

ANNUAL REPORT

2007 - 2008

1 INTRODUCTION

ESPOPF exists to represent older people in the southern parishes of Eastleigh Borough, to promote their interests with statutory authorities, to respond to their needs and to draw the attention of the public to issues of concern to older people.

In addition to our usual activities, this year the Forum has been invited to speak on different issues at a range of different events across the country. It usually falls to our Hon. Secretary to accept and she has taken on this role with enthusiasm. Recently, we have been invited to Romsey and the New Forest to advise on the formation of new forums there, which is most exciting. It would be good to join forces with other forums in Hampshire to embark on joint campaigns. Another similar invitation has come from Stoke-on-Trent Unitary Authority for their ENGAGE event.

Another new development is that we are receiving a growing number of calls from individual members with intractable problems. This has led us to explore CRB checks and more comprehensive insurance and assistance, and to question our competence and role in advocacy. It is clear that older people have problems which are often difficult to resolve and it is not always clear where help is to be found.

2 MEMBERSHIP

We have a database of 2,344 addresses to which our Newsletter is sent. This includes local councillors and officers and other contacts who support our work. We restrict our members to those over 55 who live in the six southern parishes and they are recruited in the main from senior citizens over 70, who claim travel tokens at the Token Issues in the Borough and give their consent to being on our database. Many households have two older people and we estimate that altogether we have 3,165 older members. This year, we had 266 subscribing members. Our membership year runs from AGM to AGM. We also have 100 members in the 100 Club.

3 NEWSLETTER AND WEBSITE

Our Newsletter continues to attract favourable comment and we are very pleased that Hampshire Adult Services continues to support it financially. As usual, six issues were distributed. The price of postage, the really expensive item, continues to increase, but the Royal Mail remains the best way of ensuring delivery. We acknowledge the excellent work of the Newsletter distribution team, and thank especially Margaret Phippard and the residents of Hambleside Court. We often circulate useful information from other organisations with the Newsletter. The most regular comment we receive about the Newsletter is that it keeps people in touch with what is going on. In turn, the Letters Page keeps the Committee in touch with members' thoughts and ideas. We receive numerous donations, appreciative letters and requests to reprint articles in other publications. The Newsletter is published on our Website, which also contains our research and comprehensive information about ESPOPF. Our Christmas cards for 2007 featured our Committee or our Researchers holding up copies of "Bleak Housing".

4 OPEN MEETINGS

This year, we have continued to meet at the Underhill Centre in Hedge End, though we had one meeting at the Priory Centre in Hamble and were pleased to greet Hamble members we had not seen for some time. Our caterer, Teresa Noguera, retired after 8 years of providing delicious meals, and our chair, Jackie Charles, presented her with vouchers as a token of ESPOPF's appreciation. The Home Information Support Project (HISP) Workers and Stall continue to provide information and advice and we have welcomed the regular attendance of members of the Community Innovations Team and the new community police officers. Diane Rodaway continues to lead her popular Extend

exercises. Our Raffles are well supported and contribute substantially to our fund-raising; we also have the draw for our 100 Club. We raised £155 for Macmillan Cancer Relief; the Hamble branch of the Royal Lifeboat Institution and the local branch of Save the Children Fund brought stalls to our November meeting.

Speakers at the **6 Open Meetings** – average attendance 80 - have enlightened us about elder abuse, cardiac disease, mental health services, new lasting power of attorney, the future of the Moorgreen Hospital site, creative dance, University of the Third Age, fishing, the Countess Mountbatten Hospice. We have also run workshops on strokes, energy efficiency, doorstep crime, home safety, mobility aids and adaptations, Carers Together, government proposals for older drivers.

We have developed a Guide for Speakers to be used at our Open Meetings as we recognise that visiting speakers are not always aware of what older people expect from them. We have also drawn up an agreement with our new caterers.

Following requests from our members, we, with Helen Coleman, EBC Community Development Officer, have been exploring other venues for our meetings. It would appear that, at present, the catering facilities and availability of extra rooms for workshops that the Underhill Centre provides in Hedge End cannot be matched elsewhere.

5 COMMITTEE

Our hard-working Committee of 13 representatives of all six parishes has met 10 times with an average attendance of 8.5 members. Meetings are held at Bursledon Community Centre, which has good disabled facilities and access. Out-of-pocket travel expenses are provided. Members undertake many responsibilities which ensure the smooth running of the Forum and they also represent the Forum. Our Officers, especially Betty Lawrence, our Hon. Treasurer, deserve special thanks. Committee Members invited the Researchers, Judith Cam and the Newsletter Distribution Team to join them for their annual New Year's Lunch at the Roll Call in Butlocks Heath. Two of our most valued members, Elizabeth Cauldwell and Ivie Clarke, died in hospital in January and are much missed. Fortunately, we have been able to welcome three new members, Pat Jenkins and June Watson, from Hedge End and Peggy Budd from Hound. A prospective committee member attending her first meeting said she had no idea, as an ordinary member, of the extent of the work undertaken by the committee and their achievements.

6 ESPOPF GROUPS

Following the success of *Bleak Housing* in influencing local and national housing policy for older people, a new group of ESPOPF **Researchers** embarked on research into Prescribed Drugs in January. It is appropriate now to express appreciation of their work and to thank all the 915 members who were involved in the survey and the 20 members who agreed to be interviewed. It is hoped that the Report will be launched at the September Open Meeting.

The **Hamble Culture Club** has continued to expand its activities beyond the monthly meetings in Hamble, Membership is restricted to members living on the Hamble peninsula.

Councillors on the Bursledon, Hamble and Hound Local Area Committee sponsored 10 Dance classes delivered by The Point in each of the three villages this year. We wait to see whether this will lead to the formation of a Dance Club or something similar.

It has been suggested that ESPOPF encourage the formation of a U3A group in our area and plans are afoot for this.

7 CONSULTATIONS

This year we have been involved in numerous consultations, some more satisfactory than others. Help the Aged's consultations were about Older Drivers, Pavements, Public Toilets, Consultations by Government, Age Discrimination and a South East Regional Forum. We are always pleased to respond, because we know that Help the Aged is sincere in wanting our views and always acts on them, usually to lobby Government for changes in the law or policy. We get plenty of feedback and, in fact, they produced a *Guide to Consultations with Older People* for the benefit of local authorities and others, who see consultations just as a *ticking the box* exercise, and, of course,

we were consulted on that!

Hampshire PCT consulted us on their *Healthy Horizons* programme, Hampshire County Council on their Grants Review and their Supporting People and Wellbeing Strategies, and Eastleigh Borough Council on their Bus Network Strategy and Handy Person leaflet. We were disappointed not to be involved with the HCC Review of Passenger Transport for obvious reasons.

The Eastleigh Compact, which aims to achieve closer working of the Council and the voluntary sector, consulted us and other community groups about services, including the *Borough News* and *The Point*, at an interesting meeting at the Civic Offices.

The Hampshire Police took over our Open Meeting in January to undertake a Consultation on what we thought of the service they provide and what our priorities were. They returned at the next meeting to tell us what we had told them! One of the good results is that community officers attend meetings regularly, so that members can report problems.

8 PARTNERSHIPS

We are always happy to work with organisations and individuals who share our aims and value our contribution as an organisation representing older people. We work closely with Help the Aged, and we were represented at the launch of the National Free Bus Pass at the House of Commons. We were invited to meetings with civil servants, Ministers and other forums.

Following the receipt of the remainder of the 2006/7 grant in October, we have been very pleased to work with Martin Coulson, the EBC Bursledon, Hamble and Hound Local Area Co-ordinator, to develop an Age-Friendly Action Plan for half our catchment area. It is firmly based on the research we conducted last year about the needs and aspirations of older people, *Bleak Housing*, and deals with the *Lifetime Neighbourhoods* aspect of the Government's Housing Strategy for Older People. The major problem we are working hard to solve is that of communication: how to give older people the information they need at the time when they need it. We worked with the Borough Council on a Housing and Information Day in December and we are participating in the development of the new Housing Strategy for Older People.

The National Pensioners Convention organised an excellent Transport briefing in London and three of our members attended the Annual Lobby of Parliament organised by them. Chris Huhne MP was unable to receive us as he was standing by to vote in the House. We have been in regular contact with him during the year and he has signed various Early Day Motions, written to Ministers on our behalf and undertaken case work at our request.

We have worked with Carol Gerrett of Hampshire Care Groups in the setting up of the Beacon Care Group in Hound and are pleased that two of our committee members are playing a very active part in its development, one as co-ordinator. We are delighted by the success of Bursledon Good Neighbours and the continuing achievements of the Hamble Care Group and we hope other similar groups will be developed in our other villages soon.

We remain extremely concerned about the precarious plight of older people in sheltered housing when under threat of re-development and we believe that EBC should ensure that housing associations have procedures in place to minimise the distress and stress of tenants in these circumstances. We have organised meetings of our members with Atlantic Housing Association to enable communication at the highest level to be established. We became consultees on all planning applications affecting older people's housing in our area and attended planning meetings to speak on the proposed demolition of garages in areas of social housing and the re-development of Rotary Court in Netley by Saxon Weald.

Following the ready and valuable assistance we received from Hampshire and Eastleigh Compacts in resolving our dispute with Eastleigh Borough Council, we decided to resume our active membership.

9 CAMPAIGNING ISSUES

Transport issues have continued to demand our attention. We remain unhappy that the Borough Council discriminates against 60–70 year olds in refusing them travel tokens, especially as

they are eligible for the Government's Free Bus Pass and the Senior Citizens' Rail card. We also feel that the Council should increase the £32 worth of tokens in the next budget and we shall be campaigning on these improvements to concessionary travel in the coming year. Bus Operators have cut services and our Hedge End members, in particular, have found it very difficult to make their complaints heard. It is clear that more community transport is needed to plug the gaps and the new Transport Bill allows for this. Our ultimate goal is the Free Nationwide **Travel** Pass, which will cover all sorts of transport everywhere.

We have maintained a visible profile in the local press with letters and reports and in the national Help the Aged publication, *Forum to Forum*.

Recently, we have supported Help the Aged's successful campaign on the Single Equalities Bill and Cancer Research UK's campaign to secure adequate cancer screening in our hospitals.

10 THANKS

The Underhill Centre provides our meeting facilities, which enable our Open Meetings to offer a wide range of speakers and workshops and food and we are especially grateful to John Reynolds for his assistance with the sound system. We thank Teresa for providing us with good food over the years and One Community for delivering members door to door on the 'free' community bus. We thank all the speakers who have attended our Open Meetings and Diane Rodaway for her enjoyable armchair exercises. We thank all those organisations which have given us grants as shown in the Accounts and without whose support we should falter. We thank all our subscribing members, members of the 100 Club, those who contribute to our funds by bringing raffle prizes, buying raffle tickets at our Open Meeting and giving donations. We are fortunate to have so many active and willing members who take on necessary jobs: Sue Taylor, who organises the raffle at Open Meetings and May who provides the refreshments; David Andrewes, who masterminds the database of members, produces address labels and analyses our research; John Lawrence, for designing the Christmas card; Judith Cam who facilitates our Consultations so expertly and David Dowdell, our Webmaster. We thank them all for their important contributions.

11 CONCLUSIONS

Local authorities are to be given a *statutory* duty to involve local people in active participation in decision-making – not just consulting. It will be interesting for us to see how our two local authorities break the habits of a lifetime to achieve this!

Diane Andrewes Hon. Secretary