

Sevenoaks District
Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Email: comms@sdsaf.org.uk

Newsletter 36

April 2019

AGM NOTICE

The Committee of SDSAF formally gives notice that the AGM will take place this year on Friday, 31st May at 2 p.m.

Sevenoaks District Council Offices,
Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG

All members of SDSAF are cordially invited to join us at this year's AGM. Since last May, Committee members have been doing their utmost to ensure that the views of Seniors are heard and we hope that we have done this to good effect on a wide range of topics.

It would be great if you could join us on 31st May not only to hear what our invited speakers have to say about local transport and the One You health initiative, but also to tell us what issues you think should be on our agenda in the coming year.

We are pleased that Engaging Kent has renewed their grant to us for 2019/20, for which we are grateful. The grant will be put to good use and we will continue to build our relationship with Engaging Kent and KCC whilst remaining strongly independent.

The AGM provides the opportunity for all members to put themselves forward to join the Committee so if you are interested in helping to make life better for Seniors in Sevenoaks District, please let us know. There are many ways in which you can use your talents.

Do come and join us on 31st May. We will be providing a light buffet so, to help us cater, please confirm your attendance either by email to comms@sdsaf.org.uk or by phoning Roger Bryan on 07470 201703. Copies of the agenda are available on request and on our website. We look forward to welcoming you

Eileen Murray Giles

Chair

EVENTS – DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SEVENOAKS TOWN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL WELLBEING SHOW

The Sevenoaks Town Partnership annual Wellbeing Show returns to the Stag Plaza on **Friday 17th May from 10 am – 2 pm**. The show will include the following events:

10:15–11:00 – **Fine Styling Event** with Fleur McCrone, discussion and examples of colours and clothes that suit your body shape and skin tone. Free entry.

11:15–11:45 – **Hair & Make-up Master Class** by The Peacock Rooms. Free entry.

12:00–13:15 – **Handtied bouquet Master Class** by Johnny's Little Sister Florist. There is a £30 charge for this event to cover cost of all materials. To book your place on this course, please email admin.tp@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Rockdale Housing Open Day:

This will be held on **10th June 2019, from 1.30pm – 4.30pm** when Group tours will be offered to see some of the apartments and care home.

Full information will be available nearer the date. The Rockdale website is: <https://www.rockdale.org.uk/events/>

Come Dancing – Come and ViBe!

Why not have fun trying something new at a free taster class of ViBe Dancing on **Monday, 1 July 2 – 4pm** in the Alexandra Suite, Saint Mary's Road, Swanley BR8 7BU

The event has been designed for seniors and both singles and couples will be welcome. There will be 'taxi dancers' moving around the room to help. All abilities are welcome so do come and have a go even if you feel you have two left feet.

SDSAF will be providing tea coffee and maybe a piece of cake. The class is free but, for safety reasons, the doorkeepers will only admit you if they have your name in advance.

To book your places, please contact Rosemary Ellison by phone or text – 07876 484004 or email: rosemary.ellison@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk.

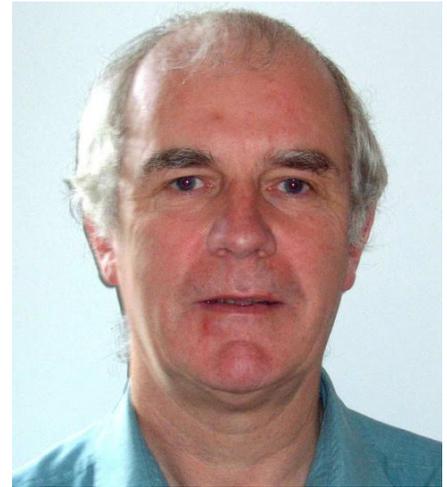
This is part of the Royal Voluntary Service's 'First Time for Everything' project to encourage people to try something they haven't done before at a social event, and which is being funded by Prudential. We are delighted that we have been invited to join in.



(Please note this event is instead of the Tea Dance that was going to happen at the Stag on 20 June).

VOTE OF THANKS TO STEVE PLATER

Many of our members may have met and even been recruited by Steve who has now taken up residence in pastures new 'north of the border'. Steve was involved in the formation of the Forum from the outset in 2010 and his main project was to encourage deployment of public access defibrillators, in which venture Geoff Parsons aided, and resulted in a Big Lottery Fund grant of £9,450 which paid for defibrillators for the 7 parishes with the largest population of over 50s: Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge, Kemsing, Hartley, New Ash Green and Westerham. Steve also gave demonstrations of CPR and defibrillators around the District to show people how to respond in case of emergency.



Steve also designed a membership survey the feedback from which provided useful information to the Committee in confirming priorities, and helped in our collaboration with the District Council. Steve was a cheerful, visible presence at local fairs and fetes which enabled SDSAF, through his professional and persuasive manner, to quickly build up membership, explaining to people face to face what SDSAF was about and encouraging them to join.

BENEFITS

While it may be a boring topic for some we hear stories from Age UK and other organisations that very many people entitled to benefits do not claim them and it is very easy to miss announcements in news bulletins or on the T.V. which is why we are highlighting the following in this edition of the Newsletter:

PENSION CREDIT CHANGES: URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

Pensioners who live together as a couple will in future only be able to make a new claim for Pension Credit when BOTH partners are over the state pension age, under new rules set to come into effect in May, so if you are eligible to claim do it as soon as possible to avoid missing out. Currently someone over 65 living in a couple can claim pension credit regardless of their partner's age, but from **15 May 2019**, those in couples will only be able to begin claiming if BOTH partners are over 65. If you don't already claim, are over 65 or will be before 14 May, have a younger partner and meet the income criteria make sure you apply as soon as possible. *The good news is if you already claim pension credit and your partner hasn't reached the state pension age, you won't be affected by the change and will carry on receiving it for as long as you're eligible.*

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT FOR PEOPLE WITH A SEVERE MENTAL IMPAIRMENT

There is a Council Tax exemption for people diagnosed with a severe mental impairment (SMI) who do not have to pay the tax, and in a two-person household, where one person has that diagnosis, they would qualify for a 25% discount. SMI could include people with dementia and those who have had a stroke. If you think you may be eligible for this discount do investigate it or ask Citizens Advice or Age UK for more guidance.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PERSONAL INDEPENDENT PAYMENT REVIEWS FOR PENSIONERS

We are pleased at the news announced by the Work & Pensions Secretary recently that disabled pensioners will no longer face "unnecessary" repeat assessments to continue receiving benefits. From this spring, 270,000 people in Britain will not have personal independence payments (PIPs) regularly reviewed. Pensioners will only face checks every 10 years and may be able to fill in a form rather than seeing an assessor in person under the new system.

NOTEWORTHY PRAISE

- ❖ **Douglas Cracknell** for his determination to keep the community safe in the vicinity of the Otford Pickmoss Step
- ❖ **Ophthalmology at Pembury Hospital** which provided an efficient & caring cataract service
- ❖ **Sir Michael Fallon** who missed his lunch to meet with members of SDSAF on 29th March
- ❖ **Amherst Medical Practice, Sevenoaks**, for providing a timely and efficient GP consultation
- ❖ **Audiology at Pembury Hospital** for providing a thorough hearing test review with empathy and efficiency

VERONICA MCGANNON

We are delighted that Veronica McGannon was given the Older Person's award at this year's 'Making it Happen' Community Awards ceremony. Veronica, from Hartley, has a knack of knowing what people in her local community need and then sets about influencing the relevant policy makers and community workers to achieve it. She has put her energy behind the Wednesday coffee morning at Wellfield community hall, the innovative inter-generational memory cafe at Hartley, held monthly, the Hartley Carers Support Group and various fundraising projects including the 'Little Buds' baby unit at Darent Valley Hospital and the 'Peppercorns' project for people with learning difficulties in Dartford.



Veronica used to be a tenant representative for West Kent Housing and has been involved with making representations to improve transport in the north of the District.

It is good news that Veronica has offered to be more closely involved with SDSAF and we welcome her warmly.

MEETING WITH SIR MICHAEL FALLON MP.

Whilst remaining politically neutral, we meet with our politicians to air our members' concerns, to raise awareness of seniors' issues, to listen and to learn.

Five members of the committee met with Sir Michael Fallon on 29 March – Brexit Day. Our meeting with Sir Michael was very wide-ranging covering health, housing, local transport, loneliness and social isolation, the increasing employment of seniors and combatting ageism.

Sir Michael listened attentively to our issues, encouraged us to keep on responding to all local consultations and urged SDSAF to give input at the pre-

consultation stage at both District and County level. He acknowledged the huge contribution our Seniors make through their voluntary work in the District.

He gave us information about Government spending reviews and was hopeful that the new medical school due to open in Canterbury in September 2020 would eventually be good news for our GP supply.

He is working to have the Oyster card accepted as far out as Sevenoaks which would bring travel benefits to the area.

We gave Sir Michael a portfolio of the reports we have produced this year (all available on our website) and will do the same when we meet with Tom Tugendhat MP later in April.

If any members would like to contribute to these meetings to help make life better for Seniors in our District, please email chair@sdsaf.org.uk or call 07775 568834.

HEALTH MATTERS: CHAIR'S VISIT TO EDENBRIDGE HOSPITAL

A recent visit to Edenbridge War Memorial Hospital highlighted some uncomfortable truths for our Seniors. Built to honour local residents who died for our country the hospital, a piece of our heritage, is no longer fit for purpose and will be sold. We have written to Tom Tugendhat, the MP for Edenbridge, supporting his campaign to keep the proceeds of the hospital within the local community as the original benefactors intended. There is a risk that the funds disappear into NHS coffers.



The hospital services will be merged into a nearby new medical hub and 14 inpatient beds will disappear. These beds are normally occupied by our seniors aged 75+ from Edenbridge and the surrounding areas. During the course of a year several hundred elderly patients use those beds to help them get over difficult times. What will happen to those patients? Where will they go? There's talk of a few 'community beds' but we are not aware of any clear plan for caring for these vulnerable people.

The situation is all the more concerning because we know that transport to medical services is a huge issue for Seniors and anyone trying to support them, especially in rural areas. Even if we have a car, driving gets more difficult if we are old and unwell and finding a hospital car parking space can test the patience of a saint. We have written to the Deputy Managing Director of the CCG asking for assurances that there will be a transport plan alongside all plans for medical services. To date we have had no reply.

We would welcome your thoughts on how, without standing in the way of progress, we can influence our policy makers to give more consideration to the needs of the elderly and the vulnerable in our district. Please write and let us know either by email to chair@sdsaf.org.uk or by post to Roger Bryan at 10 Greenside, Swanley BR8 7ER.

HEALTH SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

Urgent Care Services, Dartford Gravesham & Swanley: The future of Urgent Care Services for members living in the Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley Clinical Commissioning Group area was informally consulted upon in February and March, when residents were asked to submit their preference regarding the location of Urgent Care and GP Out of Hours Services. The outcome of the views of residents is awaited and will probably go to formal consultation later in the year.

Stroke Services: The Joint Commissioning Board for Stroke Services agreed to the establishment of three Hyper Acute Stroke Units (HASUs) which it says will improve the outcomes for stroke patients across Kent. The HASUs will be based at Darent Valley, Maidstone and the William Harvey hospitals. The first two of these are due to come on stream next year, 2020. Enhanced rehabilitation services are intended to accompany the HASUs together with a travel plan. The Forum have written to West Kent CCG to ask what the plans are for ensuring the provision of public transport to Maidstone and Darent Valley hospitals once the HASUs are in operation but to date have received no response.

Access to GP services was highlighted by the media in February, showing that some patients were having to wait an unacceptably long time to see a GP. Healthwatch Kent are always ready to hear feedback from patients so that they can gain an accurate picture of the situation, so please do let them know your experiences, good or bad, either by Freephone on 0808 801 0102 or by email to: info@healthwatchkent.co.uk

Waste Medicines: On visiting the Doctors recently there was a large bin for medicines which were no longer needed to be safely disposed of. A notice on the bin stated that it had been emptied 6 times! The amount of money spent on unneeded and wasted medications is enormous, so please, if you no longer take one of the medications on your repeat prescription let your GP know so that they can amend it and stop dispensing the medicines you no longer need.

Self-Care: Trying to keep healthy and active can be challenging. Many of our members have both benefitted and enjoyed attending the Pop Ins provided by Age UK and it is quite surprising how a little gentle, regular exercise can help with stability and mobility. Sue Larken provides a warm welcome to everyone attending the Pop Ins and is happy to answer queries and if necessary signpost people to other Age UK services and agencies which can provide support.

TRANSPORT

CHANGES TO BUS SERVICES IN THE SEVENOAKS AREA

Arriva Bus Services 1 & 2 which were introduced in April 2018 will be **discontinued from April 7th 2019**. Arriva state that “this is in response to insufficient numbers of people using them”. However, we are pleased to let you know that a new service, the No. 6 bus, will run from Kemsing to Sevenoaks via Seal and will operate twice an hour with effect from **April 8th 2019** operated by “GO-Coach”.

In addition, the route of “GO-Coach” service 401 is being amended to include boarding points in Chipstead, Dunton Green and Ryewood to offer a service to passengers who currently use Route 1. The route of the Sevenoaks Circular No. 8 bus has now been extended to cover Sainsbury’s, Aldi and other shops in Riverside Retail Park. This means there will be bus links between the rail stations, the bus station, Sevenoaks Hospital and all supermarkets in Sevenoaks.

In an ideal world the No. 8 circular would run both clockwise and anticlockwise and more frequently, but this will only happen if there is an increase in passenger numbers to make it financially viable. If more visionary, longer term and joined up planning was considered it could form the basis of a bus feeder network as outlined in KCC's Big Conversation.

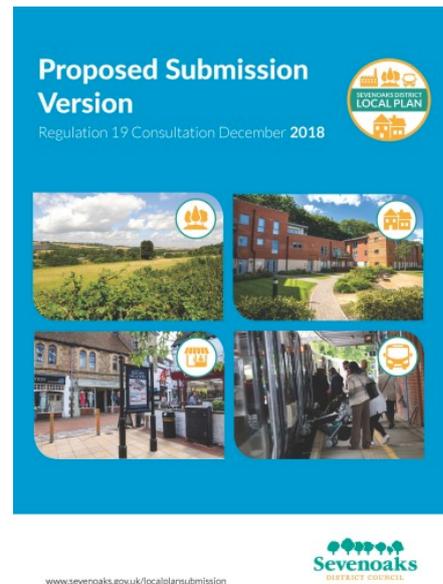
HOUSING

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2015-35 – LATEST

SDSAF Committee's submission to the Local Plan can be found on SDC's website: <http://planningconsult.sevenoaks.gov.uk/consult.ti/PRESUBLP/listresponses> on page 147 under comment ID 2807.

The Council received a total of 3,563 objections and comments in response to the Regulation 19 submission which will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate in May. We have been reassured that our submission will be put before the Inspectorate, together with comments from SDC's Planning Policy team.

We have reservations as to how much time can be devoted to each of the 3000+ responses but can only hope that ours will be given proper and due consideration and following correspondence with SDC have been given assurances that our submission will be forwarded in its entirety. A public presentation on the outcome of the consultation will take place in the Autumn.



ABOVE INFLATION COST INCREASES . . .

Death, Marriage & Birth Certificates: Charges for these have risen well above inflation and trebled in price. They will now cost £11 each which could prove costly as financial and other institutions require to see an original certificate rather than a photocopy. It should however be noted that Registration Officers do have power to waive or reduce fees on the grounds of compassion or hardship which should be borne in mind, especially at a time when many people will be experiencing difficult and changed circumstances.

Royal Mail stamps: The cost of a 1st class stamp has risen 3p and now costs 70p and a 2nd class stamp now costs 61p.

KCC Council Tax: KCC have approved a 4.99% Council Tax increase to help balance the 2019/20 budget. This equates to approximately £1.18 extra per week for a band D household. The 4.99% is made up of 2 parts:

- 2.99% general increase, which is below the 3% threshold which would require us to hold a referendum
- a further 2% for the 'adult social care precept'. This is the additional money councils raise from Council Tax in order to help pay for adult social care services. This amount can only be used as part of a council's adult social care budget.

Probate:

Probate is the process of dealing with the estate of someone who has died, which generally means clearing their debts and distributing their assets in accordance with their will. Substantial changes to probate fees are currently being considered but have not yet taken effect. When any changes are confirmed we will post these on our website and also publicise them in our next Newsletter.

FINANCE SEMINAR

SDSAF hope to hold a seminar on Finances and Estate Planning later in the year. This will be hosted by a retired bank manager who has had many years of experience helping mature customers. *Please let us know if you would be interested in attending this seminar so that we can gauge interest and plan accordingly.*

SECURITY & SCAMS

Since our last Newsletter two particular 'scams' have been highlighted nationally and in case you missed these:

TV Licensing Fraud

In our last issue we highlighted the distress which has been caused by the fraudulent actions around the renewal of the TV licence. Please be on your guard and ignore any emails or calls regarding the renewal of your licence.

Fraudulent calls posing as HMRC officials: There have been recent reports that fraudsters in India have been posing as UK tax officials in an attempt to steal millions of pounds. The victims are being told that they owe tax and face arrest if they do not pay up instantly. *Please report these callers if you are approached!*

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP SDSAF BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE

If you would like to dedicate a little of your time and talent to help us achieve our aim to make a difference to older people's lives please let us know. We particularly need help in three areas:

- Scrutinising and commenting on the plans and proposals of the Council, healthcare providers and other services to ensure that the needs of the older generation are not overlooked.
- Public Relations: A good communicator who could enhance our public relations
- Assistant Membership Secretary with good Excel and Word computer skills

To discuss this in more detail please either email comms@sdsaf.org.uk or phone Roger Bryan on 07470 201703

SDSAF Committee Contacts

Chair	Eileen Murray Giles	Chair@sdsaf.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Roger Bryan	roger.bryan@me.com

Write to us c/o Roger Bryan, 10 Greenside, Swanley, BR8 7ER

SDSAF Website: www.sdsaf.org.uk

By the way . . . The newsletter is available in large print; please let us know if you would prefer to receive a large print version.