

Sevenoaks District
Seniors Action Forum

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Email: comms@sdsaf.org.uk

Silver Coffee Morning in The Plaza Suite

Thanks to all our members who supported the Silver Coffee Morning on 7 October. Despite the fact that most petrol stations were closed and bus services ceased we were impressed by the number of people and stall holders who managed to be there.

As a bit of fun we had two ‘competitions’, one to guess the weight of the cake, which had been lovingly baked by one of our members and was won by one of the reflexologists, and the other one was to guess the number of sweets in the jar.

There was also the chance to test one’s ability to identify a variety of wonderful essential oils which created a great atmosphere.

By the way, the cake weighed 11lb 10oz (741 grams) and there were 52 sweets in the jar!



Steve Kelly, Prevent & Protect Fraud Officer, Kent Police, discussing Scams with our Vice Chair, Cllr. Dr. Merilyn Canet

Fraud

If you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details just **Stop, hang up and call 159 to speak directly to your bank.** This is the memorable, secure number that connects you directly to your bank if you think you’re being scammed.

STOP, HANG UP, CALL

Who is behind 159?

159 has been set up by banks and telephone companies who want to fight fraud. It’s a pilot scheme at the moment. The following banks are part of it:

- Barclays
- Lloyds (including Halifax and Bank of Scotland)
- NatWest (including Royal Bank of Scotland and Ulster Bank)
- Santander
- Starling Bank

Hopefully more banks will join the scheme but in the meantime if you bank with anyone else contact their fraud line as soon as you suspect someone is trying to carry out a fraudulent transaction.

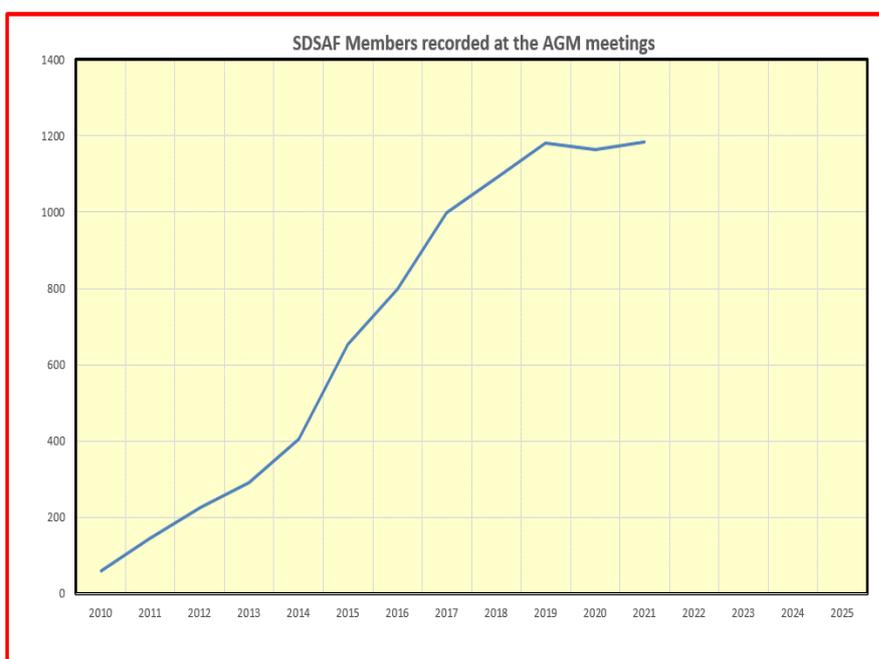
SDSAF Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General meeting was held on 7 October when it was nice to have the opportunity to see each other face to face instead of the previous year's virtual Zoom event. We are grateful to Cllr. David Brazier, KCC Cabinet member for Transport and to Ceri Hodgkiss of West Kent Mind for giving such informative and interesting talks.

Cllr. John Edwards-Winsor oversaw the election of the new Management Committee which now has 9 members, who are complemented by Action Groups on Health, Housing and Transport.

The Forum has been in existence for 11 years, and since it was formed in 2010 the chart below shows how we have grown in that time to a record high of 1,185. There was a slight dip in membership in 2020 but this was due in part to our inability to recruit face to face because of Covid restrictions and sadly a result of the virus across our communities. We are pleased that we have members in every Ward across the District, and our main strength lies in our membership numbers, so please tell your friends and neighbours about us, what we campaign for, and encourage them to join us. There is no cost in doing so but the support of the older people in the Sevenoaks District is priceless to us. We are a non-political organisation and seek only to ensure that all the views, voices and needs of older people around the District do not go unheeded by the decision makers.

SDSAF	
YEAR	MEMBERS
2010	60
2011	144
2012	224
2013	290
2014	405
2015	652
2016	798
2017	999
2018	1089
2019	1181
2020	1164
2021	1185
2022	
2023	
2024	
2025	



People often ask 'What does the Forum actually do?' The following are just a few of the things we have got up to but it should be emphasised that our topics are led by **you, our members**:

- Greatest Showman Cinema trip
- Virtual Singalongs
- arc4 Older Persons' Housing Focus Group
- Meet with MPs to highlight our members' areas of concern
- Signpost members to organisations who can assist them
- Promote and publicise the Age UK Pop Ins
- Attend and promote Every Step Counts Events
- Hold Finance Seminars to explain the importance of things like Wills and Power of Attorney
- Monitor Clinical Commissioning Group proposals and put questions to their Board
- Facilitate Vintage Bus Outings
- Interact with Kent County Council and Sevenoaks District Council regarding public transport & housing
- Promote digital access while ensuring non-digital members' needs are catered for

Climate Change

Following the outcome of the recent Climate Change Summit in Glasgow, whatever one's views on the subject, the aspiration to keep any increase in world temperatures below 1.5 degrees is commendable. However, the accusations being aimed at 'Boomers' and older people in general as being responsible for the current state of affairs are misplaced and will only serve to increase prejudice against the elderly. Having lived through the 50s and 60s, many of us have first hand experience of what steps were actually taken to improve the environment. It might be useful to remind the younger generation about the Clean Air Act of 1956 and the dreadful circumstances which led to its introduction.

None of us can turn the clock back but what we can all do now is think of small ways in which we can reduce our carbon footprint, be that using a bus occasionally, turning the heating down by 1 degree or just keeping one room warm instead of the whole house. Even sharing a cosy space with neighbours, or filling the kettle with just enough water for a cup of tea.

We would be interested to hear any of your tips – after all, we seem to be the make do and mend generation!



Oops – Iphone Takes the Plunge!

Don't ask me how it happened. Suddenly my mobile phone was in the bathtub beneath 10 inches of water. The plan had been to have a relaxing bath with the vapour of essential oils and gentle music wafting in the background. And now it seemed relaxation was the last thing on my mind - all my data had disappeared and I was in total shock! Peaceful acceptance wasn't easy.

I suddenly realised how dependent I had become on that 4 x 2 inch device that was my mobile office, lifeline and constant companion and envisaged weeks of misery trying to sort everything out. But miracles happen and after a little while the device was playing music again, receiving phone calls, sending emails and I'm writing on it now. I have learned a few lessons in the process - some iPhones are waterproof to a degree and can withstand a short dunk, while some outer cases protect to a military standard and some grandsons know how to apply a water eject app.

I have also been reminded not to catastrophise when things seem hopeless and that if we trust a solution may emerge that we don't yet know about and there are wonderful sources of help as long as we are prepared to reach out. Our Seniors are blessed with many talents and skills – so I would urge you to use them generously, especially over the forthcoming festive season, when many may feel lonely and isolated. Let's also be grateful for all the amazing people in our communities who help others, and not be shy to seek and receive help when we need it. Every act of kindness, graciously given and received, helps to make our world a much better place.

Eileen Murray Giles
Chair

Praise

- Nick Rushby for a riveting talk about Otford Palace and for demonstrating how technology can bring history to life (for more information email Nick.rushby@btinternet.com)
- Otford Parish Council for attempting to come to grips with traffic calming measures through the village
- Forget-me-not cafés for providing a safe space for people with dementia and their carers
- Barry Morse for recruiting lots of new SDSAF members when travelling on the buses
- Every Step counts for securing lottery money for free exercise classes in Riverhead
- Sevenoaks Town Council's Adopt a Tree scheme to benefit the local environment

Finance

Pensions

Retirement Pension: The Chancellor in his Autumn Statement said that there would be an uplift of 3.1% to the basic retirement pension from April 2022.

Private Pensions: If you are in receipt of a private pension it might be worthwhile reviewing the small print in the terms and conditions of them so that your nearest and dearest know what their income might be should anything happen to you. Where there is more than a 10 year difference in the age of a couple, discretionary clause in the small print of a policy can result in a great reduction in the amount the widow or widower will receive. Forewarned therefore is forearmed, and if this applies to you, it might be an idea to take the opportunity to plan accordingly.

Energy Price Rises

There has been much consternation in recent months about the global rise in the price of gas, which has caused worry to many people. Some gas suppliers have gone out of business, and those customers are probably going to feel the most immediate effect of the increase, because they will be placed with another company, probably on different terms. If you were with a company which folded and you were in credit with them they do have a responsibility to refund you the money. If the market will settle down is an unknown quantity so it is hard to gauge how each household will be affected. However if you have any difficulty in paying for heating or energy it is essential to seek help and advice at the earliest opportunity.

If you are eligible you may have had a letter informing you about the Winter Fuel allowance, which is very welcome. **However the advice contained in it urging people to switch suppliers is not necessarily sound so you may wish to think twice and check the situation with Citizens Advice Bureau before doing so.**

Contactless Card Payment

The limit on contactless card payment was recently increased to £100. Not everyone is happy with this development and if you have a contactless card and wish to have the limit on it lowered or the contactless element disabled you should speak to your bank.

Halifax Bank Sevenoaks

The Sevenoaks branch of the Halifax will be closing in February 2022 and accounts are being transferred to its Tonbridge branch.

Public Transport

Trains: Many people take advantage of the Older Persons' Rail Card which offers good reductions on rail travel. However it is important to note that some new rolling stock in the form of BEAM trains will soon be crossing the points on journeys between Sevenoaks Station and London Cannon Street. While it is welcome news that we will have more modern trains for this environmentally friendly way of travelling **passengers need to know that it has come at the cost of lost space as they do not have any toilet facilities. So you may wish to check what sort of train will be provided for your journey and perhaps amend your route to avoid any inconvenience (no pun intended) during your travels.**

Buses: What is happening about the buses?

At our Coffee Morning and AGM in October, the decline in scheduled bus services and the limitations on the use of passes was the main topic of concern raised by members. Since then KCC have made a 125 page submission to Government on the Enhanced Partnership between KCC and the bus operators. Disappointingly it does not provide any detailed proposals for the Sevenoaks District Council area, either in the short or longer term. Our best interpretation is that the only funding to provide more (or some) early, late and weekend buses is likely to be an extension of the bookable bus services. Many of our timetabled routes are only running because of subsidies from KCC.

KCC await confirmation on funding before issuing an updated version of the Enhanced Partnership which will go out to consultation, so it is doubtful that there will be much improvement before mid 2022.

Concessionary bus passes are only mandatory on timetabled routes, but can be extended to bookable services at KCC discretion. The GO bookable services do get some subsidy, but not for travel after 3 p.m. We are continuing to lobby for a review of this policy.

To find out more about the provision of buses around the whole of the District the Forum emailed every Parish and Town Council in the District especially around their parishioners' ability to use the Older Persons' Bus Pass. *Disappointingly only 6 Parish Councils responded, which is a sad reflection on their interest in the topic.* We thank and applaud the following Parishes for their responses: **Eynesford, Halstead, Hextable, Penshurst, Swanley and Westerham** whose feedback we will include in our feedback to Kent County Council in the hope that this will help the people living in those areas to obtain an improved (or any!) bus service.

Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan – Target for 710 New Homes per annum over a 15 year period

The Sevenoaks Chronicle recently published a letter stating that the Council believe that a target of 710 new dwellings per annum i.e. the same as set in 2017/18, and constantly discredited, is to be used in the forthcoming Draft Local Housing Plan, and that it may be a blessing in disguise. No explanation for this was given, despite the fact that in June 2019 the Council told the Planning Inspectors that they could not meet this target, and 588 new homes p.a. was the maximum they could envisage. So what has changed, and why is this target now deemed achievable?

It seems that the Council is seeking to comply with the Government's latest Planning Guidance without seeking any reduction in the target to mitigate the fact that 93% of land in the District falls within the Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There is clear instruction in all Government documentation, past and present, that the Green Belt and AONB should be preserved and an allowance can be made for it in all Local Plans (Latest Section 13 NPPF July 2021).

If Sevenoaks residents' housing needs must be subject to a formula for new housing targets there surely is an obvious case for a component of 'Green' credentials to be built into any updated formula and for SDC to make this proposal on our behalf.

In the same article it was also worrying to read James Gleave's comment that after 25 November 2021, which was the the deadline for new planning applications, the Council have requested developers to submit plans to build on Greenfield sites. This must be music to the ears of developers because it is cheaper for them to develop. We feel SDC need to ensure safeguards are put in place before the cut-off date that developers have not downplayed what they can deliver on brownfield sites in order to turn the attractive and beautiful parts of our District into concrete jungles.

In a nutshell, what is Sevenoaks District Council's stance on " Exactly how many new homes p.a. will actually be needed?" not just 'How many can be squeezed in?'. We need a plan to provide appropriate homes for local people with the appropriate infrastructure rather than adhering to the Governments targets – which are still only guidelines.

HEALTH

Hyperacute Stroke Units (HASUs)

After a very long wait for a decision from the Secretary of State for Health the proposal to establish three Hyperacute Stroke Units to serve patients across Kent & Medway were finally approved in November. The units will be based at Darent Valley Hospital, Maidstone Hospital and the William Harvey Hospital, where it is intended that all stroke patients will be treated. The Forum have asked the Clinical Commissioning Group what the Travel Plan will be for patients and relatives in West Kent to access the new units.

Engagement regarding Developing Cardiology Services at Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW) has been looking at ways to improve the quality of cardiology care for people with heart problems. At the moment cardiology services, especially those for people with heart conditions needing an inpatient stay and/or a specialist procedure, for example to treat heart attacks, heart failure or life-threatening heart rhythm problems, are split across its two main hospital sites. Some specialist cardiology services are delivered from Maidstone Hospital, others from Tunbridge Wells Hospital. This often leads to patients being transferred from one site to another during an inpatient stay. It also means specialist cardiology teams are thinly stretched across two sites and can't consistently provide a seven-day service at either site. Nor can all heart patients be cared for on a dedicated, specialist cardiology ward (some currently are admitted to a general medical ward). Despite the hard work of its fantastic staff the Trust is struggling to meet national best practice standards in some areas because of how its cardiology services are organised. After careful consideration, the Trust's cardiology team has identified three potential ways it could improve care. This would mean making changes to how services are organised and delivered, and includes a proposal to bring very specialist inpatient cardiology services together on one site. It is important to state that these proposals will not change how or where the Trust's cardiology outpatient clinics and outpatient cardiology diagnostic services are delivered.

The Trust is holding a 12-week engagement period, which runs until midnight on Friday 14 January 2022 to understand what patients, the public, staff and stakeholders think about these proposals. You can find out more about the proposals and provide feedback on www.mtw.nhs.uk/cardiology-engagement. Information can also be requested in hard copy by calling 01622 225771 or emailing mtw-tr.cardioreconfig@nhs.net. The final decision about the proposals is expected later in 2022.

Vegetable Stew

A selection of seasonal vegetables would be available from the back garden or allotment as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. You may wish to scale this recipe down, depending on how many servings you need.

1 small cauliflower in florets
Half a cabbage (shredded)
2 onions, diced
3 carrots, peeled and diced
3 potatoes, washed and diced
2 parsnips, peeled and diced
2 leeks, sliced
1 cup of peas
1 cup of sweetcorn
4 oz rolled porridge oats
Knob of butter or oil for frying
Around 2 pints of vegetable stock
Salt and pepper for seasoning
2 tablespoons cornflour and a little water to mix



Sauté the onions for 5 mins in the butter or oil then add the rolled oats and fry for a further 5 minutes. Transfer to a large stewpot. Add prepared vegetables with enough stock to just cover and bring to boil. Reduce heat, stir and simmer for around 20 minutes or until vegetables are just cooked. Stir in the cornflour paste, season well and simmer for further 5 minutes. Serve with a chunk of bread.

Christmas Lights Switch-On Events

It is nice to see that there will be Christmas lights around the District to bring a bit of seasonal cheer to our town centres. The following are the dates and times of four events:

- ❖ Edenbridge Extravaganza: 27 November - 1 p.m. – 6 p.m. (no formal switch-on)
- ❖ Sevenoaks: 26 November – from 6 p.m. Lights switch on at 7.30p.m.
- ❖ Swanley: 25 November – 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- ❖ Westerham: 25 November – 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

A Memoire from Jill Yates

I was born in February 1938 in a house my father built in Brockham, a village in Surrey. Apparently my mother had filled the house with hyacinths of all colours so I would come into the world with a glorious smell. How thoughtful of her. I have loved their smell and colours all my life. My brother Graham was born two years later. We both had the same coloured auburn hair. My brother and I were very well cared for, especially as it was in the Second World War. We had a nanny to look after us. The family had two houses and two cars (not many people owned one at that time) and my father owned his own business. My father had a horse named Dobbin which would transport all the long planks of wood to his work yard. We were well dressed in matching Harris Tweed coats, leggings, shoes and socks. Life was good but not for long. Pop (as we called my father) was called up, like most men of his age, into the Army to fight the war.

Mum just could not cope. After Graham's birth she developed post natal depression. Although that is well understood today, it just wasn't in those days. Mum could not cope at all and most days just stayed in bed and there was a young baby to be fed. Pop said he came home on leave to find Graham weak and poorly. He got some Farleys rusks and a tin of Nestle's condensed milk, mashed it up together, cut the end off the rubber teat from his bottle and fed him. He said you could visibly see the colour come back into his cheeks and he improved immediately. This would be frowned on today! Far too much sugar but probably saved my brother's life.

Pop had to go back at the end of his leave from the Army. We just had to cope somehow. I was a very independent soul. At four years old I could cook toast, being able to reach the grill by standing on Mother's nursing chair (a chair where the legs were cut down and mothers used to lay the babies across their knees to change their nappies - no changing mats in those days). Things just muddled along. Mum up sometimes, sometimes not. No nanny by this time - perhaps she didn't get paid with no Pop to see things were in order. One day Graham and I went into our neighbour's house. The lady, Mrs. Payne, noticed we had mumps and told us to go home and tell our Mother. She hadn't noticed.

Mum needed help. She and Pop had tried to be a 'go-ahead' couple making their own way. They had moved 25 miles from Mum's family home. Mum had use of both a phone and a car. A phone is no use unless the person you want to contact has one too. She had use of a car but was in no state mentally to drive. So there she was, isolated, husband away, no family around and not well. Her great friend, her sister in law Aunty Mary, lived nearby but unfortunately died of cancer. That made matters worse as Mum had lost her best friend. The time came when I had to go to school. By this time Mum was not really capable so I was walking to school alone. Sometimes the school gate had a chain around it. So too early? Too late? Wrong day? Who knows, better walk home again. But if the chain was not there? Better go and peep through the classroom window. Luckily there was a seat under the window where girls sat and chatted at play times. I could kneel on that and look into the classroom. Usually the teacher would see me and come outside to fetch me.

I was still in the infants class when a doodle bug came overhead. A doodle bug was an unusual German self propelled bomb that made a droning sound as it passed overhead. When the sound stopped that was the time when it started to fall on us. What did I do? Knock on someone's door and ask 'Could I come in because the doodle bug was overhead.' Those were the days when children were taught to be independent even whilst at first year of school. I really don't know what happened to Graham whilst I was at school. Luckily he survived and went on to have a glittering career with NASA. Somehow, our situation was noticed and our elderly grandparents were brought in to look after us.

Poor Mum was taken away to Nethern Mental Hospital near Coulsdon in Surrey. And that is the last we saw of her for 11 years. Poor soul. She missed all her children's childhoods. Mum wasn't mentally ill at the time she went to hospital, just unable to cope. She certainly became mentally ill after the electric shock treatments she received. That is what they used to do in those days. The electric treatment used exceedingly high voltages. There was no such word as stress. You were a mental case, as straightforward as that. When our grandparents were brought in to look after us they were very old and they couldn't cope with a two and four year old, especially with the added stress of a war and having to go down to the Air Raid Shelter every time the siren sounded. So a solution had to be found. What did our Dad do? What he always did in a crisis. Go to the pub. He was a very social person. He had friends there. The lady serving behind the bar named Ivy had a son of her own and offered to look after us. The Army became aware of our situation. It was decided that if our situation could not be improved the only solution would be for Graham and I to go into an Army Children's Home. This was unthinkable as far as Pop was concerned!! He had lost his business, his wife and now possibly his children. Pop's solution was to take up the offer from his friend Ivy to look after us. In order that we were not found by the Army we moved to the northern outskirts of Brighton near the South Downs. Nobody would know we were there and we would be safe and thus the next chapter of our life started but more trials lay ahead.

FORUM CONTACT DETAILS

To contact the Forum Committee email Eileen Murray Giles at : chair@sdsaf.org.uk, write to "Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum" 22 Lambarde Road, TN13 3HT or ring 07784 677626

SDSAF Website: www.sdsaf.org.uk

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