

EASTLEIGH SOUTHERN PARISHES

OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2010/11

1 INTRODUCTION

EASTLEIGH SOUTHERN PARISHES OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUM (ESPOPF) was established in 2000 to consult with older people in the southern parishes of Eastleigh Borough; to promote their interests with statutory authorities and voluntary bodies; to respond to their needs; to draw the attention of the public to their concerns. This year, we experienced a funding crisis, which threatened our existence. Council grants did not materialise and funds previously available to the voluntary sector at large seemed to dry up. Fortunately, our members came to our rescue with incredibly generous donations, subscriptions and fund-raising. This was immensely cheering, as we realised for the first time the extent of members' appreciation and support. The many letters were the spur and encouragement to ESPOPF becoming financially independent - no longer totally dependent on the goodwill of others for our survival. Older people are known to be the most generous givers to charity and the least enamoured of receiving it and, certainly, we now budget according to our own hard-earned resources, scrutinising and costing everything we do. However, we remain enormously grateful to our friends, such as AGE UK and Bonhomie, for their continuing support. As '*a force to be reckoned with*' and '*the authentic voice of older people*', we shall continue to give older people a voice, and we are delighted that Macmillan Cancer Support has commissioned our research, this year, enabling our unique work – *nothing about us without us* - to continue.

2 MEMBERSHIP

Our 3,000+ members live in the six southern parishes, which comprise about half of Eastleigh borough. About one quarter of older people aged over 60 in our catchment area are members. Over 600 are subscribing members. Our membership year runs from AGM to AGM. The annual subscription remains at £3 (single) and £5 (couples at the same address). This year we had 170 members in our two 100 Clubs, which run for the calendar year.

3 COMMITTEE

We began the year with 12 elected and 4 co-opted members on our hard-working Committee, which has met 11 times with an average attendance of 9.8 members. In addition, 11 members attended an Emergency Committee meeting in August to agree a programme of action to address ESPOPF's financial situation. As well as running ESPOPF and Open Meetings, Committee members represent ESPOPF at meetings and conferences. They also formed a working party to organise the fund raising Garden Party in May. We have continued to enjoy meetings in the Conference Room of the Drug Safety Research Unit (DSRU) at Bursledon Hall. Visitors to the committee included: Alex Burn, HCC Head of Wellbeing, who consulted on the Review of her Wellbeing Strategy; Sheryll Mondey, who informed us of the *Safe Warm and Secure* project; Richard Whineray of Moorgreen Hospital League of Friends; Pam Sorenson of Hampshire Partnership Trust (Mental Health), who spoke about service changes at Moorgreen Hospital. Our oldest member, Jean Norton, died just after celebrating her ninetieth birthday at Christmas and Patience Sambrook is leaving the Committee after three years of service, two as Chair. We shall miss them both. We were sorry to lose the services of our volunteer assistant secretary, Michelle Rice, but very glad that she continues as our volunteer driver. The Committee has adopted the pleasant practice of going out to a light lunch after committee meetings.

4 NEWSLETTER AND WEBSITE (www.espopf.org)

We have a postal database of about 2,000 households to which our Newsletter is sent. As part of our examination of costs, we discovered that each issue of the Newsletter was costing about £1,000, largely the result of the rising cost of postage. Obviously, this was unsustainable. The Newsletter is

ESPOPF's main benefit to members and the majority of members attending our Review of Services at an Open Meeting, told us to restrict its delivery to paid-up members. We have not increased our subscription this year hoping to encourage more members to become subscribing members. The Newsletter is available on our website and we also send e-copies on request. We acknowledge the contribution of many people towards the production and distribution of the Newsletter, especially David Andrewes, Margaret Phippard, residents of Hamble side Court and our printer, Tom Rodaway.

Our Website contains our research, newsletters news about ESPOPF activities and campaigns. David Andrewes, is our webmaster. This year, there have been 43,130 hits from countries round the world, mostly on our research: mainly "*In the Dark*", "*Bleak Housing*" and "*Pills and Perils*". Every ESPOPF talk at a conference or seminar stimulates large numbers of *hits*.

5 OPEN MEETINGS

Our bi-monthly Open Meetings are working meetings, providing a sounding board for concerns, and opportunities for giving, receiving and sharing information. Food, exercises and socialising are bonuses. We have continued to meet at the Hilldene Centre in West End, with its unrivalled facilities, although we have lost some regulars from the Hamble peninsula. We hope they realise that we provide door-to-door transport to meetings. The six Open Meetings have had an average attendance of 65 members. The themes for the workshops and talks have included Disability Information, Understanding Parliament, an ESPOPF Review, Introduction to Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC) and Hustings, Health Promotion and Dying Matters with staff from the Countess Mountbatten Hospital.

The Home Information Support Project (HISP) offers information and advice. Diane Rodaway continues to lead her popular Extend exercises. Our Raffles are well supported and contribute substantially to our fund-raising; we also have draws for our 100 Clubs. The Hamble branch of the RNLI and the local branch of Save the Children Fund bring stalls for Christmas shopping. We welcome service providers, visitors and organisers of community activities and thank the speakers. We are still striving to ensure that our sound system is the best possible and were comforted that even Wimbledon lost the sound on their microphones at the Men's Championship final interviews!

We have been delighted to welcome back Teresa Noguera, our caterer, now that there is a brand new kitchen at the Centre, and her helper, Geraldine Windeatt. We always appreciate the help given by so willingly by Brian Trotter, the caretaker. Betty Lawrence does an amazing administrative job organising members' lunch orders and other payments on the day. Our members, who bring raffle prizes, buy raffle tickets and give donations keep us solvent. We thank them all.

6 RESEARCH

Unfortunately, our depleted financial resources meant that we printed only 500 copies of last year's research, "*In the Dark*", a study of older people's information needs, launched last July. We could not afford to mail hard copies to the great and the good, as is our usual practice. However, we were amazed by the intense interest in it, as demonstrated by the number of *hits* on our website – 700 in October 2010 alone! We were very disappointed by the failure of HCC Information and Library Services to consider our recommendations. The publication of our research did not halt the savage cuts in the mobile library service and we were given no chance to stress the vital role that the service could make in providing much-needed information to isolated older people. We were mollified to some extent by the increased circulation of the special edition of *Hampshire Now* for older people, but the jury is out on whether reliance on volunteers, yet to be recruited to provide more home library services, and the proposed introduction of volunteer *Village Agents* to provide advice will adequately replace the statutory service. We are questioning whether HCC has met its Equality Duty here.

This year, a new team of ESPOPF members has come together to research *The Needs and Experiences of Older People Affected by Cancer*. We believe this is the first time that older people – patients, carers, spouses, partners, relatives – have been asked for their views on the care given to cancer patients and we hope the findings will be significant. We have received over 500 responses to our Confidential Questionnaire and they have been computerised for analysis. We have conducted interviews and we are preparing our conclusions. We expect to pass on the results of our research to

Macmillan Cancer Support, who have commissioned the research, in September. We hope to launch the research in the autumn. As usual, all of our members have had the opportunity to participate in our research and we take this opportunity to thank those who have.

ESPOPF has provided older people for various research projects for AGE UK. David and Diane Andrewes were invited to attend the Annual Conference of the British Society of Gerontologists at Brunel University as guests of Age UK and to produce papers. They were also invited to present at a Seminar in Reading, organised by a UK consortium of academics. David spoke about older people's competence as researchers; Diane spoke about how ESPOPF's research has influenced policy.

7 CONSULTATIONS/ENGAGEMENT

ESPOPF responded to many consultations this year, including: Health Authority proposals to transform '**Mental Health Services for Older People**'; EBC's Supplementary Planning Guidance, '**Accommodation for Older People and Those in Need of Care**' and '**Equality Scheme**'; HCC's '**Older People's Wellbeing Strategy Review**'; Government proposals for '**Exceptions to the 2010 Equality Act**'. An HCC Scrutiny Panel has recommended that the County adopt our ideal protocol for consultations, that we brought to their attention during the course of a consultation on **Engagement**. We appreciate the enormous work undertaken by Judith Cam in preparing ESPOPF's responses.

8 PARTNERSHIPS

We have continued our very close connection with AGE UK responding to their requests for research, focus groups and information, serving on their Policy Sounding Board and, through them, representing older people on the Macmillan Older People's Cancer Care Project. Our close partnership with Macmillan is proving to be enormously beneficial in our understanding of cancer care. We are affiliated to the National Pensioners' Convention, are grateful for their briefings and work closely with them on Transport matters. Much of our Committee meetings is given over to reports of meetings in London and with the many Hampshire groups we work with on topics such as community safety, equality, transport, advice, safeguarding. We are EBC planning consultees on housing for older people and have been consulted about the demolition and replacement of social housing bungalows in our catchment area. We are involved with three steering groups for parish plans and hope to ensure that our villages become more age-friendly as the result.

9 CAMPAIGNING ISSUES

We began the year well, receiving an apology from EBC, as directed by the Local Government Ombudsman, when she upheld our *maladministration* complaints about the withdrawal of travel tokens. Following our successful campaign and, thanks to the good offices of Mark Miller and Councillor Colin Davidovitz, Hampshire County Council (HCC), in their new concessionary travel scheme, made travel *vouchers* (replacing travel *tokens*) available to disabled users, as alternatives to the free bus pass. We are taking the same successful approach, using the complaints process, about HCC's proposed withdrawal of free parking for blue badge holders at country parks and their other facilities, and their proposed swingeing reduction of mobile library services. We await the outcome.

One of our main campaigns has involved the reconvening of our Health Action Group, which has bi-monthly meetings and has spearheaded our campaign against the proposed *reforms* of the NHS. In addition to fact-finding and contributing to many meetings and seminars locally and nationally, we were invited to participate in a *Listening Event* in Westminster with the Prime Minister and other ministers, by AGE UK. We also campaigned locally in favour of retaining the Bitterne Walk-In Centre and we are currently surveying GP services for older patients. The *Eastleigh Local Health and Inequality Profile* has guided our work. Several of our members are actively involved in assisting the SHIP Bowel Cancer Awareness Campaign and we are represented on the Eastleigh Southern Parishes NHS Stakeholders Group. We have become involved with preventing and coping with falls and health promotion and attend meetings of the HCC Hearing Loss Strategy Group.

We are actively involved with AGE UK in their work on "*How We Pay*" - their exploration of the issues arising from the Payments Council's intention to withdraw cheques by 2018. We provided information on how ESPOPF depends on cheques for the payment of subscriptions, donations, bills, travel

expenses etc., and on bank statements for accounting. We organised a focus group of 20 frail, older people as part of AGE UK's research into their ways of spending money and their views of proposed alternatives. Two of us recently attended the launch of the research in Parliament.

10 THANKS

We are grateful to so many members who have come to ESPOPF's rescue many with very generous donations during our financial crisis, enabling us to continue. Mr and Mrs Worthy kindly opened their garden for a delightful fund-raising event in Netley Abbey. Incredibly, we have emerged with far more subscribing members and 70 more members of the 100 Club, which we take to be a vote of confidence. We thank Bursledon Hall for free use of their facilities for our small meetings, and organisations which have given us grants, as listed in the Accounts. We are especially grateful to AGE UK and Debbie Beale, their Engagement Officer, who proved to be a very present help in trouble. Special thanks are due to Patience Sambrook, who is stepping down as ESPOPF's Chair after two years. During this time, for ESPOPF, she took on with enthusiasm the establishment of the Hamble Valley branch of the University of the Third Age and the Hampshire Association of Older People's Forums, charring both with some distinction. We also thank Michelle our volunteer driver and all members, especially our Committee members, who take on necessary jobs for the benefit of all.

11 CONCLUSIONS

This is a time of great uncertainty for older people and the future is not bright. ESPOPF is doing its best to raise concerns and join with others in speaking up for older and disabled people. At the same time, it is important that we realise how much we are able to achieve for ourselves and for each other in order to keep our independence. Being sociable and active, mentally and physically, will ward off illness and afford a happier life. This year has demonstrated for ESPOPF that older people, together, can survive and live to fight another day.

Diane Andrewes Hon . Secretary

HON. TREASURER'S REPORT 2010-2011

For two years, ESPOPF's reserve had been shrinking slowly and after the 2010 AGM we found ourselves in debt. ESPOPF's main expense is the printing and postage of its Newsletter, now amounting to £6,435 a year. Until 2009, this cost was largely offset by grants from local government and national and local charities. We know we cannot rely on these in future. We sought to control the escalating cost of postage by franking our mail and by sending out the Newsletter by email where possible. This produced some savings, but not enough. An appeal was made to the membership for donations and the response has been overwhelming, as the accounts demonstrate, the members donating nearly £3,000. A special "thank you" is extended to our many other donors: AGE UK for giving us the opportunity to provide services, Brook House Masonic Lodge, Bonhomie United Charities, Radio Solent Community Fund and 5 Parish Councils. Thus, we are entering the new financial year with our customary reserve of £5,500 restored and a stern resolve to make ESPOPF's Newsletter a sustainable expense.

Notes to the 2010-2011 Annual Accounts (overleaf)

- 1 An appeal to the membership because of ESPOPF's low cash reserve brought in £2,872.70 .
- 2 A second section of the 100 Club was started because the first was over-subscribed.
- 3 The item "*Insurance*" in last year's accounts included the cost of the franking machine.
4. The postage costs of the newsletter are shown as £6,435.46, as usual. Postage for the previous year was paid in advance to avoid the increase in postage rates.
5. The cost of "*In the Dark*" was £5,124.08 and paid for in this financial year. However, a grant of £2,963 to offset part of this cost appears under "Research Receipts" in the previous year's accounts.
- 6 Fixed assets: franking machine, laptop, projector, microphones, dictaphone, flip-chart.

Betty Lawrence Hon. Treasurer