

ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 71st meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2009 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
Joan Armitage (Bexley Civic Society), Chris Broadbent (Erith Riverside Res. Assn), DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc.), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Les Hoskins (Erith Rotary Club), Barry Owen (Erith Riverside Shopping Centre), Rosemary White (CSAZ), Councillor Bernard Clewes, Councillor Margaret O'Neil, Councillor David Leaf, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

L Finch, S Boyd, P West, A Harbert, C Wakeman, J Butler, M Butler, B Abrahams, J Baker, M Davis, P Young, D Young, W A Brookes, A Williams. Colin Bloom (Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Erith and Thamesmead)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Munir Malik, Ray Hudson, Pamela Horner, Rena Papa, Chris Betts, Denis Roberts

Others: Councillor Chris Ball, David Evenett MP

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked everyone for coming and in particular Joan Armitage who is replacing Charlie as the representative of the Bexley Civic Society.

The Chair continued with some items that had been notified to her since the last meeting. She briefly explained the new arrangements from Bexley Care Trust. She said that the new arrangement to deal with stroke and major injuries services for London would be as follows:

Major Trauma Centres – the closest will be Kings College, Denmark Hill.

Hyper Acute stroke Units – will be at Kings College and Princess Royal, Orpington.

Stroke Units and TLA (mini stroke) services - will be at Kings College, Queen Elizabeth, Woolwich, Princess Royal, Orpington, University Hospital, Lewisham.

The Chair gave the following website to access for more detailed information – www.healthcareforlondon.nhs.uk.

She also informed the meeting about a new health centre in Crayford – Bexley North Health Centre at 17 Crayford High Street which is open seven days a week 365 days of the year. It is open Monday to Sunday 8am – 8pm and a GP will be available for both booked appointments and walk-in patients.

The Chair also informed the meeting about Bexley Forum of Forums and how they have now been formed to link local area Forums with the previously LA21 groups who looked after environmental issues – transport, recycling, rivers, wild life etc. She said that Bexley Forum of Forum's discussions have prompted Bexley Council now to set up an Environmental Committee after many years of asking from the LA21 groups. Doreen said she hoped that talking together would enable the group to present stronger arguments to the Council and other bodies on issues that arise, eg the care of the River Thames in Erith and possible river transport etc.

The Chair encouraged people to attend the Cory Open Public Meeting to be held in Christ Church, Erith on Tuesday 13th October from 7pm – 9pm. She said there would be a presentation on the progress so far. She also said there would be a Police Meeting taking place at Erith Library on 30th September at 10.30 am, to discuss strategies for Erith High Street and West Street, with the hope of trying to prevent alcohol and drug related activities.

The Chair touched on a few items which needed updating from the last meeting. She mentioned the issue about trying to get new members for the Forum, and Les Hoskins, Munir Malik and Mike Dodsworth were looking into this. She asked Les if he would take this forward.

(ACTION: LES HOSKINS, MUNIR MALIK & MIKE DODSWORTH)

The Chair raised the issue of the Landslip in Fraser Road. A member of the public said he has seen that they are cutting away all the vegetation and there has been two small landslides but the Council have been quick to clear it up and there is a working party there at the moment. The Chair was happy that the issue was being taken care of. Another member of the public said that on the same side there were two fast growing sycamore trees which will become quite dangerous. Cllr. O'Neill said she would be happy to take this up.

(ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL)

The Chair touched on the pathway which is to be reinstated at the old swimming pool site and it was agreed this had been done.

The Chair brought up the issue of the disabled parking outside the new library. A member of the public said she had parked there with her badge on a double yellow line outside. Joan Armitage said you need to be careful because there are restrictions on a double yellow line. Cllr. O'Neill said that there are two disabled bays outside the library.

The Chair informed the meeting about Jim Bennett's cycle ride through Vietnam and Cambodia raising money for the Hospice as well as the 10% off card for local stores and also courses that are being run. She informed the Forum that there were leaflets available at the meeting giving more information and encouraged people to pick them up at the end of the meeting.

A member of the public, Colin Bloom the Parliamentary Candidate for Erith continued regarding the pathway and said it was obscured by trees and bushes and said the aim is to thin the vegetation out and leave the trees but remove all the bits underneath, therefore preventing good hiding places for unwanted behaviour.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Les Hoskins informed the meeting that they had received £750 being the grant from Frogmore leaving a balance of £2,793.57.

Deposit Account	£ 168.50
Community Account	£2,606.67
Cash in hand	£ 18.40

The Chair informed the meeting that she had been unsuccessful in obtaining another grant but said she would try again. The Chair also asked the Councillors present when she would be able to apply to the Council for the small grants scheme. Cllr. Leaf said you can apply now and offered his assistance in doing this. The Chair thanked him for his offer and asked if he could let her have the details.

4. TRI-FORUM YOUTH NEWS

Cllr. O'Neill was happy to inform the meeting that the fun day in the summer had been very successful and said it was probably the best they had experienced in 10 years. She said that there was only one day and had more than 500 people attending and it was a full day of free events with beautiful weather. She said she had a meeting in two weeks time to discuss finances. She said she will be contacting Alison Fisher at the Rowing Club and Roy Hillman is looking for extra funds to do other events.

5. ERITH RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

The Chair said Chris Betts of Frogmore had sent his apologies but said that they fully endorsed the document on the Erith Western Gateway. The Chair said he had commented that it would create more business opportunities for further employment with more retail space and bigger units. He had said that the Erith Western Gateway needs to be redeveloped so that the town does not become run down. He had told the Chair that Frogmore were trying to let units still. He had also reported to the Chair that the numbers were up and Mambacino and Accessories were very happy and doing well. Barry Owen informed the meeting that they were against the one way system in Bexley Road. He said footfall numbers were lower but are now back to what they were last year. He said Mambacinos have

requested to have a larger unit as well as Accessories. He also said the letting agents were trying hard to let the units. Mr Owen said that the windows at Wises were continually being vandalised and the police are aware of it. A member of public asked if there has been any interest in Wises but Barry Owen reported that there has been nothing positive but said we need to protect the building. He reported on the successful appearance of "Titan" the robot and the entertainment for the children in August. Barry Owen apologised for the ceiling being down due to floods in the flats above. He informed the meeting that seats would be going into the centre this week as well as planters too.

The Chair reminded the meeting that the Forum were hoping to work with the shopping centre for the Christmas activities.

6. SIGNAGE NEW LIBRARY/CARNEGIE BUILDING

Cllr. O'Neill said a sign had gone up on a wall that faces the shopping centre, but said there was still not one sticking out from the library. Margaret O'Neill said she would ask again to get this done and did not know whether it was not able to be done because of a planning reason. She said she will pursue it.

(ACTION: CLLR O'NEILL)

The Chair informed the meeting about a home library service whereby you can have books delivered to your home.

Cllr. Leaf said he was aware that new signs were on their way. The Chair encouraged all to work together to get good signs up.

Barry Owen commented on the fact that not a lot of people know that Argos is there. He said they would be arranging to get a totem pole put up with the signs for all the shops on it.

(ACTION: BARRY OWEN)

Cllr. O'Neill informed the meeting that they had a successful musical event called the Bexfactor Competition, culminating in a fantastic show. She went on to say that at the Arts sub-group meeting they were talking about a place for the youths to do their auditions for this future event. She said that schools were too expensive but the Carnegie building would be a good place to use because it has lots of different rooms and wheelchair access. Cllr. O'Neill said it would be good for them to rehearse and she said she would press to get use out of the Carnegie building for young people.

(ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL)

The Chair said Cllr. Peter Catterall had reported that he had no further news on the Carnegie building as yet.

7. ERITH WESTERN GATEWAY SUBMISSION

The Chair asked if everyone was happy for the document to be submitted. Alison Fisher commented that if the rowing club increase their membership then they will want to expand their rowing club. Cllr. O'Neill said that if the rowing club do want to expand and with a view of renting the Regeneration Unit then we should not stand against it. It was agreed that the Chair take out the bit on the Regeneration Unit. Otherwise everyone was happy to go forward with it.

It was agreed that the Chair would send the discussed document to the Chief Executive copying the Leader of the Council and All Cabinet Members. The Chair informed the meeting that the document would form the centre of the next Town and Around and more articles are needed.

(ACTION: DOREEN IVES)

(Post Meeting Note: The Chair visited North Peckham Estate. There are still some of the old flats and walkways there and it is easy to see the built in crime opportunity.

New buildings are three and four storey flats, maisonettes, and green areas and space for people to breathe – emphasising once again that high density living is not for us.)

Margaret O'Neill talked about the Erith Area Action Plan and noted that not many residents had made comments on the last part according to officers. She said only 150 responded. She said a new document, which is part of the regeneration of Erith, is coming out in the next Bexley Magazine. She asked the meeting to consider it and said that the discussions had at the Forum meeting in July dovetails very well the answers you can give. She said she had attended an Advisory Group who discussed how planners decide. She said Erith Action Plan is special to Bexley

Council and there is a leaflet you can get but it is not in the Bexley Magazine. She repeated how poor it was only getting 150 responses.

The Chair said Judith Houghton had emailed her, she thinks with the document, but there was no attachment. The Chair said Judith had said that once the consultation was out she would try to come along to the next meeting to talk to the Forum. The Chair asked the Councillors if they thought it would be a problem for Judith to come to the meeting. The Councillors agreed it would be good to have Judith come along. The Chair asked the Councillors if they could support this

A member of public asked what the timescale was on the consultation. Cllr. O'Neill said the end of December. The Chair said we need to get Judith here for our November meeting. Cllr. Leaf said, on receipt of the document, may be the Chair should email to the Forum distribution list. Les Hoskins asked if Crest Nicholson was now out of the question. The Chair said yes.

8. MURAL – NEW SITE

The Chair said it had been suggested that the mural could go on Farm Food's wall (car park wall). The Chair informed the meeting that Cllr. Catterall had said it was definitely not going there. Barry Owen said he understood it was going alongside Blockbuster's wall. The Chair commented that it was agreed a board should go up with the mural with information about it.

9. NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR ERITH SCHOOL

Les Hoskins informed the Forum about a meeting that he and Doreen Ives had attended with the Head Teacher of Erith School and the Chair of Governors. He said that they had arranged the meeting because of rumours circulating about changes to the school. Les informed the meeting that the outcome of the meeting was that because of the new Academy opening in Crayford, and because of the other Foundation Schools in the area, Erith School were becoming vulnerable and did not want to be left taking on all children in the lower ability level but to continue to have children of varying abilities and all levels. Les continued to say that the school has Foundation Status meaning that the Governors and not Bexley Council can determine admission procedures. He continued to say that the school will be a twelve form intake, will continue to have bandings, will still take the same number of special educational needs students, but there will be a verbal and non-verbal entrance test. Les said the school assured us that it would be a flagship school for the borough and available to all residents.

The Chair said it was re-assuring that the Head of Erith School recognized the place Erith Forum has in the community and was happy to explain the new arrangements

A member of public asked what happens if a child fails the test. The Chair confirmed that the test will be purely to assess what level the child goes in at. She said it is the most over-subscribed non-selective school in the borough.

A member of the public, Colin Bloom, Parliamentary Candidate for Erith and Thamesmead said children will have to travel further to get to school and it is hard on children to take all these tests. He said Erith School have been put in a difficult position.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a. Joan Armitage said she thinks the trees that were taken down in Pier Road should be replaced. Rosemary White said that Cllr. Clewes had mentioned something about schemes for trees. Margaret O'Neill said that there are some electric points in Pier Road in case of having market stalls so that may be why there are no trees. Joan said even if we had big pots with trees in or something. Cllr. Leaf said there are some tree planting schemes and said he would look into the options.
(ACTION: CLLR. LEAF)

b. A member of public said the lighting on the earth columns needs attention. Cllr. O'Neill said she would look into it.

(ACTION (CLLR. O'NEILL))

c. Chris Broadbent informed the Chair that the Safety Neighbourhood Watch had come to the estate and was trying to put a ban on alcohol in the town. He said drug users were injecting in the stair wells and the neighbourhood watch were patrolling up and down the stair well. The Chair said at the last Police Panel meeting she had attended the biggest issue was drugs and alcohol. Cllr. O'Neill informed the meeting that Chris Ball had gone out with the police and was talking to them regarding alcohol and drugs and the Riverside Gardens.

The Chair said maybe this could be an item for the next Town and Around. Chris Broadbent said we need to get rid of alcohol in the town.

d. Barry Owen said he had spoken to Sgt James Coomber and they are trying to get cameras. Cllr. O'Neill said she would remind Sgt Coomber that the Regeneration Unit have said they would have a camera in their offices.

e. Cllr Leaf said that train fares have had an increase of 26% over 2 years and the government had agreed not to increase peak time travel.

Cllr. Leaf spoke again about the landfill site expansion on the Essex side of the Thames immediately opposite Erith. He handed round a document and also the petition which he asked everyone to sign.

f. The Chair asked if people were happy with the usual format and layout for the bi-monthly meetings or did they prefer the layout for the July discussions. The general opinion was to leave the layout the same as normal.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting – **25th November at 7pm at the Vets Club**

Dates of future meetings: 27th January 2010, 31st March 2010, 19th May 2010 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 8.30pm