

Sevenoaks District
Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Email: comms@sdsaf.org.uk

Chair's Message

June 2020

Being lucky enough to go out walking daily, I have discovered many beauty spots nearby that before Lockdown were unknown to me. Today I admired the clear blue skies and the birds singing with their new air of confidence. I couldn't help counting some of the many blessings that this new situation has brought - a wonderful sense of community in our streets, a new empathy for the lonely, time to learn new skills, Zoom on-line video meetings with family and friends and a huge unleashing of creativity as we all adapt to a new norm. I for one risk keeling over with pleasure trying multiple new chocolate recipes. Do tell us about your Lockdown blessings. We'd love to know.

This is not to underestimate the very real difficulties and sadness that many of us have experienced in recent times and our hearts are with you. It is important to be gentle with ourselves as we come to terms with the fear, shock and emotions that have destabilised us. Do use the many Helplines that are available and please give absolute priority to getting any medical or other help that you need. Our self-care has never been more important and we have also included some self-care guidance with this Newsletter which we hope will be helpful.

One issue that concerns us deeply is the large number of seniors who are not connected to a computer or smart phone. Our modern society seems to assume that we are all connected to the internet so if we don't get digital we are left behind. We have written to our three MPs to ask for their leadership with this issue and we are finding out about various schemes designed to help. Please tell us if you would like some support to get on line and we will do our best to point you in the right direction. There may also be some limited funding.

Meanwhile, stay safe and strong, keep active and let's remember that, although every day may not be good, we can make it better by doing something good.

Eileen Murray Giles
Chair

Formal Notice of Virtual Annual General Meeting – 11 a.m 24 July 2020

We will be holding our 2020 Annual General Meeting on line this year due to the unpredictable situation regarding social distancing and gatherings. The Annual General Meeting will therefore take place via the Zoom video conferencing method on Friday, 24 July at 11 a.m. and all members are invited to participate. We will carry out the formal business required by our Constitution, namely reviewing the 2019/20 accounts and minutes of the last Annual General Meeting and elect Officers and Committee members for 2020/21.

The Constitution calls for all Officers and Committee members to step down each year. All members can nominate themselves or make nominations for the posts of Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. If there is more than one nomination for any post an election will take place. **For security purposes please let us know, preferably by return email, if you will be attending the meeting via Zoom and we will send you an invitation nearer the date.**

Members who are unable to make that date and members who do not have access to the internet but wish to stand for election or make a nomination are invited to telephone the Forum Secretary on 07707 757201 who will ensure your wishes are recorded and actioned.



NHS Test & Trace

Test and Trace was introduced on 1st June. Now anyone who is identified as having been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Coronavirus will be traced and contacted by the NHS. The close contact must then isolate for 14 days, even if they have no symptoms. If the close contact develops symptoms they will be asked to get tested for the virus. Applications for a test can be made via the internet or by phoning 119. It is hoped that this will avoid unknowingly spreading the disease to others.

More information about Test and Trace can be found on this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

Please be aware that scammers have already seized on the opportunity to pose as officials and gain people's personal data. If you get a text, call or email please double check that it is genuine.

Keeping Calm and Carrying On

While some of the lockdown rules have been eased we can all help control the virus if we all stay alert. This means we must still:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance if you go out (2 metres apart where possible)
- Wash your hands regularly
- Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms

Recent Rule Changes for People Shielding

The advice for those over 70 remains unchanged but there have been recent changes for people who have been patiently shielding for many months, helping to protect themselves from the virus and potentially relieving pressure on service. The latest Government guidance allows people who are shielding to have their home with a member of their own household, or with one other person, if they live alone, ensuring at all times that they are 2 metres apart. If you have been shielding and are in any doubt whatsoever as to what would be best for your health condition we would advise contacting your nurse, GP or Consultant for further guidance.

Face Masks in Crowded Places

The Government advises the use of face masks on public transport and in crowded places like shops where social and physical distancing is difficult. This will not prevent people catching the disease but decrease the risk of those with the illness from spreading it.

Masks can now be purchased in some shops but can also be made at home with a little ingenuity. Newspapers have published instructions on how to make them and there are 'no sew' methods using old tee shirts or socks, but if you cannot do this a scarf or other layers of cloth to cover your nose and mouth are better than nothing.



*Make do and Mend:
3 layer face covering made from an
old pillowcase*

Power of Attorney

No one knows what's around the corner, and at the start of 2020 we couldn't have guessed what an understatement that was and the untimely losses as a result of the pandemic have highlighted this.

Last year the Forum held a financial planning meeting which had 'being prepared' as its theme. Ian Dixon mentioned the benefits of making a will and having a Power of Attorney. Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge have kindly given us the following information about setting up a Power of Attorney:

"Many companies will compile a Power of Attorney for Health or Finance on your behalf for a fee. However, it is possible to do it yourself if your circumstances are straightforward and you make sure you dot all the "i"s and cross all the "t"s. This is obviously the cheapest way as you only have to pay to register it.

Age UK are not legally qualified so they cannot actually draw it up but there are a number of ways in which Age UK can assist people. Please contact Bob Carpenter, their Information & Advice Officer, by either emailing bob@ageuksevenoaksandtonbridge.org.uk or phoning 01732 454108. If he isn't in the office, please leave your name and number so he can phone you back. He can help you in the following ways:

- He can email or post you an information pack which explains Power of Attorney.
- If you still have some questions about what Power of Attorney involves, he can put you in touch with Warners Solicitors in Sevenoaks. They may be able to give you free legal advice over the phone for half an hour. They would however charge if you wanted them to go on and draw it up for you.
- If you don't wish to fill in the forms yourself, Bob can give you details of a firm of solicitors in London who can fill in the forms for you by correspondence or phone. He can also give you some numbers for local solicitors in Sevenoaks who you could ask if they could do it by correspondence or phone. All solicitors will charge to fill in the forms for you. However you may also be able to get help filling in the forms over the phone from Citizens' Advice (by appointment on 0300 330 9001)."

Good News

- Some National Trust sites reopening. Pre-booking required.
- Recycling Centres open. Pre-booking required.
- Dental surgeries reopening on 8th June but you may not be seen immediately because of the backlog of patients.

Praise

- The work of our local churches keeping communities connected
- Road friend schemes working well
- Lockdown larder
- Creativity of VE Day parties
- Polhill Garden Centre for maintaining home deliveries and giving excellent customer service
- Sue Larken, Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge, posting Virtual exercise classes on our Facebook page



VE Day Celebrations



Social distancing may have changed the plans for celebrating VE day in the towns and villages across the District but many streets were adorned with bunting, with people sharing memories of the war years and the sacrifices made. Alan Dixon, our Vice Chair, has shared his family's unique experience of the war years.

Recollections of a Wee Evacuee

About the time the war broke out my parents must have been on the best of terms, as on the day Hitler was making final preparations for Operation Sea Lion in July 1940 I entered into this world in South London as a bouncing 9lb baby boy. Unbeknown to me 10 days later in Wimbledon a baby girl was born who I was not to meet until the late 1950s and is still with me today.

My father, for reasons best known to the Army, was called up and joined the Gordon Highlanders. He was posted close to the small fishing village of Rosehearty 45 miles north of Aberdeen and got himself a job as the Colonel's Batman. One of his first tasks was to chat up a crofter down the road to get some fresh eggs and they got talking about families. He mentioned that his 'old lady' had always fancied working on a farm with the result that my mother, my brother Tony and myself were evacuated to live at Barnyards croft for the duration of the war. I must have been just a few months old when we journeyed north by train and because space was at a premium on trains in wartime I was put on the luggage rack for most of the journey.



*Alan Donald Dixon, Mother & Auntie Margaret
Digging for Victory!*

Our time at Barnyards provides me with many fond memories of both the place and people. As a fairly self-sufficient smallholding with two cows, lots of chickens and growing and selling fruit and vegetables there was no shortage of home made butter and cheese and no shortage of chicken and eggs. Fish was available from the village harbour and we caught dabs from the rock pools on the nearby beach. Water came from a well and there was no gas or electricity. Cooking was done on a peat fire and a paraffin range cooker with lighting from Tilley lamps. In the corner of the kitchen was a barrel of oatmeal used for porridge, oatcakes and coating fish and other food. Thankfully I wasn't aware of those surviving on meagre rations or the starving people in Europe. There was no car, but a Fordson tractor was used to give us rides on the trailer.

The croft was owned and run by Jim and Margaret Smith aided by their son Jim, best known to me as Big Jim, Little Jim and Auntie Margaret. There was also Granny Rennie who I think was Margaret's mother and she did most of the washing, cooking and household duties and really brought me up while Mum and Auntie Margaret worked outside. There was a farm dog called Beauty who was my constant companion. On Sundays we all got smartly dressed and went off to the Kirk at nearby Peathill and just as the sermon was about to begin there was a rustling of paper bags as the pandrops (sugared almonds) were handed round. When I was four and a bit I started at the village school where we all used slates and slate pencils to learn to read and write and learn our sums and times tables.

The ruins of Pitsligo Castle, built in 1424, and enlarged in 1625 and sacked by the wicked King George of England, were located nearby and I was told the ruins were haunted and not a place to play. It was here that Little Jim observed some strange goings on and reported it to the Army and was instrumental in them catching a Spy. A video of this can still be seen on You Tube.

My father spent much of the war in North Africa and Italy. He was popular as he was able to knock out a tune 'by ear' on the piano and other instruments. He also spent some time as a guard in an Italian Prisoner of War camp and it was there that one of the prisoners taught him to play the mandolin and he brought one home when he was demobbed. My first recollection of my father was when he came home on leave in his full highland regalia and apparently I said "He's nae me father, he's wearing a skirt".

Celebrating and Commemorating VE Day in Otford

Since February many of our lives seem to have been put on hold. Firstly the selfish panic buying which resulted in scarcity of bread, pasta, rice, eggs and last but not least loo rolls. Things on that front are gradually getting back to what is termed 'the new normal' but VE Day also provided the opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices people made during the war years across the British Isles.

It is sobering to realise that 14 years of food rationing in Great Britain did not end until midnight on 4 July 1954, nine years after the end of the war, which puts the recent deprivations into perspective.

During lockdown some of us have had a bit more time on our hands to renew our cookery and baking skills so you may like to have a go at the Ration Book recipes below, but would issue a disclaimer that we cannot guarantee success or that they will be to your taste, but they illustrate how innovative people were at making do with what they could get hold of.



Ration book walnut cake *(pictured left)*

4 cups plain flour
1 cup walnuts (shelled and roughly broken)
1 cup milk, 1 cup sugar,
4 Teaspoons baking powder
pinch salt

Small handful of rolled oats

Grease and line small cake tin.

Sieve flour, baking powder and salt into bowl add sugar and walnuts. Mix in the milk, pour into prepared cake tin and leave to rise in a warm place for 10 minutes. Preheat oven 180c . Sprinkle rolled oats over the top and bake for around an hour or until a knife inserted comes out clean

No-bake Ration book Birthday chocolate cake

2 oz margarine
2 oz sugar
2 tablespoons golden syrup
2 oz cocoa powder, 2 drops vanilla essence
6 oz dried breadcrumbs (crushed)

For the Icing

2 teaspoon melted margarine, 1 tablespoon cocoa powder, 1 tablespoon golden syrup,
2 drops vanilla essence

Put margarine, sugar and golden syrup in a saucepan over low heat and stir till melted. Remove from stove. Stir in cocoa powder, vanilla essence and breadcrumbs. Mix well.

Dollop into 7" lined cake tin. Allow to stand somewhere cool for 4 hours until set then turn out onto a cake plate. Cream all the icing ingredients together and put on top of the cake.



Transport – Bookable Buses

The bookable bus service introduced by GO Coach in conjunction with Sevenoaks District Council that started on April 14 will be continued and run for the foreseeable future, with extended hours from 6 a.m. to 19.30 p.m. Monday to Friday and 7 a.m. -7 p.m. on Saturdays.

The service provides journeys of up to 7 miles in most of the SDC area .Other routes in the Sevenoaks area remain suspended. This service is open to all, but the current government guidelines state that it should only be used for essential journeys. The directive to use a car rather than public transport has obviously limited its current usage. With the gradual lifting of restrictions we should expect this service to grow and it is now being increasingly used by more shoppers and we expect this to be a growing trend. Journeys to Pembury, Farnborough and Orpington hospitals can also be booked via this service.

GO Coach are collecting data on current usage and this will come in useful in planning future routes. It is possible that the longer term future of local transport will all be by bookable services and will include new taxi-style buses that will come into service when social distancing issues have been resolved.

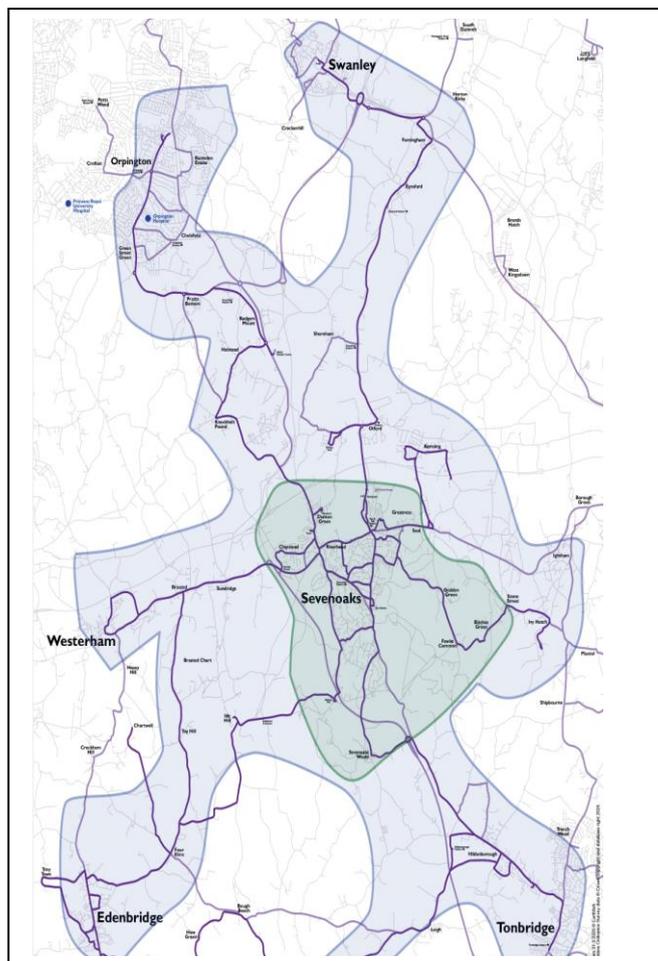
To make a booking or get further information check go-coach.co.uk or call 01732 463 964 or emailoffice@go2now.co.uk

GO have other services running on the outskirts of the SDC area, details are on their website or by phone.

Arriva buses continue to operate using a more limited timetable, and you can call them on 0344 800 44 11. You can also plan journeys using www.traveline.info. They don't have a phone contact but you can always get a friend or neighbour to help if you haven't got access to the internet.

The Committee are seeking clarification from Government on the £5 billion planned expenditure to improve rural bus services that is due to come up at a July spending review! The aim to provide affordable, accessible transport for all, to jobs, education, health and other services in KCC's Growth without Gridlock may well need to be revised or reconsidered alongside Sevenoaks District Council's aim to be Carbon Zero by 2030.

Happy to Chat



On Wednesday 22nd January 2020, Cllr Nicholas Busvine OBE, Mayor of Sevenoaks, and Sophie Woods-Scawen, launched the 'Happy to Chat Bench'. Sophie contacted Sevenoaks Town Council at the end of last year to suggest the Council got involved in this nationwide scheme and we were more than happy to play our part in this fantastic initiative to combat loneliness.

Once the Lockdown is over we hope that the bench will be used to continue some of the conversations people have been having on the phone or over the internet.

Housing

In October 2019 Forum Committee Members were looking forward to voicing their views on the Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan 2019-2035, but to everyone's dismay the Planning Inspector called a halt to the Inquiry after just 4 days. To update you the following is an extract from Sevenoaks District Council's website:

"On the 17th of April 2020 SDC began Judicial review proceedings after the Government Planning Inspector refused to endorse its new Local Plan..... The Secretary of State for the Department for Communities which is responsible for the Planning Inspectorate, will have the opportunity to respond before a judge decides if the case should proceed. In the light of the Coronavirus outbreak it is not possible to estimate when a hearing may take place."

The dispute is over the issue that SDC have stated that they can only envisage building 9,410 new buildings between 2019-35 and not the Government's target of 11,312. The Inspectorate insist that SDC did not comply with the requirement to off load the forecast under delivery to other local authorities. There is ample evidence that the Council did try. However, it was apparently not done in the way the Government would have liked.

We still maintain that this target was too high in the first place and is based on a very flawed method for calculating housing need. We have repeatedly requested the Minister for Housing and Local Government to explain their formula and they have failed to do this, but we will continue to persist for a proper answer.

Breaking news: The High Court issued a notification on Tuesday 2 June 2020 granting permission for the review. The Honourable Mr Justice Swift concluded all grounds for the Council's claim are arguable and permission for judicial review was granted, clearing the first hurdle of the process.

Finance

Vehicle Excise Duty: Although lockdown restrictions are easing slightly the opportunities for car journeys are still reduced, so you may wish to consider taking your car off the road and applying for a SORN: Statutory Off Road Notice. The car must be off the public road until you tax it again.

TV Licensing: It is still the intention to charge those over 75 who are not in receipt of Pension Credit for a television licence from August 2020. The House of Lords will be debating this in June, and it will be interesting to hear that debate.

Health

Visits to hospital appointments and GP surgeries have had to undergo massive changes since March to minimise the spread of infection. Things are gradually getting back to normal but we would urge any members who have had an appointment postponed to ensure that it has been rearranged. Some scans and other procedures are now taking place at different sites, so do be prepared to travel to a hospital you may not have visited before, and if you are unsure about any of the arrangements sort out any travel or access queries in good time.

The Clinical Commissioning Groups have now merged into one organisation, the NHS Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group. They are carrying out a consultation about how Covid-19 has affected you and is open until Monday, 15 June and can be accessed here:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KMCCGlockdownPE.

If you would like to receive the survey by post or if you would like to complete the survey over the phone, please call 01634 335260 to arrange a convenient time for you.

Volunteering

Many of our members have benefited from the services of volunteers during the past few months and realise what a real, tangible difference their work has made to lots of lives and we thank them all immensely.

The generous offers of queuing for shopping, delivering medicine or just ringing up for a chat took a lot of the stress and loneliness out of what for everyone has been a very challenging period.

The voluntary organisations and charities around the District are always looking for new recruits and in the post- Covid world it is likely that their services will have to adapt to social distancing and other rules. Therefore there are ample opportunity to assist them.

The coming year will no doubt see proposals to change services and implement new plans, and Sevenoaks District Action Forum would be pleased to hear from any member who would like to become more involved in reviewing reports and papers concerning health and housing so that we can continue to ensure that the voice of older people around the Sevenoaks District is heard by its decision makers.

What we've Missed most during Lockdown

- ❖ Meeting family and friends
- ❖ Visiting the barbers or hairdressers
- ❖ Going for a peaceful stroll around a public garden or park
- ❖ Having a drink in a pub
- ❖ Enjoying a nice meal in a restaurant
- ❖ Fellowship at church
- ❖ Having a lovely holiday
- ❖ Giving someone a comforting hug
- ❖ Having a manicure or pedicure
- ❖ Going to the Library



Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum 10th Anniversary Celebrations

We hope that by October some of the rules around gatherings will have been relaxed. 2020 marks the 10th Anniversary of the Forum so we plan to hold a special event on Sunday, 4 October, at Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club, our 10th birthday and Silver Sunday. Please put this provisional date in your diaries in the hope that you will be able to join in with family and friends to celebrate our Seniors and all that has been achieved.

Keeping in Touch

If you have received this Newsletter by post and you have an email address and would be happy to receive it by email, please email newsletter@sdsaf.org.uk, letting us know your email address. By doing this it will save us postage and be kinder to the environment.

To contact the Forum Committee email Eileen Murray Giles at : chair@sdsaf.org.uk
or write to us "Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum"
22 Lambarde Road, TN13 3HT
SDSAF Website: www.sdsaf.org.uk

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