

Forum eNews



ENFIELD BOROUGH OVER 50s FORUM NEWSLETTER

eNews 291

6 June 2020

Dear Member

The impact of the Covid-19 virus dominates life across for all. This eNews focuses on issues affecting our Forum and Enfield residents so we urge you read it through carefully.

The Lockdown has restricted Forum meetings, events and activities since the beginning of March. Millfield House and our office remain closed to all visitors and for group activities. Ruth Fathaddine and Diane Barron, our two office staff, have been furloughed for 5 weeks and are now busy back in the office catching up with members post and other administrative matters. All cheques and membership matters have been processed and the office is being geared up in readiness for normal resumption of business.

No newsletter issue was printed for June/July period, but the intention is that we will publish and post out an August/September issue. Meanwhile we are relying on email to distribute information of. Following this email we will email out our Annual Report as a PDF file for the year ending 31 March 2020. Sadly, we have had to postpone the Annual General Meeting due to be held at the Civic Centre on June 30th. Again, we will notify members when a new date is fixed.

Besides nominations for 2020/21 from current executive committee members we also received nominations from Jan Oliver, whom most members will be familiar with while she was the Forum's development manager, and also Ann Zinkin. Ann is an ex Enfield Councillor who will bring a wealth of experience of the issues important within our borough. Both have been co-opted onto the executive committee until such time that the AGM can be held so that their positions can be ratified as trustees.

The executive committee has been convening via Zoom online meetings and will continue to do so until Covid-19 risks are eliminated.

Notes from executive committee members

1 Monty Meth

Council faces Covid-19 cash crisis

Financial pressures are fast building up on Enfield council as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic which could ruin its carefully planned balanced 2020/21 budget. The blunt figures are the council expects to be down some £68 million while receiving just £17.9 million compensation so far from the government.

The council took £3 million from its reserves to meet the immediate needs of those hit fastest and hardest by the pandemic; setting up the crisis centre, buying food for some 20,000 of the most vulnerable, high risk residents; buying patient protection equipment for care homes because the government's delivery was totally inadequate - and even giving the care homes money to buy their own PPE equipment. The council, we are told, provided additional adult care beds to ease the pressure on hospitals and they took over Travelodge in Edmonton to bring rough sleepers off the streets.

The council has had to meet significant increased costs to cover for staff sickness ranging from social care workers to the bin collection service, while at the same time they have lost income from

council tax and car parking charges. There's also been lost income from libraries, business rates and increased costs to meet for children's care and homelessness.

Taken together the council estimates it is about £45 million short of balancing the books as a result of Covid-19. All London councils are in the same boat so it is important that Robert Jenrick, the communications and local government minister lives up to his promise that "local government will have the resources they need to meet this challenge."

Unless this promise is fulfilled, the council warns it will have to cut back on some of the essential services it provides - and that could put the Community Toilet Scheme and the £11 million plus a year cost of the Freedom Pass under scrutiny. So, we expect the government to treat local government in the same way as it is helping industry and the economy.

Open for advice

Although we were too optimistic in hoping that our Dugdale Advice Sessions would re-open in June, we are pleased to report that both Solicitor Michael Stennett and tax and financial adviser George Ttouli have remained open for business by telephone or email during this coronavirus lockdown. Forum members can still make a free and confidential calls to either adviser. Call Michael Stennett 0208 920 3190 or George Ttouli on 0208 882 6688

Attacks on Triple Lock

The lockdown doesn't mean we are shutdown. We are ready to rebut the constant attacks on the Triple Lock formula for state retirement pension increases. I wonder whether those who say the guaranteed 2.5 per cent increase should be dropped, so that future increases would be either based on the increase in inflation or earnings realise that the recent City/YouGov inflation survey predicts that inflation will rise to 3.1% for the next five to ten years. I suppose the Social Market Foundation and the learned pundits in the media realise that 3.1 is more than 2.5 and all they are doing is condemning future pensioners - our children and grandchildren - to poverty pensions. They should remember the uproar when Gordon Brown was Chancellor and inflation was 1.1 per cent and pensioners received a paltry 75p increase.

2 Gail Hawkesworth

Changes ahead for London's Health and Care System.

Members interested in the latest proposals outlined in 'Journey to a New Health and Care System' can access it on the link below:

<https://healthcampaignstogether.com/pdf/Journey%20to%20a%20New%20Health%20and%20Care%20System%204th%20April%202020REVISED%202.pdf>

3 Jan Oliver

I am pleased to say that I have now been co-opted onto the Management Committee as Membership Secretary and one of the first things I would like to do is to encourage your participation in the eNews from members and from our affiliated groups. So, I am inviting contributions from you for the next eNews. For example you could write a short piece about how you are coping with lock down - either as an individual or as an affiliated group - any tips you might have for interesting online sites or socially distanced activities or anything to do with local news. If you have anything you would like considered for this section please email it to me at eternalechoes2002@yahoo.ie - please do not send adverts - which should be sent in the normal way to the office email account. Looking forward to hearing from you all.

4 Jim Cantle

Thanks to all the members of the lottery for their continued support. Since the Forum's last monthly meeting held in February NO draws have taken place. As soon as we can organise an open meeting, we will make the draws for March, April, May and June. Each winner will receive at least £300. Any members wishing to join the lottery at £5 per month should contact me, on 0208 363 4969.

Other relevant information

1 Covid-19 Deaths

Below is recent ONS data on Covid-19 deaths in Enfield and our neighbouring boroughs.

As you can see the percentage figures for Enfield are in line with those for Greater London.

Table 1 Deaths between 29'h February and 22nd May for London Boroughs and local boroughs

	All causes	COVID 19	% Covid-19
Haringey	548	258	47.1
Barnet	1076	442	41.1
Waltham Forest	581	234	40.3
Enfield	939	373	39.7
London	20092	8034	40

Source:

Death registrations and occurrences by local authority and health board, ONS (2 June 2020)

2 Paypoint

Members are reminded that as from 31 May the cashiers service at the Civic Centre and autopy kiosks at the Civic Centre and Edmonton Centre have been withdrawn and other than online transfers, all Council bills now need to be made by **PayPoint**. There are over 140 **PayPoint** locations across the borough and all **PayPoint** retailers accept cash. Many are open 7 days a week and have long opening hours. Most of us live within one mile of a PayPoint retailer.

PayPoint can be used to pay:

- Council Tax
- Housing Rent - existing rent cards containing a barcode used as Post Office & PayZone will work with PayPoint
- Leaseholder service charges
- Housing benefit overpayments
- Invoices to pay for a council service or charge
- Business Rates

3 Enfield Fusion Leisure Centres

Fusion has informed the Forum that the Centres will remain closed until the Government lifts the lockdown

4 Scams, Phishing and suspicious emails

Many of us have received and continue to receive unwelcome emails and posts that attempt to access our contact lists, access our accounts, dupe us into supporting senders' criminal lifestyles. The National Cyber Security Centre has just launched a website where we can report such unwelcome emails. Now, if you have received an email which you're not quite sure about, forward it to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS): report@phishing.gov.uk

Details about the NCSC can be got from:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/report-suspicious-emails>

As of 28/05/20 the number of reports received by NCSC stand at more than 614,000 with the removal of 1,117 scams and 4,530 URLs.

5 Freedom Pass Changes

Temporary suspension of free peak time travel for 60+ passengers

Transport for London has introduced temporary measures to help London re-open carefully, safely and sustainably. As agreed with the Government, TfL will be making temporary changes to the Older Person's Freedom Pass, 60+ Oyster photocard and English National Concessionary Scheme in London.

From Monday 15 June 2020, all customers with an Older Person's Freedom Pass, 60+ Oyster photocard or English National Concessionary Scheme pass can only travel for free after 09:00, Monday to Friday and at any time on weekends and bank holidays. If travel before 09:00 is essential, we will be advising pass holders to travel using pay as you go with a contactless card or mobile device, or an Oyster card.

TfL is working hard to ensure that those who have no option other than to travel using public transport can do so safely. Given the national requirement to maintain two metre social distancing, the capacity of buses and trains is hugely reduced. These temporary changes to the Older Person's Freedom Pass and 60+ Oyster card pass during morning peak travel will help reduce the risk of crowding when it would be more difficult to maintain social distancing.

Disabled Freedom Pass holders are unaffected and can use their pass to travel at any time.

Any members who have queries about the changes, can contact London Council's helpline on 0300 330 1433 for further information.

6 Face Masks

From Monday 15 June, the use of face coverings will be compulsory on TfL services. In line with new Government guidance, all passengers travelling on public transport from 15 June will be required to wear a face covering. This will apply across all TfL services for your entire journey.

You should also note that the World Health Organisation has advised that simple face coverings are inadequate and that over 60s should wear medical grade masks and all others should wear three-layer masks. (Guardian report 6 June 2020)

Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum
Millfield House
Silver Street
N18 1PJ
0208 807 2076
info@enfieldover50sforum.org.uk