

ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 79th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH 2011 at 7pm.

Present: Doreen Ives (Chair)
DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc.), Mike Dodsworth (Erith Museum), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Pamela Horner (Erith Playhouse Theatre), Les Hoskins (Erith Rotary Club), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Rena Papa (Bexley Pensioners Forum), Denis Roberts (Baptist Church, Erith), Rosemary White (CSAZ), Councillor Chris Ball, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

L Finch, D Johnson, D Brodie, E Brodie, A Tapper, M Butler, J Butler, P Young, D Young, T Williams, A Harbert, M Beadle, J Baxter, M Spencer, A Heartfield, E Prott, G Wratten, C Wakeman, M Davis, W Brookes, J Baker, B Sampson, T Sampson

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Chris Broadbent, Chris Betts, Sylvia Boyd

Others: Cllr. M O'Neill, Cllr. E Boateng

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. She mentioned the timing of the meeting and suggested it might be better for the meeting to start later at 7.30 to enable people to get home from work in time. She said we would look at this again at the AGM with a view to changing the start time. The Chair said most of the activity had revolved around the Riverside Gardens and the Western Gateway SDP. She said this would be looked at further later in the Agenda. She said Alec Tapper will update us on FORGE, but said she would personally like to thank all those who joined in the foreshore clean up. She said she hoped to get in touch with the Cadets to persuade them to write an article for the next newsletter about young people taking action to improve their environment. The Chair said we hear such negative stuff about them.

The Chair informed the meeting that she had sent a Forum response to the Consultation on cuts to Bexley Council, in particular with regards to Libraries, support for the elderly and those with special needs. She said she would do a similar one after this meeting on the Western Gateway SDP.

Doreen said the concerns we had about large groups of children congregating around the bus stops has been addressed by Sgt. Coomber and his team, and they are observing other reported activities.

The Chair said she hoped everyone had seen the Spring issue of Town and Around and noted all the dates in their diaries. She said the canopy under the Snooker Club is much safer now. She asked Chris Ball if this is likely to be replaced. Cllr. Ball said it has been made safe but is not likely to be replaced in the near future.

The Chair informed the meeting that the Old River Police building which was used previously by the Regeneration Unit had new occupants in the upper floor and the company is involved with boat engines, so very appropriate. The Chair informed the meeting that Parking Charges would be going up with a new mandate for 7 days a week. She said some car parks would be 24 hour. Doreen said this change would be effective from the new financial year. Chris Ball commented that the level of enforcement would be going up too.

Ray Hudson informed the meeting that there had been a large conference in Bexleyheath with Transport for London and there were complaints about increasing surveillance, and it was noted that Erith needed help. He said it was reported that there had been a drop in anti-social behaviour but he said it had not dropped but the behaviour was not getting reported. He said forms must be filled in. A member of the public said that by putting up parking charges could deter business. The Chair pointed out that mostly in Erith it is free parking.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Les Hoskins reported a balance of £3,181.37 in the bank. He said he had copies if anyone wanted one.

4. HEALTHCARE IN BEXLEY

Phillipa James was not present at the meeting so Cllr. Chris Ball stepped in to give an overview. He said that currently the Health Service runs via the Care Trust. He said the arrangement will be that the GP's commission services and there will be a wider scale service. He said as part of the London and South East we will have 6 Care Trusts in the SE. He said it saves money and is more efficient. Cllr. Ball continued to say that the GP's will commission the day to day stuff. Eg a hip replacement – they will find a more appropriate provider. He said in theory GP's can help get the right care more quickly and more efficiently. He said the Care Trust employed 160 staff costing £350M, £12M on running operations and GP's will be doing it for £1.4M. Chris Ball said he had some concern over a completely new system like that. Cllr. Ball said having a campus with lots of services gives more flexible arrangements. He said QM A & E is 8am-8pm and if you are taken by ambulance you will go to Darenth Valley. He reported that Cardiology, Diabetes etc will be expanded. He said it will take 3 years to complete and there is debate as to who owns the site. He said Erith Hospital will be a smaller version. He said that elected surgery that was already booked would be business as usual. A member of the public asked are they working to the 4 hours waiting time. Cllr. Ball said there is an Urgent Care Centre at QM Hospital. He said there is not at Queen Elizabeth because they are resistant to Urgent Care Centers because it means less people stepping through the door – therefore less money ! The Chair asked if there was anywhere you could report complaints/concerns. He said hospitals have forms or you can do it on-line or you can phone PALS to report concerns. A member of the public said it is a concern that people are being seen by Triad Nurses then being sent home. Chris Ball said Triad Nurses are quite experienced. He said the National Health is all about the way the money flows and it forces people to manipulate finances. He said they are not worried about the healthcare. The Chair said if you are not happy you have to make a complaint and take up the issue.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (JAN)

It was noted and amended that on pg 2 of the January Minutes it should read Peter Hickson and not Hickman.

Queen Street Zebra Crossing

Cllr. O'Neill was not present so Cllr. Ball said he would see what the status was on this.

(ACTION: CLLR. BALL)

Shopping Centre Signs – Bikes (lowering them)

The Chair has spoken to Barry Owen and he is looking into this.

(ACTION: BARRY OWEN)

Cross Street Parking

It was reported that parking tickets are still being issued where they should not be. Cllr. O'Neill was not present at the meeting Cllr. Ball to pursue.

(ACTION: CLLR. BALL)

6. TRI-FORUM YOUTH NEWS

Margaret O'Neill was not in attendance to report on this.

7. ERITH RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

Chris Betts was not present at the meeting so the Chair reported. The Chair commented on how well Chris kept the Forum informed. She said Chris had reported that he had just agreed terms to let the vacant shop next to Banardos – but it is a guessing game as to what it is going to be! She said he reported only 2 empty units now, but still no luck in getting a mobile phone shop. The Chair reported that the people who had taken over the old Wises store would not be staying but an independent £1 store would be coming. She reported that the footfall was increasing above 2009 and 2010. The Chair said Chris Betts had informed her that it is planned to run market/craft fair stalls for Easter, Summer, Halloween and Xmas.

Denis Roberts informed the meeting that a new small Tesco's will be opening at the beginning of June where the old Style and Winch pub used to be.

8. ROBINSON CRUSOE EVENT 2011

Tony Williams reported in the absence of Cllr. O'Neill. He reported that they had raised £800 through the lottery funding and the Newshopper had given them £1,000 towards costs. He continued to say the 25th June will be the major kick off. Primary Schools will be doing an arts competition Erith Academy multi-media activities on 10th September and 11th October, then on Saturday 15th October there will be a re-enactment landing of Selkirk. Tony said they have secured a Thames sailing barge to land an actor on the causeway. He said there would be other activities/events on that day. He said to look at their website Selkirksummer.110mb.com. He said they also hope to get a final memorabilia or plaque.

9. AGM – CONSTITUTION AND CHANGES

The Chair said we would vote on the change of start time of the meeting from 7pm to 7.30pm. The Chair said currently all officers are willing to stand, but if anyone wants to nominate or put forward anyone they need to let her know before the AGM. The Chair said it is proposed that we remove the representative for the Bexley Federation of Residents Association. The Chair said that Pamela Horner has decided to move away but has arranged for a colleague, William Brookes, to come on to the Forum as a member. The Chair said it is proposed to invite Alec Tapper to come onto the Forum under FORGE. Doreen also said that Margaret O'Neill wanted to propose for Robyn Drummond to come onto the Forum as the new Youth Representative. She said any proposals for changes to the Constitution need to be notified to her before the AGM. Doreen said that since there was no longer a BCRE group, she would like to invite Derek Johnson to come onto the Forum as the Ethnic Minorities Rep. Derek to let the Chair know of his intentions.

10. ERITH WESTERN GATEWAY SDP AND FORGE

Alec Tapper reported on the clean up operation undertaken by Forge in March. He thanked everyone who came along and said it was very much about the community. He said about 60 people came along, with varying ages too. He said they were very much guided by Thames 21 Charity and also Erith Safer Neighbourhood Watch came along. Morrisons provided some staff and refreshments. Alec reported that 50-60 shopping trollies were retrieved, prams, wheelchairs, traffic cones etc. He said the total weight was about 1.8 tones over 4-5 years accumulated debris. Alec said a 2nd day will be organised in May or early June. He said there was also support from Wilkinsons who provided refreshments. Alec said the Cadet group were brilliant, working so efficiently. The Rowing Club helped and also one Councillor. He said it was a remarkable effort. He said FORGE is continuing to strengthen our Community. Alec said the membership is now over 500 members and said that they were so grateful for the support of the Riverside Gardens to prevent development. He did comment that if you propose to send a letter opposing the development you have to have a DA8 postcode. He said they are in the process of gathering title deeds and evidence as an integral part of making their proposal. He said anyone can make their objections to the Planning Committee but these need to be in by 11th April. He said we need to ensure it is not the way they want it but the way we as a community want it. Alec said he would hand out at the end of the meeting the address and details of where to send letters/emails of objections. He informed the meeting that FORGE have an HSBC Community Account and that if for any reason FORGE winds up, they have decided that whoever is Mayor at the time any monies left would go to the Mayor's Charity.

The Chair spoke on the SDP Development Plan and said they had invited officers to come and talk at the Forum but they declined. Doreen said she, the Forum management and FORGE met with 3 officers. She said 2 of the officers were Seb Salom and Sunny Eee, two people well known to the Forum. The Chair said it was a good meeting and they did confirm points we wanted to raise. She said she was pleased they had responded to our request for a Saturday and evening meeting times. She said the area of the Erith Western Gateway is not the case of one piece of development and one organisation doing it. It can be piecemeal – 13 different development parties, 3 portions being done and the rest not happening. She said the first of the sections is up for development in June/July with the building on the Riverside Gardens and building on other green parts, she continued to say - all the green parts - then nothing else happening! She said the money might not come forward. The Chair said she was concerned that piecemeal development could be dangerous. Cllr. Ball said piecemeal was a risk. He said the planning process is ongoing but planning would not go ahead because of public discomfort. He said the Planning Committee would not be keen on that. The Chair said if you look at the document talking about 3,4,5 storey buildings and there is so much flexibility which means they could be even higher. The Chair said the document has so much flexibility that the developer could determine it themselves. The Chair said she would write on behalf of the Forum asking that the flexibility be taken away. The Chair said the Council had said that Erith has been calling for regeneration, but the Chair said no-one has so she doesn't know where they got that from. The Chair confirmed it would be better to write a letter than complete the Council's questionnaires because they are leading questions that you tick. DJ commented that his organisation were shocked when they read the document of the density and scale of it. He said we need to make our objections known. He said we believe the development could break up our community. He said we oppose the destruction of 20 low rises, the road coming between the 2 blocks and oppose the scale and density for our estate.

Brian Silk (D.E.A.T.H) introduced himself as the person who is the publisher of Erithtown.net the Erith website and said if we write to the Council it opens up a debate to the public forum.

A member of the public said they will only look at legitimate responses. Chris ball said you do need to put emotions into your responses.

There were a number of discussions on this subject together with the issue of the Bexley College development. The Chair said there was every chance that Bexley College would go on the old Tramshed site.

11. AOB - TOWN AND AROUND

Doreen said the next one would be the summer one in June/July. She said all articles need to be sent to her with no more than 200 words.

Ray Hudson informed the meeting that as of Monday, Trinity School will become an Academy.

A member of the public said that Ken Chamberlain gave a talk at the library and informed the community that 2013 would be 150th Anniversary of the Thames Barge Race which started at Erith and in June/July the Royal Yacht Club will have an event to mark this.

Denis Roberts confirmed that the next Senior's Outing will be on Thursday 16th June and the suggested venue is Clacton. He said it would be £9 each and that Rena would be taking names and money. The Chair gave out Rena Papa's number 01322 339477.

Terry Middleditch briefly spoke to the Forum about Disabled Go and had leaflets to hand out. The website is www.disabledgo.com. It gives opportunity for a temporary role, working with people within Bexley. Terry said it goes hand in hand with the London Borough of Bexley.

Terry also pointed out that with regards to new houses being built within Erith Western Gateway, they are all supposed to be accessible and should have set rules for kitchens, doorways etc.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS - Date of next meeting: 18th May 2011 (AGM) at the Vets Club

Dates of future meetings to be confirmed at AGM: 20th July 2011, 28th September 2011, 30th November 2011, 25th January 2012, 28th March 2012, 23rd May 2012 (AGM)

The meeting closed at 9pm