

Useful Numbers

Southend Police	01702 431212	Traveline	0870 608 2608
Southend Community Action/SAVS	01702 356000	Arriva Southend	08701 201088
Southend Borough Council	01702 215000	First	01268 525251
South Essex Homes	0800 833160/161	National Express	08705 808080
Swan Housing	0845 6124700	Dial-a-Ride	01702 215666
The Guinness Trust	01245 496773	The Papworth Trust	01702 465182
Southend Hospital	01702 435555	HandyVan Scheme	01702 464199
Southend Primary Care Trust	01702 224600	RSPCA Cruelty Line	0870 5555 999
NHS Direct	0845 4647	Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Carers Line	0808 808 7777	Consumer Direct	08454 040506
Help the Aged	0207 278 1114	NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Age Concern (Southend)	01702 215780	Victim Support Line	0845 30 30 900

Assembly Meetings are all held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre

1.00pm Registration

1.30pm Start

2011 Meetings of the Assembly

21st September 2011

23rd November 2011

Falls Awareness Week Starts 20th June 2011

Sadly, it's true that falling is a natural part of ageing. Around 30% of people over 65 and 50 % of over 85s will fall each year. It can happen as a result of many factors; as we age our muscles weaken, making it difficult to right ourselves if we trip or stumble; combinations of medicines can cause dizziness; and a natural deterioration in eyesight can affect our balance as well as judgement when it comes to negotiating obstacles such as stairs and uneven paving.

Contacting the Older People's Assembly

Do you have a topic that might be of interest to others?
Do you have a question for the Assembly to take up on your behalf?

Do you have an interest in volunteering?
Do you have an anniversary or birthday to celebrate?

Send your questions, articles and letters to:
members@southendopa.org.uk

Visit our website at www.southendopa.org.uk

Disclaimer: Articles and letters sent for inclusion are subject to scrutiny or verification by the Assembly editorial team and reserve the right to alter or amend and will not publish material that is detrimental or derogatory to any individual or organisation. Comments made are to promote dialogue and response and are the views of the Editors only.

A late news item when available

ASTRONOMER: When you rearrange the letters: **MOON STARER**

Issue 11 Summer 2011

The Assembly Times

Newsletter of the Older People's Assembly

*Our Community
Our Voice*

Elmer Square development

Southend residents had one last opportunity to have their say on plans for the new library and learning development at Elmer Square. Architects are currently in the process of drawing up final designs for the ambitious £26.9m Scheme but before they submit their plans to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Development Control Committee in May residents are being asked for their input.

The Elmer Square development is a joint venture between the Council, the University of Essex and South Essex College of Further and Higher Education. It will provide an integrated municipal and academic public library alongside a modern teaching facility for the College and a stimulating research and learning environment for the University.

The new building will be constructed on the former site of the soon-to-be demolished Farringdon Car Park. It will be funded jointly by the Council (£12.5m), the University (£10.4m) and the College (£4m).

Ed: In an inclement financial environment, are we right to spend £30 million of capital expenditure and overcrowd our town's high street, when we have a well used library in the town?

Book Worm.....Pat Balls

1947, my first job was as a library assistant in a big modern public building, working staggered hours, causing travel problems with hourly buses crossing to County homewards.

Then a transfer to the County library headquarters in a Victorian school building full of reference books. Postal services; Cataloguing all new books for all county services, and a new venture of a mobile library van reaching all areas of the beautiful rural county of Buckinghamshire.

Now as an elderly resident, living in a complex in Southend, I use the mobile van as I still need to read. Over the years my interests have changed but books have always been a part of mine and my family's life.

From the Chair.....



As the newly appointed chair I want I to see that the mission for the Assembly has it's sights set on the changes that will be imposed on us in the coming years.

As such, the bus services are clearly in need of improvement, even though the past few months have been fraught with road congestion and disruption.

I want to keenly campaign for these services seeing an improvement and outline my thoughts later in this issue.

My campaign and any others we embark on will be greatly assisted by more people joining the Older People's Assembly, the larger the membership, the louder the voice. Together we can effect changes

Derek Iles



*Friendship comes in all forms,
and lasts a lifetime.*

Tip to avoid colds and flu – just avoid all human contact and become a hermit!

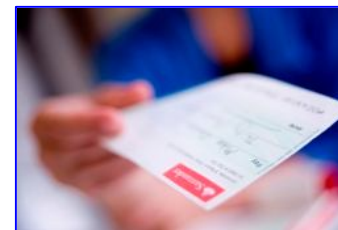
THIS IS THE ONLY TIME WE WILL SEE AND LIVE THIS EVENT. This year, July has 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays and 5 Sundays. This happens once every 823 years

Calendar for July 2011

July						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - The real reason that we can't have the Ten Commandments posted in a courthouse or Parliament, is this - You cannot post 'Thou Shall Not Steal', 'Thou Shall Not Commit Adultery' and 'Thou Shall Not Lie' in a building full of lawyers, judges and politicians - It creates a hostile work environment!

Older People with a cheque book



Older people typically write more cheques than other groups of consumers. This

is why the Payments Council has said that the needs of older people must be a priority in our work on the future of cheques.

Older people tend to use cheques for payments between friends and family or for payments to small businesses and other organisations such as charities and clubs. They are also more likely to use cheques for bill payments and other regular payments and are less likely to use online or telephone banking.

People with particular types of impairments (such as visual or manual) or people who are housebound, cheques can be an easy and flexible way of paying for services in the home, without the need to remember security information, use technology or access cash. As a result, some people can feel cheques are the only payment method available to them.

Many people still write or receive cheques although most people don't do this as often as they used to.

Increased use of debit cards in retailers and of Direct Debits to pay regular bills has led to the decline in cheque use and many people now find alternative methods of payment more convenient and easier to use than cheques.

Existing alternatives to cheque include use of a debit card and making internet and phone banking payments.

Using cheques can be a matter of habit and we will be looking at how we can encourage people to use alternatives which may be more efficient and secure than cheques. Emerging solutions include mobile payments, prepaid cards and new forms of online payments.

As an individual, you are unlikely to see any marked changes in the short term – just more of what we've all seen over the past twenty years i.e. almost everyone using and receiving cheques less and less.

Shocked that the Payments Council had not conducted a rigorous cost-benefit analysis before giving evidence at the earlier hearing, and that he hoped to examine the one they had now been instructed to do

ED: *Having researched this, they must talk to older person forums and ensuring they have detailed market research on older people's payment uses before it's too late. We should be worried this abolition would happen by the back door, any enquiry will highlight the issue again and will bring it into the public arena. It will help to make sure that nothing happens that would be detrimental to us or for the charity sector. How strongly do you feel about this?*

THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION - They keep talking about drafting a Constitution for Iraq. Why don't we just give them ours? It was drawn up by a lot of really smart guys, it has worked for centuries and we're not using it anymore!

The New Bereavement Service launched across The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)



On 16 March DWP's a new bereavement service was launched across the

Department.

This means that customers only have to contact the Department once to report a death, and this information will be shared across all appropriate DWP business areas.

At the same time, all bereaved customers are offered the opportunity to check what additional help they may potentially be eligible for as a result of the bereavement.

By asking a few questions, the telephony agent will tell the customer if they could be eligible for any benefits as a result of the death.

And, where they are eligible to get a Social Fund Funeral Payment (SFFP) and/or Bereavement Benefit (BB), they can make the claim over the phone in the same call.

The Bereavement Service is linked to the Tell Us Once (TUO) service, that captures death details and shares them with other local and central Government organisations

In the UK, over 65s are too often seen as frail, a burden or a drain on society's resources.

There is certainty that older people make a huge contribution to our society, but sadly, their potential isn't always realised.

By 2030, there will be three million over 85s in the UK and more than 15 million over 65s. The baby boom generation is hitting 65 from this year onwards. It is easy to see how the debate becomes focused on the resulting cost on the state.

In March the WRVS report found that in 2010, over 65s, through taxes, spending power, provision of social care and the value of their volunteering, made an astonishing net contribution of £40 billion to the UK economy.

With an estimate that in 2030 the positive net contribution of over 65s will grow to £77 billion by 2030.

More than any other group in society, older people are the social glue of most communities.

The research shows that every year, each older volunteer spends an average of over 100 hours 'informally' volunteering and more than 55 hours in formal volunteering roles.

This is worth £10 billion to the UK economy.

In 2012 the government will be bringing in a programme for measuring 'national wellbeing', based on the idea that there is more to a good life than Gross National Product.

'Experts' have previously seen a good 'later life' in terms of life expectancy, or years of good health after retirement, concentrating on physical needs and income. However new ways are being developed of looking at older people's lives.

Recent research addresses this by a study into what older people themselves identified as contributing to their quality of life as they grow older.

Questions such as 'Thinking about your life as a whole, what is it that makes your life good? Which factors are most important to you?'

Towards the top of this list came 'good social relationship' and 'being able to walk 400 yards'. In addition older people appreciated safe neighbourhoods with good community facilities and transport, social networks and adequate income.

Any research will help government develop policies which can foster a better quality for older people.

DESPERATION: When you rearrange the letters: **A ROPE ENDS IT**

Bus services?.....Derek Iles

Did you miss a bus, have you made contact with the Bus Company if it happened to you? Let us know the outcome.



"Two important questions and the latter is the most important.

Making contact by phone is the worse thing you can do, as once the person on the other end has replaced the receiver, the complaint is more likely not logged or ignored. Write your complain down and send a letter, requesting a response within 48 hours, and keep a copy of your letter.

One of the operators in Southend is woefully short of vehicles to be able to maintain good services. However, I have been told on good authority that 10 'brand new' buses are due to be put into service in the next few months.

We senior citizens, elder or whatever we chose to call ourselves have the free bus pass which has, I'm sure, enabled a lot more of us to get out and about, but spare a thought if you will to the many fare paying passengers who have a right to an efficient clean reliable bus service in the Southend and surrounding areas.

We are a force to be reckoned with and have the ability to get changes made, both in local and national government.

They need to hear our voice loud and clear.

The more letters that arrive on bus operators desks and in MP's offices, the more they will have to sit up and take note".

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is to play a pioneering role in ensuring local services are better tailored to meet the needs of local communities.

Southend is among 132 councils which has joined an 'Early Implementers Network' tasked with establishing new 'health and wellbeing boards' by April 2013.

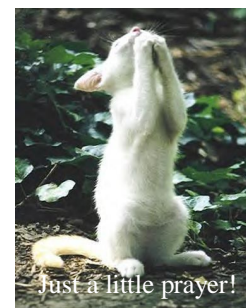
The aim of the boards is to strip away the existing divisions between the NHS and local authorities. This will give them a greater say in the services needed to provide care for local people and tackle the wider factors affecting health such as transport, housing and leisure services. The ambition is that all local authorities create 'shadow' health and wellbeing boards by April 2012.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, fully-fledged boards will be up and running in April 2013 – at the same time as GP consortia take on responsibility for the NHS budget.

The boards will act as a forum for those who buy services across the NHS, public health, social care and children's services, elected representatives and representatives from Health Watch. They will enable these different organisations to come together to talk about how they can work with each other to better the health and wellbeing of people in their area.

ED: "With so many changes being implemented for our health and wellbeing it's now, more than ever, so important that communities being served by the health care authorities, become aware of how these changes will be affecting them - groups who tackle these issues must be up front on 'panels' and 'boards' to effectively monitor and make the service providers aware of parochial issues.

However, none of these changes are focused on Prevention. Any Agreement must include a big responsibility of the public to better manage and protect their health.



just a little prayer!

How might Public Health reduce incidence, prevalence, or acuity of Bad Health (physical or mental) in less than 5 years?"

"A man's got to believe in something. I believe I'll have another drink."~ W.C. Fields ~

.....Viewpoint.....

How much listening goes on?

A recent article in the Guardian quotes Jane Ridley, mother of a disabled man - *My experience of trying, and failing, to communicate with a minister engaged in finalising policy affecting the most vulnerable people has left me utterly disillusioned with the point of consultation. The very process of consultation seems to be frustrating and radicalising consultants into adversaries, not placating them as being 'heard'.*

The article also quotes the Institute's Rhion Jones, who says that Britain in general is, *probably the best in the world at consultation.* But he adds that the quality of public engagement varies widely and that *the last government wasn't very good at observing good practice – and this one is shaping up even worse.*

Irresponsible parking?

Local Councillors have been campaigning, up to their election, for grass verge damages be put right by this Council and giving reassurance that they can be done - how much have we challenged this Council on the damages and disruptions caused by irresponsible people?

Why have no prosecutions been made and recoup the

costs from those who incur the damage?

ED: *Are we dragging our feet on this and having noted that some of the damages, at the risk of my rubbish remaining uncollected, are caused by the refuse vehicles - so where is this cost being recovered?*

Pension and the budget?

For our age, the highlight of this year's budget is the Chancellor's statement that the Government will consult on the introduction of a simple flat-rate state pension of £140 per week.

Do we welcome the principle of simplifying the state pension system and are we now keen to see aspiration turned into a firm commitment and time table, so that those approaching retirement have financial certainty?

As life expectancy increases, it is reasonable to consider raising the State Pension Age. But the Government should guard against any automatic system for future increases based solely on average life expectancy.

Other equally important factors must be taken into account such as the impact on the poorest, the unemployed and those with health problems or disabilities.

Receiving enough time to plan properly for delayed retirement is a key requirement for increases to the state pension age.

Should we object to the Government's plans to increase the state pension age to 66 by 2020?

By pushing ahead with proposals in the current Pensions Bill, the Government is denying millions of people the notice period they need to adapt their retirement plans.

Are we disappointed that forthcoming age discrimination laws will be put on hold for small businesses over the next three years?

This surely gives out the wrong message to business implying that treating people fairly is a burden rather than an opportunity.

Did the Chancellor miss an opportunity in his Budget to give hope to hundreds of thousands of frail and disabled older people who rely on council-funded care and support?

Older people and their families are battling to secure decent care in the face of the most brutal council cuts in recent memory.

Help for the most disadvantaged, such as people reliant on social care, should be a priority whenever small amounts of extra public money become available.



"Censor: a man who knows more than he thinks you ought to." ~ Laurence Peter ~

Election and how the elderly figure?

As most councillors know, people in later life make up a significant proportion of those who vote in elections. Local politicians will therefore need to take into account the views of all those who want to see improvement in the way local authorities support older residents to live active, independent and healthy lives.

There are a number of current issues we believe councils need to address to secure better outcomes for older people.

- Protecting care services and safeguarding the vulnerable
- Involving older residents in decision making
- Ensuring fair and equal treatment for those in later life
- Making neighbourhoods a good place to grow older

The Government's Citizenship Survey 2010 found that 90% of people aged 65+ feel they belong strongly to their neighbourhood, compared to 77% of all adults in England³. However, only 30% of people 65-74 and 29% of people 75+ feel they can affect decisions in their local area.

Other surveys have shown that over half of adults surveyed in Great Britain (53%) feel that politicians treat older people as second-class citizens⁵ and 67% of adults say that politicians do not take older people seriously⁶; 68% of people aged 65+ think that politicians tend to see older people as a low priority.

The Coalition Government's devolution agenda increasingly places emphasis on the importance of local people holding their councils to account through the democratic process. This election will therefore be a critical opportunity for local people, of all ages, to ensure that they elect councillors who promise to improve services for people in later life.

In spite of additional funding for care from central government, many local authorities are cutting social care services, raising eligibility criteria and increasing charges. These changes mean people who need care services will go without and family carers will lose essential support.

Councils must work to protect frontline services and ensure the money allocated to care is spent on care.

The move to personalisation and wider public services reform will change the face of social care provision over the next few years. Increasingly councils will need to use their role as commissioners to support and develop the market to ensure services are delivering better outcomes for older people. They will need to support the principle of choice in securing a diversity of providers, in particular taking into account the wider social value of smaller, local, community based organisations.

The voluntary and community sector have a key role to play, drawing on their experience and expertise in providing services responsive to people's needs and expectations and in supporting people with information and advocacy.

Involving and engaging local older people?

There are many examples across the country where effective engagement with local older people has improved local service design and delivery.

Councillors have an important role in ensuring that local older people are involved in all decisions taken on the services that affect them. Councils now have specific duties to involve local people but meaningful engagement also needs to be part of the "culture" of the council, and a high priority for all elected members.



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"The trouble with words is that you never know whose mouths they've been in." ~ Dennis Potter ~