

## ERITH TOWN FORUM MEETING

Notes of the 93rd meeting of the **ERITH TOWN FORUM** held at VETS Club, Park Crescent (junction with Glebe Way), Erith on WEDNESDAY 25th September 2013 at 7pm.

**Present:** Doreen Ives (Chair)  
Bill Brookes (Erith Playhouse Theatre), DJ (Erith Riverside Res. Assoc. - present for part) Ray Hudson (Bexley Neighbourhood Watch Assoc.), Terry Middleditch (Disabilities Groups), Rev. Rob Radcliffe (St John's Church), Rosemary White (Erith Park Residents), Councillor Chris Ball, Councillor Edward Boateng, Councillor Margaret O'Neill, Julie Clark (Minute/Admin officer)

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

L Finch, D Brodie, E Brodie, C Barry, J Baker, M Davis, A Heartfield, R Hadley, J Ferreira, P West, J Vick

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

**Forum Members:** Joan Armitage, C Broadbent, Lorraine Davidson, Mike Dodsworth, A Fisher, Fred Finck, Jerry Martin, R Papa, Dennis Roberts, A Tapper

#### **Others:**

### **2. CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting She reported attending the Police Panel meeting where it was announced that the number of policeman patrolling in the town had been reduced due to cuts in budget which was not good. There are two dedicated officers looking after Erith and others could be called in to cover emergencies. The crime figures showed a reduction year on year. Doreen informed the meeting of the new priorities set, which were all linked to ASB and drugs:

1. Christ Church Grounds, drug use and perhaps even dealing going on.
2. Sandcliffe Road drugs ASB.
3. Grass Area along West Street ASB

The police were surprised to hear of drugs dealing and use in the church which had not been brought to their notice before. It was voted that police look at Christ Church as their main focus. The Chair confirmed the next meeting would be 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at 7.30pm at the Youth and Family Centre, West Street. A member of the public said that at 4 in the morning cars were racing in Erith Recreation. The Chair said that would come under Colyers Ward. Cllr. Boateng said he had written to the department about clearing areas of the church and was told it was not the responsibility of the Council, but he agreed that as a community we would get together to do some clearing. He said the Council would provide the vehicle to clear. Cllr. O'Neill confirmed the date for this would be October 19<sup>th</sup>. Ray Hudson informed people to be careful with what they put in their green paper bins because people search through them. It was confirmed the Neighbourhood Watch meeting would be on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30 at the Vets Club with the possibility of setting one up for this area.

The Chair continued saying that the Food Bank project is progressing well and with the possibility of local businesses such as Wates and the Erith Group helping and becoming involved.

Finally the Chair informed the meeting about possible future speakers – Ever Green Project speaker, Bexley Heritage Trust, Thames 21, Port of London Authority.

### **3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

Doreen reported, in Joan's absence, a balance of £2,250. She said the Alexander Selkirk fund is £985.55 and the Barge Festival money is £224.07 and Erith Town Forum £1039.73. The Chair confirmed Cory have promised £500 and Frogmore £500 so said it is quite a healthy position.

### **4. HUGH NEAL BLOG**

The Chair introduced Hugh Neal to the Forum. He introduced himself and started by saying he had lived in Erith for 17 years and explained that a Blog was an "on-line Journal". He said he writes about what happens in and around Erith and promotes good things about Erith. He continued saying that when you set up a blog you have to give it a silly name which is "Arthur Pewty's Maggot Sandwich" which Hugh said he got from when he was involved on the radio. He said in 2010 the Government sponsored the top 50 bloggs and Hugh said his was voted best blog title in the UK. He said his blog has been covered in the Guardian and on the radio and said his current article is about the Yacht Club. He said around 23,000 people look at the site

every month and he said he has quite a lot of input from local people. Hugh commented that he does not put advertising on his site, but he confirmed to the Chair he would promote the Forum's meetings. A member of the public said she has been looking at it for the past 5 years and said it does get some attention and thanked him for covering some details about FORGE.

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

**Christ Church School expansion** – The Chair confirmed she had done a letter to the head about the traffic issues and the idea of the walking bus. She said the letter was also sent to the Schools Director and the Chair of Governors and said we are now awaiting a response.

**Garage in North End Road** - Cllr. Ball confirmed there are 2 rooms at the garage and occasionally for security reasons someone sleeps over but it is not residential. The Chair mentioned about the idea they were buying/selling old clothes. Cllr. O'Neill said this is a different type of usage she will check this out.

**Pavements in Avenue Road** – Cllr. O'Neill promised to look into this for next time.

**ACTION: CLLR. O'NEILL**

**Erith Park** - Rosemary reported saying that the last block in Phase 1 is going down. She reported on 2 open days for public viewing on 27/9 and 28/9 and said everyone is welcome. She said there is a 3 sided building to show different brick work and insulation. Rosemary reported that they are hoping to put a time capsule in and there are lots of discussions about this (eg bills, tickets, bus tickets, photos etc - as was done in Riverside Shopping Centre). She said when the Dell is opened up there will be a very long slide to go down and lots more plants to go in.

**Bexley College** – Doreen spoke about an email she had received from Danny Ridgeway confirming that the frame is currently being erected and that it is all on target to open in September 2014. She spoke about the crane disruption to residents in Stonewood Road with their Sky reception. She confirmed that Osborne's are working with the housing association to try to rectify this issue and they apologise for any inconvenience caused. Doreen informed the meeting that there will be a brief publicity ceremony on 2<sup>nd</sup> October to publicise the coming of the new build and confirmed that as part of the ceremony a time capsule will be buried containing some college documents and history which will be opened up in 50 years. The Chair continued to report on the college signage now up on the hoardings showing the exciting design of the new building. She said they will keep us informed of the progress. Cllr. Boateng said he had been in the area and people had complained about how early they were starting work like 6am moving the crane etc. He said this should be sorted out in the planning. The Chair asked if the Councillors could look into this. Cllr. Ball said they should have signed up to the Considerate Builders Scheme.

**ACTION: COUNCILLORS**

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

The Chair said there was no update from Chris Betts. She did say there had been some controversy about the letting of one of the units. The Chair said she is working with them regarding the Christmas lighting.

## **7. ERITH SAILING BARGE FESTIVAL 2014**

Cllr. O'Neill reported on plans for a festival each year. It will be on the last Saturday in August but the theme has not been decided yet. Margaret asked for any ideas for the 2014 festival. Rev Rob Radcliffe mentioned could be for the anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Cllr. O'Neill said she was not sure we want to hold a festival for such a gruesome event. The Chair said it was important to get details sorted as we want to get funding. The Chair asked for any ideas to be sent to the Forum. A member of the public said it may be better to have it on a Sunday because of parking fees. Cllr. Ball commented that on 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 Greenwich Council is holding an event with regards to Tall ships on the Thames. The Chair asked if we could check this out.

**ACTION: CLLR. BALL**

The Chair said details of any small businesses who might want to have a stall at the summer event eg. Crafts, jewellery etc. should be sent to erithtownforum@hotmail.com.

## **8. FORGE**

A member of Forge reported in Alec's absence. It was reported that there have been 3 separate plantings in the last 12 months. Watering was difficult during the hot dry summer. There will be planting again at the end of October and Forge have entered into the Environmental Challenge. The prize giving is on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October and they are hoping to win something having won bronze last year! Joe Ferreira said the problem with the watering is the access point and no drainage etc. Joe will look into this with Thames Water.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **a) Community Infrastructure Levy – Draft Charging Policy**

The Chair talked about this consultation on replacement for 106 arrangement. The 106 charge is for any development. Residential Zone 1 £40 per square metre. Bexley Council is struggling to find money for infrastructure projects.

Chair commented that in the consultation paper there is nothing on accessibility for Erith Railway Station. Cllr. Ball commented that the charge is on new builds not extensions.

A member of the public said developers might choose to build in Dartford because the tariff is lower rather than build in Erith. Cllr. O'Neill said compared to some other Boroughs Erith is not too bad. The Chair commented that she didn't think for schools eg playgrounds it should come out of the 106 funding.

Cllr. Ball to look into this.

**ACTION: CLLR. BALL**

### **b) Policies and Sites Local Plan**

Bexley were consulting on this saying Bexley's town centres need to be defined differently. Neighbourhood centres need to be treated differently, many people visit a town centre for eating out rather than just shopping, or for community leisure, sport. Perhaps Erith needs to have other things like a restaurant for evening meals, and a soft play facility. She asked if Councillors have looked more closely. Cllr. O'Neill agreed there should be mixed use and more flexibility in mixed use. She asked about the shops in Pier Road. A member of the public said the people of Sidcup were spoken to about revitalizing but said you couldn't do that in Erith there is no incentive to sort it out. Joe Ferreira said Bexley College will drive in more eateries etc. The Chair continued to say it will generate more footfall. The council documents suggest that changing the definition of how a building can be used might have to be looked on more favourably.

**c) Christ Church Avenue** – A member of the public brought up the issue of speeding traffic down Christ Church Avenue using it as a cut through. Cllr. Ball said you can ask for speed limits but they will ask how many accidents and come and monitor it. We can get them to do work but will not be seen it as a priority. It was agreed the Councillors will take it up.

**ACTION: COUNCILLORS**

Terry Middleditch said the Council will turn down any proposals because of build up on the main road. He said they did have a camera in Christ Church Avenue which just appeared then disappeared! Rev. Radcliffe said if you sort out Christ Church Avenue they will just come down Park Crescent. Ray Hudson urged people to go to the Ward Panel Meeting and said the police will get involved and you might get it sorted out.

Ray Hudson informed the meeting about a gym for older people in Christ Church hall 2 mornings a week. He said it is aimed at helping those with breathing difficulties, mobility problems asthma etc. He said it is on a Wednesday and Friday at £4.50 per session includes refreshments.

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

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

**Dates of future meetings: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014, AGM 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014**

**The meeting closed at 8.50pm.**