

ERITH TOWN FORUM

Notes of the 86th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 25th July 2012 at 7pm.

Present: Dennis Roberts (Chair)
Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Jerry Martin (Chair, Local Police Panel), Councillor Edward Boateng, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

D Brodie, E Brodie, M Davis, K Hadley, M Beadle, R Durrant, S Sian

Speakers: Danny Ridgeway – Bexley College
Carol Smith – Bexley College

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Doreen Ives, Fred Finck, Joan Armitage, Alison Fisher, Mike Dodsworth, Alec Tapper, Rosemary White, Cllr. Margaret O'Neill, Cllr Chris Ball

Others:

2. PRESENTATION BY DANNY RIDGEWAY – BEXLEY COLLEGE

Danny Ridgeway the Principal of Bexley College informed the meeting that on 5th July the Planning Committee had approved the proposal to build the new college in Erith town centre. He confirmed that the housing development on the Tower Road block had been approved as of that evening. He said there is still 3 months for a potential judicial review but he said that on the basis of there being no objections, and Danny said there were relatively minor points, they were not expecting a judicial review. He said they were looking at January 2013 to start building until June/July 2014, new college opening September 2014. Danny showed some large photographs and images of what the college would look like. He said there will be a coffee shop, gym and hair salon open to the public. He pointed out entrances etc on the photographs. Ray Hudson brought up the issue again regarding parking and the point that there are very few parking spaces at the college. Danny Ridgeway confirmed that as part of the Planning Application a study had been done on how many people use cars and how many parking spaces there are within 1km of the new build. The outcome of the survey was that because the college is right near the station, bus routes etc it is expected that most people will use public transport. He said there will be a review of residential parking. He also confirmed that there is a new loop train service to Erith. He continued saying that part of their plans for 2 year's time would be looking at travel plans and encouraging students and staff to use public transport. He said the college will be easier to get to than the present site and he said students do not come in at the same time every day.

A member of the public asked whether he thought the students would use Morrisons car park. Danny said he had been talking to businesses and it is something that will be looked at.

A member of the public asked whether in their reviews they had had talks with Orbit. Danny Ridgeway said that it would be part of the review going forward. He said you can surmise what might happen, students in two year's time will be different.

A member of the public pointed out that when rain falls a huge pool of water collects by the old swimming pool and there is a gas leak. Bill Brookes pointed out that this would need to be directed to Bexley Highways, and said it is not really Bexley College who would deal with this problem.

Mr Ridgeway said that overall there are about 3,000 students in the college and said they will keep the Holly Hill site. He continued to say that spread over a day there would be about 1,000 people in on any one day. 800 students and 200 staff. Gerry Martin asked about full access for the disabled. Danny confirmed that the college will be completely accessible for disabled people. He said Tower Road did not lend itself for disabled access. He confirmed the new college does not have lots of steps and said each floor is accessible. He pointed out that they expect more students and staff to use the train station. He said we have written to Justin Green, Minister of transport regarding Erith Station and accessibility. He said they reported on the number of users at Erith Station and said it does not justify the work being done. Danny said we will continue to support any access issue and said I am sure students and staff will lend their voice.

Dennis read out an email from James Brockenshaw on this issue.

Terry Middleditch pointed out that at Erith Station they do offer a special service whereby they will pick you up and take you to the nearest accessible station. He said when a car does turn up it is not suitable to take a wheelchair etc. He commented on the fact that Bexleyheath and Crayford have had £6M for some more updates. Terry said local MPs and Councillors should lean on network rail a bit heavier.

Danny Ridgeway said that Cllr. O'Neill and Teresa Pearce, with the Forum, are supporting the campaign. A member of the public said Erith is the forgotten Borough. Mr Ridgeway said we are working with Larnar Road and said he thought the community there would probably want to support a campaign to get lifts at Erith Station. A member of the public asked does it come under the disabilities act. Terry Middleditch said as long as they are showing they make an effort, by providing this extra transport, they are.

Carol Smith introduced herself as the Partnership Manager at Bexley College. She said she may contact the various groups as they are becoming a responsive college. She spoke about the type of thing they are doing for example she has been in contact with Caroline Field from Orbit and the college has some students there helping to make a video. She said we are working with our students to work within the community as well. She said they will get good real skills. She said we are looking at offering work experience to get an integration of students into the local community. She said we are working closely with the job centre and looking at training programmes. She said we are hoping to get some exciting new pictures on the college website.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Dennis welcomed everyone to the meeting and read out some notes from the Chair in her absence. Dennis said that Doreen had amended the constitution to add one new Church representative, Rev Rob Radcliffe of St Johns Erith. Dennis confirmed the Chair has secured £500 a year from Cory towards the costs of the bi-monthly meetings. He said the Chair is in discussions with BATS about a joint newsletter or funding through various channels. Dennis mentioned that the Chair had some Football cards to do at the Forum meetings as a fundraiser and said that would be looked at with Doreen at the next meeting. Dennis reported from the Chair that the Quiz Night organised by Cllr. Chris Ball had been very enjoyable and it had raised £265 for the Forum. He continued to say it had been supported by our Member of Parliament, Teresa Pearce and all three Ward Councillors, Margaret O'Neill, Edward Boateng and of course Chris Ball. Dennis gave the date of 23rd September for the Erith Community Festival. Dennis reported from the Chair that Disabled Go would be a future speaker at one of our next meetings. Terry confirmed that they have a website and if you go to say a restaurant whereby they do not have good facilities for disabled users they will send someone to assess it. Terry said, for example, the level of the tables in Mambochinos in Erith are not good for someone in a wheelchair, they will look into it and assess it.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

In the absence of Joan Armitage, Dennis confirmed that as of June 20th at the Management Meeting there was £1,665 in the bank and £1,090 in the Selkirk fund.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (MAY)

Julie Clark said an amendment needed to be made on page 1 of the Minutes. Chris ball said there is a deficit of £65+M not £6.5 million as reported incorrectly in the Minutes

Dennis reported on the South London Healthcare Trust. He handed out a briefing paper for those present. He said that Queen Mary's would be carrying on until February next year at least. He said they have got an administrator in which is all detailed in the hand out. Cllr. Boateng reported that at the latest Council meeting the issue on Erith hospital had been raised. He pointed out that Erith hospital is very important and essential. He said it is important that we keep what is at Erith hospital. He said it is business as usual until February next year.

6. POLICE PANEL MEETING

Jerry Martin reported on the last meeting at Pier Road Police Office on 3rd July.

To stop non-payment at the petrol station, he said Morrisons had been advised to use a system where they can only get out with a barrier and a disc. He said the crime rate was down 33% for Apr-Jun. He said they are a good team, very visible. Jerry talked about Olympic extraction days and said there would be 6 that would not be covered.

Extract from Police Panel Minutes

“ **Action raised:** a record be made of Alcohol related incidents to consider whether an ‘Alcohol free zone’ is viable within the WEST STREET area

(All members of Ward panel) Unanimous vote for new Ward priorities for Drugs and Alcohol related ASB”

He said anyone can attend the Police Panels and the next one is on 2nd October at the Youth and Family Centre, West Street at 7pm. He continued to say all three Councillors are welcome to the meeting but only can vote. He said if we do not get members there, we will have to abandon the meeting. He said the panel would have to be dissolved and joined with Northumberland Heath. He has been there for four years and they have only managed to get four quorums in that time. Cllr. Boateng said we Councillors feel it is very important to have all Forums open to all Councillors. He said he had rung and spoken to the Sergeant. He continued to say we need people to attend because we need feedback and it is important that residents are there. He said Parkspring Court and Atrium Court had a meeting recently. Jerry Martin continued to say we need to encourage a cross section of people to come. A member of the public asked what the role of the PSO is. Jerry said their powers are pretty limited. He said they can contain people but they have not got the power of arrest. Jerry said they fully intend to put to the panel about having a panel membership. A member of the public said that 2 or 3 of her neighbours were refused when they came to a meeting. Jerry said that has changed now we have to sign terms of reference at a neutral place and they are open meetings now. Jerry said the panels are for residents to tell police what they want. Cllr. Boateng suggested after the Olympics that the Commander may like to come to the Forum.

Ray Hudson said he was aware of the rapid rise of cold calling and scams. He said if someone knocks on your door who does not speak English they may be dodgy window cleaners, builders, driveways etc. He said let the police know or Neighbourhood Watch know.

7. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE UPDATE

Dennis informed the meeting that there was no-one present to report on this Agenda item.

8. FORGE

Alec Tapper was not present at the meeting to report, but his neighbour confirmed all was going well.

9. SENIORS' SUMMER OUTING

Dennis reported that 48 seniors went to Hastings on 11th July and it was a success.

10. ERITH COMMUNITY LUNCH

Dennis reported that this was a real success. He said there was plenty of food, drink and desserts with 300 attending. He said we hope to do this again next year in June for the 60 year Coronation.

A member of the public said may be not on the same day as the Erith Riverside Festival.

Dennis thanked all those who helped provide such lovely food and put on the Erith Community lunch.

11. QUIZ NIGHT

This was covered earlier in Chair's Report

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A member of the public asked if the Forum could write to Bexley Council regarding the way the contractors have cut the trees in Lesney Park Road and Park Crescent. She said they have left all thin branches and next time could they use a different contractor. Another member of the public said we should not really complain it has taken us this long to get them trimmed. Cllr. Boateng asked if the Forum could refer this letter to the Councillors rather than the Council and they will deal with it.

A member of the public brought up an issue regarding a problem with some pavements in Avenue Road which Cllr. Chris Ball was dealing with. The resident had received a letter from Cllr. Ball with the issue still unresolved. Cllr. Boateng spoke to the resident and said he would take up the matter. He would discuss with Cllr. Ball. **ACTION: CLLR. BALL/BOATENG**

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting: 3rd October 2012 at the Vets Club

Dates of future meetings: 28th November 2012, 30th January 2013, 27th March 2013, and 22nd May 2013 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 8.25pm