

ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 78th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY 2011 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
Chris Broadbent (Disabilities Group), DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc.), Mike Dodsworth (Erith Museum), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Rena Papa (Baxley Pensioners Forum), Denis Roberts (Baptist Church, Erith) Councillor Margaret O'Neil, Councillor Edward Boateng, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

J Webb, M Webb, D Brodie, E Brodie, M Spence, P Harrison, A Tapper, L Finch, A Harbert, J Baxter, J Baker, M Davis, P West, F Fink, A Fink, C Wakeman, J Leake, A Wells, R Shore, W Brookes, A Williams

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Les Hoskins, Pamela Horner, Joan Armitage, Rosemary White, Sylvia Boyd,

Others: David Evenett, MP, Teresa Pearce MP, Cllr. Chris Ball

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She said a grateful thanks to Chris Betts and Frogmore for paying for the extra lights in Pier Road. She commented on the struggle over the Christmas lights. She thanked Barry Owen who had worked with her to get the contractor, who initially seemed so keen to get the lights, up then made it rather heavy going. The Chair said clearly there will be no funds from Bexley Council for Christmas 2011, and we will be on our own again trying to get smaller businesses to put money in to put up some lights. The Chair commented that Northumberland Heath did it so Erith ought to be able to. She said we need to start the process in about August/September.

She reported on a Voluntary Forum meeting she had attended. She reported on a presentation there by Janet Smith of Bexley Voluntary Service Council BVSC who talked about the Government's new ideas on how to achieve "The Big Society". She continued to say that basically it was all about how national and local government could get volunteers to do work currently carried out by paid employees, sometimes highly paid!. She continued by saying that money previously given to the voluntary sector is to be cut by 20%. She commented that she was glad we got some funding last year, hopefully to see us through the next 2 years.

The Chair briefly touched on the GP Commissioning instead of Bexley Care Trust. She said Bexley Doctors are keen to take on the job. She said she was unsure as to whether the community will get a better service or private health care may creep in. The Chair remarked on the fact that Erith Hospital will be the first centre for health and well-being in Bexley to open in April.

The Chair introduced Shirley Dewhurst who had come to the meeting to brief the Forum on the 10 year Census due to take place in March to May of this year. Shirley informed the meeting that every household had to complete the census form and there would be assistance offered to anyone having difficulty completing it. She talked briefly about the Census and said it was important for us as a community to complete because this enables the government to plan for future services to the Borough to ensure your area gets the correct funding. She assured individuals that all information is kept confidential, and there is a helpline number on the form and if needed you can ask for it in other languages. She said the last day for return was 6th April and if they have not been returned someone will come and knock to collect it from you. The Chair informed the meeting that you could visit the website www.censusjobs.co.uk.

Finally, the Chair talked about the Bexley Core Strategy consultation documents being available in the Library during the last two months. She continued to say there has been some fear over the change of use clause and the fact that Developers may be able to acquire Riverside Gardens for housing. The Chair said with this in mind Joan McCarthy and Alec Tapper have decided to do something positive to protect this green space. The Chair then handed over to Peter Hickman who she introduced as a former Senior Environmental Officer for the old Erith Council. She said Peter has many years of experience and is very attached to this area, although he now resides elsewhere in the Borough.

3. PRESENTATION: Riverside Gardens

Peter Hickman gave a presentation and overview about the history of the Riverside Gardens – how it has changed, what it has been used for, and the various proposals put forward for the gardens. He said he had not been a resident in Erith for 46 years, but has a keen interest in Erith. He said the future of this site is vulnerable and we need to protect it. Alec Tapper addressed the meeting with news of their newly formed organisation called “Forge” – Friends of Riverside Gardens Erith. Alec said we felt we needed to converse together before they come forward with another proposal. Alec said we want to put forward the people of Erith’s views because we want the Developers to observe the wishes of the local people. Alec said we have application forms for you to join “Forge”. He said he hoped the representatives on the Forum would take away the forms to their respective organisations, and hoped individuals would sign up at the end of the meeting. He said it is £1 to become a member of “Forge”. He said they already had 100 members. Alec informed the meeting that a press statement was ready to go out. The Chair said Alec and his colleagues would be available at the end of the meeting to chat to and give out forms etc. She encouraged those in attendance to have a look at the photos and their “Forge” notice boards. Denis Roberts asked if you become a member will it mean attending lots of committee meetings. Alec replied no the meetings would be as and when required. Councillor Boateng asked if Councillors could become members. Alec said of course if they are in support of it. Alec asked the Chair if he could have a show of hands for those in support of their actions. It was noted that the meeting was in full support of “Forge”. Alec informed the meeting that they intend to hold a “clean up the foreshore day” on the last Sunday in March – Alec will have more details on this.

Cllr. O’Neill confirmed she had attended a recent meeting and remarked that the Erith Western Gateway was by no means dead. A member of the public (Chair of the Riverside Festival) informed the meeting that the Council are trying to dissuade them and trying to get them to use Erith Rec. for this year’s Festival. He said he is going to pursue it because it will be the 20th Anniversary. Cllr. O’Neill said maybe we need to get a petition up.

4. TREASURER’S REPORT

Doreen Ives reported for Les Hoskins who was unable to attend the meeting. She reported that we are in a good position with a balance of £3,000, which means we can take the meetings forward. She said we can do a few more issues of Town and Around. She touched on the fact that the Council maintains the Vet’s Club building and the cost for holding the meetings may be slightly increased.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (SEPT)

Queen Street Zebra Crossing

Cllr. O’Neill said the road markings are in place, but the order has been lost. She read out a letter informing everyone of the situation. She informed the meeting that another order has been put through and they will update Cllr. O’Neill as soon as possible. The Chair reviewed that the site visit was done back in the summer. A member of the public remarked on some give way signs in the same area that have worn away and you cannot read them. Cllr. O’Neill to pursue.

(ACTION: CLLR. O’NEILL)

Shopping Centre Signs – Bikes

The Chair needs to still talk to Barry Owen about getting the signs lowered to eye level

(ACTION: DOREEN IVES)

Cross Street Parking

It was reported that parking tickets are still being issued where they should not be. Cllr. O’Neill to pursue.

(ACTION: CLLR. O’NEILL)

6. TRI-FORUM YOUTH NEWS

Margaret O’Neill reported that they had their Annual meeting.

7. ERITH RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

The Chair reported that the shopping centre was doing well. She said she had no figures from Chris Betts but was pleased to see the new shops – The Card Factory and the old Woolworths store doing well. She said she had been informed that the Woolworths shop had a 10 year lease. She said the Manager in the Wises store had renewed his lease and Mambocinos were very happy. The Chair continued to say the shopping centre looks more active and the footfall is increasing.

8. ROBINSON CRUSOE EVENT 2011

Cllr. O'Neill reported that the project group is working really hard. She said that the Heritage Lottery Fund have suggested that they apply for Youth Roots Funds. She said therefore we need to involve lots of young people and spread the news. She said we need Application Forms to allow young people to present their research. She said by October we should have lots of information from young people. Cllr. O'Neill continued by saying we are looking at using a barge and are going to try to land someone on the day at Morrison's Pier. Margaret said she had approached the Deputy Manager of Morrison's about using the Pier on 15th October. She said he was happy about it. Margaret said the opening event would be at the Riverside Festival. She said arrangements were all going well and confirmed that the Community Fund account of the Forum was their umbrella account. Cllr. O'Neill confirmed that Kent Life was interested in doing an article.

9. ERITH WESTERN GATEWAY

This was covered earlier in the meeting. Alison Fisher confirmed that the Regeneration Unit moved out of their offices last year.

10. SENIOR'S CHRISTMAS EVENT

The Chair reported that the event had been successful but was unsure as to why it was not as well attended as in previous years. She said it had been publicised in the same way. Someone raised the concern that some people might not like crossing Northend Road. The Chair said at their last Management Meeting they had taken the decision to hold the event at the Baptist Church, Erith, which holds just 80 people.

11. TOWN AND AROUND

Doreen said she will be getting another Town and Around together and articles need to be to her by 9th February. She said "Forge" would take the front page. There would be articles on Erith Hospital and the new provision, the Robinson Crusoe event, the Police Panel and any other articles that she gets. She said the articles need to be 200 words and it will be published in early March.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Chris Broadbent reported on Starburger that had burnt down and has re-opened. He said it is doing even better, they have changed the whole set up. He said there is a Gym going above Wises and an Accountants has opened above Owens.
2. Margaret O'Neill reported on the canopy at the Snooker Club in Pier Road. She said it is 70 or more years old. She said it is in a dangerous state. She said it is difficult because there are a number of owners in the building – it is under scrutiny!
3. Margaret O'Neill spoke about the Core Study Local Implementation Plan the Chair had touched on earlier and urged people to take the questionnaire on Transport in the Borough and fill it out and send it back to Richard Hawkins. She said it will put our points of view across on the Transport in the Borough. She also urged people to point out the issue of accessibility to Erith Station and the fact that it has not been discussed openly. She said we are trying to get 2 lifts in the station for accessibility.
4. The Chair touched on the Cory Incinerator meeting she had attended the day before and which was an update on the works and said the first firing up will be in Feb/March. They hoped it would be up and running by 2012. She informed the meeting that from a report it stated that out of 54 employees required, who need to be of a high skill level, 25% are local people from within the Dartford and Erith area. She said they are working with Resources Plus in Erith. The Chair said she thought Corys were doing quite well on environmental issues and it was Bexley Council who were holding them up for the paths and seating in the surrounding areas.
5. The Chair and Mike Dodsworth confirmed the next 3 priorities to emerge from the last Police Panel meeting were:

- Metal theft
- Residential Burglary
- Work on drug activity

They both said the Panel meeting was well attended. The Chair said things have definitely improved and the Sgt is very proactive. Alec Tapper said the Sgt has promised his support for the river clean up day. A member of the public asked for dates of the police panel meetings but the Chair agreed they were not well publicised. She said she always forwards any dates on through the Forum email mailing list. She said if you could give her your email address she will forward on details on community events.

6. Chris Broadbent said there are groups of children from two schools hanging around the bus stop opposite the Town Hall. The Chair said she had brought this up at the Panel meeting but no one was aware of it. Chris said there are about 80-120 school kids from Erith and Trinity. Edward Boateng said children nearly pushed a woman under a vehicle the other day. He said he had been into Erith School to talk to them to try to sort it out. The Chair asked Cllr. Boateng if he would go into Trinity to do the same. He said he would and would feedback to the Chair. Mike Dodsworth said he would email Sgt James Coomber. A member of the public said he thought it was to do with the informality between the police and the kids on the street, he said if you look at the way the officers deal with the youngsters the police are too easy going. **Action Cllr. Boateng**

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS - Date of next meeting: 30th March 2011 at the Vets Club

Dates of future meetings: 18th May 2011 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 8.40pm