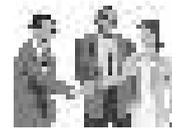


Forum News



August 2004

The Newsletter of Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum

COUNCIL TAX: BACK ON THE AGENDA



Although this is the time of year when we ought to be relaxing and enjoying a warm summer in the garden, visiting friends and relatives, or holidaying at home or abroad, we find that time is flying by and here we are again

with the dreaded Council Tax back in the news.

Parliament is now in recess for the summer, but already the kite-flyers are out predicting Council Tax increases next April of anything from 4% to 15%. While we advise caution at this stage preferring to wait until there are some hard and fast figures to bite on, the Forum Committee has decided to set up a small Council Tax sub-committee which we hope will be representative of all older people and their organisations in the Borough.

It is not too early for us to show we are on the ball since the Council has decided to start its consultation procedure earlier this year by around mid-November. It is now clear that changing the various Council Tax property bands, having regional property valuations, letting local councils set business rates and looking at a local income tax are options that will be considered by yet another inquiry into reforming the present council tax system. Until this new Inquiry reports at the end of 2006, we remain reliant on the level of Government grant to local councils and good local authority management to keep down council tax increases.

We are in a straitjacket since I suggest most of us do not want to see council services cut. Indeed, many of us want more money spent on policing and on, for example, the social services caring for the elderly. So the argument will go on about how to juggle the money received from Government and the money raised through council tax.

Meanwhile, it is estimated that £2 billion - yes, two billion pounds - that the Government is ready to give in rebates on Council Tax bills goes unclaimed every year. Our Forum has pressed the Council to do more to ensure that people who may be eligible for a discount actually apply - and it is only fair to say they willingly responded to our request.

Indeed, the Council Cabinet was told at its July meeting that: "these efforts will continue and pensioners' representatives in particular will be consulted on how best to communicate the availability of benefit to potential claimants".

And one thing we'll be asking for is to get rid of talk about "benefits" which has a ring of charity, of begging, of being supplicants and replace it with discounts or rebates which people are fully entitled to without feeling guilty or compromising their independence - and the Government should do the same.

Monty Meth

Chair

3 Unmissable FORUM Events

Tuesday 31 August at 10.30 a.m
Enfield Civic Centre, Silver Street
Health Service Challenges and Changes

The Speakers are the two top officials running Enfield's major hospitals - **Averil Dongworth**, chief executive Barnet and Chase Farm Hospital & **Clare Panniker**, chief executive North Middlesex University Hospital.

Thursday 7 Sept 10 a.m - 4 p.m
Edmonton Leisure Centre, Edmonton Green

Stay Safe, Fit and Healthy
talks, gentle physical activity, information stands etc

Admission free including lunch
Opening by the Mayor Cllr John Egan and Andy Love MP

Tuesday 28 Sept at 10.30 a.m
Enfield Civic Centre, Silver Street

Services Making Life Better for Older People

Speakers: **Tony Seagroatt**, chief executive, Age Concern Enfield & **Margaret Allen**, LBE commissioning manager for older people's services.



OLIVIA CALLING.....

I'm delighted to welcome Stroke Action Enfield as a new affiliated member of the Forum because I see a major part of my work will be helping them and similar groups to have a stronger voice in the Borough through their mem-

bership of the Forum. There are approximately 400 people a year being admitted to our local hospitals, Chase Farm and the North Middlesex, because of strokes and I think that too often they and their families are left to face the consequences on their own.

By joining the Forum, Stroke Action will strengthen our voice and we in turn can hopefully strengthen their campaign for better facilities, rehabilitation and care for stroke patients.

So welcome Stroke Action who join organisations such as the Cypriot Elderly and Disabled group, the Sangam Asian Ladies Group and the Over 50 Bangladeshi Luncheon Club as members of the Forum.

Competitive members please note that there is a Special Prize for the Forum member who introduces the most new members to the Forum between July 1st 2004 and April 1st 2005. All enquiries to Olivia on 0208 447 8841. Please ensure that your introduction lets Tony know who introduced them so that we accredit you correctly.

The September series of "Helping You Stay Fit and Healthy" events for over 50s in Enfield, which begins with the Forum's Safety, Health and Fitness day on Thursday September 9th at Edmonton Green Leisure Centre is a good opportunity to introduce potential members to the Forum and I look forward to seeing you there.

I am delighted to announce the beginning of a long and fruitful association with Millfield Theatre, who are "delighted to offer excellent entertainment opportunities to your members and promote Millfield Arts Centre in the community". Plans are in hand to develop a system of reduced price tickets for a host of productions at this local jewel of entertainment.

The Forum were given 30 free tickets to The Merry Wives of Windsor on July 13th at extremely short notice, but all tickets were taken and thanks to Monty and Anne for organising this within hours.

Finally, if you know of or have links with any older people's organisations, no matter how small, please let me know and I will contact them to keep the Forum growing from strength to strength.

Olivia Goodfellow

Forum Development Officer

HELP WITH METERED WATER BILLS

If you pay your water bills by the amount you use - calculated by a meter - then you may be entitled to help with your bill if you receive the Pension Credit, Council Tax rebate or Housing Benefit.. Call 0845 9200 887 for an application - calls to this number are charged at local rates.

Special Wards for Elderly at BCFH

From this month, the medical and care of the elderly wards at Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals will become speciality based. In practice, this means that patients who need specialist attention, such as gastroenterology, endocrine, respiratory etc will be admitted to the appropriate speciality ward, where they will be cared for by the appropriate speciality team.

Currently wards are nominally classified as speciality wards although in reality, they tend to contain medical patients under a number of different specialities. In order to facilitate the move to a true ward based system, some of the current wards will change speciality. For example: Juniper Ward in Barnet Hospital will be changing from a gastroenterology ward to a respiratory ward.

In order to ensure that the right patients get to the right wards, patients will be allocated to specialities and wards as early as possible from A&E or the Clinical Decision Unit where patients are seen on admission. This will be by a bed management process (in discussion with the CDU consultant and the on-call specialist Registrar). Patients expected to have a length of stay of less than 3 days (2 nights) will, where possible, be transferred to the short stay ward, where they will remain under the care of either the admitting consultant or, if agreed, the Medicine for the Elderly service or appropriate speciality.

Book Your Place Now

Stay Safe, Fit & Healthy

A Free Information - Advice - Awareness Open Day

Edmonton Leisure Centre, Edmonton Green

Thursday 9 September 10 a.m to 4p.m

We are planning a stimulating programme of talks on healthy living and eating, crime prevention and home safety; activities to watch or join in such as swimming, table tennis, yoga, pilates and short mat bowls; and there'll be free refreshments.

A leaflet with an outline programme is available containing a "book your place" slip, so please spread the word, bring your friends and let's make this an even better event than last year's successful day at Southbury Leisure Centre.

Our Stay Safe, Fit & Healthy Day will be followed by three Primary Care Trust "Helping You Stay Fit and Healthy" Days being held from 10 a.m to 12 noon on:

Thursday 16 September, at Edmonton Leisure Centre

Tuesday 21 September St Andrew's Church, Chase Side, Southgate

Tuesday 28 September. St Andrew's Church, Market Square, Enfield Town.

All four events will have people on hand to advise on fire safety, pensions, house warming grants, crime prevention, housing, social services and many other facilities which taken together offer the chance of a better life for many older people in the Borough. So let's make sure that every one knows about them.

We're tackling anti-social behaviour.....

Forum member **Hazel Kinsler** has volunteered to be our representative on the anti-social behaviour review team, set up by the Council in partnership with the police and other agencies such as the probation service and the courts to improve the way in which it is dealt with in the Borough.

Anti-social behaviour can have an impact on the lives of older people if it causes alarm, distress or harassment or has an impact on their quality of life from things like hoax calls, excessive noise, vandalism and rowdy behaviour.

Just how serious this is can be judged from a one day count taken at random last September which identified 219 separate incidents of anti-social behaviour in the Borough - and that is equal to 75,000 or more incidents in a full year.

The review will, among other things, consider the extent of anti-social behaviour, whether it is being dealt with effectively and how the number of incidents can be reduced.

While Enfield remains one of the safest places in London, there is a fear particularly among older people, of mugging, distraction burglary and harassment especially at night and the early evenings in winter with the result that many older people are scared to open their doors by day and are house-bound once the nights draw in.

Hazel has lived in Enfield since 1967. She taught languages in our local schools for 18 years after obtaining degrees in French and English at Leeds University. Hazel is currently a governor at Enfield Grammar and volunteered to represent us on the anti-social behaviour review team.

.....and monitoring fair charging for home care

Forum Member **Brian Wright** has volunteered to look at the various changes being discussed in the home care services provided by Enfield Council community and social services department. Brian was chief rent officer with Haringey Council and has wide experience of housing and residential homes. On his retirement he completed a bachelor of art degree in history and philosophy with the Open University.

Brian has been nominated to represent the Forum on a special working group set up by the Social Services Scrutiny Panel and drawn from councillors, service stakeholders and other co-optees to review the impact of the proposed changes and to take into account the views of users.

In September 2003 our Newsletter carried an article on the new 'Fairer Charging' that Enfield Council was intending to apply to residents receiving home help from the Council. At that time, we considered that for some care recipients the increased charges would be punitive and anything but fair. The Forum made its views known to the Council and at its Social Services Scrutiny Panel meeting on 22 June 2004 it was decided that a working group would be set up. The remit of the working group is

- to understand 'Fairer Charging', how it works and who it applies to.
- to assess the impact it is having on take up or drop off of services.
- to assess the impact the new charging regime is having on vulnerable people in the Borough.
- to make recommendations for improvements.

The review is scheduled to start in September 2004 and be completed by January 2005 and we shall be watching both the costs of the home care service to dependent users and whether the numbers eligible to receive help are being cut.

IS IT FAIR?

Organisers of the national protest against the present Council Tax system - are holding a march in London on **Saturday 2nd October** when a petition will be handed in at 10 Downing Street.

Personal Alarms



These pocket sized alarms are Available from Age Concern Enfield
0208 345 5064

As demonstrated at the June Forum



Lynn Altass at the June Forum giving a stimulating talk on Tuberculosis

Our Home Safety Audit Reaches Moscow

The Home Safety Audit checklist of 50 questions to reduce home accidents to older people, designed by Forum member Derek Friggens and produced by Enfield NHS Primary Care Trust, was reported to the 12th International Conference on Health Promoting Hospitals held recently in Moscow.

Over 5,000 copies of the booklet were distributed locally and it is now going to be reprinted by the PCT to reach even more older people in the Borough. The home safety audit will also be used by a new Enfield Council and London Fire Brigade partnership providing a risk preventive service to older people in the borough.

Margaret Allen, the Council's commissioning manager for older people's services says: "We have jointly employed a recently retired fireman to carry out a home fire & safety audit. He will "case find" by attending luncheon clubs, day centres etc, and making appointments with individuals who would like their homes assessed for fire and other risks."

"The forms he will use are a combination of the Fire Brigade's risk assessment, the Over 50s Forum home risk audit and the contact assessment form used for the health and social care Single Assessment system. Each or any of the forms will be completed as needed depending on the person's circumstances, and in agreement with the individual."

"Each form carries a consent section, in order to appropriately provide advice or to pass the person's details to other relevant services across health, social care and voluntary sector partner organisations where the person wants this. Other service providers and groups can also contact the Fire Brigade at Edmonton Fire Station, Church Street, if they are aware of an older person who would like the Home Fire & Safety Audit carried out."

"The service is designed to assist in preventing accidents or injuries in the home, whether linked to fire or other general risks, and can provide a much needed link to other services that the person may not be aware of."

"I am grateful to the Over 50s Forum for their collaboration in this matter and for allowing us to utilise their risk assessment form in this new combined service," said Margaret Allen.

Falls that make you think

Five years ago nearly 2,000 people across the country were taken to hospital after falling on their floor. Now it is 12,000 and the switch to wood flooring is being blamed. At the same time falls on carpets has increased from 55,000 to 70,000 a year, says the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

RoSPA reports that the number of people falling off ladders rose from 10,000 to 14,000, injuries from hammers were up from 4,500 to 5,900 and cuts from a craft knife shot up from 1,800 to 13,900. The total number of people going to hospital after an accident in the home is estimated at 2,700,000 a year - but 175,000 more people had accidents outside the home. So the message is take care wherever you are and keep consulting our Home Safety Audit booklet.

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT ARTS ZONE ?.....

What exactly is Arts Zone? During the early June heatwave Forum Committee members Audrey Hardwick and Anne Wood visited this strange sounding place, which was to be found on the first floor of 54-56 Market Square, Edmonton Green. Behind a rather shabby exterior they found a circular art gallery, meeting rooms and brand new offices. The Art Zone is a development agency, partially funded by the European Development Fund and the Mayor of London, and specialises in bringing the arts to the people.

They can help with co-ordination of ideas, provide meeting rooms, offer various arts courses throughout the year and display public work in the gallery. They offer a once a month drop in poetry and discussion evening and have promised to send any information regarding forthcoming events and courses to the Forum. Leaflets and information on current events can also be found at reception.

Audrey and Anne then continued their visit to Salisbury House where the Art Zone co-ordinator was holding water-colour painting classes. There are some vacancies in the present classes for those with a little experience, but new classes for beginners will be starting in early 2005. The coordinator suggested that it may be possible for the Forum to initiate classes for its members.

If members are interested in this idea the Art Zone may be able to help us organise a class in the future. So please contact the Forum for further details of the day/ evening classes in drawing and painting.

.....or the MARY WARD CENTRE ?

- the friendly place to learn

You're never too old to pursue those interests you have always wanted to pursue. If you are interested in continuing in lifelong learning and personal development then this is the place to go. Mary Ward (1851-1920) was famous in her time as the best selling novelist Mrs. Humphrey Ward. She was a pioneer of public education, social and educational work; of clubs, concerts, debates and lectures that was to reach the lives of ordinary people.

At the Centre there is a fantastic range of courses for everyone, many held during the day, ranging from art, drama and music, languages, philosophy, history, arts and crafts and computing. Concession fees are low. The over 60s programme offer companionship and a pace of learning which is welcomed by many older students. For example, art, singing, fitness classes are all just £4 per term or £12 a year.

The Mary Ward Club on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 1 pm to 3 pm has 36 meetings a year and is free. The Mary Ward Centre is situated at 42 Queen Square, WC2, tel. 020 7200 6000 just a 5-7 minute walk from Holborn Underground and the 2004/ 5 prospectus is now available.

(Anne Wood attended the History of London course last year and can recommend the quality of teaching and friendliness of the students)

NATIONAL LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT

WEDNESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

Called by the National Pensioners Convention to promote the new Pensioners' Manifesto which among other things calls for:

- the basic state retirement pension to be raised to the level of the Pension Guarantee of £105.45 a week for single people, rising every year in line with average earnings.
- Council tax should be abolished and replaced by government grants, higher local business rates and income tax
- Free nationwide travel for pensioners and disabled people.
- The 25p age addition at 80 should be increased to £25
- Winter fuel allowance should be £300 per pensioner household
- Annual Christmas bonus to be increased to equal one week's full basic state pension

For a full copy of the manifesto phone the NPC 0207 553 6510.

Lobby Details

Before 1pm Arrive St Stephen's Entrance, House of Commons
 1.15 - 1.45 speeches in Westminster Hall
 1.45 - 3.30 Lobby MPs

FREE PASSPORTS FOR OVER 75s

Free ten-year passports are to be offered to everyone aged over 75 to thank them for their efforts during the Second World War. The £6million cost will come from the UK Passport Agency budget. The concession will apply to every British citizen, including those born abroad, who was alive on or before September 2 1929.

It is understood that special forms will be available in October. Tel: 0870 521 0410



Forum at Capel Manor

Roger Sygrave, gardens manager at Capel Manor, describes one of the 30 acres of themed gardens to over 25 Forum members who thoroughly enjoyed their summer outing to the Georgian Manor House and Victorian Stables. Capel Manor, renowned as a horticultural college with 2000 students, attracts some 85,000 visitors a year. The Capel Manor estate was created in 1486 by Sir William Capel, who helped to create Kew Gardens and at one time it stretched across the A10 to take in the present Bullsmoor Estate.

SALUTE TO LOU

Members attending the June Forum meeting paid tribute to the outstanding and longstanding dedication and contribution made by Lou Prince in fighting on behalf of Enfield's pensioners. In standing in silence to respect his memory we recognised that he will be a hard act to follow. Forum members present donated £60 to Macmillan Cancer Relief in Lou's memory, the family's chosen charity, bringing the total received to over £400.

NEW CHEQUE PAYMENT SYSTEM FOR PENSIONS

update on Pension Credit

Anyone who genuinely cannot manage to have their pension paid directly into a bank, building society or Post Office of their choice - and this is the safest way of getting the money you are entitled to - will have the chance to cash a cheque at a Post Office from October 2004.

The Government has reluctantly accepted that for the minority of people who cannot manage the new direct payment system, which is replacing the pension order book at the end of the year, a cheque will be sent either weekly or monthly to their home which can be cashed at any post office or paid into a bank account. If this is what you want because you can't use the new key pad on the post office counter or you are unable to remember your personal identification number please contact the Direct Payment Information Line on freephone 0800 107 2000.

Meanwhile, because only some 60% of those entitled to pension credit are receiving it, we have joined with Enfield Citizens Advice Bureaux in making a bid for funding to employ someone for three days a week for two years to raise awareness among older hard-to-reach people. To give just one example of what is possible, Maureen Arthur, CAB benefits liaison team manager, tells us she won £3,083 in backdated pension for one client whose annual pension income rises to £5,483.40 a year, and we think there are many people who could have their entitlement backdated to October 2003, if they would only apply for it.

It is important to remember that nobody aged 60 and over should be living on a weekly income of less than £105.45 if they are single and £160.95 for couples. If you know anyone who is, then please put them in touch with the pensions service on freephone 0800 99 1234.

Our latest figures for the number of Enfield people receiving the Pension Credit are:

Constituency	Number of individual beneficiaries	average weekly amount £ per/wk
Edmonton	4,865	59.95
Enfield North	4,390	52.88
Enfield Southgate	3,770	61.00
A total of	13,025 recipients	

Toenail Cuts Overcome

Enfield Council Social Services have stepped in to save Age Concern's Toenail Cutting Project, run in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust, following a decision by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund not to extend its grant.

The Council, Age Concern and the PCT all agreed that the service, set up in October 2003 to meet the very real need of older people who are unable to reach and care for their own feet had to be maintained and developed even further.

Funding arrangements are now in hand to keep the project running until March 2006 which hopefully will include extending the service to the Southgate area when a suitable venue is found. Age Concern provides the volunteer toenail cutters who have been trained by NHS podiatrists to fill the gap in healthcare created when the NHS introduced new eligibility criteria which left some 1,000 people excluded from NHS footcare and many were forced to pay up to £30 for private chiropody.

The Age Concern- PCT toenail cutting service has attracted interest from PCTs in Barking, Rotherham and Camden as well as the University teaching hospital in Manchester. The Enfield scheme started at the NHS Plevna Road clinic, Edmonton, where three morning sessions a week are now held. Since May, sessions have been held at the Age Concern Lancaster centre in Lancaster Road and there are plans to operate from the Moorfield Road Health Centre and from a base in the Arnos area later this year.

Jennifer McIntyre, Age Concern's ActivAge unit senior manager, said that the Neighbourhood Renewal funding was initially for a pilot scheme in the Edmonton area, but it is now recognised that this is not a health problem for one area, but a social care issue for the whole Borough.

Enfield Social Services have therefore agreed to fund the service for the remainder of this year on the basis that the project is expected to be joint funded with the PCT and Age Concern next year.

Age Concern charges £5 per session and its volunteers can give advice on how to care for your own feet. Patients are asked to get a referral and assessment form signed by their GP, practice or district nurse. A very limited number of home visits for people who are really housebound and unable to get to one of their clinics are undertaken.

Some 180 people have so far registered with the Age Concern service and as more volunteers are recruited both the number of sessions and locations can be increased which will make the service more accessible for people in all parts of the Borough. In the absence of a fully funded and operated NHS service which the Forum has been requesting, we congratulate Age Concern and Enfield Social Services for the service they are providing which we hope will be extended to everyone who needs help.

For more information about attending a clinic or becoming a volunteer please contact Jill Dawson 020 8373 6285.

Compulsory Retirement at 65 Ends

Enfield Council has ended its compulsory retirement ruling and now allows those staff who wish to continue as Council employees to stay on beyond 65, unless there are significant reasons why they should not do so.

"A number of staff who would otherwise have been compulsory retired are now continuing in their employment with the Council", says Timothy Strong, assistant director human resources, and this is "clear evidence that the Council's current policies and practices are already effective in combating age discrimination in recruitment and employment".

Mr Strong was responding to the Forum's request that the Council give a lead to local employers who need to prepare for legislation banning ageism in the workplace from 2006.

Mr Strong says that he will review the Council's various employment policies when the draft legislation is published and meanwhile "the Council will continue to welcome applications from older people and consider these purely on their merit without consideration of other factors such as gender, ethnicity etc which have no bearing on the ability of the person to successfully undertake the duties and responsibilities of the job applied for".

WATCH THIS SCAM

A number of Forum members have received personally addressed but unsolicited letters from Spain. They tell us that we are the lucky winners of a lottery - Loteria Primitiva - that we never entered and they request that we do not disclose our winnings until we receive the money. In the Forum Chair's case his winnings were 630, 250 Euros - about £400,000! In another member's case it was 615,960 Euros.

The letters, with so called payment processing forms, came from either Estrella Security and Finance S.A or ElGordo de la Primitiva lotto, both based in Madrid. In both cases it asks for a string of bank account details to be sent in writing - as well as those of your next of kin!! - in another it also asks you to make a phone call to a phoney "Mr John Smith" in Madrid

We should not need reminding not to disclose any details of bank accounts or account cards to anyone because with this limited and basic information it is surprising how easily fraudsters can gain access to your money. It is a lovely thought, winning £400,000 but it is a scam and we hope nobody falls for it.

Visit our website

www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk

where you will find up-to-the-minute information about the Forum's activities, minutes of our meetings, links to other websites, coverage of issues affecting older people and a membership form for joining the Forum.