

ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 81st meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2011 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre), DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc.), Mike Dodsworth ((Erith Museum), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Fred Finck (Erith Yacht Club), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Phillippa James (Bexley Care Trust), Denis Roberts (Baptist Church, Erith), Alec Tapper (Forge), Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Councillor Chris Ball, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

L Finch, A Finck, R Durrant, J Baxter, P West J McCarthy

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Joan Armitage, Chris Betts, Jerry Martin, Rosemary White, Cllr. Edward Boateng

Others: Teresa Pearce MP

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She touched on the problem of the travellers' horses on the old swimming pool site. She said Bexley Council were contacted by several people which resulted in the situation being rectified quickly. She said Lorraine at the Running Horses was particularly anxious since she felt customers could be deterred from eating at her restaurant. The Chair informed the meeting that she had sent a letter to all the traders at the top end of Pier Road regarding Christmas tree lights. The Chair said she had not had a response from any of them therefore concluded that the traders cannot afford to pay for lights this year. The chair informed the meeting that approaches to Tadge regarding the Riverside Festival had been unsuccessful. The Chair had contacted Bexley Council to get costs for road closure and other expenses for 2012. Joan McCarthy said she is in contact with Tadge with a view to making some progress with this project. Doreen said both the Forum and Erith Rotary are anxious to help make it happen and will continue with their efforts. The Chair confirmed that proposals have been made to offer the public the choice of paying by phone for parking in the Pay and Display car parks. Some discussion followed and comments were made that off street parking was being changed to this method exclusively, with no choice. The Chair was asked to respond to the Council expressing the concerns of the public, particularly the knock-on effect of parking in private areas eg Saltford Close.

3. SENIOR'S CHRISTMAS EVENT

Dennis confirmed that this year it would be held at the Queen Street Baptist Church which holds a maximum of 80 people. It will be held on Monday 12th December from 2pm – 5pm with the usual entertainment, Bingo and of course a raffle. The residents of Sherwood House are helping with preparations. To secure tickets, contact Dennis on 01322 341913.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

In Joan's absence the Chair confirmed that there are still enough funds to carry on with our meetings and produce at least one more Newsletter.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (JULY)

Bexley college – The Chair reported that contracts have now been signed with developers and the next stage is to submit formal planning application. Various matters still to be settled particularly the 106 payment. Cllr O'Neill said we should press for the 106 money to provide disabled access to Erith Station. During her visit to the College the Chair said she was surprised to see much of the building not being used. The new College will be 50% smaller than the existing accommodation. Mike Dodsworth commented that local residents were not supportive of the planned new housing development on the old college site.

Cllr. O'Neill confirmed that Cllr. Boateng had not yet visited St Columbus School about unruly behaviour at the end of the school day..
(ACTION: CLLR. BOATENG)

POLICE PANEL MEETING – The Chair reported that arrests had been made for starting loose rubbish fires and the culprit had been sent to prison.

PLANNING APPLICATION SOFT PLAY AREA AND CAFÉ - Local residents have expressed concern about possible noise and both the Planning Officer and Cllr. Ball expressed doubt as to whether it will be granted.

6. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

Chris Betts had sent an update to reveal to the Forum that the secret unit in the centre is Cash Generator a shop retailing second-hand goods and offering pawnbroker services. A member of the public remarked that a similar shop was operating in Dartford. Also since the last meeting the toy shop had closed and re-opened in the Orchard Shopping Centre. Some interest has been expressed in the unit already fitted out facing on to Bexley Road Bus stops opposite Argos. The Chair reported that Paydons Chemist is trying to sub-let to a Baby Scanning operation to be run by the Health Centre. The chair asked Phillippa to get more details for the Forum. Riverside Shopping Centre would not be getting involved with any Christmas lighting at the top end of Pier Road because trying to achieve a display had been too problematic. Chris Betts' email also contained the good news that a cheque for £1000 was on its way to the Forum.

7. UPDATE ON MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SITES – CARNEGIE AND EWG

Cllr. O'Neill said Bexley Council are concentrating solely on the Bexley College project and the Bexleyheath Civic Centre. She said their eye is off the ball as far as Erith is concerned. DJ asked if a statement to this effect would be made. A member of the public said that FORGE had been promised an answer about the gardens by the end of the week. Cllr. Ball expressed surprise since nothing had appeared on the Council list. He promised to make further enquiries.

8. FORGE UPDATE

Alec Tapper expressed disappointment that Bexley Council had not tried to get funds when available from GLA to re-design the gardens rather than relying on selling off part of the Gardens to build a block of flats. DJ asked Cllrs. to get a written update on the current situation for all parts of the EWG proposal. Tenants in the flats in Saltford Close ought to be kept informed about this on a regular basis. Cllr. Ball reminded members that a "response" is different to a "public decision". We will probably get the former but not the latter. The Chair said she would write to the Council on behalf of the Forum asking for the latest position.

Doreen Ives

9. BEXLEY COMMUNITY POLICING GROUP MEETING

Mike Dodsworth attended the last meeting which spent some time discussing actions taken by Bexley police which resulted in keeping the borough relatively safe during the recent riots. There was also a workshop exploring different ways to plan for public disorder. He also announced that the next Police Panel Meeting would be 11th October, and encouraged people to attend.

10. ROBINSON CRUSOE EVENT

Cllr. O'Neill confirmed that the Alexander Selkirk Re-inactment Day was 15th October. Plans had been finalised and she outlined all the events that would take place. She encouraged all to attend what should be a really good event.

11. ERITH RAILWAY STATION

Lift - The Chair confirmed that the Management Committee recommended that we should have a paper petition as well as the on-line petition started by Teresa Pearce MP. Cllr. Ball reported that Teresa had this in hand.

Ticket Office Closure - The Chair told the meeting that there are plans to close the ticket offices at all category E stations. Erith, Belvedere and Slade Green are category E stations. It was generally agreed that it would be disastrous if the office at Erith closed, Cllr. Ball reported that since the Taxi Office at the station closed, incidents of minor crime had doubled. A presence for at least some of the day is necessary. Cllr. Ball agreed to arrange for a Network Rail representative to attend our next meeting to discuss the issue. It was agreed the Forum would draw up a petition to try to stop the closure.

Doreen Ives

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

VET'S SUMMER FETE – Good event, gave the Forum some publicity.

Cllr. O'Neill reported that **St. Johns Church Erith** are making plans to take over the old tyre factory opposite their church hall with a view to having community activities there. All Councillors welcome this idea. No formal planning application has yet been made. St. Johns will welcome their new vicar on 9th November – Rev. Robert Radcliffe.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting: 30th November 2011 at the Vets Club

Dates of future meetings: 25th January 2012, 28th March 2012, 23rd May 2012 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 9.15pm