

## ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 94th meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 27th November 2013 at 7pm.

**Present:** Doreen Ives (Chair)  
Joan Armitage (Bexley Civic Society), Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre), DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc.), Alison Fisher (Erith Rowing Club), Fred Finck (Erith Yacht Club), Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Phillippa James (NHS Community Engagement Officer), Barry Owen (Erith Riverside Shopping Centre), Alec Tapper (Forge), Rosemary White (Erith Park Residents), Councillor Chris Ball, Councillor Edward Boateng, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

**Members of the Public:**

C Wakeman, L Finch, K Hadley, P West, J McCarthy

**Guests:** Danny Ridgeway – Bexley College  
Martin Peet – Bexley College  
Friends of Evergreen

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

**Forum Members:** Chris Betts, Mike Dodsworth, Les Hoskins, Dennis Roberts, Councillor M O'Neill

**Others:**

### 2. PRESENTATION BY EVERGREEN

The key aim of Evergreen Care Bexley is to serve the elderly in the borough with support and care services. It is a Christian organization, believing that you treat people as you would like to be treated. They have a big pool of volunteers currently undertaking training. They receive support and license from Evergreen Core Trust in Stanford. They have an office in Belvedere with 4 trustees, and are registered as a charity. There is a website [www.evergreencare.org.uk](http://www.evergreencare.org.uk). The Chair asked where they have get their funding from. They said various churches and individuals have been very supportive, and donations have come from the most unexpected places. Within their team they do have a fund raiser. The Chair asked how they identify their clients. They said they go to GP surgeries etc. Cllr. Boateng asked if they get support from the Council and they responded by saying no and they would not be asking the Council for funding. Phillippa James asked whether their customers would have to fit a certain criteria. The answer was simply that if someone is lonely and needs a friend Evergreencare will help. Evergreen are careful to match the appropriate befriender. The Chair thanked them for coming along to the meeting.

### BEXLEY COLLEGE PROGRESS

Danny Ridgeway and Martin Peet were present to update the meeting. Danny said that the frame was close to completion and with the correct temperature the concrete would be put down and after Christmas the interior work will begin. He said the project is still on target for September 2014. He said Osborne is part of the Considerate Contractors scheme so that no building work starts until 8 o'clock in the morning. The Chair asked what the situation was in terms of students applying for places. Danny said yes we have had interviews and said a new build can increase applications by 10%. Martin continued to say that they will be launching a new logo and campaign to come and study art at the college. Cllr. Boateng and Cllr. O'Neill thanked them both for coming to the Forum meeting. Ray Hudson raised the question again regarding parking issues Martin said we are trying to discourage people from using cars and said the college will be having an LED display with train times/bus times etc. Danny said we will still campaign and support the access issue at the train station and expect students to use the station. Alec Tapper expressed the fact that he was somewhat surprised at the linear development of the building, and asked if the car park facilities were going to be tree lined. Martin said the hoardings obscure the space between the building and the footpath, actually there is quite a big space and nothing has changed from the plans. He said there will be 41 car spaces in our property. A member of the public asked if there would be horticultural courses there. Martin said there would not be. Danny said the one thing we have got students to do is work experience. DJ mentioned the issue of the parking going from 130 spaces to 41, saying are you forewarning people. They said they are working with students making sure they know there will not be car spaces encouraging the use of trains or buses. A car share scheme has also been discussed. The Chair asked about the use of bicycles and Martin said there will be adequate racks and security. Cllr. Ball asked the percentage of staff and students with disabilities. Martin said including learning disabilities 15% but 2% physical disabilities. Cllr. Ball asked about opening times and other facilities and mentioned that the Borough made a scheme to promote cycling. Martin said the opening hours would be 9am-7pm and said there would be a Costa Coffee open to the

public with a smaller area for hot food and they would cater in-house for shows etc. Martin answered a question on the Tower site saying there is planning for 96 houses/flats and the contractors are ready to build as soon as the college vacate in July. The college will be having a sale of furniture and equipment etc. He offered some to Evergreen. The Chair thanked them for their report.

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

The Chair spoke about the Bexley Road Bridge Repairs saying how inconvenient it is especially at this time of year for the traders. She said it was interesting to see the latest email about the big proposal for a new road layout Bexley Road/Queens Road and said that Bexley Council are seeking public views to support their efforts to get funding for the scheme. She said as a Forum we should have views and make it known. It was agreed Cllr. Ball would get a copy of the plans and email to Doreen who would send it out and we could make a decision to send a letter from the Forum or not if we are in favour. The Chair also mentioned about moving the fish sculpture and asked for constructive suggestions to be sent to her. A member of the public suggested the roundabout by McDonalds. She said the new road proposal of 4 lanes of traffic, 2 on and 2 off lanes (also chopping off some of the church land) would start 2015 for a year. The Chair spoke about the Newsletter she forwarded by email regarding Christ Church School works, which she said is clearly aiming to keep residents informed and therefore hoping for support. The Chair said lots of congratulations are due to Forge which will be covered later in the Agenda.

**(ACTION: CLLR. BALL)**

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

Joan reported saying we had received £500 from Corys and the Council £2,000 for the Christmas lights, which are up and the Chair agreed to check to make sure they are all working. Joan said we still have not had some invoices yet but the balance is £1,802.23 (excluding the Alexander Selkirk money and The Barge Festival money). Joan said that Batts Cable have already given £250 for next year's fun day. The Chair said the Fun day would be on 30<sup>th</sup> August next year and asked if people know anyone who wants to sell their wares at the fun day to get in touch. She said the Forum funds are in a healthy state. Ray Hudson asked about the Alexander Selkirk funds but the Chair said this was ring-fenced and the plan is to get some sort of plaque in memory of that day. The Chair said we hope to receive more funds from Riverside Shopping Centre.

### **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (SEPT 2013)**

**Erith Park Progress** – Rosemary reported saying that flats have been built and are higher than Verona House. She said they are getting on with the bases of houses and should be finished by May 2015. Rosemary enthused about the committee she has been on for 4 years which Wates set up whereby they got to choose kitchen colours, designs etc and said there will be an open day soon.

**Christ Church School** – Reported above.

**Christmas Lights/Carol Singing in the Centre** – The Chair said there will be singing in the shopping mall – choirs from St John's and the Baptist Church on 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December and on the 7<sup>th</sup> December there will be various activities going on.

**Food Bank** – Cllr. Ball said this was in progress and the Erith Group and Wates are supplying the porter cabins but these have been delayed because of the need for planning permission. She said all volunteers are ready with a few interim arrangements.

**Health Issues** – Phillippa James said she would be doing a full presentation at the January meeting but confirmed that QM is now managed by Oxleas with lots of organisations working together to put more services together. She handed out leaflets. She said regards to Erith Hospital the Health and Overview Committee have agreed the need of urgent and unscheduled care and they are enhancing these services saying there is a commitment to improve.

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

Barry Owen reported that due to the economic climate Owens, Warmlake Sports and Blockbuster have closed and said there has not been much take up. He said footfall has increased year over the year 51,000 but has been decreasing in the last 6 months. Barry said with the new builds we are hoping this will increase. He commented on the change of use on the unit opposite Argos being a restaurant facility. He said the Christmas lights are up and said that the new Asda in Belvedere has had an impact and also the bridge work has not helped as well and Morrisons have also been affected by this.

### **7. FORGE**

Alec reported on a number of issues. The first being with regards the Bexley Environmental Challenge Competition and he said this is the last one. He said last year we entered for the first time and got a bronze award and got £20 he said we entered again and there were two factors to our entry firstly our efforts on cleaning up the river foreshore and secondly our colourful flower display. He said six Councillors viewed everything we had done and we won the silver guilt award and a £40 cheque. He said

there were four exceptional awards – Community Award for Erith for its sense of community £100 received and a rose bowl. Alec said it was a splendid evening for Erith. He said unfortunately the competition will cease due to budgets. Alec continued to say that Bexley had invited them to look at budget proposals for 2014/15 regarding spending and the closing date for written responses was 18<sup>th</sup> December. He said Forge would make a response and individuals should make their comments as well. Alec continued saying that the proposals to save money were to reduce frequency of grass cutting, also dog bin emptying and any new street tree planting to be revised and less frequency of cleaning, repair and maintenance. Alec talked about the massive thick bushes that remain and the damage done to sea walls. Alec said even now the damage is considerable and is a matter of health and safety and we are in a flood area, it is very significant. He said they plan to withdraw all funding for parks etc. The Chair pointed out that all this information is on the internet and people can view it. She asked if Alec could email the significant points to be made to her and the Chair would forward on to all. The Chair congratulated Alec and Forge and urged those present to take a look at the trophies at the back of the hall. On the council budget issues, a member of the public spoke about the 3 Councillors per ward being reduced in the budget. Cllr. Ball said I have suggested decreasing the number of Councillors.

**(ACTION: CHAIR)**

## **8. ERITH POLIC PANEL MEETING**

Alec attended the last meeting. Alec said the 3 priorities set were:

West Street ASB  
Fly tipping (rear of Morrisons)  
Motor bikes – (noisy exhausts early hours of the morning)

Alec said there is 1 full time police officer and 1 PCSO. He said the next meeting was 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014 7pm at the Youth and Family Centre, West Street. The Chair asked if there was anything on drug related issues with regards to the Church grounds. Cllr. Ball said they had got better patrol for the church grounds. He said a group of his colleagues have volunteered to clear the church grounds. They are waiting for Bexley Council to provide a vehicle to remove the debris. Chris Ball said the Panel Meeting was not well attended, just 3 members of the public.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **a) Christmas Tree Festival**

The Chair encouraged those present to take a leaflet.

### **b) Opening of Adult Education College Bexley Facility**

The Chair advised the meeting that the College now had a presence in the town, next to Bojangles hairdressers. She said she was delighted and said it was a very nice facility offering some free courses.

**c) Regeneris Consultants – Bexley Economic Plan** – Cllr. Ball said the timescale for this is quite long and said there were some interviewers speaking to shoppers in the Mall.

**d) Vermin in the Town** – A member of the public informed the meeting that Pest Control Service would be discontinued and was down as one of the budget cuts. Cllr. Ball said they can charge you for it because they will say it is down to the management companies to deal with it. Cllr. Ball said the Council is looking at providing statutory services only. Cllr. Boateng said we will see if we can get together on this. The Chair asked the Councillors to do whatever they can because she said we need these services provided because we are near the river.

**(ACTION: COUNCILLORS)**

**e) Avenue Road** – A member of the public brought up a concern regarding the roundabouts in Avenue Road and the speed at which people come down the road – 40 mile an hour and do not slow down. Cllr. Ball informed the meeting they would not take them away.

## **11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING**

**Date of next meeting: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 at the Vets Club**  
**Dates of future meetings: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014, AGM 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014**

**The meeting closed at 8.45pm.**