

## ERITH TOWN FORUM

Notes of the 89th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 30th January 2013 at 7pm.

**Present:** Dennis Roberts (Chair)  
Joan Armitage (Bexley Civic Society), Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre). Mike Dodsworth (Erith Museum), DJ (Erith Riverside Residence Association), Phillippa James (NHS Bexley Clinical Com. Group), Rev. Robert Radcliffe (St Johns Church), Alec Tapper (Forge), Councillor Chris Ball, Councillor Edward Boateng, Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

### **Members of the Public:**

D Brodie, E Brodie, L. Finch, J Vick, D Vick, R White, S Boxall, The Revd J Conalty, M Beadle, J McCarthy, S Thouless, J Baker, M Davis, K Hadley, T Copley, P Mackie, T Oliver, M Rogers, P Donaldson

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**Forum Members:** Doreen Ives, Alison Fisher, Fred Finck, Ray Hudson, Rena Papa

**Others:**

### **2. UPDATE ON HOSPITAL SERVICES - CARL SHOBEN, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR NHS SOUTH EAST LONDON**

Dennis Roberts thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a Happy New Year. He introduced Carl Shoben, Communications Director NHS South East London. He said that the last time he spoke to the Forum there were worries regarding the future of the local health services and he said he updated us on clinical care at the local hospitals saying it was very good with low mortality rates and low infection rates, but that there was unacceptably long waits. He continued to say what has changed. He said an Administrator was brought in for the future of the services in the area and a report produced. Carl said they were awaiting the Secretary of State's verdict. He also continued to say that they are aware that although services in SE Healthcare are a concern and in public debate, the special Administrator had a remit to look at not just services in the SE but wider SE London sector, Lewisham, Kings etc. Carl said they cannot view the organisation in isolation it has to stretch wider. Lewisham feel aggrieved to be punished because of the failings of other hospitals. He said where the failure was a financial failure, this was out of our control and the PFI debts are not receiving the necessary level of income. He said the view was that there was probably enough money in the system but it made sense to have all debts in one place. He reported there were 6 recommendations. He also said that the debt was a long term one, PFI was a concern as were inefficiencies in the buildings and estates.

- Dissolve the Trust – South London Healthcare.

- Kings College takes over the management of the Princess Royal Hospital.

- QE Hospital and Lewisham merge.

- QM – the land and buildings taken over by Oxleas. In Patients – elective surgery would still be done there, still have a day surgery.

- Most controversial Lewisham stops being an admitting hospital but has an Urgent Care Centre. ?

-Significant proposed savings needed over next few years. Savings would come from efficiency in the system. Programme over a number of years would save money.

Carl continued to talk about Erith Hospital saying it is very important, popular and has lots of patients. He said there is no current proposal to close or change the services and said he believes it is an important service. He said it has not been decided who will run Erith Hospital yet. He said it may be Lewisham, Oxleas or Darent Valley it has not been decided yet. He stated that the Secretary of State could accept all in full or reject in full and there may be some tweaks in timing issues. He commented further stating that what everyone is asking is that QE A&E is extremely busy so if you lose another A&E, Lewisham

one, then how will QE cope with more. Carl said the special Administrator's report sets a 3 year timescale for these changes. He said Urgent Care Centres can treat a high amount of patients. He continued and QE A&E would be made bigger and Kings A&E, and there would be more staff, more consultants and more nurses. He said when we closed QM the performance of QE, the time people had to wait, had not got any worse. He said clinical indicators have improved also. A member of the public asked what would be left at QM. Carl said over the last 2 years the medical wards had gradually gone. He said what is there now will be there except for the overnight surgery. He said there will also be a Radiotherapy Centre. He said the proposal sets in stone the health facilities that are there now will stay and are guaranteed to stay in the future. Member of the public said what about the stroke wards. Carl said there are no stroke wards and said they have all come together now in London. He said it was better to have fewer higher quality care wards to treat stroke patients. He said it is the best treatment for strokes and survival rate has massively improved. A member of the public asked Carl how much consideration had been given due to the growing population. Carl said lots of work has been done on population and trends and it is a difficult and complex issue but said that Health Managers believe that when you get expanding numbers it is better to have larger facilities but fewer and to have a higher concentration of specialists in one place. A member of the public asked if the capacity at Darenth would be increased. Carl said it is projected to go up. Member of the public said it is all very well having fewer hospitals but what about the older generation and transport etc. He replied saying that the Administrator had a further programme to increase travel options to each hospital. He continued saying in terms of population, the Medical Director of the NHS said having fewer hospitals will mean less time patients need to stay in hospital because they will get more appropriate treatment. He said the GPs will be doing more things, minor surgery, clinics etc. A member of the public said it's going back to the old cottage style hospitals. Carl replied – well yes. Cllr. O'Neill asked for confirmation from (confirmed to) Carl that QM will be run by Darenth and the Services will go out to different bidders, and asked if these would be private organisations. Carl said Services need to be tendered for. Cllr. O'Neill said in the rumours about the hospitals there was talk that Princess Royal will be run by a private organisation. Carl said this was not a proposal but for Kings to run it. Carl agreed that things will not happen at once it will be 2-3 years down the line once more facilities are in place. Carl said the NHS is very good at finding money. He said staff will come from Lewisham to QE. He continued to say on day to day running of services is where the trust has run up the deficit. He said on one off infrastructure the Government have always got money to spend. Chris Ball commented saying that he agrees the need for change and the general acceptance is there needs to be a plan for the future. He said from a local point of view this seems partly about stopping Lewisham running into a deficit. Cllr. Ball continued saying there would be an extra 8,000 people at QE A&E if the Lewisham A&E closes and already ambulances are stacking and waiting areas and times are struggling. He said the staff are not coping currently without resources and investment. He said it is a significant risk to A&E. Cllr. Ball commenting on Erith Hospital, asked who would commission services. Carl said that whatever the outcome is you need to watch for the implementation for all the resources promised, capacity changes etc that they arrive on time, watch out that Erith stays as it is and gets more services. Cllr. Ball said the reality is the £60M deficit in a year and reducing staffing is inevitable. Carl responded saying that the Trust employs more people than others to do the same job. He said there is the relocation of staff to other clinical areas. A member of the public asked if QM Urgent Care Centre is staying. Phillippa James informed the meeting about a new software system she has in place telling people about Urgent Care Centres and she is going round to groups. She said it is a fun voting software like "who wants to be a Millionaire" and said she is happy to visit groups with more information.

Dennis Roberts thanked Carl for coming to the meeting again.

### **3. CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair was absent so there was no formal report. Dennis informed the meeting that Barclays Bank in Northumberland Heath would be closing on 19<sup>th</sup> April and the nearest branch is Erith.

### **4. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Joan Armitage reported that there is £2,216.63 in the Community Account including £168.72 in the Deposit Account. Joan reported that there was only £33 left over from the Council's fund for Christmas lights which would be split between the churches. She thanked the Rotary Club for their donation for the Christmas event.

### **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (28 NOV)**

**Ken Boyce Centre:** Margaret O'Neill to find out where this had been relocated.

**ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL**

**Pavement and trees in Avenue Road:** Cllr. O'Neill said she thinks we have solved the problem and it will be done on 15<sup>th</sup> March. Member of the public (Mr Hadley) said there is also a gas smell outside Nos 60-80 approx. Margaret O'Neill said she would look into this.

**(Post meeting note: Cllr Ball wrote to Mr Hadley on 1<sup>st</sup> February regarding the matter of tree roots and responsibility and the matter has been taken up with Mr Dave Saunders, the Council's Head of Engineering Services. Mr Saunders**

**will send a member of his team to visit and discuss. It has been noted from Mr Saunders that work to pavements could not take place until Mid-March due to the gas works currently being undertaken).**

**Potions** – Cllr. O’Neill to keep on asking why their windows have not been changed.

**ACTION: CLLR. O’NEILL**

**Planning Applications/Decisions-** Cllr. O’Neill said as a consequence of the college moving to the old tramshed site we need to watch this space over parking issues. She said there is going to be a spillage of parking. Cllr. O’Neill said we are determined, us Councillors to get an accessible station for Erith. She said Will Tuckley said Erith is their highest priority now.

**Barge Race Event** – Margaret O’Neill reported on this event taking place on July 13<sup>th</sup>. The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first barge race. She said it would be in memory of Mark Boyle who died suddenly at Christmas who had been helping organise this event. She said Erith Town Forum will be holding a community day.

### **Christ Church School**

Edward Boateng spoke about the parking issues being raised with regards to increasing the size of the school. A member of the public spoke about the suggestion of putting yellow lines in Lesney Park and Lesney Park Road, but said this would not be viable for residents. Member of the public also spoke about the suggestions of having drop off areas in Park Crescent and an area of about 10 parking spaces for years 5 & 6. Parking issues, using coaches etc and anti-social behaviour issues were discussed again. Cllr. Boateng suggested if Kevin Taylor the consultant on this could be invited to come to talk at the Forum. It was agreed this would be beneficial. Cllr. Boateng to liaise on this.

**ACTION: CLLR. BOATENG**

Julie Conalty the vicar from Christ Church said it might be worth looking at their walking to school policy. Dennis asked her if she went into the school regularly – she said she did.

A member of the public said if you put yellow lines people will park further afield. She said by expanding they are just trying to get too many into a small area and said when new houses are built they should build another school for that area. She commented that in the league tables larger schools do not do as well. There were further discussions. Cllr. O’Neill said that the planning application would go in within the next 6 weeks.

A member of the public said we need to object to the enlargement of the school. At the moment it is a C of E school and it does not have a catchment area Cllr. Ball said the reality is the permission for expansion is very likely to be given. He said 85-90% come from half a mile of the school. A member of the public said more used to come from the DA postcode about 2 years ago but that is not the case now. She quoted from her child’s class. Cllr. Ball said that most schools have kids from the local area. A member of the public said so you are saying that in reality it is probably going to happen anyway. He said you need to have a really good objection on planning grounds. Other schools have similar issues with parking and some anti-social behaviour. Cllr. Boateng said if you want to oppose I can come with you and support you against the Planning Committee. Dennis asked the Christ Church Vicar if she would go to the school to see what their catchment area is now. She said she would and would speak to them also about reviewing their Admissions Criteria.

A member of the public said residents of Hardwick Court bought their places because they overlooked greenery a nice area – not to look at a car park!

### **6. RIVERSIDE SHOPPING CENTRE UPDATE**

Dennis reported that the new 99p shop had now opened.

### **7. ERITH POLICING**

Dennis confirmed the next meeting would be on 14<sup>th</sup> February. He said there was now a team of 6 and the new priorities were:

Rutland Gate

Small Close in Erith – difficult family safety issues (Dennis didn’t name the close)

Drugs use in Franks Park

Shoplifting in Erith (over the Christmas period only)

A member of the public informed the meeting there was a mugging near Christ Church.

It was confirmed the Borough Commander was leaving in March, going off to Harringey.

## **8. SENIORS' CHRISTMAS EVENT**

Cllr. O'Neill said unfortunately it was not very well attended only 38 people came. She said the general opinion was that the entertainer was not that good. She said the Management Committee decided that they would not have another one but would concentrate on the community lunch on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Steve Boxall, talking on behalf of FORGE, said FORGE achieved a lot over last year. We had permission to take over a small part of the garden and the Council have now given us a bigger area under the flagpole. He continued to say that FORGE won a Bexley Environment Award for the gardens and also received a grant of £4,000 to do some more planting and said we are in the process of renewing memberships. Alec Tapper said the Council have done an immense amount of cutting down and the view for those living in the flats has vastly improved. Similar work at the station approach was reported as an improvement. Alec reported that more lovely bulbs should be coming up in March.

Margaret O'Neill confirmed the flood tea on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February and said Ken Chamberlain will be doing a talk. She said it is free and urged those present to pick up a leaflet.

A member of the public asked what was happening with the workingmen's club – Cllr. O'Neill to investigate.

**ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL**

## **10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Date of next meeting: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at the Vets Club**

**Dates of future meetings: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013 (AGM)**

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm.**