



1000 - and still growing



As we get older the years do seem to get shorter. It only seems like yesterday since we welcomed 2006.

Yet here we are

already into 2007 and what a way to start the New Year. We can now proudly announce a record individual membership reaching 1000 for the first time - and we now have 48 affiliated groups with a special welcome to our latest group, Arthritis Care. This achievement deserves a big and special Thank You to the many people who have made it possible.

Pride of place must go to our three-year lottery fund grant which enabled us to secure the invaluable help of Olivia Goodfellow as development officer - and what a difference she has made. Thanks are due to Tony Watts, our Forum secretary for among many other things negotiating the lottery grant and setting up the Forum's organisational systems; to Help the Aged for two grants used to help finance this Newsletter and other activities.

Thanks too to vice-chair Roy Barrows and the Forum committee for giving up so much of their time initiating the

many activities listed in this Newsletter. And we do not forget and accept lightly the support of local businesses such as Waitrose and Warburtons, the bakers, who have made our events so worthwhile attending.

We seek new members and to retain all those who have been with us for ten years and more not for the sake of boosting our numbers and boasting of our success. We seek to increase our numbers so that we can exert still greater influence with the decision-makers wherever they may be.

We have fought many campaigns to improve the quality of life of older people. It was our agitation that speeded up the delivery of digital hearing aids at Chase Farm Hospital. We claim that it was our drive that encouraged the leisure centres management to boost their income by introducing concessionary charges which in turn increased the involvement and participation of older people.

Without us would there have been any toilet facilities for people using the new Edmonton bus station? Would Southgate Symphony Orchestra still be performing? We have battled at the highest Ministerial level to get rid of the

abysmal 25p extra pension at age 80 and the present system of council tax.

We are still battling to get better access to public toilets in the borough; still pressing the case for new amenities at Whitewebbs Park - and there are always new issues to take up such as better access to GP surgeries and exposing the withdrawal of concessions to older learners who are not eligible for financial help, but are still living on low incomes.

So while we celebrate our first 1000 members we do so knowing that there is still a great deal to do and knowing that there are many, many more older people out there who could boost our numbers still further, could come in and lead some of our activities, could strengthen our committee.

Most of all, it is not too late for each of us to make a New Year resolution, to do one thing extra this year to try and make life better for older people in Enfield. And if we all did that, think what a difference it would make.

A belated Happy New Year to all Newsletter readers.

Monty Meth

Chair

Future FORUM Events

Monday 22 January 10.15am start

Face to face with Michael Rye

a question and answer session with the Council leader.

Tuesday 27 February at 1pm

Advice & Information Day with speakers and displays from the Home Support Network (fire, pensions services, primary care trust, community alarms, home care, Age Concern handyman services etc

Monday 19 March at 11am - 12.30pm

Two special meetings to discuss **'The future of NHS hospitals in Barnet, Enfield & Haringey'** with **Sally Johnson, chief executive, Enfield PCT** followed by **Councillor Kate Wilkinson - 12.45 - 2pm**

Tuesday 27 March 10am for 10.30 start

Chief Inspector Chris Barclay speaks on **Safer Neighbourhoods: Progress and Problems**

Please take special note of the above dates and times which vary from our normal day and time. All meetings take place at the Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield Town.

Forum welcomes new police schemes

Chief Superintendent Sharon Rowe, the police commander for Enfield, has briefed the Forum on two major developments which we have welcomed as positive signs that the concerns of older people to live in a safer environment are being heeded.

First big change is that Enfield is only the second borough in London to have a single patrol base. It will provide additional and more consolidated operational accommodation, house around 250 officers and 25 operational vehicles, as well as some other units and departments currently spread around the borough. The new base does not replace any police stations and is an additional facility in the borough. The public will continue to be able to report crime to any of the five existing front desks open in the borough.

The base is located in the Great Cambridge Industrial Estate, which is in the heart of the borough. Centrally located it will enable effective policing of all areas to the north and south of the borough. It is within easy access of major routes serving the borough and in close proximity to public transport links. It is also well located to support other operational police buildings in Edmonton and Enfield.

"This new base will allow all our operational officers from the borough to be located together at one single site. It

is a cost effective solution to meeting present operational policing demands and will mean we are in a better position to brief and deploy our staff quickly and efficiently. We have to recognise that London is growing and changing and the police service must reflect this change. With the right people in the right places, we will be taking another step towards making Enfield one of the safest boroughs in London," said police commander Sharon Rowe.

The second big change is the opening of the long promised C3i project which will enhance the police capacity to receive calls and despatch units to any trouble spots. Forum members have long complained about their inability to make speedy telephone contact with the police and this should change with the 3Ci start-up.

C3i stands for Command, Control, Communication Information. It is an integrated change programme to meet the growing demand placed on the police service. Through a range of proven technologies, together with introduction of the new mandatory national radio system, Airwave, C3i will deliver an improved and sustainable service.

As part of the programme, our borough control room has moved from the borough and staff are now housed in three

purpose-built centres located in Bow, Hendon and Lambeth. This move will increase our capacity to receive calls and despatch units when required.

"Improving the way we deliver our services to you through a centralised system does not mean we have to lose the essential local knowledge and experience that exists here in Enfield. In fact, the local C3i programme sees local police as a vital link in our new way of working", said Sharon Rowe.

"In our new site we have established a new function called Integrated Borough Operations, (IBO) where officers will provide additional local information and intelligence to support officers who have been directly despatched to an incident by staff in one of our new centres. Through the IBO, we will also have an overview of all the borough's police officers and ensure those not assigned centrally are being best used to support local policing priorities," she added.

Chief Inspector Chris Barclay who leads the safer neighbourhoods project covering all wards in the borough will speak at the Forum meeting on Tuesday 27 March.

Truth will out - or better late than never

Writing about the position of the elderly, **Mr Michael Portillo**, the former Cabinet Minister and Conservative MP for Enfield Southgate said: "Within a few years three-quarters of our retired people will depend on means-tested benefits, while people in work will have become even richer than now.

"Old people in Britain will be much poorer, absolutely and relatively than their counterparts in the rest of the European Union. Will that be tolerable? The people involved are near or beyond the end of their working lives so private provision is no answer.

"Last week John Hutton, the work and pensions secretary, talked of the need to raise retirement ages to avoid tax increases. That is not really the issue. Our prudence over the past three dec-

ades means that we will keep the costs well below those in other countries, but the result will be millions of poor old people.

"It goes back to Thatcher's decision to raise the basic pension only in line with prices, not earnings, meaning that the state pension would not reflect rising national prosperity. Both John Major and Blair sustained the policy. On pensions strategy Labour joined the Thatcherite consensus" (Sunday Times 26 November 2006).

It is small comfort to have this admission so late in the day from the horse's mouth. But it would have been better if it had been accompanied by an apology or some contrition for a policy **that has so far robbed pensioners of over £50 a week - and the robbery goes on!**

I'm Fine

There's nothing whatever the matter with me I'm just as healthy as can be

I've arthritis in both my knees and when I talk, it's with a wheeze

my pulse is weak, and the blood's a bit thin but I'm really well for the shape I'm in.

I think me liver is out of whack and there's a terrible pain in my back

my hearing's poor, my sight is dim almost everything seems out of trim

but I'm really well for the shape I'm in I've arch supports for both my feet or I wouldn't be able to walk in the street

sleeplessness I've night after night and in the morning I'm a bit of a sight

my memory's failing, my head's in a spin I'm just living on aspirin

but I'm really well for the shape I'm in.

The moral of this tale we unfold that for you and me who are growing old it's better to say "I'm fine" with a grin than to let them know the shape you're in.

Older learners forced to drop part-time courses

Hundreds of Enfield's older people who want to attend part-time recreational learning courses at Enfield and Barnet colleges have been forced to drop-out because their concessionary grants have been withdrawn.

The number of part-time students aged 60 and over at Enfield College has declined from 400 during the academic year 2005-6 to 185 in 2006-7. Barnet College has lost 636 older learners since May 2006 and is now down to 1372 compared with 2855 in April 2005.

Lifelong learning courses offered by Enfield College has declined from 90 to 64. Among the 26 lost courses are those for portrait and water colour painting, IT courses, woodwork and creative arts.

Bernadette McAnespie, director of curriculum, foundation and progressive studies at Enfield College, told the Forum: "Elderly students who are not means-tested as being on low incomes

now have to pay an average £190 for a 30-week course, compared with an average £110 in 2005 - an increase of more than 55%.

"The drop in the number of part-time elderly students and courses has been the result of changes in Government funding and the withdrawal of concessionary fees to those older people not entitled to council tax rebates, housing or pension credit", she added.

Government funding has been redirected away from recreational courses attracting concessionary grants for older learners towards training younger people with no formal qualifications for employment. And the Government is adamant that older learners should pay more towards their course fees.

We are told that a French class at Enfield College now has only two people of retirement age where previously there were many more retirees attending. "It is so stupid and short-

sighted on the part of the Government as a working brain and an active body saves the NHS a lot of money", says Forum member Jo Over.

The Forum is now challenging the head of the Government's older people and ageing society division to explain how forcing older people to drop out of lifelong learning courses squares with the Government's claim that it wants to reduce their dependency on social services and delay the need for residential care.

We want to know why Ministers are ignoring medical opinion which overwhelmingly shows that learning in later life, regardless of age, is one of the best ways to ensure the brain remains healthy and its deterioration delayed. There is enough evidence to show that involvement in learning by older people reduces strokes, Parkinson's disease and some forms of Alzheimer's.

Council appoints first policy officer for older people

As we announced at the recent launch conference of Enfield's first strategic plan to improve the quality of life of older people, Wriotheseleynn Rehill (pronounced Roxlyn Rayhill) will be working two days a week as corporate policy lead officer on the older people's strategy.

Her responsibilities include taking forward the key priorities within the strategy's action plan, as identified by OPTAG - the Older People's Thematic Action Group. Wriotheseleynn's family has lived in Enfield since the 1970s. She studied at St Matthew's Primary School, Ponders End and at Latymer School, before going on to study at the Universities of London and Vienna.

Wriotheseleynn has worked for Enfield Council's social services and library

service, and at Enfield College and Middlesex University. She has been a project officer and manager of services to councillors at Thurrock, Waltham Forest, Croydon and the Greater London Authority. Her experience is in opening up the democratic decision-making processes of a council and making them more open and accessible to the public. She hopes her experience of turning policies into actual working practices will be of use to the Older People's TAG.

If you were at the strategy launch conference you should have received a copy of the final report summarising the day's proceedings. If you missed the conference and would like a copy then phone Olivia or collect one at a Forum meeting.

For the over 50s

Create your own floral designs

2 hour sessions once a week for 6 weeks on **Wednesdays 1.30-3.30pm** at **Ruth Winston House**, Palmers Green, Details and reservations -

Tel: 020 8886 5346

Walk leaders required

Enfield's thriving walks in the parks initiative is offering a further round of training for anyone who would like to qualify as a volunteer walk leader. The training will be a one day event and is really good fun.

Forum members who have previously expressed an interest will be contacted as a matter of course, but with so many new members there may be others who would be able to commit to an hour per week to set up a walk in a park of their choosing.

If you would like more information about this free training and any other questions please call Olivia on 020 8447 8841.

We are seeking volunteers to help with the Forum's newsletter

The Forum is looking for volunteers to help with the writing and production of this Newsletter. Journalistic skills would be invaluable in maintain the standard of the newsletter, while desktop layout skills would be useful for its production.

We are also seeking a volunteer with web skills to help in keeping our website up to date. Our new office has good computer facilities. Contact Tony Watts tony_watts@blueyonder.co.uk or **020 8886 9125** if you can help.

Olivia's page.....

Forum Rhine House Party Round Up **Edmonton Forum**

going from strength to strength



Along the Rhine

At the end of November a coach party of 48 Forum members left Enfield on an exciting expedition with Crusader Holidays to the Rhine Valley in Germany. The Rhine is well known for its enthusiasm for Christmas and we were not disappointed. The hotel was somewhat reminiscent of Fawlt Towers German style, but we buckled down and had a ball!

The trip included a visit to the Christmas market in Koblenz, which is an impressive city. We tasted fine wines and brandies from a family producer in the village of Alken. The highlight for many was the steep climb to Niederwald, where panoramic views of the river were breathtaking and the autumn colours a joy to behold.

The small town of Rudesheim provided us with the perfect start to Christmas, with stalls and little windy cobbled streets full of intrigue and gastronomic delights - apple strudel was a must!! The river cruise was a delight and the tranquillity of the journey was coupled with great food and a refreshing breeze for those who ventured on deck.

On the Saturday evening, the hotel provided entertainment which got us all up and dancing along with other guests in the hotel (the free drinks added to the success of the evening fun). This is a must do trip for the Forum and next year's trip is already in the pipeline.

Thanks to all who made this trip such fun and in particular to Roy Barrows, Forum vice chair who kept us all in hysterics throughout the weekend.

Our trip finished with a lucky seat draw where seven people won prizes. **Thanks to Ken our driver who finished with an evaluation score of 97%.**

Editor's note:

Olivia is too modest to mention that she and Roy have had numerous messages of thanks from the participants - thanking them for organising a lovely long weekend in Germany and saying how much they enjoyed it all, more so, because people had no idea the area was so beautiful. **"We know that a lot of hard work went on to make the trip such a success, so thank you both and everyone involved - it was a lovely experience"**, wrote Joyce and David.

Free phone calls for forum members

Twenty five Forum members had a wonderful pre-Christmas trip to the Merrill Lynch offices in the City to take advantage of their generous offer of free phone calls anywhere in the world for up to 30 minutes per person.

We were greeted by friendly faces and treated like royalty from the moment we entered the building housing one of the country's biggest investment banks until we were waved off on our luxury coach. The staff were so delightful and catered for all our needs at all times. A welcome drink and biscuits were followed by the calls themselves. Forum members called a variety of countries including India, Cyprus, Australia, France, Germany, Denmark, Guyana, Ireland, Israel and Barbados.

After the calls a lovely meal was provided with fish casserole, chicken pie and lovely puddings (and plenty of sherry and other beverages!) Father Christmas was waiting in the foyer to give out a goodie bag to all members, which contained a large selection of Christmas foods such as cake, coffee, tea, preserves, tipples of port and Baileys and much more. Our friendly coach driver made sure that we travelled safely and it was altogether a magical experience which I know made all concerned very happy to be a part of the Forum and its purpose. Thank you to all who came for being such fun and I look forward to the next time!!

Olivia Goodfellow

The first meeting of the Edmonton forum takes place on Friday 26 January at 10.30am. The venue is Forest Road Health Centre, Hertford Road. Our theme is variety with Police Sgt Hazel Harris speaking on the Safer Neighbourhoods scheme and other issues of concern to N9 and N18. The second speaker is Ann Raichura, senior revenue information officer from the Civic Centre, who will be enlightening us on pension credits and making sure we are all aware of our entitlements. Any queries please call Olivia on 020 8447 8841, or email at olivia.g@virgin.net

The final Edmonton forum meeting of 2006 took place on 8 December and was the best attended meeting of the year. Members put their thinking caps on to discuss and suggest ideas for the way forward in 2007.

As the Edmonton forum meets every two months, we will have six meetings in 2007 and have decided to invite two guest speakers to each of the meetings, in order to keep up the momentum that has been built over the last year.

Ideas for next year include:

- * A trip to the House Of Commons
- * Taster sessions of the Alexander Technique and Pilates - which is a bit like yoga, but which works the tummy and back muscles the most
- * Trip to Capel Manor with a talk
- * History of the NHS
- * Picketts Lock walk and visit to see the new facilities
- * A Council official to discuss the street scene (dog mess and fast food)
- * Councillors to enlighten us on the services available to older people
- * Learning and Skills Council to talk about educational opportunities
- * University of the Third Age
- * Library service
- * Forest Road Health Centre manager on their services
- * David Pam from the Edmonton Historical Society and a heritage walk.

Olivia and Geoff Robinson will produce the programme for 2007 and circulate it to all Forum members in N9 / N18 in the New Year.

Council tax: have your say

Council tax was introduced in 1993 with an average Band D in England set at £568. It is now £1,268, a rise of 123%. Over the same period inflation was 39.7%. If Band D tax had risen in line with inflation since 1993 it would now be £794 (source: *IsitFair* campaign).

Although the final decisions on the council tax payable in the year beginning April 2007 will be taken on Wednesday 21 February, we all know that if we are going to influence the budget in any way we have to make our views known well before then.

Councillor Michael Rye, the leader of the Council, will be attending the next Forum meeting on Monday 22 January starting at 10.15am. Some Council area forums have already taken place with the final one covering Chase, Southbury and Town wards scheduled for Thursday 25 January and there will be a special commission with representatives of all the scrutiny panels meeting at the Civic Centre on Tuesday 16 January. Admission is by ticket only from 020 8379 5301.

The Forum committee has expressed its desire for more information on the past and potential sales of Council assets, which it would like to see ring-fenced for particular projects. Sales of toilets in Lancaster Road and Sterling Way, for example, have gone into the Council's "kitty" and not into better toilet provision, as we were led to believe it would. Similarly, we think the Budget should include such matters as the replacement of the Whitewebbs Park cafe and the redevelopment of surrounding amenities; replacing the loss of free parking for disabled people in the new Palace Exchange and the need for fairer charges for homecare as recommended by the working party that met under Cllr Pamela Adams.

We'd also like to see some public discussion on the level of the Council's reserves, what is the interest earned

on them being used for and we'd like to include under the staff efficiency heading some discussion on the overlap between the Leisure Centres and the Council's sports development unit which seems to publicise private fitness centres rather than the community's assets

Lyons enquiry

The report of the Sir Michael Lyons inquiry into local government finance has now gone to the Chancellor but we read that Ministers are again delaying its publication and their response until next month at the earliest. Speculation continues in the media that the inquiry will recommend widening and increasing the number of council tax bands, but as local finances have been under review for over three years, we think it wise to wait and study any firm proposals for change before jumping to conclusions.

'One option of the Lyons Report might be that nobody should pay more than X% of their income in council tax.'

The *IsitFair* campaign - to which the Forum is affiliated - has met Sir Michael Lyons who told them that he had received some 3000 separate submissions. He has dismissed newspaper scare stories of property revaluations in Wales and Northern Ireland being introduced in England, saying revaluation for council tax will not happen in this Parliament. What we might get are changes in the entitlement to council tax rebates with more and better allowances and getting rid of the "benefits" stigma. Sir Michael Lyons is apparently considering a range of options one of which might be that nobody should pay more than X% of their income in council tax.

This would go some way towards meeting the ***IsitFair* campaign** demand that council tax should be based on the ability to pay and not on the property value of your home, which does not

have any relevance to your income. And the cost of providing local council services does not go up or down with the market value of our houses.

It is worth recalling that something called the Balance of Funding Review was set up in 2003 in the wake of protests at the massive hikes in council tax. It deliberated for 15 months and its main outcome in July 2004 was the setting up of another inquiry. The Lyons Inquiry was then supposed to report on how best to reform council tax and complete its report by the end of 2005. In September 2005 the government altered the inquiry's terms of reference which meant that the final report of the Lyons Inquiry was put back until December 2006. And now publication has been put back until sometime in 2007!

So until this report is published we would be well advised to ignore all the press "leaks" which the Lyons Inquiry team say are often based on nothing more than their refusal to rule out this or that solution. Journalists often wrongly take a refusal to deny a rumour as a confirmation of its truth.

We think a family's ability to pay is the only fair criteria and this applies equally to people with young families on a low wage and pensioners on low fixed incomes. A new survey from Help the Aged (HtA) reveals that more than a third of people aged 65 and over with the lowest incomes are spending more than 10% of their money paying Council Tax bills. The same survey showed that well over a million pensioners have had to cut back on food, heating, hobbies and socialising to meet the payment - or they had gone into debt.

The survey results' coincide with a HtA campaign urging Chancellor Gordon Brown to reinstate the £200 grant to pensioners to help meet Council Tax bills, given before the 2005 general election but since withdrawn.

Published by Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum.

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Our condolences

We recall at this time Forum member **Jashvantrai Raval**, who passed away suddenly in November and would like to extend our condolences to his wife, family and relatives who are also strong supporters of the Forum.

Winter Festival for older people, by older people

GLA City Hall, Nr London Bridge Stn, 1pm-5pm Thursday 8 February
- spend the afternoon with older singers, poets, dancers, writers, actors and musicians
Apply for free tickets
020 7785 3873

Your Good Morning Smiles

Going Saga?

Overheard at a Forum meeting: Joan H said to her pal. *"I'm going on a Saga holiday this year"*

"I wouldn't" said Kate. *"Saga stands for Senile And Geriatric Association. You're wrong"*, said Joan. *"I'm going 'cos it stands for Sex And Games for All"*

A miss - understanding?

Morris, an 82 year-old man, went to the doctor to get a check-up.

Shortly afterwards, the doctor saw him walking down the street with a gorgeous young lady on his arm.

A couple of days later, the doctor saw Morris again and said: *"You're really doing great, aren't you?"*

Morris replied: *"Just doing what you said, Doc. Get a hot mamma and be cheerful."*

"I didn't say that at all", said the doctor. *"I said: 'You've got a heart murmur - just be careful.'"*

Let's probe phone charges.....

Does your GP surgery have an 0844 telephone number? So far we have identified four in the Borough situated at Nightingale Road, Edmonton, Silver Street and Tenniswood Road, Enfield and Green Lanes, Palmers Green.

And if they also have an enquiry and options menu before you actually get to speak to somebody, you are almost certainly paying more than if your surgery had the normal local telephone number.

A surgery with an 0844 number is probably deriving an income from incoming calls - and they may be getting even more if you use a mobile to dial into them. So please let us know if there are other surgeries not using local numbers and we'll ask the Primary Care Trust (PCT), to which GPs are accountable, for their views.

We understand the 0844 numbers are often provided by NEG Telecom Ltd - not BT - and they may have originally been 0870 numbers, but they were changed to 0844 numbers following complaints about the cost and the time spent hanging on and listening to a series of multiple choices which prolong the length of the call and add to your cost.

Although 0844 numbers are said to be a lo-call cost, the cost may well depend on the caller's provider and they are almost certainly always more expensive than a straight local dialling code.

Banks, it is said, alone rake in over £2 billion a year - yes, £2 billion - from calls to their customer service centres - a misnomer if ever there was one. Banks make about 2.5p a minute from a daytime 0870 call which charge 8p per minute. Some companies have special deals with the network provider yielding them even larger profits at our expense.

We think it is time our MPs, the Government and the so-called watchdog bodies called a halt to these premium time phone calls, which can cost as much as 20 times a standard call - and plenty of older people, who are not flush with money are still being compelled to use these premium rate numbers, or are being conned into doing so by unscrupulous traders.

Proof that a campaign to expose these profitable premium phone lines can end in victory has come from the Department of Work and Pensions which used an 0845 number to give advice on benefits, but has now switched to 0800 numbers that can be dialled without charge.

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Association used the Freedom of Information Act to ascertain that the DWP had raked in £268,000 from this scam - and this from people who were almost certainly claimants on low incomes just seeking help on benefit entitlement.

Join our first

Freedom Pass Away Day to Greenwich

Thursday 22 February

meet Southgate Underground Station 9.30am

visit the *Old Royal Naval College, Maritime Museum* and time permitting *the Royal Observatory*.

take the Piccadilly line to Leicester Square
change to Northern Line, alight at Embankment.

board the catamaran river bus to Greenwich Pier

(cost £3.40 with freedom pass)

lunch at the college cafeteria or the riverside Trafalgar Tavern - or bring your own

Further details at Forum meeting on Monday 22 January

The tour will be led by vice-chair **Roy Barrows**

tel: 020 8360 8561 e-mail:

roybarrows@broadfields.wanadoo.co.uk

Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum

invites you to a

Wine & Cheese evening

6.30pm - 8.30pm

Tuesday 13 February 2007

to welcome its 1000th member.

Civic Centre Restaurant, Silver Street, Enfield

guest of honour:

Jack Jones CH MBE

life president, National Pensioners Convention

admission by ticket £3 available from

Olivia 020 8447 8841

**An event supported by Waitrose
Palace Gardens Shopping Centre**

.....and look at surgery opening hours

The PCT tell us they are keen to improve the ease of telephone access to surgeries and this is part of a four-point "directed enhanced service", which they are trying to get local GP practices to support.

In addition to easier phone access, the surgeries should also offer patients a GP consultation within two working days, the opportunity to book appointments more than 48 hours in advance and the opportunity to be seen by your preferred GP.

But there is often a gap between promise and performance judging by the problems Forum members raise with us which we think are often due to the discrepancy between surgeries in their level of service. And this could be due to some GPs having more than the ideal 1,700 patients on their list. So a practice with three GPs should have about 5,000 patients to look after.

We know of only around 15 of the 60 something surgeries in the Borough that you can phone anytime between early morning and early evening and get a person to speak with at the other end of the line. We know of only four surgeries that are open continuously from early morning to early evening five days a week - Forest Primary Care Centre, Hertford Road; Green Lanes surgery and Abernethy House in Silver Street, Enfield and Oakwood Medical Centre.

Why is it that patients can have direct and personal telephone access to some surgeries from 8 in the morning to 6.30 at night every weekday,

while others still remain shut between 12.30 and 4 in the afternoon? Why do some surgeries open from Monday to Friday while others close on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon? Is this a throwback to the days when shops had a half-day closing or when surgeries opened on Saturday morning?

We've asked before whether there is any other business that puts up the shutters at around 12 noon, shoves on the answer machine and comes back at 4 or 4.30 in the afternoon for a leisurely couple of hours work?

Are we being unfair if we ask our GPs who have recently had big pay rises - we've read that the increase was 20% and that doctors earned on average £106,000 last year, the second best in the world after the US - to look at the service they are providing and whether it can be improved to meet the changing pattern of life we are now witnessing?

Do our GP surgeries still not have the financial incentives to change their methods of work to meet the challenges of an ageing population, in which there are now more over 65s than under 16s and they reckon there'll be 2.4 million more over 65s in the next ten years?

We have seen estimates that up to 70% of people seen by A&E hospital departments could be treated equally efficiently by local GPs if only they were available to see people. So a crucial element in securing public acceptance of any changes in local A&E services must be their belief that surgeries

ought to be open all-day, five days a week - and they should then be able to deal with more if not most emergencies.

We are told that GPs are not employees of the PCT - they are self-employed under contract and so cannot be compelled to open for longer hours or man their phones all day. But there is nothing to stop we patients asking, gently and politely, whether the service at our surgery should be on par with the best in the Borough. And we'd like to see the PCT exercising some influence in this direction too.

Meanwhile we read that patients unhappy with their GP will be able to influence the income of their surgery. Some five million patients are going to be asked in an NHS survey this month how easy they find it to have telephone access and get a prompt appointment at a convenient time - and part of the GPs income will depend on the satisfaction level of their patients.

The average practice with some 6,000 patients can earn an extra £8,000 if it scores well. So by asking your surgery to look at their opening hours and telephone access you could be helping them get a juicy bonus in June. So look out for posters and leaflets at your surgery asking for your views.

The new primary care centre at Edmonton Green will be named Evergreen and will open on 5 February. Six GP practices will be moving in during next month together with local community services and it will be fully operational by March.

Need urgent medical advice out of hours?

**Call NHS direct 0845 46 47 or Barndoc 0845 389 0945 North Mid. walk-in centre 020 8887 2680
no appointment necessary and open until 10pm**



**Eine gute riese
The Rhine trippers November 2007**

Age discrimination - only the start

The new laws against age discrimination in employment which came into force last October will go some way towards making sure that older people are not penalised when it comes to promotion or training simply on grounds of their age. It may also protect some people who may wish to put off their retirement because they enjoy their work and want to continue earning.

But it doesn't end all forms of discrimination based on age. We have Forum members who on reaching the age of 80 found themselves thrown out of travel insurance schemes of which they have been lifelong members and others found it financially prohibitive to get car insurance. Some charities even have trouble insuring volunteers and so are compelled to have an age bar of 70.

So we want to see the new laws extended to goods and services as soon as possible and we'd like to see the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights that is coming into being this year include these aspects in its age discrimination remit. Help the Aged has launched a **Just Equal Treatment** campaign and we'd like to have any evidence of age discrimination you may have experienced so that we can pass it on.

Claude Moraes, the London member of the European Parliament, tells us he recently asked the European Commission why observers over the age of 70 were excluded from participating in Electoral Observation Missions, which he said was discriminatory. Following his intervention, the Commission agreed to relax the rules and remove the ceiling on electoral observers.

Pressure for action on age discrimination has been building up for many years in this country. Indeed, it has taken another 30 years to make any headway since legislation outlawing discrimination on grounds of race or sex came into force and it's 10 years since we started to tackle disability discrimination.

Although the focus of the latest changes have all been about equal opportunities for older people and

extending their working lives, the legislation applies equally to the rights of young adults, probably stretching down to 16-year-olds and this can be important for their education and training.

Although it is fashionable to knock the EU it is a fact that successive governments dodged the issue of age discrimination until an EU directive in 2000 included it in an all-embracing anti-discrimination law - and then the government successfully argued the case for a six year delay before it became a national law.

So having got rid of tens of thousands of workers over the age of 50 in the last 25 years or so, everyone has now woken up to the fact that it was crazy to let people retire early, work fewer years while living much longer. The Whitehall whizz kids suddenly realised there will be a million fewer people in their 20s and 30s in the labour market while there will be 3 million or more over 50s with all their skills and experience doing nothing.

Today, there are 1.3 million more people over 50 in work than in 1997 and this could grow by another million as employers such as Enfield Council encourage their staff to put off retirement until they are 68 if they want to. And when councillors boast that Enfield was the first London council to be awarded Age Positive Champion status it would be nice if they acknowledged that it was our Forum that initiated the conference on age discrimination in employment which set them thinking, but which was largely ignored by other employers in the Borough.

It is worth remembering that under the new law, age discrimination in recruitment will be unlawful. Harassment in the form of jokes and banter about people's age could be unacceptable, pay and other benefits related to length of service may be illegal and you have a right to request to work after the age of 65. Upper age limits for unfair dismissal and redundancy will be removed and the old "last in first out" method of redundancy selection almost certainly falls foul of the new law.

Are you receiving your entitlements

Do you struggle to pay your rent?

Do you worry about paying the Council Tax?

If the answers are yes, then you may not be receiving the Housing and Council Tax Benefit you may be entitled to and should speak with a Revenue Information Officer at one of three Offices the Council has within the Borough:-

- * Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield;
- * Edmonton Centre, 36-44 South Mall, N9 (above the library)
- * John Wilkes House, 79 High Street, Ponders End, EN3

(These venues are open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30 pm except John Wilkes House which closes at 4pm)

Alternatively you can telephone 020 8379 3798 between 8.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday or you can leave a message with the Customer Services Centre on 8379 1000, and the Council will call you back. You can also call 8379 4779 to arrange a Home Visit.

Chair (Elect) for Age Concern Enfield

Age Concern Enfield is seeking to recruit a Trustee as soon as possible with a view to assuming the role of Chair in October 2007. This position requires managerial and leadership skills, an understanding of the needs and interests of older people and experience or knowledge of the voluntary or statutory sector in the field of health and social care.

AC Enfield is a leading local voluntary organisation, a member of the highly regarded Age Concern Federation, providing a range of services for older people. It has good professional working relationships with key personnel in the local authority and is recognised as a key strategic partner. Full training and mentoring is provided for new Trustees.

For further information and/or an informal discussion, please contact the current Chair, Mavis Whyser on 020 8373 6344.

Leisure centres: be vigilant

Almost the first public action of the liquidators put in to run Enfield's leisure centres has been to shut the Bramley squash courts on 22 December and the Edmonton Leisure Centre from 8 January, **despite** previous promises to keep it running until the expected opening of the newly-built replacement centre in March.

At the same time, the Council is proposing to spend £12,000 on a consultation exercise the results of which will, it says, help to realistically plan the future provision of leisure centres in the Borough. We have expressed our concerns to Council leader Michael Rye about the consultation process which is supposed to involve "the whole community". We would like to see the questions that will be asked and ensure that they are not loaded against current users of the centres, many of whom are older people.

We are pleased that Cllr. John Boast, the Council's older people's champion, is seeking similar assurances that the needs and views of older people will

not be ignored in this consultation which is supposed to be completed by 23 February. Cllr Boast rightly pointed out that the Council is committed to improving health in the borough by getting a reduction in strokes and heart disease which greater physical activity will help to achieve. Cllr Boast told the Cabinet that getting more older people involved will increase income to the leisure centres and ease the financial burden on social services.

Why are we questioning the consultation procedure ?

Because tucked away in a paper prepared for the Council's Cabinet committee is the suggestion that somehow "taxpayers who are asked to provide the subsidy" are different from taxpayers who use the leisure centres. Does the Council make this distinction between taxpayers who utilise our social services ? Some of us have been paying local and national taxes for 40 -50 years and more without calling on help from social services and we hope never to need them - but

we've never sought to play off one section of the community against another.

The Cabinet paper also refers to the so-called strong presence established by the private sector with four major health and fitness clubs in or just outside the Borough, without comparing their facilities and prices to those offered by the leisure centres - or their ability to shut shop if profits slip on the orders of their owners far removed from Enfield.

We've said before that our leisure centres are community assets, paid for by previous generations of local taxpayers. They cannot be separated from the need to provide facilities that will enable more and more people to develop healthy lifestyles as the essential prerequisite to longer life expectancy and a better quality of life.

So we urge all Newsletter readers to be vigilant - make sure you participate in any consultation exercise. **Air your views loud and clear - no cuts in our leisure centres!**

Past campaigners remembered

The Forum has nominated **Lou Prince** and **Stan Anderson** for entry into a new Roll of Honour being launched by the National Pensioners' Convention to celebrate and recall the names of those stalwarts who helped to build the pensioner and forum movement in Britain over the last 25 years.

During that time many fine men and women have campaigned, organised and represented older people in all parts of the country. **Lou Prince** was the secretary and driving force behind the Enfield Pensioners Action Group and **Stan Anderson** was its chairman, as well as serving on the Forum's committee until ill-health forced him to retire. The book of honour will be on display at the 2007 Pensioners Parliament and on the NPC website.

Bombard the press

We'd like to run a column of letters that Forum members have written and had published in the local press, raising matters of concern to older people. This is the best way we know of encouraging the many people who are not linked to a community group to know that there are people like us around who are interested in their welfare - and are trying to do something about it. It may inspire them to find out and even join the Forum!

Recently we've had letters published in the Gazette and Advertiser from Forum chair **Monty Meth** and **Liz Henthorn** on the service deterioration at the former main post office in Church Street, Enfield Town; from Forum member **Jack Graham** on the leisure centres crisis while Forum member **Peter Horsfall** had a letter published in the Independent contrasting the publicity given to gas and electric price rises with the silence on the "outrageous rise in the cost of maintaining heating systems"

Peter's letter said: "I have had a 'home-care agreement' with British Gas for the annual servicing and emergency call-outs for many years. In November 2005 the annual cost was £189. This month it has increased to £248.

"Once again it is the pensioner on a fixed income who suffers most. It is also OAPs who need the heating to be reliably maintained at all times". said **Peter Horsfall** in a straight and simple message that many other people will recognise applies equally to them.

What good will it do? Well, it lets the decision-makers and those with some power know that we are not satisfied with their performance. And who knows whether if enough of us complain, something may be done to change things for the better. The alternative is to suffer in silence and that's what our so-called betters would like us to do.

So get writing those letters!

Forum backs London's first **Nowt more for pensioners** over 50s radio station

We'll soon be able to tune in to 102.2FM and hear a new commercial music and speech station dedicated to the Over-50s in London. Ofcom - the licensing body - has allowed Smooth 102.2FM's application for a change of format which the Forum supported to help get our views across to a media that largely ignores us.

Smooth FM's owners, Guardian Media Group, wrote to thank the Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum for their help in supporting the application. "Your well-argued letter helped greatly in persuading Ofcom to agree to the new-look station which will be launched in the New Year but, as yet, we do not have an exact launch date.

"However, in the coming weeks we will be keeping you informed of how the station is developing and how we can work with you to get your message across to your target audience. If you would like a representative from Smooth 102.2 to address a future Forum meeting to outline our plans we would be more than happy to do so. Best wishes and thank you again for your support which was so vital to our campaign", said Mike Ridley, on behalf of Smooth 102.2FM.

Supporting the application, the Forum said that at a time when life expectancy is constantly rising, when the emphasis will be on how people can use and enjoy their extra years, there is no radio station with this mission which could be a vital asset in helping to raise the quality of life of older people.

This year, for the first time on record, there will be more over 50s than under 16s - yet we are not catered for in any media through the spoken word, although we do have outlets playing our kind of nostalgic music which we note will continue. We think it is time that Ofcom recognised this demographic change by permitting a new-style Smooth102.2FM to go on air with a new approach that would make a positive contribution in making ageing something to relish and enjoy.

We think Ofcom could give a lead by showing it has a strategy to meet the needs of an ageing population by recognising that we are not all characters from "one foot in the grave", but are interested in further learning, in maintaining and improving our physical and mental health and well-being which can lead to savings in health service budgets.

A new-style Smooth102.2FM could be an important conduit for relaying information and ideas that would engage the specific interest of older people and so increase their participation in social and community activity - instead of all too often being left to feel isolated and a burden, rather than the asset they could be to society.

Overheard at the Forum

"I missed my nap yesterday. I slept right through it!"

"Ethel was born with a silver spoon in her mouth and she hasn't stirred since"

Despite the big rises in energy costs and the loss of the £200 grant towards Council Tax, there's to be no extra State pension paid from April above the 3.6% increase in the retail prices index which only takes in increases in the year ending last September. A single pensioner will get £87.30 a week, instead of £84.25, while a pensioner couple will receive £139.60 a week compared with the present £134.75. Pension credit rates go up £5 - £7.65 a week.

Those eligible to receive the pension credit minimum income will get an extra 4.4 % in line with the increase in average male earnings - not prices - which gives an idea of what the Chancellor is saving by not restoring the link between pensions and earnings until 2012 at the earliest. The minimum pension credit payment will go up from £114.05 to £119.05 and couples who qualify will see their minimum raised from £174.05 to £181.70. Anyone with a weekly income below these figures after taking into account interest from savings etc should immediately call the Pensions Service 0845 60 60 265, Monday to Friday 8am-8pm. Calls from BT landlines are charged at local rates.

This is an improved state pension and pension credit tele-claims service which will at the same time deal with housing benefit and council tax rebate claims. The Government still insists that its reforms to pensioner tax and benefits since 1997 has meant that on average pensioners are £29 a week better off in real terms - that's after inflation has been taken into account, while the poorest third of pensioners are said to be £40 a week better off.

The latest data shows that pensioners are facing higher inflation rates than the rest of the community because of the large share of their income spent on food and fuel energy. The Office of National Statistics reckons food prices have gone up 4.9%, electricity 27% and gas 39.9% - compare these figures with the official inflation rate of 3.6% on which pension increases were based and you realise why pensioners are like the donkey's tail - always behind!

Thank you Mount Carmel.....

We would like to record our special thanks to the Parish Committee of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St George for considering our Forum worthy of receiving a donation of £300 to further our work on behalf of older people in the Borough. It is our intention to use this money for a special project to be decided by the Forum committee.

Suggestions are invited from Forum members.

.....and thank you Waitrose

Christmas started early for Forum members attending the November meeting with popular local historian David Pam. Waitrose branch manager Philippe Baradeau from the Palace Gardens shopping centre branch, assisted by lovely staff members Kasia and Moggie, brought along nine different wines and various cheeses for members to taste and enjoy.

With fresh bread and biscuits, mince pies, assorted nuts and soft dried fruit it provided a wonderful last meeting of the year for the Forum - all due to the initiative of Forum vice-chair Roy Barrows who secured the support of Waitrose for the Forum which we are sure many members will reciprocate. Thank you Phillipe and staff.

Forum's SOS for SSO

I think the Forum should be proud of its part in ensuring that the Southgate Symphony Orchestra (SSO) continues as a vital community resource. However, it would be good to see more Forum members actively supporting the SSO by going to their concerts. Dates of future performances will be advertised in this newsletter.

Nothing on the box, so I thought I know what to do and took myself off to Christ Church Hall, Southgate, one December night. This is the first time I've heard the SSO and I was glad I decided to go. The Orchestra, under their conductor Alex Eadon, gave us an evening of pleasure. The programme was varied and I was familiar with most of the music.

That evergreen favourite Mendelssohn's 'Fingal' gave a rousing start to the evening. Two soprano soloists, Shirley Pilgrim and Lee Mason, then gave performances of arias from Mozart - The Marriage of Figaro; Puccini's La Boheme; the Evening Prayer from Hansel and Gretel by Humperdinck, and a piece completely new to me - Moonfall from the musical by Rupert Holmes based on Charles Dickens' The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

It has certainly whetted my appetite to hear more. Their reprise was the old favourite We'll gather lilacs, which was well received. Just before the interval we heard Brahms' Variation on a Theme of Haydn.

The big piece of the evening was a spirited performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 in D major. This demonstrated again, as it had throughout the evening, that it has well balanced wind and string ensembles who play well and sensitively together. The players obviously enjoyed playing and communicated this to a large and enthusiastic audience.

Irene Richards

Enfield Pensioners Action Group

The Enfield Pensioners Action Group (EPAG) is a campaigning group which aims to speak for the interests of pensioners. Decent pensions for all, with the restoration of the link with earnings now.

Reform of the Council Tax. Adequate NHS provision for older people; in particular we oppose the proposed cuts to services at Chase Farm. We are completely independent of all political parties.

We meet from 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. on the first Monday of every month (or the second Monday if the first is a Bank Holiday) at the Royal British Legion, 114 Nags Head Road, Ponders End. There is usually a speaker, a lively discussion a raffle and a cheap cup of tea.

Membership costs a minimum of just £1.50 a year (though donations are welcomed), for which members receive a monthly newsletter.

If you are interested in joining, please come along to any of our meetings and feel free to attend one or two meetings before deciding whether you want to join.

If you have any queries, please contact the secretary, Ian Birchall, by e-mail at ian@ibirchall.wanadoo.co.uk or telephone 020 8805 7556.

Random Round-Up

Fairtrade support

The Forum has decided to support the Enfield Fairtrade campaign which has been endorsed by the Enfield Civic Society Forum and nearly 30 community and faith groups. The aim is to secure recognition of Enfield as a Fairtrade borough which it is hoped the Council will also approve. Fairtrade products ensure that a fair price is paid to producers and workers in Third World countries, so helping to relieve poverty, and are available at Waitrose, Marks and Spencer and other major stores in Enfield.

New Forum - CAB welfare rights adviser

Aiyampillai Gunesingham has come out of retirement to take up the special Forum-CAB post funded by the DWP which aims to find more people eligible to apply for pension credit, housing and council tax rebates and other allowances that may be available to elderly people needing assistance. Mr Gunesingham is available on Monday, Tuesday and Friday at Community House, Fore Street, Edmonton. telephone 020 8373 6295 and he is willing to make home visits if necessary to ensure that people get the help they need.

Check that pressure

High blood pressure affects over 16 million people in the UK. It is widely known as the silent killer because high blood pressure rarely has any symptoms and the higher your blood pressure, the greater your risk of stroke, heart attack and heart failure. The only way to know if your blood pressure is too high is to have it measured. So, when was the last time you had one? We think that people in their sixties and above should have their blood pressure taken at least once a year, if they are in good health. And more often, say once every six months if they are being treated by the GP for say diabetes or some other ailment. Don't leave it to the GP to ask you in for a blood pressure check - ask them to give you one regularly.

Thoughts for the day:

* There is more money being spent on breast implants and Viagra today than on Alzheimer's research. This means that by 2040, there could be a lot of people with perky boobs and huge erections and absolutely no recollection of what to do with them.

* We all get heavier as we get older because there's a lot more information in our heads. So I'm not fat just really intelligent and my head couldn't hold any more so it started spilling up the rest of me. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Age Concern Enfield 2007 UK holidays

28 May -1 June, Lakeside Coastal Resort, Hayling Island 4 nights (5 days) half board £225pp. heated indoor pool; nightly entertainment.

17 -21 September Warner Norton Grange Classic Resort Yarmouth, Isle of Wight 4 nights (5 days) half board, two half-day excursions included £227pp; heated indoor pool, nightly entertainment. Details **020 8375 4122**.

Age Concern Enfield has moved from the **Edmonton Portacabin** and is now based at **335-341 Baker Street, Enfield Town** opp. the Hop Poles pub. (10am-3pm daily)

Roddy writes

The Christmas party was once again a sell out and a great success. I just could not believe how early some of you got there! I hope you all had a great time as I certainly did, although I must learn to line dance in 2007 so I can keep up with our wonderful ladies.

On behalf of the Forum I'd like to thank the following businesses and friends for the gifts they gave to our Christmas social raffle, raising £184 for our funds:

Boots the Chemist, Dog & Duck Palmers Green, Greggs, the Bakers, Goose at the Green, Millfield Theatre, Papadelli, Enfield Town, Pearsons of Enfield, Rymans, Southbury Leisure Centre, Wades Hill Butchery N21, Waitrose, Enfield Town & to the many Forum members who also donated prizes.

Now you'll recall we sent out a flyer about Prague - well, we did not get enough people to make it work this time. I asked myself why? Maybe it would be best if you tell me. Was it too far? Too expensive? The wrong time of year to demand a deposit, just before Christmas, when money is at a premium? We will try again if you wish so let me know your thoughts either by email, or by writing to me at the address below.

Our first London day out is booked for Thursday 22 February and goes to Greenwich thanks to Roy Barrows for organising the trip. You'll find fuller details elsewhere in this Newsletter.

What other events would you support? West End theatre trip / local meals out / quiz night / a trip to Scotland in August to see the Edinburgh Tattoo?? Again I repeat, you tell me!!

Thanks for all of your help in my new job as social secretary and keep your ideas coming.

Cheers

Roddy Beare

18 Lucerne Close, London N13 4QJ or email
Roddybeare@blueyonder.co.uk

Edmonton Forum Meetings

Meeting dates for your 2007 diary are:

Jan 26th, March 30th, May 25th, July 27th,

Sept 28th, & November 30th - all on Fridays

See page 4 for details of the January 26 meeting.

Forum Coffee mornings at Salisbury House

This **new initiative for the Forum** will start on **20 February 10-12 noon** with a discussion on **'Lifelong learning in Enfield - opportunities and needs.'** This will be your meeting where you can promote your favourite pastime and find out what others are doing and what is going on in Enfield. Members willing to lead discussions, summarise outcome or help in arranging these mornings should contact Olivia. A second coffee morning will be held on **20 March** to discuss **'Leisure - keeping active - barriers, opportunities and needs.'** These meetings will be held in the lounge on the top floor. Access is not suitable for members with disabilities. **Salisbury House** is in Bury Street West, N9. The 192 bus passes the door. Easy nearby parking.

Forum AGM

Tuesday 24 April at 10.30am

Civic Centre, Enfield

- your chance to nominate and elect the officers and a new committee
- annual report discussion

Guest: **Pat Healy, vice-president, National Pensioners Convention**, who will speak on the campaign to end all forms of age discrimination throughout society.

Fancy a break ?

Forum member Audrey Luce has been organising holidays for a number of years and will open the 2007 trips to interested Forum members. They are: Saturday September 8 to Morecambe for 8 days (7 nights) with bed, breakfast and evening meal and staying at the Auckland Hotel for £379.00. On Monday November 12 there is a trip to Carlisle, Cumbria for a Holly and Mistletoe Festive Break, lasting 5 days (4 nights) with bed, breakfast and evening meal and staying at the Gillsland Spa Hotel for £255.00

An additional £8.00 insurance is available if required.

Audrey can be contacted for further information on **020 8367 6921** either early morning or during the evening.



**ENFIELD BOROUGH OVER 50s
FORUM**

www.enfieldover50sforum

Membership Application Form

Surname	
First Name(s)	
Organisation*	
Address	
Post Code	
Phone Number	
Email	

* Not applicable if joining as an individual or a couple.

(I/We/My Club) wish(es) to apply for membership of the Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum. Enclosed is a payment of (£4.00 individual membership; £6.00 for couples; £10.00 for Clubs). Cheques should be made payable to Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum. (Delete as appropriate)

Signed:

Please return this application form to Olivia Goodfellow, Development Officer, Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum, 19 Wades Hill, Winchmore Hill, N21 1BD. or hand in at a Forum Meeting.

Please tick here if a receipt is required. Receipts are not usually sent as a full membership list is available at meetings.

How did you hear about the Forum?

Or

Who introduced you?