councillor and said the Committee meet bi-monthly in between full Forum meetings, usually on a Tuesday morning at the Running Horses at 9.30am. The Chair informed the meeting about a Planning Application to demolish the Howbury Centre in Slade Green and then to erect 278 dwellings.

Phase 1 & 2 5 1 bed flats 114 2 bed flats 28 3 bed houses 131 4 bed houses

Outline Planning for Phase 3 for 94 dwellings and up to 300 sq metres of retail Class A! (shops, restaurants)

A member of the public asked what would happen to the activities held there. Cllr. O'Neill said that a Community Centre will be built. She spoke about the school becoming part of Haberdashers. A member of the public asked what is happening about the disabilities centre. Cllr. O'Neill said all the activities are being dispersed but she would find out about the Ken Boyce Centre.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

The Chair informed the meeting she had been invited to a Taser Briefing which was a presentation on the introduction of this activity in Bexley. The Chair said she would report back.

ACTION: DOREEN IVES

The Chair then spoke about the Riverside Community Forum and proposals for arrangements to change now that the construction of the incinerator is complete and in full operation. She said we need to make sure Cory are mandated to communicate regularly with the community and to keep us fully informed about any problems that occur and actions to correct. Doreen said communication could be arranged by a member of the Cory team attending a set number of meetings of Erith Town Forum and Belvedere Community Forum. The Chair said she was in discussions about this with Richard Hallet at the moment. She continued to say that there was need for change because the Forum might be struggling to find items to discuss. It was suggested that a joint meeting be held with Belvedere and Erith Forums. She said new arrangements would be outlined. Cllr. O'Neill said with regards to planning permission I'm not sure we can mandate them to do this. The Chair said there was not an end date for the Riverside Forum so they cannot disband without offering an alternative. The Chair asked what people's feelings were on this. Ray Hudson said if it is absorbed by Belvedere we need to know when the meetings are etc. Alec Tapper mentioned the legal document and the 106 agreement which the present system is under. The Chair asked if Cllr. O'Neill will ask the Chief Planner about making changes.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

Rev. Radcliffe said it might be boring holding monitoring meetings when everything is going right but it is hard to conjure up a group out of nothing, if things go wrong. He said he thought it would be better to continue with the meetings even if they are just 15 minutes. The Chair said she did not feel people would attend if there was nothing on the Agenda. She said if you link it to Belvedere and Erith Forum you already have a group of people together. The Chair to continue talks with Richard Hallet

ACTION: DOREEN IVES

BARGE RACE - Cllr. O'Neill spoke to the meeting about an event on 27th July next year regarding a Barge race between Gravesend and Erith. She said 60 sailing barges will be a spectacular site. She spoke about Erith Town Forum organising a fun day. Margaret said the barges would start out at 9 am and get to Erith about 3pm. She continued to say that there is a problem with the harbour master in Gravesend who has said it is too dangerous to pass the docks at Tilbury because the huge ships take precedent on the river. She said the barges will be coming up on the right hand side. She said Ken Chamberlain, our local historian, has got involved and is trying to persuade the harbour master to let the barges come. She said it would be lovely to celebrate the barges coming to Erith and would have the finish line at the Riverside Gardens. Margaret O'Neill will report back at the next meeting if any decision has been made.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan Armitage said as at 25th July there was £2,375.38 in the bank. Receiving £500 from Cory and £1,000 from Frogmore. The Chair said that at the Management group we have been talking about going for another Town and Around which costs about £800. She said we must cut down on these costs. She said Jerry Martin has agreed to have a go at the layout then we will get it printed with Vista print. She also mentioned about it being online and not doing door to door deliveries. A few options to cut costs. A member of the public asked what do we think people get out of it – do they come to the meetings etc because of Town and Around. Doreen said she is not sure people come to the meetings, but people do read it. The Chair said we will get £500 for the next 3 years from Corys. DJ said he thought if the costs came down to say £300-400 it may be worth doing it. The Chair said the Robinson Crusoe thing all took off because Robyn picked up a leaflet in Hall Place. A member of the public said that if it is done electronically then a notice should go up in the Library, Morrisons etc to say it is on the website. Joan Armitage asked if the £500 for the next 3 years from Corys was the only source of income. The Chair said it was at the moment. The Chair said we will take Jerry up on his offer.

The Chair touched on some articles she required and said they are to be no more than 200 words. Jubilee Lunch, Interview Len Arnold, Barge Race, Erith Station Access, Bexley College, Julie's arrival at Christ Church, Christmas Events, Forge, Community Hall – progress Rev Radcliffe. Rev. Radcliffe mentioned the event at St Johns Church on 2nd December at 6.30pm to raise funds £5 / £3 concessions – mixture of music/songs from shows.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (JULY)

A member of the public informed the meeting that on page 3 of the last Minutes under AOB regarding trees being cut it should have read Avenue Road. The lady actually wrote to Bexley Council herself.

The issue regarding pavements in Avenue Road was brought up by the resident again. Cllr. O'Neil said she would look into this. Member of the public said it has been going on since 2007. **ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL**

6. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE UPDATE

The Chair said Chris Betts had sent his apologies but hoped to attend on 28th November. Barry Owen reported saying that there were various events coming up – 27th October a Halloween event, 17th November Sponge Bob and stalls and 8th December a Christmas fun day. He said we are hoping to have Choirs on 3 Saturdays and 11th November the decorations will be going up. Barry said there was not too much to report on the shopping centre. He said the £1 shop on Bexley Road was changing hands and there was still no firm interest on the unit by the bus stop. He commented on how pleased they were with how Iceland is doing. He remarked on the increase in footfall. 260,000, last year was 235,000. He said this will encourage more retailers hopefully. A member of the public commented on the 3 hours free parking and how good that is and said that is probably why footfall is good.

7. FORGE

Alec commented on the fact that Forge entered into the Bexley Environmental Challenge and said the event has been going for 20 years and that it is the first time Erith has put in a submission. He said he was pleased to say that Erith received a bronze award. He said they received a cheque for £20 for their funds. He commented how good it was to have 10 Forge members attend the ceremony as well as Cllr. O'Neill and over 300 people. Secondly, Alec continued to say that Bexley Council has a cost neutral policy and he said that he and Joan McCarthy had sought external funding from Cory Environmental. He happily reported that a grant of £4,000 was made over a 3 year period. He reported that Forge will be working with Parks and Open Spaces and monitoring Autumn and Spring planting. He said for their future plans they have employed a professional lady gardener and will be discussing planting for both these seasons. Alec asked for any practical help possible from Forum members on a monthly basis. He reported finally on a requiem mass he attended with the Chair for a lady called Joan Hart from Lesney Park Road and informed the Forum that she was a long standing member of Forge and made an extremely generous donation to Forge. Joan McCarthy added that the money will allow Forge to extend their planting area.

8. SENIORS' CHRISTMAS EVENT

The Chair reported that this will be on 17th December at the Baptist Church from 2.30pm. She said it will be the same format as last year with the same entertainers. The Chair said the Rotary Club gave us £100 last year and Margaret O'Neill would put a word in for this year.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Christmas Lights –The Chair reported that Frogmore will be paying for the shopping centre and up to Cross Street. She continued saying that Bexley Council are proposing a contribution of £2,000 towards Xmas activities, and the purpose of the contribution is to support local businesses. Doreen said she had been in touch with Chris Betts and he said that £2,000 would not go a long way and he recommended lights fixed to lamp posts at the top of Pier Road and one at the bottom by the Health Centre. The Chair sought the opinion of those present and it was agreed to accept the £2,000 and go with Chris Betts' advice. A member of the public commented that it would be nice to have a Farmer's Market.

Flood Tea Margaret O'Neill mentioned on 31st January 1957 Erith flooded and 10 years ago she and Belvedere Community Centre organised a flood tea. She said she thought it would be nice to mark the 60th Anniversary and involve Erith Forum. She said the date would be Sat 2nd February to have tea and reminisce. All are welcome.

AVENUE ROAD TREES A member of the public brought up trees in Avenue Road that are pushing up a neighbour's driveway and pushing concrete up in his property. Nos. 104 and 106. Cllr. O'Neill said she would look into this.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

Prescription procedures at Health Centre

Terry Middleditch asked for some feed back on the new prescription system running at the health centre. He said there are lots of problems with prescriptions that are supposed to be there then they are not etc. He said they are automatically supposed to go from the health centre to the pharmacist but it is not happening. Terry said he had mentioned it to the Manager at the health centre. The Chair said as many people as possible to send any issues to her at erithtownforum@hotmail.com.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting: 28th November 2012 at the Vets Club

Dates of future meetings: 30th January 2013, 27th March 2013, and 22nd May 2013 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 9pm.