

## ERITH TOWN FORUM

Notes of the 66th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2008 at 7pm.

**Present:** Doreen Ives (Chair)  
Len Arnold (Europa Gym Club), Les Hoskins (Erith Rotary Club), Councillor Bernard Clewes, Councillor David Leaf, Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

**Members of the Public:**

L Finch, S Boyd, J Butler, M Butler, D Brodie, E Brodie, R Read, B Brookes, P West, T Middleditch, B Abrahams, C Wakeman

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

**Forum Members:** Charlie Armitage, Rosemary White, Denis Roberts, Alan Boakes, Chris Broadbent, Ray Hudson, Pamela Horner, Munir Malik, Rena Papa, Chris Ball

**Others:** David Evenett MP

### 2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair said since the last meeting we have received funding from two sources, Frogmore who have once again given £1,000 to continue work with the newsletter and £1,170 from Bexley Council, to enable us to continue to hold our public meetings. She said that attached to Bexley's grant were several requirements all of which were no problem to the Forum because our meetings have always been conducted in a formal manner, as the minutes prove. She said that the Forum has also always worked closely with Councillors and officers to publicise local issues.

Cllr. Bernard Clewes informed the Chair that there may be extra funding to apply for on separate issues from the Council. The Chair said this was something they had considered and Alan Boakes had offered to set up a website for the Forum which would be something like £50 a year and the Chair said this is something we may put in a further bid for.

She said the latest issue of Town and Around had been circulating since the middle of September. All 5000 copies were delivered in time for the Open House Weekend featured in it. She said Christ Church had a good steady flow of visitors. She continued saying the next issue will go out early February, reporting on all the Christmas events. The Chair said that if anyone wants to submit an article (no more than 200 words), to get it to her early part of January. She asked Joan McCarthy if she could do an article since there had been nothing in the last edition about the Riverside Festival. The Chair added that we do get lots of compliments on the newsletter so people definitely read it. She said she has asked Len Arnold to do an article on how the Europa Gym is working towards 2012, for the next issue, for our local interest item.

The Chair commented on how good it was to see the David Ives stadium being used for a Paralympics event last week on the day Boris received the flag for 2012 in Beijing. She said The Mayor of Bexley stood in for him in Erith. She said it was very humbling to see how people with quite severe difficulties strive to do their very best. She praised all who took part and to those who organised it and helped on the day. The Chair continued saying that she really hoped the stadium would be used as a training ground for one of the smaller world teams in 2012. She said she knows the Council is trying to achieve this.

Doreen said, as agreed at the last meeting, she had sent out the papers electronically to those who provided an email address. She informed the Forum that Len Arnold had arranged for one of his gymnasts to copy, collate, and put in envelopes the other copies to go in the post and thanked them for that. She said that if anyone else wanted to be added to the email list then they should let Julie Clark have their email address. Terry Middleditch informed the Chair that he had been unable to access the documents, but said there is a package you can download to enable you to do this.

The Chair continued by saying that Les Hoskins, who was a member of the Forum for many years representing Erith Rotary Club, has agreed to be co-opted back on to the Forum and also to come back on to the Management Committee. She said work commitments had prevented Les from working with the Forum for some time but said she is now very pleased to welcome him back, and said this would mean we have another business representative too.

The Chair was pleased to announce that Rosemary White had reported that the open flowerbed alongside the bus stop at the top end of Bexley Road just before the roundabout had finally been concreted over. The Chair commented on how much money had been wasted planting flowers and shrubs which were being continually damaged by people sitting on the wall and putting shopping bags on them. She said if anyone had kept past copies of minutes you will find at least five or six mentions of this waste by Rosemary over the last few years and her suggestion to concrete it over and make it another seat. The Chair said that Rosemary is one of the few members of the Forum who speaks from experience because she always travels by bus.

### **3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Doreen reported on Charlie's behalf. Due to his illness he was feeling under the weather and unable to attend. The Chair reported there is £4,160.03 in the Community Account, £168.28 in the Business Account and £157.93 in the Cash Account, totaling £4,486.24. She continued saying that with invoices outstanding to be paid for Town and Around there would be just under £4,000 to spend. She said we hope to have some extra money from Help the Aged

Cllr. Bernard Clewes said he would like it noted that the Forum send Charlie their best wishes.

### **4. TRI-FORUM YOUTH NEWS**

Cllr. Margaret O'Neill said the summer events had taken place in spite of some bad weather. She said the events were over 4 days and about 500 children attended (attendance usually about 900). Cllr. O'Neill praised the volunteers. She said we have decided we have enough funds to have an event in October half term, a dance event. She said we want to concentrate on next year and said the Council seems to have had a change of heart over funding of Forums. She commented that Belvedere Forum put in £1,000 for the Tri-forum which will be used for the mail outs.

Cllr. O'Neill and the Chair commented on the lack of help and support from parents of the children who attended the summer events and have agreed a "craft event / training day" would be useful showing parents how to organise arts and crafts with the hope they will want to help and volunteer. Cllr. O'Neill said depending on the success of this in February half term, we will decide whether we go ahead with events next year.

A member of public brought up the question of CRB checks for parents but Cllr. O'Neill said this would not be essential because they would not be on their own with the children. Len Arnold said he had lots of coaches who are all CRB checked and who could help at these events. Les Hoskins said that may be some of the police cadets could also help. A member of the public raised the question of running a project where children have to raise money towards it. Cllr. O'Neill said that was a good idea but it was originally set up to be free to children and we raise money in other ways. She said we need to think more laterally.

### **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

#### **Erith Museum**

Cllr. B Clewes had spoken to Cllr. Catterall and the Museum will be moved to temporary accommodation in other libraries. The Chair commented that nothing had come of using an empty unit at the Riverside Shopping Centre. Cllr. Clewes said that he and Alan Boakes had talked and Alan was happy with the temporary arrangement.

#### **New representatives on Forum**

The Chair reported that she had had a very swift response from Sunny Ee regarding two representatives from Crest Nicholson and Orbit but had not as yet made contact with them. **(ACTION: DOREEN IVES)**

#### **Old Riverside Swimming Baths**

The Chair read out a letter in respect of the demolition of the Riverside Baths which said that Cllr. Catterall and Cllr. Waters had been incorrect in the timing of this demolition reported at the last meeting. This is now likely to take

place in January 2009. Local neighbours will be notified of dates and conditions of working on the site. Les Hoskins said that it will not be demolished by the Council because they will not pay all the costs unless the new developers provide the funding. Cllr. O'Neill said the Forum should write a letter to ensure it comes down as soon as possible because it is a terrible danger. The Chair said we need to urge our Councillors to press the local authority. A member of the public said that if this is a danger to the public surely someone needs to take responsibility for it. The Chair said she was under the impression that they could not demolish it until there were definite plans as to what was going there. Member of public commented saying obviously the situation has changed now and it needs to come down. The consensus of agreement was that the building is a danger to the public and needs to come down. It was agreed the Chair would write to the Chief Executive with a copy to the Health and Safety Department. **(ACTION: DOREEN IVES)**

### **The Mural**

It was reported the Mural has been boarded up. A Member of the Public asked what is happening with the Mural. The Chair said Cllr. Catterall had said he would look into Maisie Jamieson's idea of having it on the wall of Wilkinsons. **Note after meeting: The mural is in good condition being refurbished and will go on Woolworth's wall.**

### **Radio Caroline Boat**

Cllr. Clewes reported to date this had not gone to planning and no decision made.

### **Dangerous Dogs Issue**

Cllr. O'Neill said she had talked to the Regeneration Unit about incidents and there were still concerns. Cllr. O'Neill said that generally there were lots of dogs in the town centre. She said we have asked the police to have a CCTV camera in the kitchen window of the Regeneration Unit. She said this would also capture footage of other unwanted behaviour. The Chair said we would keep this on the Agenda as an ongoing item. Cllr. Leaf said dogs are being used as weapon of choice and under the legislation police should take action. Cllr. Leaf said if people see or know of dogs being bred it should be reported to the police under the dangerous dogs act.

**(ACTION: CLLR. MARGARET O'NEILL)**

### **Pier Road parking**

The Chair said she spoke with Chris Broadbent on this issue regarding cabs parking on Cross Street. The Chair said when she spoke with Rodney Kearns he was not taking action to stop the illegal parking. Chris Broadbent suggested that cabs might be able to use the parking bays outside Wises. The Chair said this was discussed 2/3 years ago. The Chair asked the Councillors present to see if they could get anywhere with this and make the suggestion. Terry Middleditch said they are actually breaking the law and we were told there would be traffic wardens patrolling that area.

**(ACTION: COUNCILLORS)**

### **Landslide area Fraser Road**

Cllr. Clewes said he had looked at this situation and did not think it was too bad. The Chair said it was good to keep an eye on it.

### **Earth Columns**

The Chair reported one earth column still not lit up.

**(ACTION: CLLR. MARGARET O'NEILL)**

### **Residents Panel**

Cllr. O'Neill said this was not a very good organisation of meetings. A member of the public said that the police want to Chair it themselves and the police to produce the minutes etc. The Chair said it was not publicised very well. A member of public said Mike Waring had said it was not a public meeting. Cllr. O'Neill to keep us informed on this.

**(ACTION: CLLR. MARGARET O'NEILL)**

## **6. ERITH COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION ZONE**

Rosemary White was not present at the meeting so no update was given.

## **7. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE**

The Chair said that she had received a letter to say that planning application had gone in for the canopy and seating etc. The high level canopy roof would start on 6<sup>th</sup> October and be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> November, the glass partition at the top of the escalator would go in the two weeks commencing 22/29 September. All works will be undertaken out of trading hours. The whole of the mall area will have a matting surface to reduce the wet and blue

resin route markers commencing 6<sup>th</sup> October. The visual covered area will have significant improvements to improve lighting, eg lighter painted ceilings, lighting etc. It is hoped all these alterations will improve ambience and eradicate wind and rain etc. The Chair remarked on how busy the new charity shop opposite Wilkinsons seems to be.

#### **8. ERITH WESTERN GATEWAY**

The Chair said she had been in contact with Sunny Ee but there had been no further development.

#### **9. ERITH HIGH STREET SOUTH – NEW ERITH LIBRARY**

Cllr. O'Neill reported that the Carnegie Library will be closed by the end of January and the new library will open about a week or so after about February 09. A member of the public asked what will happen with the Carnegie building, and the Chair said we should not leave it empty. Cllr. O'Neill said it will probably be used for staff in the Council offices when they start work in Bexleyheath. The Chair said we need to keep on the case. At the last meeting we were informed it would possibly be part of an educational establishment. Cllr. O'Neill said that when Bexley College, Tower Road closes, the museum will stay and will be used for some arts and culture campus. The Chair said we need to keep this on the Agenda. The Chair said it would be good to email copies of our Minutes to Councillors and the Chief Executive. **(ACTION: CLLR. MARGARET O'NEILL / DOREEN IVES)**

The Chair said the White Hart has opened and looks really good. She said lets hope it prospers.

#### **10. SENIOR'S CHRISTMAS EVENT**

The Chair confirmed the date of 15<sup>th</sup> December 2.30 till 5pm. The afternoon will consist of tea, mince pies, and Christmas cake. Entertainment will be Max Wall, Vera Lynn, Gracie Fields, Bingo and a raffle. There are 120 tickets please call Doreen Ives on 01322 345406 if you want to book a place. The age limit is over 60. The Chair requested helpers for the afternoon.

#### **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **11. Incinerator**

The Chair said that Les Hoskins had asked that the Incinerator come onto the Agenda as a regular item. The Chair said she was happy for that as long as we don't have lengthy discussions whether it will happen. She said it is there and is going ahead and said the Forum should be discussing how it is progressing. The Chair said that the Environmental Agency will be continually monitoring and doing periodic sampling, and there will be independent sampling once a year. Cllr. Leaf said that If Corys are found to be producing particals that they are not suppose to then if it is minor they will get a warning but if it is major they will be prosecuted. The Environment Agency has to give Corys a permit and this is only given as long as they meet all the criteria. The Chair said that the Environment Agency is an independent Government body and they are there to look after our interests and they will check everything for us. A member of the public said that the area we live in is a bad one already for asthma. Cllr. Leaf said it is still worrying even with all the monitoring and the new European legislation. He said that some of the smaller particles, which cannot always be detected, are the worst. A member of the public said that Paris, Switzerland, Norway all have these incinerators and they do not seem to be worried by them. A member of the public mentioned the Crossness sewer work's smell and Cllr. Clewes said that there was to be a multimillion pound investment to try to stop this.

The Chair said there was a public meeting of the Riverside Resource Recovery Forum on 11<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm at Belvedere Baptist Church where you can meet Corys. The Chair informed the Forum that there are documents for public viewing in upper Belvedere Library pertaining to the Incinerator. The Chair said the road for site construction vehicles is underway at this point in time. She said the meetings would not be as often during construction period. There would be 4 public meetings in 2009. Cllr. Leaf confirmed that there would be about half a million tonnage by barge, a 6-1 barge to road ratio, so by far the most going by river.

##### **Erith Railway Station Access**

Cllr. Leaf, Cllr. Clewes and Terry Middleditch had attended an official Transport For London meeting and said it was a productive meeting and discussions took place regarding Erith and other stations. Cllr. Leaf reported that it looks unlikely that Erith will get funding for a lift but may get a second footpath to get to the platform going up to London. Cllr. Leaf said network rail are promising us a meeting. Terry Middleditch informed the meeting of a very difficult journey up to London. He used a helpline you can call to get a taxi to pick you up from your local station

and take you to the nearest accessible station. Terry said that in an access report as of 2001 nearly all local stations are inaccessible to wheelchair users. He said he went onto the internet for small grants 2015 and there is no mention of Bexley regarding improvements. Cllr. O'Neill said she was surprised at the footpath plan because in 2002 we had the same idea and was told it was considered too steep. She said we need to put pressure on to get a lift.

There were various disagreements between Councillors on the way this funding has to be approached but Terry Middleditch said that Cllr. Waters has talked about 700 new lifetimes homes for Erith and that we should push for Erith along these lines. The Chair said we need to keep pressurising, and what should Erith Forum be doing.

It was agreed the Chair should write to Network Rail. Terry to draft letter with the Chair. A member of the public said that Erith was bad not just for wheelchair users but the elderly and those needing sticks too. The Chair said there needs to be new thinking for Erith Station. Terry wanted to point out that Bexley Access Group was not just about those in wheelchairs but covers a wide spectrum of disabilities. The Chair said this issue should be on the Agenda on a regular basis.

Len Arnold spoke to say that things were quite difficult at Europa Gym at the moment with new landlords and their rents have increased from £2,500 a month to £4,600. He said they had had some TV coverage and an article in the Observer recently. He said he had had a visit from Bexley's Chief Executive Officer and someone from the English Sports Council who were very impressed with the club. He said the owners of Europa will not give them a long term lease. He said he and others were doing extra work in Birmingham to get extra funds. He said they had invited Boris to see the club and have had a lot of support verbally from different sources so will see what happens. He said the children have been doing some fund raising activities.

Cllr. Clewes finally commented on the success of the reading scheme held throughout the summer in the libraries.

## **12. DATES OF MEETINGS**

Date of next meeting – **26<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at 7pm at the Vets Club**

Dates of future meetings: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2009, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009 (AGM)

**The meeting closed at 9.00pm**