

Forum News



November/December 2003

The Newsletter of Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum

Team Work: The Key to Success



This is the last Newsletter of 2003 - a year in which our membership and influence have grown - and the year is not over yet as you will see from the important events listed on this page.

Recognition of the Forum's endeavours to raise the quality of life of older people has taken many forms recently. We received a £4000 grant from Help the Aged which will be used in 2004 to expand our presence in parts of the Borough we barely reach. Being selected by Pegasus Retirement Homes to receive £200 to help meet the cost of this Newsletter indicates our growing status which was reflected in the presence of the Forum at the recent lunch for H.M. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Forty Hall.

You will see in this Newsletter that there is no shortage of campaigning issues on our agenda and there are many others we cannot take up for want of more volunteers coming forward to take on new responsibilities. So we welcome the help given by Anne Wood as the Forum's new Health Issues Coordinator; Don Smith monitoring the Council's scrutiny panels; John Jacques as Membership Coordinator joining vice-chair Audrey Hardwick, the long-standing Transport Coordinator.

Because we are all volunteers it is more than ever vital that the Forum's leadership should be a team effort. The stronger the team, the more the Forum will become a force to be reckoned with.

See you at the November 25 Forum and the Christmas Buffet on December 10.

Remember - Team Work is the Key to Success

Monty Meth

Chair

FORUM Events

Tuesday 25 November

at Enfield Civic Centre, Silver Street 10 am for 10.30 start
MAKING HEALTH SERVICES FIT FOR THE 21st CENTURY
Nick Samuels, Director of Communications Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals, supported by older people's champions Cllr Penny Heathwood, Julian Tracey and Patricia Obichukwu

Wednesday 10 December

Christmas Buffet Lunch

at 278 Baker Street, Enfield (N. Enfield Conservative Club)
W8 bus from Enfield Town passes the door
Tickets £4 must be purchased in advance
Call Shirley Scott 8351 1317 or Ann Wood 8372 4123

S.O.S. Petition the Council

We were caught out by the Council last year cutting its grant to Enfield Leisure Centres Trust by over £100,000 which directly led to the ending of free swims for pensioners - and we do not intend to see a repeat next year when the Council's Budget is decided.

So we have launched a 3-point S.O.S. - Save our Swimming - petition to see if we can get some of that lost grant restored; to urge the Council not to cut the ELCT grant further next year and, most importantly of all, to grant ELCT extended leases on all its properties, enabling them to invest and improve facilities serving everyone in Enfield.

We urgently need everyone you know to sign the petition because the Council is considering calling in outside consultants who could recommend handing over the centres to the private sector. So instead of ELCT profits being ploughed back into improved facilities, charges will almost certainly go up and the profits would go to private investors.

We believe that the leisure centres were built with money provided by council taxpayers and should remain a community asset.

Meanwhile we are pleased to see that the cost of the Discount Card will be halved to £8 a year for everyone 60 plus from April 1 2004 and until then there will be a pro rata charge. We expect this will be matched by a new £15 per month swim anytime and as often as you wish admission charge, which will reduce the impact of the cuts in Council grants.

Thanks: This issue of the newsletter is sponsored by Pegasus Retirement Homes



A word from our Newsletter sponsors

Pegasus Retirement Homes

Time was when retirement meant a few short years of exhausted rest after a lifetime of hard work. Greatly prolonged life expectancy, however, means that retired people can now look forward to a long run of golden years with some people's retirement lasting even longer than the decades spent working.

Making the most of these years, however, has much to do with remaining independent, active and involved - physical and mental fitness, and involvement in the community being the key to a long and happy retirement.

Pegasus Retirement Homes, one of the sponsors of September's Over 50s Health and Fitness Day at Southbury Leisure Centre, has a wide experience of issues surrounding active retirement. Trudi-Joy Levy from Pegasus Court on Green Lanes, Winchmore Hill said:

"Retired people have traditionally 'exiled' themselves in retirement by moving to bungalows or cottages either in the middle of the countryside or by the sea. These may be places they have always dreamed of living, but in reality the dream cottage may prove to be a prison, isolated from family and friends built up over a lifetime."

"A much more sensible alternative is to choose a place to live in retirement that will suit your real needs for now and the future. That means a place where you can remain actively involved in the community you know, whether in a smaller house, a manageable flat or a purpose-built retirement apartment, in an area where there is a supportive network of friends, family and useful organisations".

Equally important for a long and happy retirement is the need to remain physically fit and healthy. The route to physical fitness need not mean signing up for expensive gym membership or committing to exhaustive workout regimes. The most effective forms of exercise are those that people actually enjoy and will therefore take part in on a regular basis, even if it is just a case of taking a pet dog - yours or a neighbour's - for a regular stroll in the park.

Enfield has no shortage of clubs and leisure centres and there are countless opportunities to get involved in local community activities with many and varied voluntary groups and organisations to keep you on your toes.

To find out how Pegasus can help you enjoy an active retirement in a purpose-built retirement apartment in Winchmore Hill, call Trudi-Joy Levy or Wendy Thomas at Pegasus Court on 020 8360 2414 between 10.30 am and 4.30pm. The development is open to view 7 days a week.

Age Concern's Handy Person Service

Minor repairs and small practical tasks can be undertaken for older people - but not painting and decorating, window cleaning or gardening. Charges: £5 for the initial visit and up to one hour's labour and £5 per hour after that plus the cost of materials.

Call Tony Westney on 0208 351 1671 or 1322 between 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday

Public Toilets: First Flush of Success

Out of 19 rail stations in London being upgraded with better facilities for customers, four will be in Enfield, according to a letter we have received from Network Rail.

Edmonton Green and Bush Hill Park stations will get new toilets and closed circuit TV to discourage vandalism. Enfield Town will also get CCTV, a shelter and waiting room and we have been told that the toilet renovation is shortly to be completed. Enfield Lock is getting a waiting room.

Enfield Council has been as good as its word in following up the scrutiny panel and Cabinet discussions on public toilets in which the Forum played a part. The Enfield Council Cabinet has now received the first of two reports dealing with the poor condition of public conveniences in the Borough's parks largely brought about by age and vandalism. There is now a programme of repairs underway covering light fittings, clothes hooks, locks, toilet roll holders, soap dispensers etc.

Changes are being made in the duties of cleaning staff to include reporting on a daily basis any breakages so that immediate remedial work can be undertaken. A repair programme to replace the broken and missing fittings is now underway and is more than halfway completed. Cleaning staff now have to make a daily report and they are equipped to make minor repairs, leaving Property Services to do the more substantial jobs and they will use more robust and upgraded replacements.

The report to Cabinet concludes:

"It has been accepted that these matters should not have had to be addressed out of a scrutiny panel conducting visits. These are day to day management issues which should have been attended to. The process for daily checks and reports on minor matters, including cleanliness will now be regularly reviewed by senior management including regular discussions with the Member with specific responsibility for Parks, Cllr Ann Zinkin".

Thanks are particularly due to those Forum members who raised the public toilets issue through us with the scrutiny panel and the Cabinet member for environment and street scene, Cllr Terence Neville, for setting about improving some 20 conveniences in our parks.

Cllr Neville has assured the Forum that he is keen to see public toilets brought up to acceptable standards and adds *"your input in identifying options has been invaluable"*. So we now await his next infrastructure report with interest.

Forum Development in 2004

The committee welcomes suggestions from members for topics, speakers and activities for the coming year; so please forward your ideas to any committee member for them to raise at a future committee meeting.

In addition to the normal meetings programme activities being developed for 2004 by the committee include: writing, editing and printing of the newsletter; campaigning and promotional materials; and the organisation of an all day Over 50s Parliament/Conference; and away day coach trips. Topics being considered for the Parliament are: health; leisure; pensions and income; home care and residential care.

News Clips

Boost Flu Jab Target

Last year only 66% of people in Enfield aged over 65 received the free flu vaccination - and in Edmonton it was down to 58%. This year the aim is to reach at least 70% of people and with reports of new flu strains heading towards Britain it is most important that everyone we know should be protected.

If you have any queries about the flu jab or have not been contacted by your GP THEN DO SO NOW OR PHONE NHS DIRECT 0845 46 47.

Winter Warmth

If you have any queries about keeping warm this winter call the free Winter Warmth Advice hotline 0800 085 7000. They will advise you whether you are eligible for financial help this winter.

Inheritance phone line

Bereaved relatives can now call a government phone line for information on probate and inheritance tax. The helpline can advise on applying for probate, supplying forms and whether you may be caught in the IHT trap currently 40% tax on assets over £255,000.

The helpline number is 0845 302 0900 charged at local rates and open 9am to 5pm.

The London Mayor's Conference

Saturday 29th November, Westminster. Tickets are free.

Call 020 7983 4158 or visit www.london.gov.uk

Make a Tea Dance Date

We haven't heard of wedding bells ringing just yet but we live in hope!

Thanks to Forum member Eddie Harris who first suggested that Bob's Big Band should be a feature of our free Fitness and Healthy Living Day, we are pleased to see that Wednesday tea dance sessions will be held every month at Southbury Leisure Centre between 2pm and 4pm starting on November 26 and then on December 17, January 28, February 25 and March 31.

Admission for the tea dance only will be £2 or it is included in the 50 plus all-day charge of £3.95 (with a discount card) which covers admission to the wide range of swimming, health and fitness, indoor sports activities and lunch.

Shaking it at the September Fitness Day



New Toenail-Cutting Service

The new Age Concern toe-nail cutting service based at Plevna Road Clinic, Edmonton, is now up and running. We understand that at the moment this is a one year project supported by the Enfield Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Enfield Primary Care Trust to meet the needs of people mainly living in N9 and N18 postal districts.

We do not accept this postcode lottery for treatment because we know of people in other parts of the Borough on income support and paying up to £20 to see a chiropodist, who were thrown off the NHS treatment list as not being in "clinical need" such as being diabetic or having a circulatory disorder.

If you come into this category, there is still a chance you will be seen at Plevna Rd if you can make your own way there but you must phone for an appointment on 020 8373 6285 Monday -Thursday between 9am and 4pm.

Meanwhile we are pressing the PCT to enlist the help of Enfield social services to set up a Borough-wide scheme for elderly people who for one reason or another cannot bend down to cut their toenails and have nobody to do it for them.

We have reminded the PCT that the junior Minister of Health, Stephen Ladyman, speaking recently on the Radio 4 Today programme said: "What many Primary Care Trusts have done is to put in place arrangements with voluntary organisations like Age Concern or social care services or other organisations to provide a nail cutting service.

"This is something that I would urge all Primary Care Trusts to look into because THEY DO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO COMMISSION THESE SERVICES.... and if they are not looking into it or they're not commissioning that service then I think they're letting down the elderly population".

So we shall keep pressing the PCT to fulfil its responsibilities.

Get Fit and Enjoy Life

At Southbury Leisure Centre every Wednesday 10am - 4pm

NPC Travel Club Launched

The National Pensioners' Convention has started the NPC Travel Club offering the best prices for short or long-break holidays. They have linked up with the non-profit making Travel Club Services Ltd to offer better prices than any High Street travel operator.

This covers airfares, car hire and good savings on coach tours, cruises, ferries and travel insurance which is becoming a very big problem for older people.

You can either chose your holiday from a brochure or call and ask for expert, friendly advice to get your automatic NPC discount.

To join the NPC Travel Club call 0845 60 60 910 or e-mail: membership@mytravelclub.co.uk giving your name and telephone number. You will then receive a new members pack - and every time you book, Travel Club Services will make a donation to the NPC. So everyone's a winner!

Edmonton's Credit Union

Edmonton has a new non-profit making Credit Union for safe and convenient means of saving together with low-cost credit which means not having to use loan sharks. Situated at 14 South Mall in Edmonton Green shopping centre, the Credit Union offers people a fairer and more flexible chance of saving and securing loans, with any surplus at the end of the year being handed back to members.

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Thanks

THANKS

Our grateful thanks to Mr Barry Gramlick, manager of Sainsbury's Supermarket at Winchmore Hill, for partly meeting the cost of refreshments at our Forum meetings.

Fitness Day Success

The September fitness day at the Southbury Leisure Centre was a huge success with over 200 people taking the opportunity to sample the facilities and to learn more about healthy living and life styles. As the result of this initiative by the Forum the Leisure Centre now runs a regular fitness day for over 50s every Wednesday. Anyone wishing to join in should go along and sign up. For £3.95 with a discount card you can spend the day at the leisure centre and take part in as many activities as you want. Lunch is included so it is really good value,

Congratulations to the winners of the lucky draws at the Fitness Day . The winners were: A. Curtis, Ethel Stansell and Ken Robinson all from Edmonton (Sports Vouchers); Mrs L Leghorn from Waltham Cross (ELCL Leisure Voucher); and Mrs Joyce Taylor from Enfield (Outback Voucher). The Forum gives its warm thanks to the management and the staff at the Centre for their efforts in making it all so enjoyable and for their ongoing support.



Full house at the Fitness Day

Road Humps and the Emergency Services

Attached to the papers for the November 11 Council Health Scrutiny Panel was a report on *Road Humps and the Emergency Services*. This report, prepared by the Council's Liam Mulrooney, reviews the issue by looking at both the benefits of road humps in terms of reduction in accidents and the fear of accidents and the disadvantage to the emergency services in terms of longer response times and patient discomfort.

The report recognises that the concerns of the emergency services are genuine and need to be addressed. The main recommendation to overcome this aspect is to adopt a network of preferred emergency response routes clear of speed humps. However it also concludes that road humps are very effective in reducing accidents and the severity of accidents and are necessary in reaching reductions in road accidents in line with Department of Transport targets.

One of the most telling statements in the report is that pedestrians hit by vehicles travelling at 40 mph have only a 15% chance of survival, whereas pedestrians hit at 20 mph have a 95% survival rate.

The full report can be obtained from Democratic Services at the Civic Centre. 020 6379 6500

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

The Greater London Budget

The Budget of £4.7 billion for 2002/2003 was set with two main priorities: delivering more police and better transport. The budget set by the Mayor covers the Metropolitan Police Authority, Transport for London, the London Fire & Emergency Services and the London Development Agency, as well as the GLA. The GLA itself accounted for just one percent of the total budget in 2002/2003.

Where the money comes from

General Government Grants	42%
Earmarked Grants	30%
Fares, Fee, Charges, etc.,	18%
Council Tax	10%

Where the money goes

Metroplitan Police Authority	50%
Transport for London	35%
London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority	8%
London Development Agency	6%
Greater London Authority	1%

Further information is contained in the Mayor's Annual Report 2003 - tel 020 7983 4100 www.london.gov.uk

So is it better in Europe?

Some of us went along to a gathering in London recently called by the National Pensioners Convention on how older people fare in other parts of the EU such as Italy, Sweden and Ireland. Unfortunately, although it is often suggested that it is better elsewhere, when we tried to establish the facts, answers were few.

For example, we get free medical prescriptions - no ifs or buts - but from Italy there was no straight answer. It depends on income, how long you have worked and whether you were a public or private sector employee.

Anne Wood now reports on the talk by Barbro Westerholm, president of the Swedish Association of Senior Citizens:

“Suffering similar problems to Britain, Swedish senior citizen forums are lobbying government on age discrimination at work and health care. Sweden has a pay-as-you-go pension system. The more you pay, the more you get. The health system is funded by the state, county and municipality - but nothing is free. Subsidies to the needy are being cut back and like Britain help is directed to the most needy.”

“They also have a shortage of doctors - who have to retire at 67 - and they recruit doctors and nurses from around the world. There is a shortage of care assistants and lack of funding for training in health care and care of the elderly. The Swedish Forums’ solution is to establish primary health care centres for older people from 60 to 100 years of age! They want more luncheon clubs and more emphasis on healthy living and lifelong learning. Final message from Sweden: know your MEP and lobby for what you want.”

Everywhere in Europe there its talk of raising the retirement age and cutting the cost of pensions, of more older people living longer and more of them not working. Only in Ireland it seems is progress being made with free travel across North and South, free telephone allowances, free electricity allowance - and no means testing.

Perhaps the lesson from Ireland where pensioners make a pre-Budget presentation to their Government is that they speak with one voice instead of the host of organisations we have in Britain - and all with different priorities.

Over 50s TT

TT in this case stands for table tennis not teetotal and we are invited to join the Ellenborough Table Tennis Club - voted England's best sports club of the year in any sport in 2002 - based in Kimberley Gardens, off Southbury Road and within walking distance of Enfield Town station.

Two sessions for the over 50s are held every week on Monday 10.am-12noon and Thursday 1.30-3.30. The cost for non-club members is £2 per session.

Ellenborough TT Club has some 200 members of all standards and all ages from 8 to 80. They have superb playing facilities and the Club runs around 13 teams. The club secretary is Sylvia Tyler 01992 638269 and membership secretary is Bernie Kelly 020 8363 3020.

Printed and Published by Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum
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Monty Meth with the Pensions Credit Team

Pension Credit a Winner

Any advance on £14.75 ?

That's the biggest extra weekly pension being received by a Forum member that we have heard of so far from the new Pension Credit. Others have had £7 and £12 and all sums of money in between, proving that the free telephone call line can bring a much needed boost to many low income pensioners - if only we can convince them to apply.

That was the message conveyed at our very successful Pension Credit Briefing Day at Enfield County School addressed by Joan Ryan MP and Rob Leak, the Borough's chief executive officer and attended by representatives of some 60 local organisations. Over 100 members of the public were also seen on the day by the splendid team of Pension Service advisers who helped them fill out the application forms and we hope that more money will soon be winging its way to them.

Helen Dimmock, the Pension Service manager covering North and West London said: “Getting so many local organisations and members of the public together in one place produced an excellent event. We really do value the close working relationship we have had with Enfield's over 50s Forum and I think we ought to consider repeating the exercise again next year”.

Despite the knocking headlines in the media about “pensions credit fiasco” and “bungled birth of the pensions credit”, we have started to put new money into the pockets of Enfield's pensioners and our efforts will continue well into next year because the extra money is being backdated to October 6 2003, so nobody loses out by being a late claimant.

Everyone can help by encouraging every pensioner you and your friends know to phone the free hotline 0800 99 1234. Or you can get personal advice at one of the many benefit surgeries in the Borough. For details of the nearest surgery ring: 020 8899 3212 or 3316 between 9am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on Saturday.

Have you bought your ticket for the Xmas Social on December 10th?

Council Tax: Watch this Space

The hardship caused by massive council tax increases to everyone on fixed incomes - not just pensioners - is now widely understood. Everyone knows the problem, but nobody has come up with a solution acceptable to all councils.

We wrote to Council leader Michael Rye drawing his attention to the Kent County Council scheme approved by the Government to limit council tax rises to pensioners to the level of inflation or a maximum 2.5%, with younger people paying an extra 1.3%.

Cllr Rye says in reply that he needs to await the Government's announcement on the level of grant for next year and adds: "I will ensure the the views you express are considered as part of the budget process, but I believe it would be premature to consider the Kent scheme at this stage".

Meanwhile we would draw your attention to the "Is It Fair"? demonstration taking place in London on January 17 and supported by the Royal British Legion. Our three MPs have all written to the Forum saying they well understand our concern about recent council tax increases. Andy Love MP, for example, is meeting the Local Government Association and says he is hoping the Government "will come forward with recommendations on how local government can raise its income and how this can be done on a fairer basis".

Because it could take two years or more for the Government to come up with a new and better method of local government financing, we believe that more should be done to increase the take-up of council tax benefit which should mean that half of all pensioner households are entitled to some kind of reduction in their council tax bill.

We think the Pension Service which is doing a good job in getting the new Pension Credit into the pockets of pensioners should be given the task of raising the council tax benefit take-up. Help the Aged is also calling for the upper savings limit to be abolished so that those with low income but moderate savings should not be excluded; and that pensioners living in the highest bands should not be excluded, ensuring that no pensioner has to move home because of the tax.

We do not claim to have the answer on the best way to finance local government spending, but we do know that we cannot continue with 15% council tax increases and increases in the basic state pension being tied to price inflation of around 2%.

Help the Aged - Some Useful Publications

Residential Care

A brochure to help you decide whether residential care is appropriate for individuals and explains how to find and pay for a care home.

Can you claim It

A leaflet describing the rules about benefits for people living in the UK who are aged 60 and over, Covers Pension Credit, Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and other payments.

Living Alone Safely

This leaflet looks at some of the worries that people living alone may have and practical things that can be done to overcome them.

These and other publications are available from HtA, 207-221 Pentonville Road, N1 9UZ - Tel 020 7278 1114

A Special date for your New Year Diary

Making Enfield a Better Place for Older People

The first Forum meeting of 2004 will be on WEDNESDAY January 21 because we are unable to get a Civic Centre date in our usual spot of the last Tuesday of the month. And the January meeting will be something different because it will be a seminar with two sessions. The first will start at 11am and be followed by lunch and then we will have a second session in the afternoon finishing no later than 3pm.

The theme of the meeting will be: Making Enfield a Better Place for Older People and it will be led by local government expert Ian Beaver.

Among the many things we'll discuss will be:

- *How do we influence the people who make the big decisions?*
- *How do we get to the decision-makers on the Council and its officers?*
- *How do we pull our weight with the Primary Care Trust and the NHS Trusts running local hospitals?*
- *How do we get heard in the new Patients Forum and all the new bodies such as the Enfield Strategic Partnership and Enfield Community Empowerment Network (ECEN)?*
- *And most importantly: What messages do we want to send them?*

If we are to be the voice of older people in Enfield we have to know where power lies and then punch our weight. We have often said it is no good moaning from the outside - we have to get in there and fight our corner.

So make sure of your place at the Make Enfield a Better Place for Older People Forum meeting. Wednesday January 21 at 11.am at the Civic Centre.

This seminar and lunch is being kindly sponsored by the ECEN and to assist the committee in arrangements with numbers for catering please advise Tony Watts, the Secretary, that you will be attending. Tel: 020 8886 9125.

Thought for Today

"Old people who are always talking about the past are boring, those who are always complaining about the present can be intolerable, and older people who want to keep control and run things are a bloody menace."

"The campaigns on which older people should now be concentrating should, in my opinion, be focused on helping others in the community who feel ignored and isolated and there are many ways in which that can be done".

Tony Benn writing in the Greater London Pensioner, October 2003.