

**Sevenoaks District**  
**Seniors Action Forum**

***Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus***

Email: [comms@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:comms@sdsaf.org.uk)

**Message from the Chair**

We have just emerged from a second Lockdown and are now entering Tier 3 restrictions. There has been plenty of time to watch world events unfold and to see the impact on ourselves, our families and our community.

We may feel peaceful, panicked or many emotions in between. Some of our members say they feel powerless and disappointed that their winter years of life are not turning out the way they had hoped and planned. Some are finding that they feel better if they simply accept what is and embrace the many blessings around us. Whatever our situation, we can take the power we have and use it to make our world a better place. Mother Theresa reminded us to 'do small things with great love' so let's keep up the momentum of kindness in our wonderful district and always remember to receive graciously and to put back a little bit more than we take out.

Looking on the bright side, we have heard many inspiring stories of neighbourly creativity, kindness and helpfulness - the box of books at the end of a driveway (with hand sanitiser) saying 'our library', the flask of coffee kindly left every morning on a window ledge, the tray of Sunday lunch delivered with love.

Let us be particularly thoughtful towards our neighbours who don't have computers and help out where we can - perhaps printing and delivering this newsletter to them or offering to add some items for them to your online shopping.

As Christmas approaches, maybe we can encourage those who don't have iPads or Smart Phones to consider putting these on their Christmas wish lists so that they are better placed to take part in the digital world. The members of our Committee would like to thank all those who support our Forum and who bring love, care and hope into senior lives. Stay warm well and strong!

**SDSAF Connectivity and Information Technology Survey**

At the Annual General Meeting the Forum agreed that our priority for this year would be to campaign for better 'virtual' connectivity for older people and for Government and decision makers to acknowledge that not everyone has access to the internet.

We gave a presentation to our MPs, Laura Trott and Tom Tugendhat, who promised to follow up our concerns about the people that our 'on line society' is leaving behind. We are told that Laura Trott and Tom Tugendhat are writing to Oliver Dowden Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport but to date have not had any indication of what can be done to solve this problem.

Laura has also written to the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group about overcoming the issues of people who are not able to use the internet and find, for instance, the prescription service very poor.

The Forum has compiled a survey which is printed on the last page of this Newsletter. We would be grateful if you would complete it and send your responses to us. Members who receive the Newsletter by email can forward responses to Questions 1 and 2 to [newsletter@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@sdsaf.org.uk). Our postal members can either complete the survey and post it to us or ring the number at the bottom of the survey and we will write down your answers.

Your answers will help us to present a comprehensive snapshot of what members use the internet for and what the barriers are for those who currently have no access. We can then use this data to try and identify solutions to help to increase connectivity but also ensure that there are always alternatives for those without access it.

Thank you.

***Eileen Murray Giles***

## **Housing: The Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan**

On November 13th a Judicial Review in the High Court issued a ruling that SDC failed in what is called “The duty to cooperate” when they formulated the Local Plan. This refers to the housing targets for the SDC area which were set in September 2017.

In their submission of a Local Plan the Council made the point that they would be unable to deliver the targets required, by a deficit of 92 new homes a year. The Council did make efforts to see if neighbouring Councils could take up this under-delivery, but did not do so in the time or manner set out by the Government.

During the course of the Judicial Review the Government issued a White Paper on future housing needs. This new proposal stated that this “Duty to cooperate” would no longer be a requirement for Councils to fulfil. The White Paper also sets out new targets which are higher than those previously set.

The Forum submitted responses to the White Paper pointing out that in our view the formula used for setting them was seriously flawed and should be scrapped. Media coverage indicates that this is now likely to happen.

At the time of printing Sevenoaks District Council are considering an appeal against this High Court Ruling and we await publication of a revised National Housing Plan. In the meantime SDC are continuing to work to their previously agreed Local Plan.

## **Charitable Giving**

2020 has been particularly challenging for voluntary and charitable groups to raise funds to sustain their essential, good work. The pandemic has meant that most face to face activities and fund-raising had to be curtailed or carried out on line. With Christmas on the horizon members might wish to consider making a small donation to local or national charities so that they can be equipped to restart their work in 2021.

## **Volunteering Opportunity**

The Layberry Foundation is a local Charity and is based in Knockholt. The charity was set up by Marion Layberry OBE and her husband James (known locally as Knocker) to provide mentoring support principally for young people who have experienced the care system. The Foundation are also able to mentor other young people who may require support in the Sevenoaks District. Their work will focus on recruiting volunteers who will be approved, trained and supported in their role working with young people.

The Layberry Foundation would like to hear from anyone who is interested in becoming a volunteer and who has a genuine desire to help a young person achieve their goals. If you are interested please contact them at:

[team@thelayberryfoundation.org](mailto:team@thelayberryfoundation.org)

## **Praise**

- ❖ Maidstone Hospital A&E and Eye Departments for prompt and very caring support after a worrying incident
- ❖ Various churches for their outreach work during the pandemic - newsletters, fellowship groups, Zoom coffee mornings, supportive phone calls and food parcels.
- ❖ Irene Collins for keeping Every Step Counts going with Zoom meetings, emails, phone calls and with general encouragement to their walkers.
- ❖ All the children who have helped our seniors with technology problems
- ❖ Smiles Dental Practice, Biggin Hill, for going the extra mile

## **Citizens Advice North & West Kent : New Freephone Number**

Anyone seeking advice from Citizens Advice North and West Kent can contact them on the following number: You can call them for free on **0808 278 7810**, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, or by email at:

[advice@nwkent.cab.org.uk](mailto:advice@nwkent.cab.org.uk)

## Finance & Legal Issues

**Interesting Times:** There is debate around the origin of the saying ‘We live in interesting times’, but during 2020 you could say that that is a total understatement and perhaps the word ‘interesting’ could be replaced with other adjectives, some not suitable for printing in the Newsletter! Few people can be unaware of the amount of money the Government has had to spend because of the Corona virus. The Autumn Statement has been postponed once more. Interest rates have been declining for some years and now there are rumours of Negative Interest rates, so it will be even more interesting to see what the coming months bring to the financial sector.

**Premium Bonds (ERNIE):** The first Premium Bond was issued on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956. Many members may have been given Premium Bonds as gifts when they were children, some dating back to the 1950s. National Savings & Investments have recently contacted Bond holders to advise that they will no longer be issuing warrants to lucky prize winners, which came as a bit of a shock. If you received a message please be assured that this was not a scam.



NS&I will start moving affected customers to bank transfer prize payments from December 2020 and paper warrants are set to be phased out completely next year. The deadline has been extended because of difficulties with the NS&I website. If you currently receive Premium Bond prizes in warrant form you will need to make sure NS&I have correct details for you.

You need to act now to make sure the process is as easy as possible once they're phased out. Here's what to do: **Make sure you're registered for NS&I's online and phone services.** You can do this online or those without internet access can also phone 08085 007 007 to register or provide NS&I with your bank details. Good luck!

**Women's State Pensions:** Some married women who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016 may be losing out on derived State Pension entitlement from their husband due to historic computer issues at the Pension Service or because they didn't know they had to make a claim for it. Please note that a woman may be eligible even if her husband has died or she is divorced, as long as she did not remarry before reaching State Pension age herself. If a woman thinks she may be eligible, she should contact the Pension Service at [www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service](http://www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service) to enquire about her entitlement, or to make a claim if she does not currently receive a State Pension at all.

**Lasting Power of Attorney:** As we near the close of a turbulent and stressful 2020 you may wish to take the opportunity to give thought to setting up a Lasting Power of Attorney, which gives someone the legal right to act on your behalf. The recent arrest of a nurse who wished to take her mother out of residential care to look after her at home highlighted the fact that if she had been given Power of Attorney this probably would not have happened.

If you have already set up a Power of Attorney it might also be a good idea to revisit from time to time who you have elected to act on your behalf.

There are two sorts of Lasting Power of Attorney, one for property and financial affairs and one for health and welfare. The registration fee is £82 for each one, with reduced fees for people on benefits.

**If you want help or more information you can contact the Office of the Public Guardian on 0300 456 0300 or email [customerservices@publicguardian.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@publicguardian.gov.uk)**

## Scams – Check your Bank Statement for Direct Debits you did not set up

2020 seems to have been a bumper year for unscrupulous thieves to come up with new ways of ‘conning’ people out of their savings. The BBC Money Box programme on Radio 4 was contacted by a listener who noticed that some Direct Debits were being taken from his mother's bank account without authorisation. Because these amounts were below £200 the bank had not alerted him to this and did not realise they were fraudulent. So please take a little time to review the Direct Debits in your bank statements to check that they are payments you agreed to.

## **Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum 10 Years On**

The pandemic meant that we were unable to have a party to celebrate The Forum's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but we are pleased that some of our Founder members have shared with us their recollections of the establishment of SDSAF.

With the support of our members we hope that the Forum will go from strength to strength and celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2030 in somewhat better circumstances.

### **SDSAF – the beginning...**

*Fiona Cottingham, Project Development Manager, Imago, writes*



Back in 2010 four ladies from different organisations came together with an idea – to set up a Forum to give a voice to the over 50s in Sevenoaks District. Those ladies were Diane Aslett from Help the Aged (now Age UK), Hayley Brooks from the Council, Gillian Shepherd-Coates from the local Age UK and myself, Fiona Watkins from Voluntary Action Within Kent (now Imago).

After successful launch events were held across the District a steering committee was recruited and we four took on a supporting and advising role. As the committee grew and gained momentum public meetings were planned, a newsletter was constructed

Over the following years the membership has blossomed and action has been at the heart of the Forum. Regular meetings have been held on topics chosen by the members and Imago has been able to input to some articles about services we run in the area such as Dial 2 Drive community transport and recently about Social Prescribing. Wendy McGeachy now heads up our community support function as I have moved on to a supportive role within Imago for the range of in-house services we run.

I wish the forum all the best for the next decade and am delighted to keep receiving the newsletters and hearing how well it's all going and the impact the collective voice is making on decisions locally and further afield.

### **Gill Shepherd Coates, Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge, writes**



It is hard to believe that it is 10 years since the formation of SDSAF, how the time has flown past. It is a great shame that you are not able to celebrate the occasion with a party in the normal way due to the current Covid restrictions.

I was first involved when Age Concern and Help the Aged merged and became Age UK, as the local representative of the charity, I attended many of the steering group meetings. It was essential that local older people were consulted on local issues that affect everyone in society and had a strong voice.

The enthusiasm and commitment and determination of the founding members was instrumental in making SDSAF what it is today. To see the number of members that have joined over the years and contribution that you have made to the many debates and consultations is a real achievement. You are no longer an afterthought, but a respected body, who everyone wants to consult with and to listen to.

Sadly in this current climate, there will be much to discuss and priorities to be made for the future, but I am heartened to know that you will all be there, speaking up for older people, making your views known, The efforts of all involved, Committees and members is tremendous, it has taken many hours, hard work to make SDSAF what is today and you are all to be congratulated.

## ***Cllr. Dr. Merilyn Canet, Forum Vice Chair, writes***



I became involved with the Forum and supported it from the outset because I wanted to change the way that older people are seen and treated by officialdom. Most of us are better educated, healthier and engaged in our families and communities than in days gone by and we want our much longer lives and time in retirement to be well lived, not just waiting safely for the end of our lives.

Many older people are essential to the economy, not just as consumers but caring for young grandchildren as many more mothers and fathers are working and also caring for partners, friends, neighbours in our communities and many older people have started new businesses and are working in various ways, for example volunteering.

I felt that seniors should be more visible and viewed positively in public life as well as in the media. SDSAF was determined to make these changes visible and get involved in making that happen. So as someone already doing these things, I volunteered to help with the new Group and am pleased that it has grown into the organisation it is today. I link up more widely with South East Forums and Parliamentary Bodies and recently joined in with the All Party Parliamentary Group on “Age inequality in older peoples’ mental health care”, and by doing so I can make the Management Committee and Forum members aware of discussions taking place to enrich the lives of older people.

## **Silver Week Events**

What a great Silver Week we had! We started our celebrations with a showing of ‘The Greatest Showman’ at the Stag Cinema. The film is a delightful celebration of humanity and was enjoyed by all who attended. You may recognise John and Frances Edwards-Winsor under the masks supporting us on Silver Sunday

We followed this with a week of ‘Silver Walks’ with ‘Every Step Counts’. There were 7 fun and friendly walks all over the District. Everyone walked at their own pace and as far as they felt able. Dogs were able to come along too and refreshments were enjoyed afterwards. Many who went intend to continue walking with ‘Every Step Counts’ on a regular basis after lockdown. Meanwhile they will walk in pairs.



Alongside this, exercise videos were released, facilitated by Sue Larken at Age UK ,and a number of special ‘Silver’ activity Packs with drawings from schoolchildren were distributed to some older residents.

We would like to thank all those who supported our Seniors throughout Silver Week - the District Chair, Vice Chair and their Consorts, the Deputy Mayor of Sevenoaks, staff at the Stag Cinema, at Sevenoaks District Council and at Age UK, Cllr. Irene Collins & all the volunteer walk leaders at Every Step Counts and all the volunteers of the Seniors Action Forum. Together we were able to show that, whilst adapting to new restrictions, life can still go on and we can still have fun, friendship and celebrate being seniors.

## **Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge ‘Virtual’ Exercise Sessions**

Because of the need to socially distance there is no possibility of the Pop In Cafes resuming in their previous format. Sue Larken has recorded some videos which can be seen on You Tube, but is actively working on some virtual exercise classes which people could join via an email link. So if you are interested in joining in please let Sue know as soon as possible at [suelarken@ageuksevenoaksandtonbridge.org.uk](mailto:suelarken@ageuksevenoaksandtonbridge.org.uk)

## Covid-19 Lockdown Mark II and Tier 3 Restrictions

The virus has brought many challenges to the whole population during 2020, and it is very hard to maintain the fight and keep up our guard against this enemy which we cannot see or smell. We must continue to heed all the warnings if we are to see any light at the end of the tunnel. At the time of printing this Newsletter Kent and Medway have been placed in Tier 3, with the highest level of restrictions. This may change in the future but will be widely publicised. Regardless of the Tier please try and ensure you keep yourself and your loved ones safe.



## Covid Vaccinations

Since the start of the Covid-19 virus pandemic there has been a frantic race to discover a vaccine to combat its effects. On 9<sup>th</sup> November Pfizer announced they had made a breakthrough and propose to market a vaccine which they claim will be 90% effective. British Regulator, MHRA, has authorised the vaccine and declared it safe for roll out in early December. The UK Government has placed orders for this and it is expected to be launched soon.

When the Government published a consultation about the administration of vaccines to combat Covid-19 it did raise some widely held concerns which the Committee felt needed addressing. We therefore wrote to our MPs as it is the intention that the elderly will be the first to be given the opportunity to have a vaccination and sought answers to the following issues:

1. The exoneration of pharmaceutical companies and medical staff from responsibility for damage
2. The nil compensation for anyone affected
3. The use of non medical staff to administer the vaccines
4. The side effects of a combined flu/Covid vaccination and interactions with other medication
5. The use of a timescale that rules out assessment of longer term effects
6. The promotion and rollout of vaccines without full data and without the fully informed consent of all involved.

Whilst welcoming scientific advances, many people are concerned about the safety aspects of unlicensed and hastily tested products that are intended to be used first on the elderly. Laura Trott, who serves on the Government's Health Select Committee, replied with reassurances that product safety measures would be in place. However, SDSAF Committee believes that these issues need to be addressed before we get caught up in the understandable excitement and euphoria of new vaccines and pin all our hopes on them.

## Mustn't Grumble, but here are some frustrations which confound us on a daily basis...

**Resealable Packaging**, particularly for cheese, which needs a pair of scissors to cut along the guideline or a mighty rip, the needs the strength of Samson to prize apart and having done all that is very difficult to reseal! Apparently there is a new term for this : **Wrap Rage!**

**Small Print:** We're all urged to read the small print but how much smaller can it get? A recent purchase contained the instructions which could only be read with the aid of a magnifying glass. Perhaps opticians have a vested interest in this trend so that we all order a new pair of specs.

**Recycling Symbols:** Sorting your waste into the appropriate sacks isn't as easy it would seem when the symbol is not on the product label but on the bottom of clear plastic containers which you have to hold up to the light to try and spot whether there is a recycling symbol on it. The film on many of the containers is non recyclable and the job of separating the film and disposing of it separately is by no means easy. This really needs to improve.

**Radio, TV and Government announcements** which cut short news reports and interviews and advise people to 'refer to the website for more information'. This is done without acknowledgement that many people do not have instant access to computers and I.T. and it on of the reasons we are carrying out our survey on internet usage.

## Old Fashioned Bread Pudding

Here's an easy recipe which might take you back in time which is almost impossible to get in the shops unless you are blessed with an independent local baker. It makes good use of any left over bread and other store cupboard items. You can also give it your own twist in terms of the spices you use and to make it more seasonal you could add some glace cherries or nuts. The smell while it is cooking makes it an economical tempting snack or pudding, and if you do not want such a big pudding the ingredients could also be halved and the cooking time adjusted.



### Ingredients:

8 oz. old bread (white or brown), crusts removed  
½ pint milk  
8 oz. dried fruits (sultanas, raisins, currants)  
2 oz. suet  
2 level teaspoons of mixed spice (to taste)  
2 oz. soft brown sugar, or caster sugar  
1 beaten egg  
Grated nutmeg (optional)  
1 tablespoon of granulated sugar

### Method:

Break the bread into small pieces and put into bowl  
Pour over the milk and leave for 30 minutes  
Heat the oven to 180°C  
Beat the bread and milk mixture together with a fork  
Grease a shallow 7" tin or oven-proof container  
Add all the fruit, sugar, suet, egg and spice to the bread and mix well to combine.  
Pour into the prepared tin and flatten the top  
Bake in the centre of the oven for 1-1½ hours (this could be combined with cooking other things)  
Take out of oven and sprinkle over the granulated sugar and leave to cool in the tin.

**Outdoor Gyms:** While there are still restrictions on activities in some leisure facilities you might like to consider wrapping up warm and taking some gentle exercise in the great outdoors. Councils around the District have installed equipment at various locations. In addition to Greatness Park, Sevenoaks, and Stangrove Park in Edenbridge there is also one to be found at St. Julian's Meadow, Sevenoaks.



Greatness Park, Sevenoaks



Stangrove Park, Edenbridge

## Keeping in Touch

If you have received this Newsletter by post and you have an email address but would be happy to receive it by email, please send a message to [newsletter@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:chair@sdsaf.org.uk)  
or write to us "Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum"

22 Lambarde Road, TN13 3HT

SDSAF Website: [www.sdsaf.org.uk](http://www.sdsaf.org.uk)

**If you would like to receive the Newsletter in large print please let us know**



# Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum



## Member Survey

The Committee invite you to complete a survey about **Computers and Information Technology** so that we can gain a clearer picture of the barriers some seniors have in accessing it. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. Your valued response will help to inform the discussions we have with MPs, NHS providers and Councils.

1. Do you have access to broadband, Smartphone or Ipad/Tablet in your home? **Yes / No**  
If you have answered **YES**, please list the devices do you have on the line below

.....  
If **NO** please go to Question 3

2. What do you use it / them for (please highlight or list):   Accessing Information  
Games/Puzzles   Ebay   Zoom/video links   Shopping           Phone calls  
Other.....

3. Why do you not have access: **Please insert YES or NO in the box on the right of the form and indicate ALL of the reasons which apply**

I do not have access to the internet, computer, Smartphone or Ipad because		
3.1	It is too expensive	
3.2	I do not know how to use the equipment	
3.3	I am worried that I would be scammed or defrauded	
3.4	I am unable to read the small print on the screens	
3.5	I cannot use the keyboard to type or press	
3.6	I do not think it would be of any benefit to me	
3.7	Other reasons: <i>please add your own comments</i>	
3.8	Would you like to receive help to get on line?	

If you would like to speak to someone about where to access help to go 'on line' please telephone us on 07707 757201.

**As a thank you for your participation in this research the Forum will put all the responses into a hat and send a Gift Voucher to the winning survey. To enable us to do this please write your name in BLOCK CAPITALS: .....**

Please post your completed survey to:SDSAF, 22 Lambarde Road, Sevenoaks TN13 3HT, or email it to newsletter@sdsaf.org.uk . Alternatively you can phone us and we will fill in the form on your behalf. Ring: 07707 757201