



MERIDIAN MATURE CITIZENS FORUM

Chair's Report

By Kate Davies.

This has been another busy year for the Forum. We are becoming increasingly more involved with consultations on health and social care issues. Last year if you remember Keith Hinkley (Director of Adult Social Care) found changes had taken place between the month's gap of the cancelled AGM in December and the new date in January.

Things have calmed down a bit but I personally find it a bit disconcerting when proposals are put forward and then scrapped – does this mean someone is actually listening to us or is it that they do not know what they are doing? Changes to the NHS are taking place at the same time as the Bill is still being debated in Parliament.

We are fortunate in that through ESSA (East Sussex Seniors Association) we invite speakers who can explain legislation to us and give us the opportunity to ask questions and clarify points. Although even they admit that it is a confusing picture.

Consultation. We have been consulted on changes to the Blue Badge – which I am not totally happy about. The rules are not changing as such but are being more strictly adhered to – for some time now people have successfully applied for a Blue Badge when they are not actually eligible. Now older people who have

had a knee or hip operations no longer qualify.

We have listened to Fuel Poverty presentations where we have argued that insulating the loft and walls is OK but of much more concern is the increasing inability to keep pace with the rising cost of gas and electricity. We asked that instead of the government handing out grants could they not tackle this.

Letter to E.ON sent to your behalf - after receiving an 8-page electricity bill from E.ON I wrote asking them to explain why this was so. I also wanted to know why there was no reference to the AGEUK discount (the only reason why I had become a customer). I was told that I didn't qualify as I only had electricity and I would be better off on another tariff.

The term dual-fuel is now more widely used. There is also a social tariff for those in real financial difficulties.

I was told that we should all keep in contact with our fuel suppliers and to make sure we are getting the best deal. It is not their policy to supply this information and no there was no back-dated rebate for me.

OOPS – For some time we have been concerned about the speed at which some mobility scooters use the pavements and pedestrian walkways. A number of incidents have been reported to us about people having to

walk into busy roads to make way for scooters.

I have been in contact with Norman Baker who is now minister for transport. He is aware of the situation and a report, completed in June should be available soon. I think this report has more to do with scooters on the road and not on the pavements. I think I will need to go back to the ESSA Transport Group and start again.

National Express Coach Subsidy Cut – Protest letters were sent by ESSA about this but my personal feeling was that the coach companies could offer special deals for the 60+ (which they have done) as they would not like to lose our custom.

Pensions – well, don't hold your breath! It is such a confused picture that none of us will know if we are any better off until the first payments go into the bank after April.

ACTIVITIES

OLDER PEOPLE'S DAY - was celebrated all over East Sussex with many free activities taking place.

FALLS PREVENTION WEEK
We held our own exercise session during Falls Prevention Week where we also had a go on the Green Gym on Fort Rd Recreation Ground.

HANDYMAN GRANT SCHEME
We were delighted to see that the Handyman Grant Scheme was continuing as we feel that ESCC gets better value for money with simple, straight forward grants like this.

The Sunday Lunch Club has at last started at the Newhaven Day Club.

A lunch, dessert and coffee (£5.50) is served at 12.30. The club is open to all, but you must book by 12.00 on Fridays, so we know how many to cook for.

Bookings can be added to the list at the Day Centre or phone Kate on 516207

We are also looking for volunteer drivers - *who will be offered a free lunch!*



NCDAs new **Haven's Community Information Hub** will be opening with an Open Day Launch 12 April at 31a High Street, Newhaven.

We can help to get you the right information & advice, signpost you to the right help and refer you to a wide range of services provided by NCDAs, Citizens Advice Bureau, Credit Union, Age UK, and many more. Pop in and see us for information or just to say hello!



The computer Group continues to flourish and is open to all during the first week of the month here at the Hillcrest Centre. Our website gives more information about free activities, news from ESCC and what is happening in the Meridian area.

Events for your diary

A Falls Awareness Event will be held at Shakespeare Hall on **Tuesday 19th June from 10.00 – 12.30**

Jenny Cote will be running an Extend (chair based) exercise session. Debbie Evans and Ellen Cranton will be talking about healthy exercise, healthy eating and general well-being, so will finish this FREE event with a taster session on healthy eating – looking at what is good and what has to be eaten in moderation.

Weather permitting we have asked a trainer from Wave Leisure to be at the Green Gym to provide a short exercise programme and if anyone would like to walk up Castle Hill we can arrange that.



Reminders of this event will be sent out nearer the time together with a summer programme of local events.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

This is your opportunity to let us know YOUR views. Tell us what YOU want from the Meridian Mature Citizens Forum and what would make YOUR life better living in the Meridian area.

Contact us: info@meridian-sf.org.uk
or PO Box 161, Newhaven, BN9 1AN

We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information on the MMCF visit our website:

THE FORUM COMMITTEE

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SECRETARY

Hillary Ryan

TREASURER

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Membership is free

so contact Bill on

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with your address details