

ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 83rd meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 25th January 2012 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre), DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc.), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Fred Finck (Erith Yacht Club), Andrew Grieve (Rep. S Mellows BATS), Les Hoskins (Erith Rotary Club), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Alec Tapper (Forge), Dennis Roberts (Baptist Church, Erith). Rosemary White (CSAZ), Councillor Chris Ball, Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

E Brodie, L Finch, J Baker, P Harrison, J Baxter, C Wakeman, P Kilner, D Young, P Young, P West, Rev R Radcliffe, B Wright, R Durrant, J McCarthy, M Beadle

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Phillippa James, Chris Betts, Mike Dodsworth, Joan Armitage, Cllr. Edward Boateng, Chris Broadbent
Others: Teresa Pearce MP

2. THE SERVICES AT ERITH AND QUEEN MARY'S HOSPITAL

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Forum meeting and informed the meeting that neither Richard Weaton nor Phillippa James were able to attend the meeting. She said she spoken to John Winter Head of Communications and Engagement at Bexley NHS Trust, in response to a report that has come out from the Board of the South London Health Trust. The Chair read out an email from him which stated that QM would become a Health and Wellbeing campus with a specialist surgical centre, diagnostics and outpatients, alongside additional community provided health services. It also talked about alternative approaches and scenarios if the favoured plan isn't successful in its objectives, the alternative would be based on only having 2 sites. The Chair said watch this space. Bill Brookes said there had been talk about 700 job losses on the QM Site. The Chair asked if there was any action the Forum could take. A member of the public said probably not looks like they have already made their minds up. Cllr. Ball said in reality there is a deficit of over £100M and they need to re-address the deficit.

3. PRESENTATION BY DANNY RIDGWAY ON BEXLEY COLLEGE BUILDING ON WALNUT TREE ROAD SITE

The Chair introduced and welcomed the Principal and Vice-Principal of Bexley College. Danny Ridgway the Principal, said there were 2 parts to his presentation, the first being to share with the Forum and update on the project and secondly, to get any feedback and comments. He began by reminding the Forum how the project is structured. He said the college has 2 sites Hollyhill which will stay and the Tower Road site which will be sold. He said with the sale of the Tower Road site, savings and a loan from the bank we will be able to fund the building of the new college. He said Osbornes would build the new college and said that when it is ready we will de-camp from the Tower Road site. He said that from the consultations held in the summer we got some very positive feedback – will improve Erith regeneration, students, staff, potential customers etc. He said from the consultations concerns were raised regarding having housing in the Tower Road site. Danny handed out copies of a letter which was ready to go out to local residents regarding the relocation of Bexley College. Danny continued to say that the Planning Document is ready and the intention is to submit it mid February and the intention is still to have the new build ready by 2013/14 but said obviously we have to have a degree of flexibility with these things. He said it will be a 7000 sq mtr site over 3 floors. They showed a large scale plan of an artist's impression. The meeting took out 10 mins to look at the drawings and ask questions. Rosemary White asked about parking. The meeting was informed that the college would have some parking on site but they have a green travel plan. Danny said there are many more buses near by and the train station. The Vice-Principal said they will be encouraging students to come by public transport. DJ said he was concerned that there would only be 36 parking spaces in the new college and was worried about their estates regarding parking. The Chair said she could incorporate these issues in her letter to the Council. Cllr. Ball said he did not think it appropriate to put in about the college parking but some caveats about local estates mitigation. He said put in provisions around the area. Eg. controlled parking zone. Cllr. O'Neill said Tower Road was terrible to get to. The college being in the town centre is much better. A member of the public asked about the subway. Danny said he thought the subway would go. The Chair commented that when the Planning Application goes in the Forum can raise the issue regarding the subway and parking issues, but said overall the Forum are very supportive of this plan.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair wished everyone a Happy New Year and said she had been very pre-occupied with getting funding. She said she

had been in contact with Bexley Voluntary Service Council for suggestions, but said sadly she had been given no suggestions, and commented how difficult it was to get grants for on-going costs. The Chair informed the meeting that she had taken the plunge and gone to the Big Lottery Fund with a bid for 5 years' funding and awaits their response. Doreen said she had submitted the outline proposal forms and now have to see whether we will be invited to complete a full proposal. She continued to say that you have to seek references and said she had received positive feedback, particularly from Frogmore, Chris Betts. Doreen also contacted the leader of the Council Teresa O'Neill who referred her onto our local councillors, who, she said, did say "nice" things. The Chair thanked the Councillors.

The Chair said she will be attending a meeting soon to hear the latest proposals for the Lerner Road Estate. Doreen said she will feedback at the next meeting.

ACTION: DOREEN IVES

The Chair reported on a rat problem on the Riverside Gardens. Cllr. O'Neill said there has been no definitive answer. She said a letter is going out to explain what is happening. The Chair said can we keep on this.

ACTION: CLLR O'NEILL

The Chair extended a warm to Rev. Robert Radcliffe from St John's Church and said we want St John's to be part of the Forum.

The Chair said she had sent a note to Len Arnold congratulating him on the opening of the new Europa Gym in Crayford and said Len was probably going to be a Torch Bearer at the Olympics. She said she hoped they would continue their connection with the Forum and said that if we do produce another Town and Around then we will make them a lead article.

The Chair brought up the problem with Potions Bar and that they are supposed to be changing their windows. Cllr. O'Neill reported that the enforcement people have been in to Potions. She said apparently they had an architect who they sacked and they will not speak to the Council's enforcement team. She said I think they will have to bite the bullet and replace the windows.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

In Joan's absence Les Hoskins reported, but said the figures need to be confirmed on her return. The statement says we have £2,809 in the bank, which included the Forum's money and Alexander Selkirk's funds. Les said there were some cheques outstanding. £2,462 - £1,045.55 Alexander Selkirk , £1,416.47 Forum balance. He said £468 to come off of that for Town and Around. There is just under £1,000.

The Chair said in respect of the grant they will tell you within 20 days if you are in with a chance of getting it. Doreen said we need to consider different ways of organising our meetings. She said we now pay more to hire the Vet's Club it was £25 now £45. She said we will not embark on another issue of Town and Around. She said we may get another £1,000 from Frogmore. Doreen said we have to consider reducing the number of meetings per year. The Chair said most people are on email and said she always sends out lots of information to keep people informed on activities in Erith by email.

A member of the public asked why the Forum was holding some Selkirk money. The Chair confirmed that the money is assigned for the idea of getting a Plaque done in memory of the day.

The Chair said she was disappointed that Bexleyheath and Crayford stations had got money for disabled access when they already have it and why do they need improving. The Chair said do we need some action by the Forum. Cllr. Ball said that he thought as part of the planning process for the new college the Forum could say that they are keen for the college and talk about how the building is really accessible etc. The Chair confirmed that as a result of this meeting she would do a letter to the local authority supporting the college and talk about disabled access with regards to the station etc. Cllr. Ball advised the Chair to wait for the planning process of the college Cllr. Ball said to write to the Mayoral teams for them to say they agree in their plans. Alec Tapper said the letters should go the local press.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (NOV)

New Incinerator in Belvedere

The Chair read out a letter she had sent opposing this saying we already have Corys. She said Erith and Belvedere residents are doing enough. She said Mark Watling did respond and would keep us informed. The Councillors confirmed they had heard no more. A member of the public said be careful they don't plant anything across the river to us. Cllr. O'Neill said we do get informed of anything happening in Barking and she said we have not heard anything yet. Ray Hudson mentioned he had received two strange phone calls from agitated people about a new incinerator and whether the Forum are in agreement with it. The Chair confirmed that the Forum are fairly optimistic that they will not get permission to go ahead with this.

The Chair mentioned that Cllr. Ball had sent some information to her regarding Carlton Road, Fraser Road and Riverdale Road and concerns about Planning Application. There were some issues with Japanese Knock Weed which had to be removed.

7. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

Chris Betts had sent his apologies to the Chair and Doreen gave an update on activities. The Chair reported Chris was pleased to say a new Hospice Charity shop was open. There was a new company in the old Toy shop which is a little general store. Chris had said he was hoping to get a deal with the Carpet shop for them to display their products and hopefully some new retailers. The Chair reported from Chris that footfall was good 23% up on 2010. Barry Owen had reported that last Saturday the car park was full. Apparently traders were pleased with the Christmas trade. The Chair reported further saying the news about Peacocks was disappointing and it was difficult to predict the outcome for the Erith store at this stage

8. FORGE - EWG

Alec Tapper said that just over a year ago we became public as a group, and said it is little short of magnificent the way things have progressed. Alec delightedly informed the meeting that after lots of hard work, meetings and petitions, a Supplementary Planning Document dated January 2012 had been issued and the Riverside Gardens development has been removed completely from their plans. He said their plans are first Bexley College, second the former swimming pool (rear of the running horses). Alec read out a paragraph from Linda Bailey regarding the main changes proposed. He said it is not viable in the current market conditions. He said the cost of re-jigging the gardens etc, sea wall defences would be a mighty costly exercise – too ambitious. He thanked everyone for their support, but said Forge's work is not over and informed the meeting of another clean up operation planned for Sunday May 13th. He said we are going to approach Parks and Open Space about what we might do. Alec said the finalised version of the Bexley Core Strategy will be available in March 2012. Alec said we are not displeased, but we still have to be wary and said I think the economic climate played a part and we must not sit back and have to be aware. The Chair mentioned about the idea of a Town Green. Alec said Forge are keeping this on hold. If a developer were to appear then the issue might rise again. Joan McCarthy (member of the public) said on the advice of a Planning Aid Barrister we were advised not to take that route yet. Alec and Joan informed the meeting of another appeal they were made aware of in a different area where a massive amount of evidence was produced and three councilors said it was a fantastic case and the application was denied. The Chair congratulated Alec and Joan and Joan said a letter would be going out to all the Forge members informing them of the outcome and Alec said we will also be making a press statement.

9. POLICE PANEL MEETING

The Chair reported that Jerry Martin had resigned as Chairman at the last meeting and Mike Dodsworth had chaired the meeting. The Chair said we welcome back Sgt. James Coomber who had been seconded briefly for other duties. Cllr. Chris Ball said he was not sure this was the case and that there were only 3 PCs in the area as he had met the Borough Commander. Cllr. Ball would find out.

ACTION: CLLR. BALL

The Chair said it was a positive quarterly report. Thefts from motor vehicles (Satnavs) lower than last year. Car Parks in town centre have notices. Residential Burglary down on previous year, main offences on garages and sheds. It was reported that there was no significant problem with regards to anti-social behaviour.

3 new priorities set:

- Drug Dealings – Chandlers Wharf and McCarther Close
- Burglary
- Fly-tipping

Alec said fly-tipping, in particular mattresses, are a problem because we are a private development we have to get rid of the unwanted items. A member of the public said it is a hygiene and health hazard and it has to be removed. Cllr. Ball said if it is on a private estate the Council will not take it away. Maybe if it is asbestos or something the Council will do it but then recharge the Management Company. Further discussion on fly-tipping.

10. ROBINSON CRUSOE EVENT

Cllr. O'Neill apologised she had not been at the last meeting. She said October 15th had been fabulous. She said Erith Shopping Centre did well that day. Margaret said there was some money left and that they were hoping to provide a plaque or something permanent to mark the date.

11. SENIORS' CHRISTMAS EVENT

Dennis Roberts said the change of venue was good, was better being smaller and the heating was good. Dennis thanked Rosemary for the lovely Christmas cakes.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Jubilee Community Lunch – Sunday June 3rd

The Chair informed the meeting that Christ Church, The Forum, Queen Street Baptist Church and Erith Rotary Club were thinking of holding a Jubilee Lunch in the grounds of Christ Church and asked what the general feeling was. There was a positive response from the meeting and the Vicar from St John's Church said he felt sure that they would want to be involved too. The Chair said the next step was to get together a smaller group of people to organise and take it forward.

The Chair of the Riverside Festival Committee (Taj) aired concerns that it would interfere with the Festival. The Chair did not think there would be any conflict and said that the community could enjoy both events.

b) RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL The Chair asked further questions on the funding and planning of the Riverside Festival. The Chair of the Riverside Festival (Taj) said he didn't need to share this information it was for him to deal with. Cllr. Ball said "if it is a community event you need to engage the community and have things in the public domain". Cllr. Ball continued "if you want Erith Riverside Festival to be successful you need to share with the community".

c) BATS It was reported that BATS had been awarded the contract for the Olympics and Para Olympics transport.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Dates of future meetings: 23rd May 2012 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 8.45pm