

Sevenoaks District

Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting held on 24 July 2020 via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Eileen Murray Giles, Chair (EMG)
Chris Towers, Treasurer
Dr. Merilyn Canet, Vice Chair
Alan Dixon, Vice Chair
Margaret Parker, Secretary
Roger Bryan
Elaine Elston
Davina Grant-Arrowsmith
Pamela Payne
Peter Sansom
Richard Wassell

Apologies: Amelia Moore

There were 14 additional attendees, listed at the end of these minutes.

1. **Welcome & Introductions:** EMG warmly welcomed everyone and regretted that the Forum members who were not on line would be unable to participate. The draft minutes will be posted on the website and paper copies will be available on request. EMG thanked Cllr. Edwards-Winser, SDC Chair, for his attendance and three District Councillors: Merilyn Canet, Irene Collins and Philip McGarvey.
2. **Minutes of the 2019 AGM:** These were reviewed. There were no objections to them and the Minutes were unanimously **approved**.
3. **Chairs Report:** Reporting on 14 months' activity, EMG said the Forum had focussed on giving information to members: 6 Newsletters had been published to a circulation list of 1,500. The frequency of the Newsletters had increased during the pandemic and lockdown so that members were aware of the services they could access. EMG thanked the editor, Margaret Parker, and SDC for funding some of the printing and postage costs.

2020 had seen the redesign of the SDSAF website and EMG thanked Carol Oakley for doing this. It was noted that Carol would welcome any support in developing and maintaining the site. The Forum also had a Facebook presence where information is posted.

Key work is undertaken by our Action Groups covering Communications, Crime, Health, Housing, Transport and Social matters. Alan Dixon Coordinates activities to respond to consultations and communications to ensure that the voices of seniors are heard.

4. **Action Group Reports:**

- 4.1. **Health:** Margaret Parker said that it had been a busy year, not least because of the merger of the CCGs into one Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group. This would be followed by the establishment of two Integrated Care Providers for the north and south of the Sevenoaks District.

Our particular concerns had been around: Wheelchair Services, Non Urgent Patient Transport (G4S), Prescribing Ordering in the north of the District, Ambulance response times, lack of sufficient NHS Dementia care, DMC Dermatology services, long waits for GP appointments, Edenbridge War Memorial Hospital and Sevenoaks Health Hub.

The Kent & Medway Care Record is due to launch next year, and three members of the Health Action Group are involved with the strategy for communicating this to the public.

The Forum wrote a robust question to the CCG following the publication of the Draft Terms of Reference of a Kent & Medway Clinical Ethics Committee and were pleased to see that at the present time it has not been taken forward..

John Harris raised concerns over patients' access to GPs because during lockdown these had been mostly limited to telephone conversations and many services were now by appointment only with fewer face to face consultations. He also advised that the Minor Injuries Unit at Sevenoaks Hospital were still allowing patients to walk in, but that may change in the future. There were also issues around the E-consult system, whereby patients could see their GP via video, but this could potentially disadvantage people with no I.T. connectivity who need to be offered alternatives.

Frank McConnell asked where there was any good news, and Margaret replied that the Cancer performance at Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells had greatly improved prior to the Pandemic. She was also pleased that two elderly neighbours who had caught Covid had been well cared for in Pembury and had recovered.

John Edwards-Winser did raise the difficulties encountered when waiting for a GP call back, and the indeterminate length of time for these calls which increased the possibility of missing them and there was no caller recognition system on them.

- 4.2. **Housing:** Alan Dixon reported that the Forum had submitted objections to the 2018 Sevenoaks District Local Plan because it was felt that the formula, which was dictated by Central Government, was not fit for purpose. The formula made no allowance for the high proportion of Green Belt in the area, which restricted building and resulted in more concentrated density in the remaining land. It was also felt that there was insufficient regard paid to the provision of affordable homes and specific plans to provide suitable homes for older people. The Inspector put the Plan on hold and it is currently under Judicial Review.

We also submitted feedback to the KCC Affordable Housing Committee and 5 Year Plan.

John Edwards-Winser said that the Plan was not turned down because it was wrong but the Inspector maintained that SDC had failed to cooperate with neighbouring authorities. He felt that the Inspector had not read the submission. Cllr. McGarvey felt that there was an ulterior motive because SDC was the first Council to submit a Local Plan under the new regime whereby developers would have to pay for infrastructure e.g. large road projects. The next stage is awaited.

- 4.3. **Transport:** Alan Dixon said that there was good news insofar as he had met with Austin Blackburn of Go Coach and the feedback of the on demand bus service had been good, especially the service to travel to hospitals direct on one bus. The introduction of a new fleet of transit vehicles with wheelchair access has been put on hold. This will provide public transport between Edenbridge, Sevenoaks, Ightham Moat and surrounding areas. Austin also hoped to introduce a service for commuters to access the train station, and expand it if it was successful.

In March 2020 the Government pledged £5b for rural transport in England and Wales (excluding London) and we have asked Laura Trott MP to assist us in finding out how this will be allocated. KCC also declared an objective to have Affordable Transport for Jobs, education and Health and be carbon zero by 2030. Alan is preparing a discussion document exploring what is a very disjointed Public Transport picture to find out who is in charge. Adam Littlefield asked whether Alan would share his research with the Engaging Kent Pan Forum meeting in the Autumn, and Alan agreed.

Jean Bentley highlighted the fact that there was not a bus service linking the northern part of the District with Sevenoaks, i.e., between New Ash Green and Sevenoaks. Alan was under

the impression that you could book a bus but this was subsequently found not to be the case.

4.4 **Membership:** Alan reported that there were currently 1,175 members, an increase of between 30 and 35 from last year. Approximately 50 new members had been recruited at New Ash Green Village Day and Otford Fete. 70% of members receive communication via email with the remainder by post. The Forum are keen that those without email are not marginalised or excluded. Membership is Sevenoaks and Otford-centric and the Forum are keen to boost membership in other parts of the District. New members receive information packs, and Carol reported that the first on line Membership Application Form had been received.

EMG paid tribute to Roger Bryan for this past work on the membership database and Roger confirmed that he would be happy to help in the future. EMG also thanked Meryl Canet for her attendance at the KCC People's Panel, raising the area's profile together with seniors' issues.

4.4. **Meetings and Events since the last AGM:**

Meetings with MPs: In October 2019 we met with Sir Michael Fallon, and after the General Election we held meetings with Tom Tugendhat and Laura Trott who have both offered to help the Forum. They encourage their constituents to contact them to raise any issues of concern. John Edwards-Winsor asked that when concerns about local issues are raised it would be helpful if these were copied to County and District Councillors.

One of the meetings focussed on the topic of Connectivity, with a presentation showing how many people were not on the internet and did not have access to the web. At that meeting Dr. Howard Leicester stressed the need for all organisations to work to the Accessible Information Standard. Laura Trott was particularly interested in this subject and we were hopeful that she would come back to us when she received a reply from Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Vibe Dance: 1st July 2018 the Forum collaborated with RVS who were funded by The Prudential to organise a Vibe Dance session in Swanley on 1st July, when Riverside Tea Rooms kindly provided a cream tea.

Dementia Update from the NHS which Alan Wheatley and Geoff Dalton also attended.

October 2019: Silver Coffee Morning in The Plaza Suite incorporating our 9th Birthday, attended by lots of public services and charitable organisations, kindly funded by SDC.

November 2019: Finance Seminar, which covered Power of Attorney, Wills and Probate. We thank Mr. Ian Dixon who generously donated his time and talents and Nesbit House Care Home at Badgers Mount for hosting it.

London Retro Bus Hire Company Outings: The company generously offered free use of their services which enabled two groups to visit Polhill Garden centre on a vintage bus. Thanks go to Reg Glennon, Sue Larken, Richard Wassell, Barry Morse and Alan Dixon who joined in on the day.

Committee Christmas Party Davina Grant-Arrowsmith kindly hosted an enjoyable evening for Committee and Action Group members to celebrate the festive season.

General Outreach & Research New Ash Green Village Day and Otford Fete enabled us to contact more than 400 people and recruit some of them, and to find out about any burning issues and concerns they had.

Sevenoaks & Tonbridge Age UK Pop Ins: The Forum had funded some exercise bands for use at the Pop Ins. Participants in these events which include strength and balance exercise as well as social interaction are greatly appreciated by the older people around the District.

Additionally, Committee members attended events at Rockdale, Eynsford, Weald Heights and Rivermere Care Home, and have participated in the discussions of the Voluntary Sector Forum.

Engaging Kent fund various Forums in Kent, and of the 9 Seniors' Forums Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum is the largest and most active. SDSAF attended a pan forum

meeting. We also met with Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling Seniors and we look forward to constructive joint working. Margaret Parker thanked Adam Littlefield for the data he had provided regarding connectivity, which showed that white, older women had least access to IT resources in Kent.

- 4.5. **How Effective are We?** We receive a number of invitations to serve and give our views:
- Access Group
 - Voluntary Sector Forum
 - KCC People's Panel
 - Kent & Medway Care Record Development
 - SDC helping people to gain access to employment
 - Engaging Kent interview Panel
 - CCG Engagement interview
 - Submissions to consultations on: Libraries, Social Housing, Local Plan

We have received praise and appreciation for the content of our Newsletter, and we in turn praise and highlight positive actions in the community. We could widen our impact if we had more Public Relations support, given the myriad of contacts and the development of Social Media, and members were urged to volunteer to help.

- 4.6 **Call for more Volunteers:** Anyone with talents or time to help further the work of the Forum can be assured of a warm welcome.
- 4.7 **Thanks:** The Chair thanked outgoing Committee members Derrick Bateman for his past work as Secretary. Derrick had moved out of area to be nearer his family. Roger Bryan for 10 years of amazing work, our first Chair and founder member, who took care of the database as Membership Secretary and did so much behind the scenes. She also thanked Chris Towers, David White, Marilyn Canet, Alan Dixon, Barry Morse, Margaret Parker, Carol Oakley, Peter Sansom, Davina Grant-Arrowsmith, John Harris, Howard Leicester and Ken Cardinal.

5. **Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 March 2020:** The accounts show that SDSAF had a surplus for the year of £428. This was very much due to Sevenoaks District Council paying the postage cost of sending out our Newsletter to members unable to receive it by email and to Parish Councils allowing us to hold meetings in their halls without charge. This may not be possible in future years. Already, we have had to incur some extra costs as a result of Covid.

We await a decision from Engaging Kent regarding whether they will be able to continue the grant that they currently gave to us from October onwards. It is difficult to see how we can reduce our outgoings without a significant reduction in the services we currently carry out.

It was noted that in the future, regardless of the outcome of the grant, the Forum would prefer not to charge members membership or entrance fees, to ensure no one was excluded.

Frank McConnell commented that when organisations approach the Forum they can be confident that the response is objective and not politicised and value the unique data they get from us. Because Kent County Council value real consultations and hard data the grant is a small financial way of supporting us to do so.

The Accounts were accepted.

6. **Secretary's Report:** The Secretary confirmed that the Forum had operated in accordance with the Constitution throughout the year. Regular Committee meetings had taken place, papers were circulated prior to meetings, agendas distributed and minutes circulated. If required the Secretary has responded to communications, and forwards relevant information to the webmaster to post on the website.

7. **Election of Officers:** John Edwards-Winsor conducted the election of officers, as the Constitution dictates that each year all officers and committee members step down.

The following people were nominated by John Edwards-Winsor for the Officer posts and seconded by Carol Oakley and were duly elected:

Chair: Eileen Murray Giles

Treasurer : Chris Towers

Secretary: Margaret Parker

Vice Chair: Marilyn Canet

Second Vice Chair: Alan Dixon

Davina Grant-Arrowsmith was nominated as Membership Officer by Carol Oakley and seconded by Roger Bryan.

Six nominations for the Committee were nominated by John Edwards-Winsor and seconded by Chris Towers:

Elaine Elston

Amelia Moore

Pamela Payne

Mark Robson

Peter Samson

Richard Wassell

The Action Group Members were noted:

Health: Ken Cardinal, John Harris, Dr. Howard Leicester and Margaret Parker

Eileen Arney, Jean Bentley, Maureen Dixon, Reg Glennon, Frank Gorham, Sue Larkin, Barry Morse, Anne McDonell, Carol Oakley, Heather Styles and Alan Wheatley.

With regard to the post of Auditor/Examiner, the Forum were open to offers but were grateful that David White was happy to continue with Ken Cardinal as his reserve.

8. **Any Other Business:** Marilyn Canet thanked Eileen Murray-Giles for her enthusiasm, knowledge and technique which is so impressive and thanked John Edwards-Winser for being present.

The Forum will aim to go forward at a difficult time and adapt.

Public Conveniences: Margaret Parker highlighted an issue which had long troubled older people and which had come to the fore during Lockdown, namely the scarcity and lack of public conveniences. John Edwards-Winser said that Otford had spent £100k to renovate and improve the village's public conveniences and expressed the hope that the vandalism would not recur. Marilyn was pleased to report that Sevenoaks Town Council had managed

to ensure that the public conveniences at the Bus Station, the Vine and St. John's had remained open and appreciate what a vital amenity they are.

Foodbanks: John Edwards-Winser reported that he had visited the Community Garage at West Kingsdown from which food parcels were distributed. The need for the parcels had escalated during lockdown and he had been very impressed by both the donations the Garage received and the tireless work of the volunteers.

The Future:

Eileen shared with the meeting a poster compiled with Committee members at the beginning of Lockdown with the aim of raising people's spirits:

Hold Zoom AGM, embrace technology and reduce the number marginalised by the lack of it

Overcome Ageist Attitudes and rewrite the script that not all old are vulnerable

Party – Celebrate our Birthday on 4th October

Empower and Encourage wellbeing, One You, Nutrition, Exercise to be as well as we can

Approach the future with HOPE!

The meeting concluded with Birthday wishes to Reg Glennon, Alan Dixon and Maureen Dixon.

2020 AGM Attendance List:

Cllr. John Edwards-Winser
Alan Wheatley
Dr. Howard Leicester
Mark Robson
John Harris
Cllr. Phillip McGarvey
Reg Glennon
Maureen Dixon
Jean Bentley
Frank McConnell
Adam Littlefield, Engaging Kent
Carol Oakley

Cllr. Irene Collins
John Humphrey