

ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 82nd meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 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.), Jerry Martin (Chair, Local Police Panel), Barry Owen (Erith Riverside Shopping Centre), Rena Papa (Bexley Pensioners Forum), Alec Tapper (Forge), Rosemary White (CSAZ), Councillor Chris Ball, Councillor Edward Boateng, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

Members of the Public:

M Gibson, A Finck, J Baxter, L Finch, D Young, P Young, J Butler, M Butler, M Davis, J Baker, D Brodie, E Brodie, R Durrant, J Miller, B Lupton, J McCarthy, M Beadle, B CS O'Ka, C Wakeman

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Forum Members: Joan Armitage, Cllr. Margaret O'Neill, Dennis Roberts, Andrew Grieve, Phillippa James, Chris Betts,

2. PRESENTATION ON ERITH STATION BY MIKE GIBSON – Public Affairs Manager, Southeastern Railway

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mike Gibson from South Eastern Railway who was to talk about Erith Station. Mike informed the meeting that in the 1990s the Government privatized the former British Rail and responsibility for the stations was the responsibility of the train operators and, in the case of Erith, Southeastern and Network Rail. He said the train operator is responsible for train services and the day to day management of the station, including staffing, cleaning, ticket sales and minor repairs for the duration of their franchise, which he continued, ends in 2014. He said that from a SE prospective, Erith should keep a ticket office and have disabled access and suggested continued lobbying of the local MP. He continued, Network Rail, with funding from the Department of Transport, is responsible for the station infrastructure, platforms, building, drainage etc which would include the provision of step free access, be it through ramps or lifts. He said that in the present economic climate he thought it unlikely that Erith would get funding. Although unwelcome news to Erith Town Forum he said that funding decisions of this nature are outside the train operator's direct control. The Chair asked if SE would be hoping bidding to keep the franchise after 2014. Mike said that they would be bidding for it. He said outside the DfT funding mechanism, funding for step free access works has been obtained via section 106 Agreements and if there are any major developments proposed in the vicinity of Erith Station, he said SE and Network Rail would be happy to discuss further with Bexley Council. He also said that to meet our responsibilities to the mobility impaired, SE has an Assisted Travel Service which may be contacted 24 hours a day. This will arrange to meet a passenger at the start and finish of their journey and assist them on and off the train. 0800 783 4524 or 01732 77 00 99 Text phone 0800 783 4548 or via www.southeasternrailway.co.uk. Mike Gibson confirmed that SE has no plans to close the Erith Station ticket office. He said the number of ticket offices we manage and their opening hours are locked into our franchise agreement and constitute a contractual commitment we cannot unilaterally alter. He said any change or amendment is a matter for the DfT. He informed the meeting that speculation about the ticket office arose as a result of the McNulty report commissioned by the coalition Government on costs in the rail industry. He said we understand that the Government is currently considering the report and will be issuing a formal response later this year.

It was raised from the public about how much money is lost through no-one checking tickets. Mike Gibson said there are now automatic barriers and random ticket checks and they work closely with the Metropolitan Police and Transport Police. Jerry Martin asked what percentage of people dodge the fares. Mike said London Travel Watch estimate approximately 6% of passengers do not have a valid ticket. Jerry was interested to know what that percentage was as in the amount of people. Mike Gibson said he would get this information to Doreen.

There were various queries raised about what other stations have or would be getting. He said he would get the DfT Franchise Manager Consultee details to Doreen. The Chair informed the meeting that a new timetable would be out and by 11th December there will be a new service which will go round the loop and go via the Bexleyheath line back up to London.

The Chair thanked Mike Gibson for some interesting information.

3. PRESENTATION FROM GARY DAVIS BVSC – THE DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

Gary introduced himself and said he worked for the local CVS in Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham and Bromley and said he goes

round to voluntary groups to talk about the understanding and fears of the digital switchover in April next year when analogue will disappear. He said this affects freeview TV not Virgin Media or Sky. He said old analogue TV's will not work after April. He said we aim to go to see vulnerable groups like care homes, age concern, pop-in parlours etc. He confirmed that any TV can be used with a digibox and that there is no such thing as a digital aerial. He informed the meeting that for anyone over 75, disabled, partially sighted etc, there is a help scheme for £40 where you can get an accredited RF modulator, digibox and replacement aerial. He said there are advice centres as well. He confirmed for those in high rise flats it would work through a commercial aerial and if going through a commercial aerial each TV will have to be re-tuned.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair informed the meeting that Derrick Johnson who had joined the Forum as the Ethnic Minority Groups representative had submitted his resignation due to increased workload. She said we need to recruit a new representative. Doreen continued to say that she was pursuing the possibility of getting representative from St John's Church and from Erith Swimming club and Erith Athletics Club, which she said are all very much part of the Erith Community. She informed the meeting that a new Vicar has joined St Johns and that Christ Church will also be getting a new Vicar. She said John Draycott had been given early retirement on ill health grounds.

Doreen informed the meeting that sadly Judith Houghton, the Bexley Planning/Regeneration Officer who worked closely with the Forum for many years has now left Bexley Council due to staff cuts. Doreen said she attended a farewell gathering for Judith and gave her a card and flowers on behalf of the Forum.

The Chair said we have reduced costs now that more people get the meeting papers by email with only 30 copies now being mailed out. Doreen touched on the issue of "Erith on Thames" and said she had received a few responses coming in on both sides. She said it was interesting to see it is not such a difficult process. She said presumably local Businesses might be persuaded to discuss it, and perhaps the local Chamber of Commerce. She reported that Chris Betts thought if we pursued it we could sound a bit desperate!

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

In Joan's absence the Chair reported that as at 27th October there was a balance of £3,413.41. Of that £867 is the balance from the £2000 fund for the Selkirk Project. Therefore Erith Town Forum Money was £2,546

Spent:	Town and Around	£700.00
	Admin Sept Meeting	£164.00
	CTF	£ 55.00
	BVSC Aff	£ 10.00
	Flowers	£ 15.00

The Chair confirmed we are left with about £1,500 but still have to pay for Senior's afternoon about £200.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (SEPT)

The Chair said Phillippa James had informed her that the Baby Scanning facility mentioned was nothing to do with the NHS but a private separate enterprise. The Chair informed the meeting that Richard Weaton would be coming to the next meeting to talk about the Erith Hospital Site and Queen Marys.

The Chair asked about the visits to schools and Councillor Boateng said they needed more time. The Chair asked Barry Owen whether there was a good liaison with the police. He said two PC's had moved away but there had not been lots of trouble recently.

7. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE

Chris Betts had sent his apologies to the Chair and Doreen gave an update on activities. The Chair reported activities have slowed down but they hope to let former toy shop soon. She reported the unit between Shoe Zone and Savers is on a temporary let to the Hospice. She reported that there is only one unit empty and may be put to some sort of use for the carpet shop in Pier Road to display carpets for the short term. Barry Owen confirmed the footfall was up on last year. The Chair said she hoped lots of people would come to the Christmas fayre and Christ Church choir would be singing to promote the Christmas Tree Festival. The Chair said Erith was definitely a lot busier.

8. UPDATE ON MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SITES – EWG AND CARNEGIE BUILDING

The Chair said she had a conversation with Seb Salom regarding EWG. She said we had been due for a decision on 30th November 2011. She said Seb will be presenting to the Cabinet the comments that been received. Cllr. Ball said public comments will be read through and said the end of the month is the absolute earliest we will get a decision. The Chair said that Seb confirmed no funding was yet in place. DJ said that his estate needed to know what would be happening to the flats so

people could make plans. Cllr. Ball said he thought it would be some time before anything happened, this site is not a key priority for the Council. DJ talked about the Chancellor's information about another bridge. Chris Ball said there are no details and will be no consultation until 2013. The Chair said she had asked Seb when the next EWG Newsletter would come out. She said if you remember we had one in Spring 2011 and said Seb had informed her that there would be one in 2012. Chair commented that she thought Orbit would be asking questions. Cllr. Ball said Orbit was involved in being part of the development scheme.

Mike Dodsworth said there was nothing to report with respect to the Carnegie building and Erith Museum.

9. FORGE UPDATE

Alec had no further information to give about the decision on the Riverside Gardens Site since it had been covered in the general discussion above. Alec confirmed the Erith Riverside Clean-up was very successful. He said the River Keeper and Thames 21 were meeting with him on 10th December with a view to arranging the next Clean-up for Spring.

10. POLICE PANEL MEETING

Jerry Martin said the meeting was on 11th October and said the culprit for arson had been arrested and was serving time. He said crime was down by 78%. He confirmed the 3 priorities up to January were:-

Theft from Vehicles – Satnavs

Burglary

Anti-social behaviour (region of West Street)

He said if you know of any problems please bring it to our notice. He said the next meeting was in January. A member of the public mentioned an incident involving a white van in the area involving young children. The Chair asked if Jerry could email James Coomber regarding this to bring it to their attention. Jerry said he would make some enquiries and feed back to Doreen.

11. ROBINSON CRUSOE EVENT

The Chair said this event had been a great success and said Robyn Drummond had worked really hard. She said Cllr. O'Neill would report more at the next meeting since she was unable to attend this meeting.

12. PLANNING APPLICATIONS – NEW INCINERATOR

The Chair reported there had been an application for the development of a new incinerator on Crabtree Manorway site. Cllr. Ball commented and said there is talk of having one per Borough. He said there has been one meeting so far and it is at the very early stages. He said the last thing he had seen was a discussion about briefing Councils, he said he guessed it would be turned out by Planning. The Chair said the Forum will send a letter saying the Forum oppose the idea as we already have one in the Borough.

Action - Doreen Ives

13. SENIORS' CHRISTMAS EVENT

The chair confirmed this was being held on 12th December in the Baptist Church from 2-5pm. She asked for offers of help and said it was all free and tickets were still available. Contact Dennis Roberts on 01322 341913. She said Lorraine had kindly offered to make mince pies and Rosemary, Christmas cakes.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Erith Riverside Festival – The Chair raised concerns over the event for the Olympic and Jubilee Year but Taj (Chair of the Committee) gave reassurances that the paperwork was with the Council by 2010 and confirmed to the Chair all was in hand. The Chair said she was glad he was hopeful of getting the funds for the event. The Chair asked if there were any places on the committee. Taj said he had 5 voting members on the committee already. Taj said he hoped to get some age related activities for the Jubilee – 1953 eg. age related music, vehicles etc. A member of the public said it was not just the Council fees of £5,000 needed and said it will cost about £15,000. Taj said he was hoping to get charity status and help from Len Arnold.

Christmas Tree Festival – The Chair confirmed dates for the Festival on 9th, 10th and 11th December and asked for volunteers to have advertising boards up in their gardens.

15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting: 25th January 2012 at the Vets Club

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

The meeting closed at 8.55pm