

Council tax farce

Politicians may be gearing up for the General Election, but there is a conspiracy of silence about council tax in the two main parties vying to form the next Government. Although it continues to hit hardest the millions of people on low and fixed incomes, council tax is a taboo subject. Yet it is an unfair tax because it is based solely on the size of the property you live in and not the size of your income.

So the National Pensioners Convention and many individual Forums of older people are calling for local services provided by councils to be funded through national taxation, rather than partly coming from council tax. At the same time we need a fairer tax regime with the most wealthy in the country pulling their weight, tax loopholes closed, collecting the millions in unpaid tax due from companies and super rich individuals.

In the financial year starting April 2010, councils in England will receive £76 billion that central government raises from general taxation - an increase of £3.2 billion. Enfield is expected to receive £118 million, an increase of £3.6 million and this will be augmented by the local tax collected by all councils - in Enfield's case about £120 million - and all councils have been ordered to keep any increase below 3%.

So council tax only provides a proportion of the money spent by local authorities. Nationally, it is about 13p for every pound spent by the average council. And we argue it is possible to replace this comparatively small contribution with a small adjustment in the rates of income tax which would, at the same time, save all the time and money spent on collecting council tax.

In Enfield's case, we believe it costs over £2 million a year just to collect council tax and that works out at more than £18 for each of the 120,000 properties in the borough. Ending council tax would also eliminate the need to assess and grant rebates to some 35,000 Enfield households.

In addition, abandoning council tax would save the council having to send in the bailiffs to collect the money from more than 9,000 Enfield homes in each of the last three years. So far in this financial year, with still four months of the financial year to go, the bailiffs have been sent in to 6,316 Enfield homes to collect council tax.

Enfield has a good record in collecting around 98% of council tax due and more than 99% in rates paid by business, but it still spends time and money chasing debts of some £24 million in council tax and nearly £3 million in business rates.

Council tax is an easy and convenient way for government to collect money and because houses don't move the yield can be calculated in advance. But the system assumes that the value of your house is related in some way to the disposable income available to the occupants. But we know that many elderly people, in particular, can be asset rich in the house they have worked to pay for, but are now income poor.

Continued on page 4

Greetings to all Forum members and friends. Let's work together to make 2010 a healthy and peaceful year.

Future FORUM Events

Forest Road Health Centre (308a Hertford Rd, N9 7HD)
Thursday 14 January 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
Sheila Lahey, LBE talks about rogue traders, scams and finding trustworthy suppliers.

Skidders Court (1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane)
Tuesday 19 January 10.15am for 10.30am start
Cllr Ertan Hurer discusses the council tax and the 2010-11 budget with the Forum.

FORUM MEETING at the **Civic Centre, Silver Street**
Tuesday 26 January 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
Tom Wright, CEO of Age Concern & Help the Aged speaks on the new organisation serving and supporting older people.

Skidders Court (1 Pellipar Close, Fox Lane)
Tuesday 16 February 10.15am for 10.30am start
Eleanor Hunter, LBE Twinning & Tourism Officer talks about our twinning arrangements in Europe.

Millfield Theatre Bistro (Next to Millfield House)
Thursday 18 February 10.15am for 10.30am start
Lorraine Chilton and Tony Watts will give a free introduction and demonstration of the use of computers for beginners. See page 7 for details. The Bistro is also laying on a special lunch for ALL Forum members for £5.50.

For details contact Polly on 020 8807 2076.

FORUM MEETING at the **Dugdale Theatre, Thomas Hardy House, Cecil Rd, Enfield**
WEDNESDAY 24 February 10.15am for 10.30am start
Simon Gardner, LBE Leisure & Cultural Manager talks in the new theatre about the 2012 Games and other cultural opportunities in the Borough.

Forest Road Health Centre (308a Hertford Rd, N9 7HD)
Thursday 4 March 2010 10.15am for 10.30am start
Tony Watts talks about travels in Chile and Patagonia.

Over 50s Forum poets make their debut



Forum poets, left to right, David Blake, Doris Martin and David Oliver launching the Poetry Lines collection of 37 poems composed entirely by Forum members. Many of the Forum's poets are in their 70s and 80s and they have never before seen their work in print.

The Forum's poetry group was formed when lifelong learning fee concessions for older people were withdrawn from local colleges, and thanks to **Councillor McCannah**, when the new Oakwood Library opened with meeting facilities, they were freely provided to us by Enfield Council.

David Oliver, the Forum's poetry group coordinator said: "We started by just reading and discussing our favourite poems. This grew into writing and airing our own work which revealed not only the hidden talent there is in our community, but also that poetry can be composed by ordinary people - not just the literary establishment."

Irene Richards, Forum chair, said: "By publishing this unique collection of verse we are showing what can be done to help raise the quality of life of older people, keeping them mentally active for as long as possible and out of the clutches of the NHS."

This is the Forum's first publishing venture and many people are buying two and three copies to give as gifts, particularly to younger relatives in opening up another side of literature that they may not have appreciated - and it is something that everyone can enjoy either by just reading or writing - or both.

Forthcoming meetings of the Poetry Group at Oakwood Library, Bramley Road, 10.30 - 12 noon
 Thursday, 21 January - theme "Birth/Rebirth"
 Thursday, 18 February
 Thursday, 18 March.

Buses 121, 307 and 377 or tube to Oakwood Station
Poetry Lines price £3.50 plus p&p is available from Enfield Over 50s Forum, Millfield House, Silver Street, London N18 1PJ. Tel: 020 8807 2076.

Look on the bright side

Things they say

"the sex is better and I understand life better. I don't want to be young again" - **actress Jane Fonda on life at 71.**

"Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination" - **Oscar Wilde**

Robbery

Chap goes to the vet with his budgie, which he fears is dead. Vet says he's not sure and brings in a labrador who sniffs and shakes his head. Vet then calls for a second opinion. In comes a cat who sniffs and shakes its head. "I'm afraid your budgie is definitely dead" says the vet. "That will be £1,000."

"What?", says the owner, "£1,000 to tell me my budgie's dead?". "Normally, it would only be a tenner", says the vet. "But you had a lab test and report and a cat scan".

Calling golfers

Heard the one about the married man having an affair with his secretary? Having made love all afternoon, they fell asleep, exhausted, and awoke at 8pm. Startled, the guy asked his lover to take his shoes outside and rub them in the grass and dirt.

He put his shoes on and drove home. His angry but worried wife demanded to know where he had been. "I can't lie to you", he said. "I'm having an affair with my new secretary. We had sex all afternoon and I fell asleep". At which his wife looked down at his shoes and shouted: "you're lying again to me. You've been playing golf!!"

Pulpit messages

There's the old favourite "Jesus Saves" to which some wiseacre adds, "But Rooney scores on the rebound".

"Tired of Sin? Step right in".....to which is added "if not. phone Tracey on....."

Wrinkled with burdens? Come to Jesus for a faith lift.

This building is a CH-CH. What is missing? UR

And from Spain: Please turn off your mobile. God will not call you on it.

Chain reaction

People using the Flintshire County Council canteen have been told to change the name of "spotted dick" pudding to make it more "respectable" and now Westminster Council has changed the "stop cock" sign at the gentlemen's convenience at Waterloo Station to "water isolator".

This Newsletter is for general information only and is not intended to be advice to anyone. You are recommended to seek competent professional advice before doing anything based on the contents of this Newsletter.



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Community toilet scheme doubled

The borough-wide Community Toilet Scheme, which aims to give people better access to toilet facilities that are clean, safe and accessible in convenient shopping centre locations for both residents and visitors, is being extended for another year.

Under the scheme, shops, restaurants and other businesses make their toilet facilities available to members of the public who do not have to make a purchase to use their facilities. Businesses are provided with funding by the council of between £500-£800 a year (depending on the facilities available) to help towards maintaining the toilets to a good standard. Regular inspections are carried out to ensure that standards are maintained.

The year-long pilot scheme was launched jointly with the Forum last April with 11 participating premises, and since then another 11 have been added - including five libraries for the first time. The council has now agreed to continue the scheme after April 2010. And the plan is to extend it more widely in the coming year in areas such as Hertford Road (South Street) to Edmonton Green, Southgate, Oakwood and Cockfosters.

It is hoped that in the coming weeks a dedicated council officer will be appointed to boost the scheme with more businesses being encouraged to join - and the Forum has offered to help identify potential participants. We have also suggested that the list of participating businesses be printed as a leaflet and widely distributed to community groups throughout the borough.

We have also requested better street signage to let people know the location of the nearest available toilet. We quoted, as an example, Southgate tube and bus station where there is no public toilet - the nearest is McDonalds in Chase Side, but this information is not displayed in the vicinity. We've also noticed that some CTS participants do not display stickers produced by the council to denote they are part of the scheme - or the stickers are placed in obscure places. And to help pay for the publicity drive, the Forum is suggesting that some of the money received from the sale of the disused public toilet at Palmers Green Triangle could be used.

Councillor Terence Neville, Cabinet member for environment and street scene, has assured the Forum that the Community Toilet Scheme has his full support and that of councillors and officers, and the Forum is keen to see more people knowing about

and using the facilities as well as recruiting more supporting businesses. Interestingly, Enfield unlike similar schemes elsewhere, is not at this stage encouraging public houses to join in case this undermines its child protection policy.

Businesses participating in the scheme are supposed to display signs in their windows to enable the public to clearly identify that their toilets are open for public use, but these are often placed in obscure places and are, in our view, too small to be noticed.

Community Toilet Scheme members

The following businesses are taking part in the Community Toilet Scheme. You can use their toilet facilities without having to make a purchase.

Baker Street Café, 209 Baker Street, Enfield.
The Highland, 43 Cannon Hill, Southgate Green.
The Meze Bar, 49 Cannon Hill, Southgate Green.
McDonalds, 31-33 Chase Side, Southgate.
Fore Street Café, 327 Fore Street, Edmonton.
Asda, 1 West Mall, Edmonton.
Top Hat Pizzeria, 149 Green Lanes, London.
McDonalds, 286 Green Lanes, Palmers Green
Park Side Café, 90 Aldermans Hill, Palmers Green.
Dinero, 335 Green Lanes, Palmers Green.
Café Cristo, 442/444 Green Lanes, Palmers Green.
Co-op, 654-670 Hertford Road, Enfield.
McDonalds, 4-5 Market Chambers, Church Street, Enfield.
Pearsons (Enfield) Ltd., 11-14 The Town.

Libraries:

Oakwood Library, 185-187 Bramley Road.
Palmers Green Library, Broomfield Lane.
Winchmore Hill Library, Green Lanes.
Ordnance Road Library, 645 Hertford Road.
Enfield Island Library, Unit 44-46, Island Centre Way.
These Tesco stores have joined the scheme, but have declined the annual fee.
Tesco Extra, 1 Glover Drive, London.
Tesco Extra, 288 High Street, Ponders End.
Tesco, Savoy Parade, Southbury Road, Enfield.



Oakwood Horticultural Society Trading Shed

We hold stocks of seeds, grow-bags, potting composts, fertilisers, feeds, insecticides, fungicides, weed killers, and many other gardening products for sale at very competitive prices in large and small quantities.

Membership only £2 - New members welcome

Trading Shed open on Sundays from 10am to 11.15am
and from 7 March 10am-12 noon

OAKWOOD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Oakwood Allotment Site, Behind Ashridge Court, Reservoir Rd, Southgate N14

Cineworld Silver Screen

Southbury Rd

Every Monday @ 12 noon for the over 50s

£2.50 per person

January programme

11 Jan - *La Vie en Rose*

18 Jan - Noon

For more listings visit
www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas

Did you know?

* In high-income countries more than two thirds of people live beyond the age of 70 and die mainly of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease or dementia. In low income countries less than a quarter of all people reach 70 and more than one third of all deaths are among children under 14. People die mainly of infectious diseases: lung infections, HIV/Aids, diarrhoeal diseases, TB and malaria. Complications of pregnancy and childbirth are also a leading cause of death. Source: World Health Organisation - The Times 27 July 2009.

* Only 7% of cod fished in the North Sea have lived long enough to breed.

* Only 20% of the Atlantic Ocean's shark population is left.

* Our planet will run out of seafood completely in just 41 years' time - unless we change the world's fishing policies.

Remember the Forum

We're not thinking of your will just yet, but we'd gratefully receive for our monthly raffle any surplus gifts for Christmas. Just bring them to the January 26 meeting at the Civic Centre or call the office 020 8807 2076. **Thank you.**

Benefit stigma ends for council tax rebates

Thanks to the campaign led by Joan Ryan MP with the Royal British Legion to replace “benefit” with “rebate” as many as 10,000 pensioners in Enfield, could get more help with their council tax bills from next year. This is an important development since nearly half of all pensioners (up to 2.2 million) who qualify for council tax rebate do not claim it - and one third of pensioners now said to be living in poverty could be lifted out of it if they claimed all the money they are entitled to.

Pensioners on a low income and with little savings used to get a council tax rebate, worth about £600 a year, or £12 a week until the last Conservative government axed the word rebate and changed the entitlement to council tax benefit – and many proud elderly people, especially veterans, stopped claiming it because they refused to go on benefits.

“Our pensioners are proud people. They’ve fought for their country, they’ve worked all their lives, they’ve paid their taxes – they don’t want to claim benefits. There’s a stigma associated with claiming benefits which puts many pensioners off. More than two thirds of the public believe that some people are ashamed to claim council tax benefit, even if they are entitled to it”, said Joan Ryan MP.

“My aim was to get Benefit renamed as Rebate. It’s not a subsidy, it’s not a handout, it’s not a benefit; it’s a rebate and we needed to change its name. This is money that belongs to our pensioners and I’m determined that they should get it. This is money that is rightfully theirs’ - money already allocated in the government’s budget, which is going unclaimed. Last month, as a result of my campaign, the government agreed to make the change, which should come into effect this year.

“As a result, millions of pensioners, and thousands just in Enfield, could be £600 a year better off. That’s £12 a week. Maybe that doesn’t sound a fortune, but if you’re living on £130 a week, another £12 would make a big difference”. Said Ms Ryan.

When the old domestic rates regime was in place, the term ‘rebate’ was used instead of ‘benefit’. Take-up rates stood at 75% overall and were around 90% for older people, which is substantially higher than the current estimated take-up rate of between 55% and 61%.

If you want to find out whether you could be entitled to help with your council tax bills you can contact the joint Pensions Service / Enfield Council visiting team on 020 8889 3212 or you can apply for pension credit by calling 0800 169 0133.

Crime Prevention Advice - Telephone Callers

Enfield Police are warning residents to be vigilant to ‘cold-callers’, not only at their doors, but also on the phone.

Sergeant Martin Peirson, Crime Prevention Officer said: *“Never, under any circumstances, should anyone provide their bank or credit card details in response to cold calling, unsolicited phone calls or emails requesting this information. Legitimate organisations will never approach customers in this way. If someone does contact you on this basis, obtain as much information as is possible and politely inform the caller/sender that you will contact the relevant organisation direct, using official contact numbers/email addresses. If appropriate, pass the information to police.”*

For crime prevention advice, call Enfield Police on 020 8345-1102.

Swimming Forum

Everyone is welcome and it promises to be fun! The first meeting will be in late January or early February 2010 with opportunities to attend during the day and evening. Please contact Sue Scott if you would like to attend, 020 8368 0861

e-mail scotsf48@hotmail.com

Council tax farce *continued from front page*

Income tax, on the other hand, means that everyone pays according to their earnings or their unearned income. It is based more on one’s ability to pay than on a property’s value which may bear no relation to one’s income.

The present system is unfair because local authorities are in a straitjacket. They are told how much they will get in grants from central government and told how much they can raise locally which in turn reduces our opportunity to press for an expansion in local amenities, social and care services.

There would, of course, be winners and losers in having an alternative money-raising scheme for local government services based on income tax, but this would fluctuate as people’s financial circumstances changed whereas the current system means that a person’s ability to pay is solely based on the value of their house as levied in 1991.

The real gainers would be some five million or so pensioners who are so poor they are currently exempt from income tax - but still have to pay council tax. If that is not an anomaly, I don’t know what is.

Monty Meth

Meetings of area forums and scrutiny panels will be held at various times to discuss the council’s budget for the coming year, but on Thursday 21 January 7pm at the Civic Centre, the Scrutiny Commission will hold the final meeting and you are invited to attend.

Warning: Enfield council tax scam

We’ve heard from Irene Wilson, the Willow Residents’ Association stalwart, about a particularly evil, but plausible scam, involving a convincing lady who phoned up a resident claiming that she was from Enfield Council and said are you **Mrs ???** of such and such, giving the correct name and address of the occupant and the conversation continued as follows:

“You have been on the wrong property band for council tax and therefore been paying too much for 16 years. Enfield council are keen to rectify this large overpayment and if you give details of a credit card (over the phone) the refund would be instantly repaid”. The caller did not speak very good English, claimed to be working on behalf of Enfield Council and was from ‘Claims Court central London’ on 0203 286 9981. She knew what the correct band of the property was and knew the occupant’s customer reference number. Thankfully, in this case, the victim’s daughter called the police on a mobile and they advised her not to give any details and terminate the call.

“The victim said she would have given her details over the phone because the caller knew so much information about her. If you have elderly or vulnerable neighbours or family please make sure they are aware of this scam”, says Irene Wilson.

Crime & Anti-Social behaviour - what do you think?

4th February, 7pm

Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XA

Put your views and questions to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. The Council Chief Executive, Police Borough Commander, Fire Brigade Borough Commander, Enfield Probation, Enfield PCT and Councillor Matthew Laban will be amongst those present to answer your questions.

Refreshments will be provided.

Plus, don’t forget to look out for our consultation questionnaires and interviewers around the Borough and in main Enfield libraries in January.

Please contact Shanthi Gunsekera, should you require further information or a copy of the questionnaire.
shanthi.gunsekera@enfield.gov.uk 020 8379 4136

Taxman costs pensioners £250 million

About 1.5 million pensioners have overpaid £250 million in tax since 2002-3 at an average of £171 each, admits HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). It is hoped a new computer system installed last June will cut the number of errors, although it is widely accepted that it is the complexity of the tax system itself which is largely to blame.

Banks and building societies automatically deduct 20% tax from any interest on savings - so you only get 80p of every pound of interest earned. If you are over 65 and your total income is less than £9,490 (£182.50 per week) you should not pay any tax and if your total income is over £9,490, but less than £11,930 (£229.42 per week) you should only be paying the 10p rate on your savings.

It is estimated that some 2.4 million pensioners are paying too much tax because they do not have their savings income paid gross - without tax being deducted at source. Every year you are allowed to have a certain amount of money coming in before you need to pay tax. Tax free allowance - or personal allowance for people age under 65 on 5 April 2010 is £6,475; age 65 - 74, £9,490; 75 or over £9,640. If your income is below these figures banks and building societies should not be deducting tax from your savings income. To stop this practice, just ask them for form R85 and they will no longer deduct tax. If they've already done so and you want a refund you'll have to ask the tax office for form R40 - but that will take a little longer to come through.

Some 3.2 million pensioners are thought to be paying too much tax because they do not claim additional age-related allowances. Anyone over 65 who has a total income of less than £28,930, (£556.35 per week) is entitled to this allowance. If you are paying tax, and are over 65 make sure that you are getting the Age Allowance. Also note that the allowances are going up from next April and they are higher if you are over 75. Claiming these allowances would lift the average pensioner's income by up to 4%.

The National Audit Office has recently published a report on the HMRC's performance in assessing the 5.6 million older people who pay tax. They found that:

Older people comply with their responsibilities more diligently than other groups of taxpayers and that more mistakes were made with their tax affairs.

HMRC say they are keen to make sure that no pensioner pays tax if they don't need to. This may not affect you, but if you know someone it might - then please spread the word.

The HMRC helpline is 0845 366 7850. Pensioners with an income of less than £17,000 a year can receive free tax advice from Tax Advice for Older People.

Call 0845 601 3321 or 01308 488066.

Make our 11 million voices heard and votes count

Britain's largest pensioner organisation, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) to which our Forum is affiliated, is off the mark in presenting its manifesto for the upcoming general election and it will be urging the "grey vote" to make its voice heard loud and clear to all parties and all candidates.

The six major policy areas the NPC want the parties to address include

- * **Raising** the basic state retirement pension above the official poverty level (now calculated to be £165 per week) and linking increases now to earnings or prices, whichever is highest.
- * **Introducing** free long-term and social care funded by general taxation without means-testing, rationing or being dependent on a postcode lottery to get help.
- * **Council** services to be funded through national income tax rather than council tax.
- * **Free** UK-wide travel to be extended to all forms of public transport which would encourage independent living, greater mobility leading to reduced demand on health and care services.
- * **Ending** all forms of age discrimination affecting older people in the health service or in buying goods and services such as travel insurance.
- * **Raising** the winter fuel allowance to £500 per household to cut winter deaths and fuel poverty.

Dot Gibson, the new NPC general secretary said: "All the political parties need to realise that if they want our votes, they must start addressing our concerns. Whilst it's true that pensioners don't vote en bloc, they are more likely than any section in the community to turn out to the polling booth.



Monty's letter to the 'Times'
25 Nov 2009

Now make a date

Dot Gibson, first woman general secretary of the National Pensioners' Convention speaks at the Tuesday 30 March Forum meeting, Civic Centre, 10am for 10.30 start.

Also a major National Pensioners' Convention March and Rally takes place on Saturday 10 April 2010. Join Forums and pensioner groups from around the country. Assemble 12 noon Victoria Gardens, Embankment. March to Trafalgar Square for speeches, music, entertainment.

Let the politicians know that older people are not going to bear the brunt of cuts in public services and the welfare state.

McCartney challenges Mayor

The saga of the 307 bus route being redirected to go straight into Barnet Hospital is no nearer being settled. We asked Joanne McCartney, Enfield's member of the Greater London Assembly, to raise the delay in implementing the decision with London Mayor Boris Johnson in his capacity as chair of Transport for London. No sooner had the Mayor told her that "October 2010 is now a realistic date for reaching final agreement on the design and construction of a bus termination space at Barnet General Hospital", than the date was further delayed until March 2011.

Ms McCartney has now asked the Mayor whether TfL can look at alternative plans as many Enfield residents desperately need this

bus route extension. We are now told that TfL does not include public transport access to hospitals or medical centres as a priority, in the same way as they treat commuters or access to schools. Which explains why the North Mid. remains inaccessible to thousands of people living between Winchmore Hill and Cockfosters.

Although some people may think a bus stop is not a key issue when it comes to improving NHS services, Forum member Peter Smith gives up his free time to be a member of the transport working group because he and we see access to medical facilities, particularly for older people, as being something the Forum has to battle for - because nobody else will.

Care in old age: the big issue for 2010

Let's face it. None of us really look forward to old age. We may look forward to retirement with time for long holidays to places we've always dreamed of seeing; reading all those books we've set aside over the years ready for the halcyon days when time will be on our side; some of us will get a chance to replan the garden; others will start a different dig into family history. But how much we can look forward to retirement almost certainly depends on whether we have a pension that matches our aspirations.

We all know that long after that first "feel good" flush of freedom has passed, and we've lived long enough to say farewell to the daily grind of work, comes the thought that we are all vulnerable to ill-health. We are terrified of thinking that we will not always be self-sufficient, that the day will dawn when we might be dependent on others. All this has been true for ages. What is different is this:

- * In 1908 when the first state retirement pension was introduced at 65 they calculated that few people would live to draw it.
- * By 1925 a man who made it to 65 could expect to live a further 12 years.
- * By the early 1990s, a man who made it to 65 could expect to live another 14.2 years.
- * Now it is an extra 17.4 years and it is going up every year.
- * Women's life expectancy at 65 has risen by 20 years and is still going up.
- * By 2020 the number of people aged 85 and over will double to 2.6 million.
- * And half the babies now being born are expected to live to see their 100th birthdays.

That's 35 years of life after the current retirement age of 65 which is itself going up, possibly to age 70. But it still leaves 30 years of life to plan for and it is this ever-growing ageing of the population which has forced questions about long-term care for the elderly on to the national agenda - and not before time too.

Future trends

The result of this longer life expectancy is that two out of three men and one in two women will need some form of home care or social care during their retirement. Care is costly so the big question of the hour is who is going to pay for long-term care for the growing elderly army?

Some estimates put the extra number of people that will need to be cared for at 1.5 million in the next 20 years. The £15 billion currently being spent on social care could rise to £24 billion by 2026 -and as demand for care rises there is always the danger of costs being cut and care quality falls. The Government now says it wants to cut the cost of residential care by helping more elderly people stay in their own home

In surveys and consultations up and down the country the vast majority of people are opting for a system that should be a set standard for everyone, irrespective of where they live. No more postcode lotteries. And the jury is still out on whether it should be paid for by insurance contributions while people are still working, or whether it should be paid for out of general taxation - which is the policy of the National Pensioners' Convention to which the Forum is affiliated.

There seems to be little support for the idea of a one-off payment paid on retirement (suggested figure £8,000) because people doubt whether this will cover care home costs of £600 plus per week for very long. A stay in a residential home with nursing care costs an average £35,000 a year.

But this debate will go on up to and beyond the general election and it is important that now it has started it must lead to a comprehensive system, ending the means-test and people being treated differently by councils in different parts of the country.

The Government has now announced plans to provide free personal care at home by October 2010 to some 280,000 of the poorest pensioners with the most critical care needs. Some estimates put the free care at home or other support for up to 400,000 elderly and disabled people at a cost of £670 million a year.

It can, of course, be argued - as the Forum has done continuously - that the only way to make social care affordable is to keep as many people as possible out of the system for as long as possible. But this means keeping people physically and mentally active in old age and having a clear prevention policy and strategy - but that too costs money.

Elderly care in Enfield

In Enfield, where the number of older people is forecast to increase further in future years, in particular in those aged 85 years and over who cost significantly more to care for than 65-85 year old people, the home care budget for 2010 - 11 is scheduled to increase by £662,000.

Enfield council is currently spending about £146 million on social care against an income of approximately £66 million. During 2007-08 there was a 4.2% increase in home care hours and during 2008-09 a further increase of 5.5%. In future, individual service users and carers will be increasingly responsible for making decisions about their care within a defined individual budget allocation.

The annual Government grant to Enfield for social care services in the coming financial year is expected to be about £24 million, providing services for over 10,000 people, of which about 7,000 are aged 65 and over. Between April and September last year more than 700 people contacted the older people, carers, health and social care team which has a full time staff of more than 300 people directly employed by LBE.

Personal budgets

The council has a statutory duty to care for the most vulnerable people in the community, but only people regarded as being in either substantial or critical need of care are catered for following an assessment and, subject to means-testing, they are charged £16.60 an hour for any service provided.

In line with Government policy, the council is pursuing plans to transform its social care services into personal budget holders who will have individual choice and control to deliver and provide their own care services. In future individual service users and carers will be increasingly responsible for making decisions about their care within a defined individual budget allocation.

There is, however, a great deal of concern being expressed by the National Pensioners' Convention and the Campaign against Elder Abuse about the safety and protection of vulnerable individuals that shifting responsibility on to somebody who may not be able to cope undermines the role and responsibility of the local authority.

We have heard of cases in other parts of the country where people on personal budgets have employed people who have then abused their position, stolen money and not provided the care they should. So there is, in our view, clearly a need for a local monitoring system to ensure that any complaints can be dealt with quickly and fairly.

Now that the big debate on care policy has begun we must ensure that it doesn't end up like the Royal Commission which in 1997 looked at the future of long-term funding of care for older people and ended up in the pigeon hole. It has left us with a means-tested system under which anyone with a home or savings worth £23,500 or more is ineligible for any local authority funding and, in effect, being shut out from all social services.

Are we really building the equal society when somebody who has worked and saved all their lives is penalised in this way, while people who for one reason or another are without any assets are provided with care? This long-awaited debate on the future of long-term care must surely end with a fairer and better system.

Yes, we CAN...live longer with cancer

There is a price to be paid for people in general living longer. There will be an increase in various forms of cancer, possibly affecting as many as 1:2 people. But research scientists such as Professor Mustafa Djamgoz are confident cancer can be transformed from an acute life-threatening disease in some cases today, into something chronic that we can live with, rather like asthma or diabetes.

This was the theme of a fascinating talk and frank discussion opened by Professor Djamgoz, Professor of Cancer Biology at Imperial College, London, at one of our Skinners Court education and lifelong learning meetings. His was a positive approach in which he challenged us not to see cancer as a taboo subject.

Instead, we should see it as an age-related disease which comes ultimately with the natural wear and tear of the body. And we can live for a long time with it and it will not always be the necessary cause of death. Indeed, 80-90% of cancer cases will be due to external factors in our own control such as what we eat, how we live, whether we smoke, how much alcohol we take etc.

In other words, said the professor, "too much of a good thing can be bad for you", and only in 10-15% of cases would it be genetically related from one's parents. In short, a lot can be done to prevent, or at least delay, the onset of cancer.

Cancer was a clever disease, said the professor, stimulated by changes in the body and hence it was crucial that any abnormality that may indicate a primary tumour should be spotted and reported early so that it could be removed as quickly as possible. Early detection was crucial for long-term survival.

We could learn to live with some cancers treatable by hormone therapy, surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy and this would hopefully stop them from spreading into secondary tumours. Prostate cancer affected some 80% of men at 80 plus. They may not know of it, however, and it used to be said that "men died with prostate cancer." However, as life expectancy has increased, more men are "dying of prostate cancer" due to the cancer getting out in time.

So men had better watch their diet and lifestyle (bodyweight etc), keep the cancer confined, and they may well not die of it. Breast and prostate cancers shared some similarities and tended to co-occur in families.

On the other hand, ovarian and pancreatic cancers were somewhat harder to treat along with lung and cervical cancers. Professor Djamgoz stressed that awareness, prevention, early detection, getting to the best oncologist and psychological support were vital. Imperial College, where Professor Djamgoz conducts his research using novel neuroscience techniques, is a world-class institution ranked No. 3 in Europe and No. 5 in the world. His work at Imperial College was aimed at early definitive diagnosis and non-toxic therapy.

"It is my life's challenge to make a positive contribution to cancer prevention and effective management. It surprises me that there is little statistical information to discover the number of cancer patients in the community and I think it needs to be urgently obtained and evaluated", said Professor Djamgoz.

Professor Djamgoz is chairman of the Palmers Green based Pro-Cancer Research Fund (PCRF), a member of the UK Coalition for Prostate Cancer. He is also a trustee of Breast Cancer Care. PCRF's Amber Care Centre in Aldermans Hill aims to help anyone affected by cancer by providing the attention, expertise and support that doctors do not always have the time to give.

Forum member David Foord wrote to us after our Skinners Court meeting: "I really enjoyed Professor Djamgoz's talk – quite excellent. I would suggest he was one of the best, possibly THE BEST, speaker I have heard on my visits. Please, please book him again but at the Civic Centre, where his 'knowledge' is received by a bigger audience."

So the Forum Committee will endeavour to do this in the coming year and arrange an event in support of the Pro-Cancer Research Fund.

New number to report abuse concern

Enfield Council and its partners have launched a single point of contact to report abuse of an adult at risk. The Enfield Adult Abuse Line - 020 8379 5212 - has been launched in conjunction with the new Safeguarding Adults Strategy, which is about how to prevent abuse and ensure a good-quality service when reports of abuse are made.

Although we know that most people are well cared for, some adults are at risk of abuse. It could be because of the person's mental capacity, age or disability and how this is perceived by the people around them. It can be because of a number of reasons and abuse can take many forms including physical, emotional, financial, sexual, discriminatory, institutional and neglect.

Cllr Edward Smith, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services said *"Having just one number to call if you are concerned about someone who may be neglected or abused helps to remove barriers to reporting abuse. I would urge anyone in the borough to make contact if they are concerned about an adult at risk. Concerns will be dealt with professionally and sensitively. The abuse of adults at risk is often a crime and I am confident that this phone line will help make Enfield a safer place for all residents."*

If you or someone you know is being abused, or if you suspect abuse, telephone the Enfield Adult Abuse Line 020 8379 5212. You will be listened to and your concerns taken seriously.

New vaccine may kill off tumours

The first cancer vaccine to attack tumours, while ignoring the rest of the body, has been successfully tested on mice. The implant technique, which sees the vaccine inserted into the skin in a tiny finger-nail size disk, may have important advantages over surgery or chemotherapy. The work is being carried out at Harvard University in Boston, USA.

Ed Yong of Cancer Research UK said: *"Results like these suggest that the approach is promising, but so far success has been limited to mice. There's still a lot of work to do before the same technique could be used in people."*

Special introduction to using computers

**Millfield Theatre Bistro (Next to Millfield House)
Thursday 18 February 10.15am for 10.30am start**

This beginners introduction will include demonstrations on the use of email, the internet and online purchasing, web cameras, video conferencing and photography, Skype (phoning overseas and long distance for the price of local calls), using BBC iplayer and playing DVDs and music on your computer. **The meeting is free.**

For any interested participant or OTHER Forum members the Bistro manager Jason is offering members a special buffet lunch (12.30 pm) on the day for ALL Forum members for £5.50. the choices on the menu will include: Fish, chips and mushy peas; steak and vegetable pie with a selection of vegetables and gravy; a vegetarian dish such as canallonni; spaghetti bolognese; a gateau desert.

To reserve a place at the beginners presentation and/or the special lunch call Jane or Polly on 020 8807 2076.

"We absolutely won't be downgrading our A&E"

This firm statement has been given to the Forum by Clare Panniker, chief executive of the North Middlesex University Hospital, following speculation in some parts of the local press that North Mid's A & E is to be scaled back, losing its 24-hour and other vital services.

Although the NHS sometimes operates in peculiar ways, it surely doesn't make any sense to consider cuts in services when in just five months time - in May 2010 - the North Mid. will be unveiling the result of a £120 million investment, opening up an expanded A&E service which will provide more, not less, emergency care.

It will also offer a dedicated 24 hours x seven days children's A&E service; more operating theatres, providing more, not less emergency and planned surgery; a larger outpatients department, brand new wards and the latest diagnostic facilities.

"This hospital's recent history is one of growth, investment and development and we are confident that this means services for patients that are fit for the future and the best they can be. Our direction of travel is forward, not back and growth not downgrading," says Clare Panniker.

We will, however, have to be vigilant in monitoring yet another strategic review, this one being conducted by Rachel Tyndall, Islington PCT's chief executive, covering Camden, Islington, Haringey, Barnet and Enfield. In which all the CEOs of these NHS hospital trusts are involved. We are told that the work is at an early stage and no conclusions have yet been reached but Clare Panniker says she is **"absolutely confident that there is no risk to the further development and growth of North Middlesex Hospital"**.

Winter deaths reach new high

The latest excess winter death statistics for England and Wales show a staggering 49% increase in the period December 2008 to March 2009. An estimated 36,700 older people died of cold related illnesses compared to 25,300 the previous winter.

The figures show that the excess winter death rate is increasing and has now reached a ten-year high. Frank Cooper, National Pensioners' Convention president said: **"These deaths are a national scandal and the government must act immediately to give pensioners the confidence to heat their homes by raising the winter fuel allowance to £500 and curbing the profits of the energy providers."**

All claims for this year's winter fuel payment must be received on or before 30 March 2010. If you are eligible and haven't received the money call 0845 915 15 15. Winter fuel payments are made to more than 12 million people of either £250 for households with people aged 60 or over and £400 if someone is over 80. Pensions Minister Angela Eagle said:

"We don't want older people to be afraid to turn up their heating in winter".

.....and primary care is being upgraded

The Breast Screening service has now started at the Forest Road Neighbourhood Health Centre site. Early indications are that this daily service is popular with women who prefer to attend a centre rather than a mobile site. It is hoped that this will result in a significant uptake in breast screening services among women from the more deprived areas where traditionally the uptake of this service has been low. The service at Forest Road is one of the first in London to be equipped with completely digitalised mammograms, giving doctors better computer access to the results. The new technology records sharper images than previously which should lead to earlier detection and improved survival rates.

NHS Enfield has also started a phlebotomy service at Evergreen Health Centre, similar to that at Forest Road. Currently it runs for three days a week, but this can be increased subject to demand - and the walk-in service at Evergreen continues to attract an increasing number of patients and is on track to extend its opening times to 14 hours a day from April 2010.

A planning application for the Enfield Lock Primary Care Centre is currently being finalised and that proposed development remains on track for completion in late 2011. NHS Enfield is currently working closely with the Enfield Town GP cluster to identify a site for the Enfield Town neighbourhood health centre. It is anticipated that an outline business case will be ready for submission to the NHS Enfield Board in the New Year. Discussions are also taking place with Southgate College **with regards to co-locating a GP practice on the redeveloped Southgate Circus College site.**

Saving energy - saving money

Free advice from Enfield Council and the Energy Saving Trust could help you save money. Letters have been sent from Enfield Council and the Energy Saving Trust to over 45,000 households encouraging residents to complete the survey accompanying the letter or fill in the home energy check online at:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/check

Those who fill in the survey will receive a home energy report with information and advice on how to save energy and cut the cost of your fuel bills.

Cllr Matthew Laban, Cabinet member for housing said: "Enfield residents should take the time to look at their energy costs. By taking the advice in your free home energy report, you may be able to save over £300 a year in energy payments."

The results of the survey will be made available to the Council to help with future planning on insulation and heating for households that need extra help. Cllr Terry Neville, Cabinet member for environment said: **"The free home energy report will give practical advice on how you can improve your home's energy rating. "This free, impartial, expert advice may also help you reduce carbon dioxide emissions. These things are essential to meet our commitments to help fight against climate change"**

Random round-up

TV licences up

Cost of a colour TV licence is now £142.50 and £48 in black and white. But they are free from the month during which you reach age 75 (not 65 as the last Newsletter said in error). You do need to register. Call 0845 603 6999 for more information.

Rogue sellers

The Office of Fair Trading has produced a new factsheet "crime prevention for older people" aimed at preventing people falling victim to rogue doorstep sellers. To obtain a copy call free 0800 00 99 66.

Heating bills

If you're worried about heating bills, there's a Home Heat Helpline willing to advise on insulation grants and reduced energy tariffs. Call free 0800 33 66 99.

Free passports

New passports, which now cost £77.50, are free for those born on or before 2 September 1929. For details ring 0300 222 0000.

Unwanted mail

The Bereavement Register can help to stop mail being sent addressed to someone who has passed away. It costs nothing to avoid being upset in this way. Call 0800 082 1239 to register.

Health snippets

Pills galore

Nearly half of the country's over 65s are taking five or more pills a day - and the number of prescriptions for allergies, diabetes and obesity has increased by nearly 6% in a year.

You can't win

While we are being told in one ear we'll have to use energy-saving light bulbs, because traditional light bulbs are being phased out, in the other ear we're told they can cause migraines and even exacerbate skin problems. So who do you believe?

Three hours a week

That's all it takes of physical exercise and you too could have a body that's ten years younger than a couch potato of the same age, according to scientists at King's College, London. Professor Tim Spector, one of the team said the study provides a message to "promote the potentially anti-ageing effect of regular exercise."

Hospital parking

In Wales, hospital parking has been free since last April at most hospitals. In Scotland, hospital parking charges have been capped at £3 a day since January 2008 and are now expected to be scrapped, but in England free parking "will be phased in over the next three years" if Labour is still in government, but then it will only be introduced "as we can afford it". As NHS budgets are being cut and savings demanded will this scheme - said to cost £140 million ever be affordable? No prizes for the answer.

Diabetes soars

The number of diabetes' cases rose by more than 145,000 in a year, according to data from GP practices. More than 2.6 million people are now registered as having the condition. About 90% of patients have type 2 diabetes which is linked to an unhealthy lifestyle and obesity, putting an ever-growing strain on the NHS.

Diet & dementia

More than 1,000 people in New York with an average age of 77 were monitored for more than five years and those who exercised the most and had a diet rich in fruit, vegetables and fish were 60% less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Transplants

There are more than 120 patients waiting for a heart transplant at any one time in the UK. Average waiting time is six months. UK success rate for heart transplants is well over 75%. 129 transplants were carried out in 2008, of which 28 patients were under 16.

The price we pay for drinking, smoking and eating too much

Liver disease is soaring. It is now the fifth most common cause of death in England. It is the only one of the top five causes of death that is continuing to affect more people every year - and at a younger age.

One in four Britons is now officially classed as being obese. The number of patients treated in hospital for obesity has more than tripled over the last five years. In the past year alone, obesity-related admissions jumped by 60%. In November 2004 official figures showed that 1,746 people were admitted to hospital for obesity. In 2008-9, there were 8,085.

The NHS smoking service has been successful in cutting the number of smokers from 28 to 21% - but it has cost more than £259 million. But there are still 1.4 million hospital admissions a year for diseases caused by smoking - 5% of all admissions and treating illnesses related to smoking costs the NHS £5.2 billion a year.

Just to confuse us the journal *Heart* claims that men who drink large amounts of alcohol are least at risk from coronary heart disease, which kills more than 90,000 Britons every year. Men who drink regularly, even small quantities, are more than 30% less likely to suffer from heart disease, but the more you drink, the less chance you have of developing heart disease.

Research carried out in Spain on 15,500 men aged 26-69 led to the claim that alcohol enhances heart health by keeping cholesterol levels down and so stopping clogging of the arteries. While this may be so, alcohol could damage the heart in other ways by harming other organs including the liver (see our opening paragraph). Robert Sutton, professor of surgery at Liverpool University said the study was flawed, underpowered intellectually and gave a "highly biased view of the effects of alcohol".

However, another survey has revealed that Britons drink more alcohol than their European counterparts and consume some of the strongest drinks. More than 27% of Britons exceed the recommended weekly alcohol limit compared with just 10% of people in Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

Spirits are the preferred drink of about one third of Britons, whereas in Germany and France only 14% opt for the hard stuff over beer and wine. One in five people here claim to be teetotal compared with 31% of Americans who say they never drink. Alcohol Concern says: "Our high levels of drinking are a cause for concern as a whole range of alcohol related diseases, including cancers, are on the increase".

Lose those pounds the easy way

You'll be thinking now of all those excess pounds you have added to your weight over the festive season and wondering how you are going to get back into shape - especially after reading all those dire warnings in the Newsletter about obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes and liver disease.

Well, we have a quick and easy answer. The Aspire fully inclusive membership provides unlimited use of swimming, sauna & steam, fitness gym, fitness studio for classes, racket sports such as badminton and table tennis and free access to our ever popular Over 50s activity days held at three of our centres - Southbury, Edmonton and Southgate.



Why not take advantage of our special Associate rate for all Enfield Over 50s Forum members at just £30 per month or £300 per year. You'll be joining over 360 Forum members who have already signed up to our Healthy Body, Healthy Mind campaign.

Enfield Leisure Centres is also pleased to announce two key events jointly with the Over 50s Forum for 2010. We will be holding a Health & Fitness Awareness day in March at Edmonton Leisure Centre and a joint Falls Awareness Day at Southbury Leisure Centre during the June Falls Awareness Week. Further information and publicity will be available in all centres nearer the time.



For further information regarding our Aspire memberships please call our membership line 020 8245 5191, online at www.enfieldleisurecentres.co.uk or simply drop into one of our centres and speak with a membership sales adviser.

Ken Biggs

ELC sales and marketing manager

Polly's Patter

Anyone for Penang

If they say variety is the spice of life then how about this note that came out of the blue when I sent an old friend of the Forum a note about a meeting we were calling of volunteer helpers.

From: Helen Foot [mailto:helenfoot2004@yahoo.com]

Sent: 18 November 2009

To: Polly Lawman

Subject: Re: FW: Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum - Volunteers Day

Dear Polly,

Thank you for asking us to join in the above event on the 17/11/09. We've now moved to retire in Malaysia. Our address is no longer at 22a Seaford Road, Enfield. I would be grateful if you could correct our address. We are no longer able to join in the over 50s forum activities. If anyone would like to come to Penang for a few weeks holidays, please let me know. My address is at 69, Persiaran Kelicap 1, Bayan Lepas, Penang, 11900 Malaysia. Our telephone: 0044 6462478. Otherwise please email me.

Regards,

Helen

So here's the offer of a lifetime and do let me know if anyone takes it up. Whoever thought the Forum would be able to offer a Holiday in Penang!!

Oh yes it is...

...Pantomime season in December and Paul Everitt's, Millfield Arts Centre manager, kindly invited the Forum to the 'most magical family pantomime' *Aladdin*. At the new restaurant we were greeted by a wonderful choir singing Christmas carols and songs, glasses of Pinot Noir and delicious canapes. By the time we took our seats we were ready to shout 'behind you' louder than the children. The performance was exceptionally good, the stage sets, special effects – Aladdin singing from a levitating carpet – and live music superb. For me, Widow Twankey's twinkle (Neal Wright is a combination of Louis Armstrong and Lenny Henry) and Wishee Washee's wit (Ben Fern) stole the show.

Check out the programme at Millfield: West End acts at local prices with the opportunity for a bite and a drink just before performances all at a very good price.

Volunteers meeting

Thanks to all the volunteers who attended on 18 November. It was a positive, constructive morning as volunteers brought their skills, professional expertise and sense of fun to the meeting. As

a participant said: **"it was good to meet new people and find out what you could do with your spare time."** We now have enough volunteers to set up Campaigning and Fundraising groups to help sustain the work of the Forum; we also have people to help with office work and social events. **It is not too late to get involved** – if you could not attend the meeting but still wish to volunteer please give me a call - 020 8807 2076.

Are you interested in a qualification and helping Carers?

The **Enfield Asian Welfare Association (EAWA)** is looking for two volunteers to help in hospitals in Enfield and possibly undertake home visits on two and a half days a week for 16 months. They are looking for mature, reliable people with good communication skills, willing to be trained and willing to help and follow tasks through to completion.

Knowledge of carers and giving information and guidance will be an advantage but is not essential. Each volunteer will:

- * signpost new carers to access services at point of hospital discharge of their older relatives/friends based on their needs

- * be given the opportunity to attain an NVQ level 3 Information Advice and Guidance qualification (EAWA will fund the course.)

The first three months will focus on training. There will be an application, interview and induction process. If you are interested please email: eawa.library@gmail.com or call Chetna Shah, CEO of EAWA, on 020 8443 1197 for a role description and application pack.

Flu-friends update

The Forum is operating a Flu-friend service whereby NHS Enfield refers cases of older people suffering with Swine Flu, who are too unwell to go the pharmacy and have no-one to help them. We make contact with one of our registered Flu-friends who in turn visit the patient, go to a participating pharmacy, pick up the medication and deliver it to their home. After checking that the medication has been delivered we inform NHS Enfield and close the case. Thank you to Major Peter Horsfall, Ms Pat French, and the Forum's Chair, Irene Richards who have all delivered the Flu antiviral medication - friends in need indeed! If you wish to become a Flu-friend please contact me at the Forum office.

Polly Lawman, development officer

Freedom Pass Renewal 2010

Members are reminded that **ALL** eligible persons will need to renew their passes between January and early March. Renewals can be processed at any Enfield post office. To renew your pass you will need to take the following with you to a post office:

- **Your old Freedom pass**
- **2 X recent passport photographs**
- **Proof of identity eg passport, driving licence**
- **Proof of Enfield residency eg recent utility bill**

The new passes will be available for 5 years. It takes up to 10 working days for the new pass to arrive.

Dates which have been set aside for post office renewals are:

Surname starting with:	Renewal date in 2010 (9am- 5pm)
A-E	4-16 January
F-j	18-23 January
K-O	25-30 January
P-Z	1-6 February
Anyone who missed their week	8-13 February

Flying start for Forum computer courses

I thought you would like to know that there has been an overwhelming response from the Enfield Over 50s Forum for the 10-week computer training courses at Bishop Stopford's and Southgate schools starting in January. So far I have had over 80 calls and I'm taking bookings for next September and beyond, with places at both schools receiving a similar number of requests.

So far I have received only five requests from beginners and have added these to the list I am already keeping - so it's now seven in total. People ringing have been very excited about the courses with many saying that they have been looking for computer training but can't afford the fees or find a suitable course.

Some people have mentioned that they have a digital camera but no idea how to use it with their computer, which seems to be a common problem. I'm very much looking forward to working with the Over 50s Forum.

Lorraine

01992 628266 - lorrainecourse@googlemail.com

The Chair's chair



An irresolute New Year's Day

Yes, it's that time of the year again: when we dust off the resolutions we made last year and pledge, with all sincerity, to try do better this year. New Year's Day also has an irresolute history. It has wandered around the year from the time of the Babylonians, 2000BC, who celebrated it in mid-March at the time of the vernal (spring) equinox; the Egyptians, Phoenicians and Persians preferred the autumn equinox and the Greeks the winter solstice.

The early Roman calendar designated March 1st – at that time the calendar only had ten months beginning with March. In 153BC they moved it to January 1st for political reasons because it was the beginning of the civil year, the month that the two newly elected Roman Consuls began their one-year tenure. Even then the date wasn't strictly or widely observed and it hopped back to March 1st.

Julius Caesar in 46BC introduced a solar-based calendar and January 1st, again, became favourite. However, that was not the end of it! In 567AD the Council of Tours abolished January 1st, as being pagan and unchristian like. Then it started dodging around again between Christmas Day, March 1st (again), March 25th and Easter. In 1582 the Gregorian Calendar reform restored January 1st as New Year's Day but even then it took the British, including its American colonies, another 170 years to adopt it in 1752.

New Year Resolutions are also believed to have begun with the Babylonians. Also, all over the world, despite differing beliefs and culture, people now have their own special ways of celebrating the New Year. Most, like the Chinese, include noise-making and fireworks, as it was believed that these dispelled evil spirits and brought good luck.

In Spain twelve grapes are eaten representing the twelve months of the year. In Greece they bake and eat St. Basil's cake, which contains a silver or gold coin – really good luck to the person who gets it – unless they swallow it or break a tooth! The Dutch burn Christmas trees to purge the old and welcome in the New Year.

In modern times, here in the UK for example, we seem to have been reduced to getting drunk whilst watching a Christmas show on TV or gathering at some prominent city landmark: waiting for Big Ben to strike midnight. After which we may join in that good old Scottish song, "Auld Lang Syne", which speaks of a "cup of kindness". And, that's my message – there is so much anger in the world today - perhaps all of our resolutions should be about being kinder and more generous to each other.

A peaceful and amicable New Year is my wish to you all!

Irene Richards

Forum's affiliates reach record 50

Where did that 2009 year go and here comes another one. We ended last year with a very successful meeting for our affiliated groups which have now reached a record 50. The latest to join is the **Bounces Road Neighbourhood Watch** - the largest NW group in the borough with some 60 members. Their coordinator, Bill Crossley, tells us that they are in touch with some 3,500 homes and around 6,000 people in the area. They meet monthly in St Peter's Church Hall and particularly strive to help elderly housebound folk while seeking to improve contact with the Somali and Turkish communities in the area.

"Our motto is; 'look, observe, listen' and this has helped us improve life around here on crime, fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and anti-social behaviour", says Bill. And the Forum will, I know help Bill in the good work he is doing.

Another group joining us is **Enfield Video Makers** who meet on the first and third Tuesday of each month, except in September, at Jubilee Hall in Parsonage Lane, Enfield, between 8 and 10 pm. For the first three visits by a prospective member there is no charge. If he/she is happy to join the club, the membership fee at present is £30 per year for a sole member and £37.50 for a couple. Jim Meehan tells us they currently make and show video films and help with editing them, and he will be happy to explain any further details required. His home phone number is 020 8351 1829, and mobile is 07990 500727.

Our affiliates meeting at the end of November was quite well attended, gave us plenty of food for thought and a useful sharing of information. Let's have a repeat for those unable to attend. Our membership continued to grow throughout the year. The campaigning was strong. We continue with our social calendar of events. Lastly, I would like to give a reminder to all those Forum UK tax payers who have yet to sign the gift aid form for their annual membership fee, it is worth 28p in every £ to the Forum. So please help us if you can.

Hope you all have a good year in 2010.

Joyce Pullen

Membership secretary

Free West End Entertainment

1st Thursday of each month – free film for "Seniors" at the **British Film Institute**. For further details please ring 020 7928 3232 or www.bfi.org.uk.

Free Concerts at the **Royal Festival Hall** – information and details on 0844 8750073 or www.southbankcentre.co.uk

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Published by Enfield Borough Over 50s Forum.

Contact: The Secretary, Millfield House, Silver Street, Edmonton, N18 1PJ. **Tel:** 020 8807 2076

Forum social calendar

Tuesday 9 February 2010: London Museum and Docklands trip: a special outing with loads to do and see. Cost £21pp including tea, coffee and cakes, a tour with a talk by a specialist speaker, hot lunch with a soft drink or glass of wine. For food options, more details and a booking form please contact Olivia.

Thursday 11 February 2010: Visit to the Barbican. Great opportunity for a day out – included in the ticket is the London Symphony Orchestra's final rehearsal concert (Bartok and Strauss) in the morning and a tour of the Barbican complex in the afternoon – specially priced tickets: £6 each. For more information please contact Heather Cole.

Friday 12 February 2010: Forum visit to Middlesex University. Talk on learning opportunities for over 50s, tour of the house and lunch provided. Free of charge; a £2 donation to cover our admin costs will be appreciated. Maximum number of places: 25. For more information please contact Polly Lawman.

Tuesday 9 March 2010: assembly 6pm; show 7.30-10.30pm. A magical evening full of hocus- pocus, mystery and wonder at the Magic Circle in Euston. Trip includes entry, special close up magic, refreshments, drinks and coach travel. Places are limited, so book early. Cost is £45 but £10 deposit secures your place. Contact Sue Scott on 020 8368 0861 for details.

Tuesday 23 March 2010: visit to DeHavilland Aircraft Museum, London Colney, St. Albans, for a guided tour using Freedom Pass, Oyster card/travel card. Some car sharing may be possible and bus 84 from Potters Bar goes to the museum. Book with Bill Thear - once confirmed please send a cheque for £5 payable to Enfield Over 50s Forum to Bill and please include a SAE.

Friday 26-29 March 2010: Paris holiday with Crusader Holidays : a special spring trip to one of the most beautiful capital cities. Cost £305pp by coach and ferry. Cost: £305pp. Booking details from **Olivia**.

Friday 7-10 May 2010: Normandy & D-Day landing beaches weekend break at Caen organised by the Forum with Crusader. A unique opportunity to visit the American, British and Commonwealth landing zones, beaches & cemeteries that commemorate 'The Longest Day 6 June 44'. Cost: £229pp inc. coach travel, 3 nights B&B at Ibis Caen Centre Hotel at the heart of the historical city. Optional holiday insurance £24pp. £50 deposit secures your place. For bookings, room details and itinerary please contact Roy Barrows.

Thursday 2-6 September 2010: 5-day break in Istanbul, Turkey. Come fly with the Forum! Join us on our first flight to the exotic city of Istanbul, Capital of Culture for 2010, where Europe meets Asia in a vibrant and colourful melee of minarets, palaces and souks. For a full itinerary and bookings please contact Olivia.

Please note: If you have to cancel your place on a Forum social activity/trip, every attempt will be made by the organiser to fill your place, but if this is not possible, you may lose your booking fee.

Roddy Beare, Social Secretary

Bonny trip to Bonn

December 2009 saw the Forum annual Christmas markets trip to Bonn, the former capital of West Germany. The group enjoyed wonderful food and hospitality of the Mercure Hotel and the sociability of the resident American basketball squad, who made us feel like midgets!

We explored Bonn and many of us took time to visit the birthplace of Beethoven, whose home is now a museum commemorating his memory and wonderful music. The markets were an absolute delight, tempting the Euros out of our purses. Candles, decorations, crafts and so much more were tastefully presented in little wooden stalls. We spent time on a Rhine river cruise with musical accompaniment and good food along the way.

Some of us had a wine tasting experience which was informative and great! The Ahr valley is so pretty and we would all have like more time to soak up the atmosphere. The general feedback was excellent and comments on the social opportunities afforded by such trips proved again why the Forum is growing and flourishing.

Olivia Goodfellow

Christmas starts in style

"**Fantastic, marvellous, wonderful, unbeatable value**" were just a few of the unsolicited comments that was music to the social committee's ear following two Christmas events on successive days attended by some 200 Forum members.

The first was the **annual Christmas lunch** followed by dancing provided by Myra and Terry and the second was on the following evening to the music of **Danny's disco**. Both events were superbly catered for by **Rosario**, the chef at the North Enfield Conservative Club, who laid on a 4-course spread fit for a Buck House banquet - though not many people had room for the cheese!.

There's too many people to thank individually but a special mention to **Jean Mittins, Jacky Pearce, Olivia Goodfellow Roddy Beare and Roy Barrows** for their splendid organisation at two events which launched the Christmas festivities in grand style.

Singalong

After the success of the poetry group, we're thinking of forming a choir. We need a choirmaster/mistress and accompanist to lead it and your voices. Names please to the Forum office 020 8807 2076.

Contacts details for bookings:

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Roy Barrows: 020 8360 8561

Wendy Bundle: 020 8360 2697

Olivia Goodfellow: 8447 8841 email: olivia.g@virgin.net

Jean Mittins: 020 8367 2102

Sue Scott: 020 8368 0861 e-mail scotsf48@hotmail.com

Bill Thear: 020 8363 9216 email thear_242@hotmail.com

Disclaimer: The Enfield Over 50s Forum is not liable for any personal injury/accidents that may occur during any of its activities/events.