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EASTLEIGH SOUTHERN PARISHES OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUM

NEWSLETTER 51
November 2009

STANDARDS BOARD OF ENGLAND

Case no. SBE05679
Member: Councillor Keith House
Authority: Eastleigh Borough Council
Date received: 29 Apr 2009
Date completed: 04 Sep 2009

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Allegation: The member failed to treat others with respect.

Standards Board outcome: The ethical standards officer found that the member did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct.

The complainant, a member of the public, alleged that Councillor Keith House failed to treat her with respect by referring to her as 'dishonest' at a meeting of Eastleigh Borough Council held on 23 February 2009.

The purpose of the meeting was to debate the council's budget proposals for the 2009–2010 financial year. During the section of the meeting where members of the public were able to address the council, the complainant spoke on behalf of an independent group of older people who were against the ending of the council's travel token scheme.

The complainant remained in the meeting until the end of the budget debate where Councillor House, the last speaker, replied to issues that were raised during the discussion, including that of the travel tokens. The complainant alleged that during this reply, Councillor House called the complainant 'dishonest'.

Councillor House denied treating the complainant with disrespect, but accepted that he had used the words 'dishonest' and 'misleading' in his reply. He said these words were aimed at the factual content of the complainant's speech, rather than being an

attack on the complainant's character.

The ethical standards officer took into account evidence from council members and officers and members of the public who were at the meeting. Several witnesses recalled Councillor House's speech as measured in its delivery and did not consider that he personally attacked the complainant. A number of witnesses recalled Councillor House using the word 'dishonest' in relation to the complainant. Others interpreted this as referring to the complainant's speech and not the complainant personally.

The ethical standards officer considered that Councillor House's use of the word 'dishonest' verged on being a personal attack on the complainant's integrity. However, in weighing up the various accounts of what was said, he also gave weight to the context of Councillor House's speech, and concluded that Councillor House's use of the words 'dishonest' and 'mislead' referred to the content of the complainant's speech rather than the complainant herself.

The ethical standards officer therefore considered that Councillor House did not fail to treat the complainant with respect and therefore found that he had not failed to comply with the Code.

Relevant paragraph of the Code of Conduct

The allegation in this case relates to paragraph 3(1) of the Code of Conduct. Paragraph 3(1) states that members

"must treat others with respect".

"While most examples of ageism are based on thoughtlessness and misplaced assumptions, rather than being the product of avowed prejudice, this means that many individuals do not recognise their behaviour as discriminatory."

NHS Investigation into Institutional Ageism 2009

ESPOPF COMMITTEE 2009/10

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2009/10 RESEARCH

Our team of 12 researchers invites **YOU** to help us in our new research into **INFORMATION** by completing the questionnaire which has come with your Newsletter. Last time, with "Pills and Perils", we had a record 915 responses and, this time, we hope for more. You will be amazed to hear that we are one of a very select group of older people, who do their own research *without the involvement of professional researchers*. As such, we are attracting huge interest. We have presented our research in London, Brighton and Bristol this year and, already, we have been invited to Ireland next April to lead a seminar in Galway.

We have an enormous advantage over academic researchers: we know our subject, the problems faced by older people; we know the questions to ask; we use a large sample of older people, who trust us to get it right; we aim to use our research to set the world to rights for older people. This is not some academic exercise! Small wonder that anyone really interested in providing a better deal for older people, like the Government and Help the Aged, takes note of our findings and incorporates our research in their policies.

We are still waiting for Eastleigh Borough Council to publish its Older People's Housing Strategy 2009-12, to which we contributed our research, "Bleak Housing", in 2007. Will Christmas will come early this year?

The Government has announced its intention to phase out parking charges at hospitals for inpatients' visitors? We drew attention to hospital parking problems with our first piece of research, "Sic transit...". How much did that and our research, "Missing the Bus", contribute to the Free Bus Pass and the current Government Consultation about Taxi Travel for Disabled People?

There is no doubt that policy makers will not get services right for older people, unless older people tell them what we need.

Research is our opportunity to provide the evidence that they need to start the process. For this, **we need your help, please**.

SEPTEMBER OPEN MEETING

78 people signed the attendance book for our Community Information Fair. Over 27 organisations staffed stalls and 19 speakers surprised us in the afternoon about the many and varied activities that are going on in the southern parishes and invited us to join in. We thank them all for their contribution. The raffle raised £70. Thanks to all who brought prizes and bought tickets. We enjoyed the hospitality of the Hilldene Centre and saw many new faces. Diane Rodaway led her usual exercises and we were very grateful to Brian, the caretaker, who arranged the furniture for our sessions. Hilldene needs a dishwasher!

SEPTEMBER 100 CLUB WINNERS

£50 Moira Neve (41) Hamble

£25 Iris Millard (4) Netley Abbey

£25 Mary Blake (58) West End

BHH AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

A presentation was made to West End Parish Council and the residents who were involved in the West End Parish Plan on October 15. Another one was given to Bursledon Parish Council on October 28. More will follow. We intend to form village teams from within our membership to map our communities and prepare check lists for action.

HELP WITH LOFT CLEARANCE

EBC is offering free help and advice for older people over 70 and receiving certain benefits to move possessions from their attics prior to putting in loft insulation. The purpose is to help people to make their homes cosier and more energy efficient for the coming winter. To find out more, contact Jane Altounyan, EBC Home Energy Conservation Officer on **02380 688274**

NOTICE BOARD

TESTWAY SUPPORT

Testway Homes have won a contract from HCC to provide support to over-60's in Eastleigh Borough to enable them to live safely and independently. This includes help with money matters, taking down curtains, writing letters, changing light bulbs, bringing in cleaners and personal care etc. Those receiving benefits, such as council tax and housing benefit and pension credit, will get a free service. Contact Sally on **0800 694 0303** for more details. She will be attending the next Open Meeting to answer questions.

PREPAYMENT METERS

Alan Whitehead, M.P. for Southampton Test, is backing a new Bill, which would make it unlawful for energy companies to charge their poorest customers extra for using prepayment meters. The Equalization of Tariffs for Gas and Electricity Bill has been formally presented to the House of Commons and could become law if it is selected in a ballot, as the proposal is likely to gain widespread support. Mr Whitehead has also been working on the final stages of the Marine and Coastal Access Bill, to provide protection for the marine habitat and to establish a right of public access to the whole coast line.

GERMANY'S GREY VOTE

There are now 20 million pensioners in Germany and every third voter is over 60. This has had a considerable effect on the recent, general election. Pensions, social services and health have dominated the agenda and politicians have been canvassing in allotments,

retirement homes and spas. Legislation has been rushed through to guarantee pension levels, even if wages drop. Older people feel they are finally being listened to!

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

- 1 If you go out, make sure someone knows where you are going and when you expect to be back home.
- 2 Take a mobile phone, but take care where you use it.
- 3 If you take the car, try to park in a well-lit area and reverse into your parking place for a quick getaway on your return. Make sure you know exactly where you have put the car!
- 4 If you are going to use a taxi, make sure that it comes from a reliable firm.
- 5 If you are walking, keep to main roads as far as possible, and don't talk to strangers.
- 6 Report any street lights, hedges, potholes, bus shelters that need attention.

WEST END GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Needs volunteers to offer help to older people in West End: walking the dog, changing the library book, the odd bit of shopping, a lift to the surgery etc. Please tel. **02380 403311**

"HAMPSHIRE NOW"

HCC produces a special issue of this magazine as part of the Older People's Wellbeing Initiative. It contains useful information and goes through the doors of many older Hampshire residents. If you would like a free copy, contact Jane Fowler on **0845 603 5638**

EASTLEIGH PASSENGER TRANSPORT FORUM

The first meeting is on Monday

November 23 10am – 12.30pm at the Underhill Centre in Hedge End. If you have general issues you would like to have raised, contact your representative, Chair, Patience Sambrook on **01489 782552** or visit

www.hants.gov.uk/passengertransport

PENSION CREDIT

From November, the capital disregard will be £10,000. To check entitlement and make a claim, call the Pension Service on **0800 991234** or HISP on **02380 902467**

FIRST-STOP ADVICE

This is an independent, free service for older people, their families and carers. It covers care and support, housing, finance, your rights.

Tel. **0800 377 7070** or visit www.firststopadvice.org.uk

COUNCIL TAX

Devon Pensioners are supporting FACT (Forums Against Council Tax). They report that older people are paying on average £21 a week - twice as much as they were in 1996. (*Institute of Fiscal Studies* 2009)

'IMPROVING ACCESS TO TAXIS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE'

HCC, in response to this Government consultation, has supported an amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act, which would improve access financially for disabled users (*like travel tokens?* -Ed.).

YOU WRITE...

Dear Editor

I hope to be able to come to the November meeting. I enclose my subscription and 100 Club membership fee. I am so pleased that you are using the Hilldene Centre, as I go to the Methodist Church services there and the staff are most helpful. Please note that Cancer Backup amalgamated with Macmillan Cancer in 2007 and it is still possible to get their leaflets. Tel. 020 7840 8900

Joan Cavinder West End

Dear Editor

I enclose a cheque to cover my subscription and a donation towards the expenses of the Newsletter production. I have not been able to attend many meetings due to other commitments with the W.I. and Hamble Valley U3A, but those I have attended I have enjoyed. I keep in close touch with Patience and Jean (Huggett) and so am well aware of all the sterling work you accomplish.

Wendy Basson Botley

Dear Editor

Please accept cheques for my subscription and the 100 Club. I have difficulty in getting to your meetings, but I think you are doing an excellent job for the older community. Power to your collective elbows.

V. Hugo Hedge End

Dear Editor

It has come to the attention of HCC Trading Standards that a company offering mobility equipment has been operating in Bishopstoke and West End. They target elderly and vulnerable members of the public in their own homes. They telephone or knock on door giving the impression that they are connected with the Health

Authority or associated services. A free shoulder massage is offered and, if interest is shown, a salesman visits later and gives a demonstration of a massaging device in a mattress. He will try to sell this for £1500 - £4000. If you are approached, please contact Trading Standards' Quick Response Team on **0196 833666**.

Guy Smales Community Projects Team HCC Trading Standards

Dear Editor

Eastleigh Borough Council is able to offer residents a very low-interest home loan (typical APR 5.1%) for essential home improvements, energy efficient works, solar panels for hot water or electricity, or air and ground source heat pumps. Residents over 60 may have an interest-only loan, which can be repaid when the property is sold. Loans may be used to adapt the home to meet the special needs of disabled residents or to help re-locate to a more suitable property. Contact Nick Webb of South Coast Money Line or Rob Giles and Matt Blythe from Environmental Health.

*Jame Altounyan EBC
Tel 023 8068 8274*

Dear Editor

Is ESPOPF able to give its support to Friends of the Itchen Valley Country Park in their campaign against the introduction of GO APE, a high wire, tree-top activity in the small woodlands adjacent to the river and running into the first field? We need offers to display a placard, to write to the *Echo*, and to support our walk in the park with Chris Packham, when the planning

application goes in.

Margaret Raff Fair Oak

Dear Editor

In case you are planning to repeat their figures, I draw your attention to the following information from the Audit Commission:

"The performance measure on older people in "Don't Stop Me Now" only looked at Single Tier and County Councils...Eastleigh would have been assessed under Hampshire, which was in the 31% of councils who were best preparing..."

Diccon Bright EBC

("Don't Stop Me Now" also states that a high score is not a guarantee of good performance on the older people agenda...20% of 3 & 4 star councils have the most improvements to make". We wonder what Eastleigh's score would have been if calculated alone - Ed.)

Dear Editor

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to the Community Information Day, which I thought was very successful, not least for the following two personal reasons. Firstly, quite a few people picked up my leaflet, 'Computer Skills for Life' and one person enrolled on my 'Developing Confidence with Computers' course at Botley. Secondly, I made several new contacts, one of whom will do a workshop/talk, 'Understanding Dementia'. I thought the day gave the opportunity to hear about just what is available to help us to enjoy living, and an opportunity to socialise. I hope you will organise another event like this. One final note - that chocolate cake was just scrumptious!

*Marion Holmes Hedge End
Living Learning*

(Letters may be edited -Ed.)

