

ERITH TOWN FORUM

Notes of the 88th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 28th November 2012 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
Joan Armitage (Bexley Civic Society), Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre), DJ (Erith Riverside Residence Association), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Jerry Martin (Chair, Local Police Panel), Rena Papa (Bexley Pensioners Forum), Rev. Robert Radcliffe (St Johns Church), Councillor Chris Ball, Councillor Edward Boateng, Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

L. Finch, B Simpson, M Kenny, P Donaldson, R White, D Brodie, E Brodie, W Parkhurst, J Baxter, T Oliver, T Copley, A Heartfield, M Beadle, J McCarthy, M Davis, K Hadley, C Wakeman, Y Seymour, S Seymour

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Chris Betts, M Dodsworth, Fred Finck, Andrew Grieve, Phillippa James, Terry Middleditch, Dennis Roberts, Alec Tapper

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed the meeting that she had been notified late that evening that no-one from the NHS would be coming. She urged people to go to the Civic Offices in December and to take a booklet (available at the meeting) to see what the Administrator is saying regarding the NHS.

Doreen spoke about the Christmas lights. She said we applied for and received £2,000 from Bexley Council for lights at the top end of Pier Road and in Bexley Road to try to attract passing traffic on the Fish roundabout area. She continued saying that invoices for these lights will take up all but about £100 of that money, the remainder will be given to the three churches organising carol singing in the Shopping Centre on 8th, 15th, and 22nd December between 10.30 and 11.30. The Chair said a thank you to Bexley Council and urged those who may be in the centre to join in the singing. She said that she needs to complete forms to prove the money has been spent according to criteria laid down, but did not envisage any problems. The Chair touched on getting money for the Barge Race Community celebration later in 2013 and said Cllr. O'Neill would speak about this later in the meeting. The Chair spoke about Bexley Council's plans to expand Christ Church school. She said there would be an Open Meeting at the school on Thursday 29th November 3.30pm to 7.00pm, hosted by the design team, the school and the Council and plans will be on display. The Chair confirmed that Cllr. Boateng would speak about some concerns under AOB. The Chair reminded those present that there is still a vacancy for a Management Committee member. Doreen reminded the meeting about the Flood Tea on 2nd February 2.30 at Belvedere Community Centre, Mitchel Close. Doreen also reminded the meeting about St John's Church Concert on Sunday 2nd December. Rev. Radcliffe confirmed to the meeting that during the run up to Christmas every Thursday there would be meditation at 7pm. The concert would be £5 and £3 concessions to raise money for St John's Church Hall.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan Armitage reported that there is £2,982.26 in the bank but £985.55 is the Alexander Selkirk fund which leaves the Forum £1996.71. Joan said we had funds of £500 from Cory and £1000 from Frogmore.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (3 OCT)

Barge Race: Margaret O'Neill reported on the Barge Race event being arranged in relation to the 150th Anniversary of the 1st barge race. She said the date would be 13th July 2013 and would make it a community day in Erith. She said the Council did not see why we could not use the Riverside Gardens and she said we are writing to different charities to see if they would like a stall and looking at a nautical theme. She said it is a very historic day but we need to raise some money. The Chair said if anyone has any good ideas for this day please email at erithtownforum@hotmail.com.

Ken Boyce Centre: Margaret O'Neill also reported on the Ken Boyce Centre saying that it has moved to another social service type building in the Borough. Ray Hudson asked if they would keep the name, because it was named after someone of significance. Cllr. O'Neill said she would find out.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

Riverside Community Forum: The Chair reported back on this after the last meeting saying that this Forum would probably disband. She continued to say that at the last open meeting it was agreed the way forward was to join with the Belvedere Forum. A member of the Cory team to attend a set number of meetings. A member of the public reported that Alec Tapper had gone to a Belvedere Forum meeting regarding the incinerator. The Chair expressed that it was disappointing not to have been informed of the meeting Alec had attended. The Chair commented saying that extra lorry issues were raised at the last meeting but said that what is carried along Bexley Road to the Incinerator is only rubbish from Bexley all other comes along the river.

Pavement and trees in Avenue Road: Margaret O'Neill confirmed she had spoken to an officer. Member of the public said that 2 men were out in the road and came across. They said the work would be done in Dec/Jan but only as far as No. 86. Member of the public said the whole road needs doing 106-86. Cllr. O'Neill said she would find out when they would do the rest. Member of the public said they would get a letter a couple of weeks before they are due to start. Member of the public said the Council said that regarding the tree roots it would be down to the people who do the work. Lifting drive up etc. Cllr. O'Neill said when they are there residents should contact Chris Ball. The Chair asked the members of public if they felt things were eventually happening. A member of the public talked about No. 60 Avenue Road saying a brick wall was put up, the tree was lopped to the level of the wall and a few days later the whole tree was cut down. She said we want to know when the tree will be replaced. Margaret O'Neill to deal with this.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

5. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE UPDATE

The Chair said Chris Betts had sent his apologies. He said the new £1 shop was taking some time to take over the old Wise premises. He said the footfall in the Centre was increasing. The Chair continued to report from Chris saying there would be various activities for the Christmas period, all detailed on the reverse of the Christmas Tree Festival leaflets. The Chair urged those present to pick up a leaflet at the end of the meeting. The Chair said the Shopping Centre paid for the leaflet because they had their events advertised on the back. Alison Fisher asked what Footfall was – the Chair commented on the guy from Warmlake sports who said footfall is counted from Barclays Pier Road to Bexley Road, which is where all the school children pass through! The Chair tried to be optimistic saying how much better the centre is now and said we need to be upbeat about it. Ray Hudson asked what time the choir events were as there was no time on the leaflet. The Chair said 8th December 11am -12 noon. She said the leaflets were printed before specific dates were secured by the shopping centre. The Chair said she hoped the Christmas period would be good for the shops.

Mary Beadle, member of the public, informed the meeting that the Cross Keys pub had been bought and was going to be a restaurant downstairs and a conference room/centre upstairs. The Chair said she had not seen any planning permission. Cllr. O'Neill said it was because there had been no change of use. Rosemary White asked why Potions was still open - Cllr. O'Neill said she did not know why they still had not had their windows changed and said she keeps asking and will continue to. She said they are only allowed open so many hours a week.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

6. POLICE PANEL MEETING

Jerry Martin reported saying the last meeting was in July and the one after was cancelled because of the Olympic secondments of officers. He said the next meeting was on 6th December at 7 O'clock in the Youth and Family Centre, West Street. Jerry urged people to attend and said if we do not get a quorum we cannot carry on. He said the residents of Erith are either quite happy with the policing or not bothered. Cllr. O'Neill said we know about the history of the panel when they would not allow people to come. People do not realise they can come the police do not publicise it. Jerry said we need to do a drive for recruitment for members otherwise we are wasting our time. Jerry said I admit previously it was restrictive who could attend and to vote you needed to become a panel member. He said all three Councillors can now attend but they can only have one vote. DJ said Sonya from his committee attended. The Chair said we need more people to come. A member of the public said she had lived in Erith for 20 years and had never heard of the Police Panel meetings. Ray Hudson said that when it was originally set up it was police orientated, they set guidelines and constitutions etc. He said it now needs more community engagement and we are trying hard to make a meeting of the community and not the police. Cllr. O'Neill said she would like to thank Jerry for keeping this alive. The Chair said she would second that. Rosemary White said she could never understand why Erith had such a problem.

7. SENIORS' CHRISTMAS EVENT

The Chair reported that this will be on 17th December at the Queen Street Baptist Church Hall from 2.30pm – 5pm. She said it will be the same format as last year with the same entertainers, tea, mince pies, raffle, bingo etc. The Chair said the Rotary Club will give £100 towards the event. For tickets contact Doreen on 01322 345406 or Dennis on 01322 341913 or erithtownforum@hotmail.com.

8. SECURING SUSTAINABLE NHS SERVICES

The Chair said that the booklets were available at the meeting to take and read. A member of the public went to a meeting at the Baptist Church and 2 people who were meant to come and talk did not turn up. The Chair said there were various suggestions that the Administrator had come up with and all the options/suggestions were in the booklet. There were numerous discussions on this topic and the Chair raised concerns over Erith Hospital. A member of the public said at the meeting they attended they said they would leave it alone at the moment. Cllr. O'Neill said there were no plans to enhance or to close it and keep the x-ray dept open. Cllr. Boateng said Erith Hospital will remain as it is. After the discussions the Chair asked if we should respond as a Forum. The view was that a response should go from the Forum and individuals should also do their own responses. The Chair urged those present to take a booklet and email her any suggestions/comments to enable her to put a response together.

9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS/DECISIONS

The Chair commented on Stonewood car park closing. DJ said he did get the Planning Application but it did not specify when it will close. The Chair commented whether we need to send a reminder about how people are going to park. DJ said we will need to revisit once the college starts up. He said there is nothing we can do until it starts impacting on our estate. Cllr. O'Neill said this was brought up with Will Tuckley and we have highlighted the problem and it is going to be looked at once the college is built regarding parking arrangements. He will update Cllr. O'Neill. Margaret to update at next Forum meeting. Cllr. O'Neill said she had asked about accessibility for Erith Station. She said Erith is at the top of the list for accessibility. She said you will probably know that Bexleyheath Station have a new lift. She said the Council did not know anything about a lift at Bexleyheath Station. Margaret said she has asked why Bexleyheath have been given a lift and not Erith. She said she was told they had been talking about other alternatives. She said she will get on at them and need to get Bexley College to lobby them about accessibility. A member of the public said they are providing a taxi service from Erith Station to Belvedere Station. A member of the public said they attended a meeting at Morrisons where they said they think they have enough parking and they might not have to charge. Cllr. O'Neill said she had noticed lots more cars in Park Crescent and Lesney Park Road. A member of the public commented that there are now yellow lines in Victoria Road.

ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Consultations on Detailed Policies and Sites: The Chair commented on river crossings. She said TFL want to know what you think of a ferry between Thamesmead and Beckton and a tunnel for the Silvertown link to Greenwich. What would you prefer – both or one or other? The Chair informed the meeting that in the Bexley magazine it tells you how to respond. Cllr. O'Neill said Blackwall Tunnel and the new tunnel will be tolled. The Chair said have your say on the Consultations – Planning Bexley's Future – Detailed Policies and Sites. – Consultation ends 11th January 2013.

Christ Church School: Cllr. Boateng spoke about an open meeting being held on 29th November at the school where residents/parents etc can go and voice their concerns. He said the consultation ends on 10th December. There were residents in attendance at the meeting who voiced their concerns over parking, extra traffic, noise, another entrance, quality of life deteriorating, lots of social problems already occurring. Following extensive discussion, it was agreed that the Forum should put in a response with regards to the outcome of the meeting discussions, as well as individuals putting in their own responses. The Chair would do a letter of response from Erith Town Forum. DJ advised from personal experience that it is always good to add anything extra you want to say on blank piece of paper because consultation questions can sometimes be leading questions. Cllr. Ball spoke with experience of being a head teacher about the issues and concerns and said there are always these general problems with schools and the local areas. He said unfortunately parents are not always considerate to the local residents. He said he did not know the school particularly but did comment from his own experience of being obliged to give a space if the school has one, even if the pupil is coming 4 miles. It was raised whether the police should monitor the area for anti-social behaviour. Cllr. Ball said the number of visits has increased but there are not enough resources to tackle one school. The Chair closed the discussions agreeing to do a Forum response and asked for any suggestions/comments to go to her at erithtownforum@hotmail.com

ACTION: DOREEN IVES

Forge: Joan McCarthy informed the meeting that Forge had taken over more of the Riverside Gardens and planted 532 winter pansies and 700 spring bulbs.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting: 30th January 2013 at the Vets Club

Dates of future meetings: 27th March 2013, and 22nd May 2013 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 9pm.