

# Forum News



February 2004

The Newsletter of Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum

## 2004: The Year of the Big Leap Forward



This first Newsletter of 2004 contains a great deal of news: of campaigns we are waging on Council Tax; Leisure Centres; restoring the toenail cutting service and winning more people to take up the Pension Credit. There is a lot of information in this Newsletter that you can use and pass on to others and there's news of our future meetings - all designed to strengthen the Forum and so make it the representative voice of older people in the Borough.

Pride of Place in reporting to you must go to the National Lottery Community Fund. You will see reported on page 3 that the Fund's London Committee has awarded us a grant of £53,802 to be spent over the next three years for the recruitment and salary of a part-time development officer.

I have long argued that there is so much for our Forum to do with too few volunteers, that the work becomes overwhelming. Now, thanks to the National Lottery, with the part-time and paid assistance we will now have, we should be able to take a big leap forward in the quality of our work.

Ideally, we would like to have the new development officer in place by the time of the AGM in April and with a new Committee in place it should be all systems go.

Our thanks for winning this grant must go to Forum Secretary Tony Watts, who not only made and personally monitored the application on our behalf, but also ensured that we met every criteria the Community Fund laid down. I have no doubt that having our own website - another Tony Watts creation - helped enormously in gaining the Forum the status and credibility to warrant the grant.

*Now let's make sure we make 2004 the Forum's breakthrough year.*

See you at the Forum meetings

*Monty Meth*

**Chair**

## FORUM Events

*We have been unable to adhere to our normal last Tuesday of the month at 10.30 am routine for Forum meetings. So please carefully note the following:*

**Tuesday 24 February at 11.00 am**  
*at Enfield Civic Centre, Silver Street*

**Council Tax: Where it comes from - Where it goes**

*Speaker: Mark McLaughlin, director of corporate and financial resources.*

**Monday 29 March at 10.30 a.m.**

*Enfield Civic Centre, Silver Street*

**Access for All - new rights for disabled people**

*Speaker: Rod Robb, Disability Rights Commission*

**Tuesday 27 April 10.00 am for 10.30 start**

*Enfield Civic Centre, Silver Street*

**Forum Annual General Meeting**

*Your chance to join the new Committee*

## Digital by April

The Digital hearing aids we publicly campaigned for are expected to be introduced by the Chase Farm audiology unit by April. But because of the shortage of audiologists they will at first be given to new patients.

Keith Dunmore, the hospital's chief audiologist, has however applied to join a new scheme which will allow holders of old-style aids to get the more effective NHS digital appliance fitted free by a local private hearing centre rather than wait on Chase Farm clearing the patient back-log.

## Badminton for Over 50s

*Players wanted*

**4 courts playing mixed foursomes**

**Tuesdays 12.00-2.00pm**

**Fridays 10.00-12.00pm**

**Middlesex Sports Hall, Trent Park**

**£1.50 per session**

**Contact: Ron Carr 020 8360 6954**

**Chair: Monty Meth Vice Chair: Audrey Hardwick**

**Treasurer: John Hennell**

**Secretary: Tony Watts**

## Petition Rejected.....

Although some 2000 people signed our petition calling on the Council not to reduce its grant to Enfield Leisure Centres Trust (ELCT) by £33,000 again this year, the Council Cabinet which met on 22 January decided to press ahead with its long-term plan to try and end the total ELCT grant over the next 10 years.

This would lose ELCT some £400,000 in annual grants - a shortfall that will in our view have to be made up by more customers producing increased revenue, higher charges or cuts in services or a mixture of all three. Already we have seen ELCT being compelled to close the creche facilities at the Southgate and Edmonton leisure centres as a direct result of the grant reductions.

The Council is now opening negotiations with ELCT and another Trust with a view to reaching a long-term agreement which, in exchange for a 15 or 25 year lease, would mean the Trust taking over responsibility for repairs and maintenance and a £5 million investment programme over the next 10 years.

The Forum chair, secretary and member Peter Horsfall met Councillor Burrowes, the Cabinet member responsible for leisure together with Claire Lewis, assistant director for leisure and culture and Adrian Ledbury, sport and recreational manager, to express our concern with the Council's approach which appears to be one of contracting out of all responsibility for maintaining the leisure centres as community assets.

We asked Councillor Burrowes to provide comparative details of grants by other London councils to their leisure centres; to see whether some of the Council's sport and recreational activities could be managed by ELCT; and we complained strongly that the Council's proposals were not put out for public consultation, but were drawn up by Council officers and the majority party and endorsed by the same people without any opportunity for anyone else to influence the debate.

## .....and Meanwhile

The new monthly swimming pass we have been discussing with ELCT looks as though it is finally on its way. Subject to ELCT board confirmation later this month it will be introduced in April for people over the age of 60 who hold the £8 annual discount card.

The cost will probably be between £15 and £17 a month and we hope it will enable people to swim anytime, any day. Another innovation we helped to introduce - the Wednesday 50 plus day at Southbury Leisure Centre from 10 am - 4pm is now going with a swing. Attendance has been higher than ever since the New Year, with the short mat bowls sessions really taking off. There is a full range of sport and leisure activities on offer - with lunch - all for £3.95. So why not give it a try?

Fuller details of all ELCT activities from Ken Biggs on 020 8379 2460.

## Pension Top Up for 9500 + Homes

Over 9500 pensioner households in the Borough are now receiving an average payment of more than £58 per week in addition to the basic state retirement pension. The additional money is mainly made up of the minimum income guarantee plus the new Pension Credit.

The figures for the three parliamentary constituencies in the Borough are:

- Edmonton 3589 pensioner households receive an average £60.29 each per week.
- Enfield North 3269 households receive an average £53.55 a week.
- Enfield Southgate 2660 households receive an average £61.90 a week.

Just to remind you that a claim can be made with a single free telephone call to 0800 99 1234 - and 96% of these calls we are told are answered within 30 seconds.

Pension Credit will increase again in April by £3 a week for single pensioners and £5 a week for couples, and will continue to increase linked to average earnings for the rest of this Parliament.

Forum members Derek and Helen Friggens and Stan and Maisie Anderson have done a sterling job in drawing the Pension Credit to the attention of members of their respective clubs and others have told us that claiming the credit over the telephone is quite easy.

Stan was disappointed that so few pensioners applied themselves for the Pension Credit that he made a test-run himself on behalf of five people. Two had good private pensions and did not qualify, but the other three are now receiving £7, £9, and £14.99 a week extra.

All 14 public libraries in the Borough have the "pick it up...it's yours" pension credit leaflets and there is now an easy-to-use free website where, in a couple of minutes, anyone can find out what benefits they are entitled to and how to claim,

The free website is [www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk) and if you don't have access to a computer, the Central Library in Cecil Road, Enfield Town will help you.

## Visit our website

[www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk](http://www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk)

and get up to the minute information about the Forum's activities, issues affecting older people, links to sites crammed with facts, minutes of meetings, future events, the membership list, pictures of Forum members in action and comment on local matters.

## Equal Job Opportunities Planned

Enfield Council's special projects scrutiny panel has asked its officers to draw up a new recruitment strategy to challenge age discrimination in the employment of older people by the summer 2004.

This is a follow-up to the Forum's call for the Council to give a lead to all local employers in preparing for legislation banning ageism in the workplace from 2006.

Although 35% of the Council's workforce is aged over 50, only some 3.6% of applicants for new jobs were aged 55 and over while some 25% of the Borough's residents are aged over 65. Tim Strong, the council's assistant director of human resources, says the challenge now is to get older people to apply for jobs and to raise awareness of the jobs available. They would look at recruitment and retention and working patterns to give older people flexible options.

A review of the Council's compulsory retirement at 65 policy to allow people to pay into a pension scheme until aged 70 will be undertaken in line with new legislation which is expected to outlaw compulsory retirement ages.

"Implicit in this change is the recognition of the increasing longevity of the population and the fact that many older people have a valuable contribution to make in the delivery of local authority services beyond the age of 65", says Mr Strong.

The Council's new equal opportunity employment strategy will, it is hoped, result in the Council becoming the employer of choice for all local people and enable the Council to be recognised as an Age Champion. The Council is also considering becoming a member of the Employers' Forum on Age, as previously suggested by the Forum.

## Successful Xmas Social



No business meeting was arranged for December 2003 but around eighty members enjoyed a convivial get together on the 10th. Attendees at the recent January meeting welcomed the suggestion that we should hold a mid-summer social event. Suggestions of a venue are welcomed and anyone willing to help in its organisation should come forward.

## Forum wins Lottery Grant for Expansion

A three-year grant totalling £53,802 has been awarded to our Forum by the National Lottery Community Fund to meet the salary of a part-time development officer and the overheads and running costs associated with the appointment.

In exchange for the grant we have agreed to involve more older people in the issues that concern them in the Borough; to make the Forum more effective at influencing the decision-makers on matters such as leisure, health, transport, social and community care; to improve communications between the Forum and other organisations of older people in the Borough; and to play a fuller part in the Enfield Strategic Partnership.

The grant will be paid annually to the Forum and is conditional on the Forum recording progress on each of the above projects every year. The Community Fund will set up a tracking system to monitor progress and we are required to account for every penny of the grant.

If we do not for any reason meet these requirements we could lose the balance of the grant and the Lottery Fund is unlikely to fund any future application. As we have to start the grant within six months, our first task is to recruit a suitable part-time worker and we will be looking for someone with organisational and leadership ability and experience of the issues facing older people.

The post will be advertised and the final choice will be made by a selection panel including people independent of the Forum.

## Beat the Cold

Over 40,000 more older people die each year between December and March than at other times of the year - and the causes are often due to cold related illnesses.

So it is most important that older people - particularly those living on their own and who spend too much of their low income on maintaining a warm home - take up the warm front grants offered by the Government.

The Faculty of Public Health estimates that some three million households are in the fuel poverty category and it says we have a higher proportion of the older population dying from winter related illnesses than in cold climate countries like Finland or Russia.

Poor heating and insulation linked to pensioner poverty and poor housing are some of the factors that need urgent attention. Some two million people still live below the poverty line of £5,800 a year for a single person.

So we would like to see the Government set a target for the abolition of pensioner poverty and meanwhile we urge everyone to publicise the Government warm front grants of up to £2,500 for house insulation etc.

For information and application forms ring Freephone 0800 316 2808.

## Reform the Council Tax

We know that the Council Tax system is due to be reformed in 2007 - but can we wait until then for a fair deal for the many people on fixed incomes, particularly as this reform is going to include a revaluation upwards of house prices for the majority of people?

We accept that the Council cannot on its own change the present arrangement, but we do think it could do more to protect older people and those on fixed incomes from above-inflation increases in the tax.

Why, for example, does it have to hit pensioners with a double whammy - proposing an increase of more than 8% while at the same time raising the charges for home meals, home care and raising the income assessment level for home care from 90% to 100%?

We said in our submission to the Council that we thought these increases were unfair and unjust. We argued they ought to take into account that state pensions would only rise by £2.15 a week for single people and £3.45 for couples and if no changes were made to the Council's draft proposals it would further depress the quality of life of older people.

Forum member Peter Horsfall was told by Phil Hope MP, a parliamentary under-secretary of state, that the Government believed local authorities can and should deliver council tax rises in low single figures because they had given councils above inflation increases. The budget - setting council meeting will be held on 25 February and we'll be watching to see what impact we and others have had.

It is estimated that well over half of all pensioner households are entitled to some reduction in their council tax bill and we hope that more will be done by both the Pensions Service and the Council to increase the level of take-up. The benefit is in addition to other reductions such as the 25% discount for living alone and those with low or moderate incomes - and savings below £16,000.

The Council has two telephone helplines which are open from 9.00am to 12.30 and from 1.30 to 4.30. Call 020 8379 3798 or 5361 for council tax queries - and let us know how you get on.

## The Growing Older Programme

The Economic & Social Research Council has been funding 24 research projects studying the quality of life of older people. The work has been undertaken by various UK universities and the published work is available from the University of Sheffield. Findings of the research programmes are also on - [www.shef.ac.uk/projects/gop/index.htm](http://www.shef.ac.uk/projects/gop/index.htm) email [Marg.Walker@shef.ac.uk](mailto:Marg.Walker@shef.ac.uk) Phone: 0114 222 6492

## THANKS

Once again we thank the Sainsbury Supermarket at Winchmore Hill for supporting the Forum by partly meeting the tea and coffee costs at Forum meetings.

## A New Chase Farm by 2008 /9?

That's the timetable target date set by Enfield and Barnet Primary Care Trusts and the North Central London Strategic Health Authority following the statement by Health Minister John Hutton: "the new hospital is going to be built." A private sector partner is now being sought to construct the new facilities under the Private Finance Initiative scheme.

The £75 million rebuilding plan is going ahead as planned despite the recent sudden change of chief executive. Nick Samuels, communications director at the Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals, told the Forum that 20 matrons have been appointed across both sites to cover all nursing areas. They have the responsibility, authority and funding for the cleanliness of the wards. They can put right concerns raised by patients and can go straight to senior management to sort out any problems.

"They have the clout to get things done and the remit to get things sorted", says Nick who is also involved in discussions with Transport for London on the crucial need to ensure that patients, relatives and staff can get to the hospitals by improving the current inadequate services.

Forum members who complain that the antiquated phone system makes it difficult to change appointments have been assured that the network has been upgraded, significantly increasing the number of direct dial numbers. But a major improvement in the communications structure will await the hospital rebuild.

Missed outpatient appointments are now down to about 14% and people missing operation appointments has been halved to 6%. "We now contact all patients coming in for an operation closer to their time of appointment to ensure they still plan to keep it," says Nick.

A new round of consultations on the future of Chase Farm will take place in the summer and the Forum will have the chance to discuss any proposals in detail before the rebuilding work commences.

The Forum is also participating in the Council's joint scrutiny commission on the future of Barnet and Chase Farm hospitals. At its first all-day meeting assurances were given that A&E departments would operate on both sites, but reservations were expressed about the one-site location for the Women and Children's centre.

Sally Johnson, Enfield PCT chief executive has outlined her vision for a move away from single-handed GP practices to primary care centres offering a wider range of services. The first of these centres at Forest Road, Edmonton, will relocate 15 GPs into one large £6.2 million clinic allowing 20,000 people to be attached to one health centre. Another centre is earmarked for Moorfield Road, Enfield Highway, and it is hoped that both centres will reduce hospital referrals by 2005.

At the same time a new community-based blood-testing facility is scheduled to operate from six GP surgeries at three different parts of the Borough, each with a capacity of seeing 200 patients a week by appointment and would be in addition to the hospital based service. Patients would then have a choice of the most suitable location and this will hopefully end the waiting time at Chase Farm.

## Meeting Report..... Making Enfield a Better Place for Older People

A new departure for the Forum was a 'teach-in' seminar held in the conference room at the Civic Centre on 21st January 2004. Over seventy members heard local government expert Ian Beever explain how the Local Government Act 2000 was bringing about change in the way Councils, the Greater London Authority and the National Health Service operated.

Decision making processes within Enfield and how government funds were being targeted towards deprived areas within Enfield were outlined. Local partnerships with the voluntary sector were being put together to influence the direction and funding of developments in Enfield. This was being overseen by the Enfield Strategic Partnership through a number of thematic groups. These groups are charged with putting forward and monitoring projects that will benefit communities on the eastern side of the Borough.



*Member Tony Kingsnorth appeals to members to consider the Council's plans for the New Central Library and Museum.*

At the seminar an overview of the work of one of the five Thematic Groups - The Better Enfield Group was presented by Tony Watts. Programmes being funded include: Raynham Park, Safer Warmer Homes, Local Estate Services, Safer Communities, 'Street Hawks', Edmonton Credit Union, and Ponders End Community Development Trust. Projects being considered for the future include redevelopment of Craig Park, involvement of local traders in improving the shopping area in Angel Road and Fore Street, a competition for local residents to come up with ideas that could improve local streets, and research to identify the sources of street litter. The sum available for the five thematic groups for 2004/5 projects is about £1.2 million.

***This seminar was funded by Enfield Community Empowerment Network***

## HAPPY VOLUNTEERS

"It was the best training course I have ever done. I enjoyed every minute of it and was sorry when it ended".

These were the words of Betty Lewis, a *TransAge Action* Volunteer with Age Concern Enfield, who has just completed a 6 week, half day per week training course. She and all the other new volunteers will spend three hours per week helping children get the most out of their schooldays.

They are involved with all classroom activities, helping the children to read, write, with number work, art and craft as well as encouraging the children to develop their skills and interests in many other areas.

"I have made many new friends through volunteering with *TransAge Action* and a whole new social life has opened up for me. I can heartily recommend it to people like me, aged over 50 with some time to spare", said Betty Lewis.

INTERESTED? NEW TRAINING STARTS IN LATE FEBRUARY.  
Why not ring:

**JUDI** 020 8373 6320 or **SUE** 020 8373 6381

## News Clips

### Capital Call

Enfield is one of five outer London boroughs to pilot Capital-call which helps people with mobility problems. Capital call is available only to registered Taxicard users who can use both services. With one simple telephone call, a minicab will be booked and you pay the first £1.50 from your £200 a year allocation. Details from 020 7275 2446.

### Credit Card Scam

Beware of people phoning you to warn of a credit card scam such as Visa or Mastercard. The person phoning after chatting you up then gets round to asking the security number on the back of your card - and that's the trap. Don't give any numbers to anyone, particularly strangers.

### Holiday Options

Holidays. Age Concern Enfield are running three holidays this year - spring, summer and autumn. Weston-Super-Mare in March, Bournemouth in June and Lowestoft in September. Further details from Lisa MacMurdie, senior manager - trading on 0208 351 2702 9am -1pm.

### Free TV licence

Free TV licence for the over 75s - thousands have still not claimed. To enquire and claim ring 0845 6036 999.

### Terry & Gaby Show

Fancy being part of the audience for the Channel 5 Terry & Gaby Show? Free admission to the Terry Wogan and Gaby Roslin live TV show recorded at the old County Hall. Call 020 7843 9519 - group bookings available.

## PCT - Social Care Find Their Feet

Hopes of a breakthrough aimed at restoring a toenail cutting service to people struck off the NHS treatment list has at last appeared following talks between Pinky Millward, the PCT podiatry and physiotherapy services manager and Steve Tall and Margaret Allen from the Council's social services.

Both sides appear now to accept that they each have a role to play in ending the arbitrary and illogical ruling that forced many elderly people to pay up to £20 for private chiropody - even if they were on income support - because they were defined as not being in "clinical need".

This meant they could have their toenails cut under the NHS if they were diabetic or had a circulatory problem, but not if they could not bend due to severe arthritis or were even awaiting kneecap surgery.

This is an issue the Forum has long campaigned about because we have never been able to understand why NHS care stops short when it reaches the feet, especially when we know that the lack of toenail cutting can lead to walking difficulties, then isolation and depression - and that is worse than a false economy for health service costs. It is scandalous.

We know that the PCTs in Harringey, Portsmouth, Merton and Sutton, Somerset, Eastbourne, Canterbury and East Lincolnshire are among those working with social care workers to provide footcare for people unable to cut their own toenails.

We have sent the PCT details of the East Lincs scheme where people are first assessed to see that they do not have any problems that need the help of a qualified NHS podiatrist. They are then asked to buy a set of nail clippers and a file at a cost of around £14 which they keep and either take along to a clinic every three months or keep at home for the trained social care worker to use.

It will help us to keep the pressure on our PCT and Enfield social services to introduce a similar scheme if you will get people in need of a toenail cutting service to fill in and return the special survey in this Newsletter as soon as possible.

### FEET FIRST

***Don't forget to complete the enclosed SURVEY and bring it to the meeting on 24 February or post it to Tony Watts, Over 50s Forum, 35 Kingsley Rd, N13 5PJ***

***Get a friend to join the Forum Now - Contact the Secretary on 020 8886 9125 or get a form from the web site - [www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk](http://www.enfieldover50sforum.org.uk)***

## Special Police Statement

We have been asked by Inspector Ian Clark of Enfield Police to draw the following statement to your attention and to urge you to pass on the information.

There have been a number of burglaries throughout Enfield Borough and across North London whereby premises have been entered in the early hours by people posing as police officers. These have targeted the elderly.

Should you see people acting suspiciously in the area of your home or should a person claim to be a police officer and you have any doubts, call 999 immediately.

There have been a number of householders tricked by doorstep con artists. This has involved such incidents as a man claiming to be a neighbour calling to fix a leak, he engaged the victim in conversation whilst an accomplice raided the house. There have also been instances of people claiming to represent the utility companies ( gas, electricity etc) using similar tactics.

***Please be vigilant if strangers come to your door.***

***Put the chain guard on before you open the door - even if you are expecting someone, it may not be that person. Keep your wits about you, this will deter the bogus caller - if in doubt close the door and call 999.***

It is also advisable to ask callers for identification and to verify this with their employers before letting them in the house.

***If you have any information call Enfield Police on 0800 555111***

### Get Fit and Enjoy Life

## Over 50s Day

***Every Wednesday, Southbury Leisure Centre 10am - 4pm***

## Forum AGM 2004

**Make a difference - Stand for the 2004  
Forum Committee**

## Home Safety Audit Winners

Penny Butler, assistant director of social services (adults), made the draw to find the winners of Marks and Spencer vouchers worth £135 donated by the Enfield Primary Care Trust for those who completed the falls prevention home safety "50 questions for the over 50s" audit.

Copies of the audit booklet, drawn up by Forum member Derek Friggens, were distributed to GP surgeries and pharmacies. Copies were requested by Enfield social services and Enfield Community care Physiotherapy Unit for patients who have suffered falls in their own home.

The prize draw winners were: £50 Mr M Finn; £30 Maria Janally; £15 Elzbeth Zambas; £10 each to C. Lange. Mrs B Newport and Mrs A.R. Polley; £5 each to Mrs E. Etridge, Mrs D. Banks, Mrs G. Hooker and Mrs M. Taverner.