

Issue 14 Autumn 2012

The Assembly Times

Newsletter of the Older People's Assembly



Established 2007

DEAR READER

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Summer is slowly fading and as our thoughts move to autumn dare we mention its just over three months to Christmas! And yes even before some of us have taken our summer break we have already seen in one of our local greeting card shops a full range of Christmas cards! Its been a busy year to date with many good things to look



Our Queens Jubilee cele- and wonderful June set the

back on. Diamond brations pageant in mood for

the programme of events across the country, many attended by her majesty and other royals.

Then London 2012 arrived and as Sir Sebastian Coe so eloquently put it 'We did it Right' and what a wonderful two weeks it was. The achievement of our athletes far surpassed all expectations and as a host nation what a welcome we gave to everyone.

Well Done Team GB!



Lets not forget the Paralympics and the achievements of the competitors despite adversity.

Hopefully the wonderful community spirit will endure and inspire us all.



Important DATE!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Our next public meeting in Civic Centre Council Chamber is on **26th September 2012**. Please see our invitation letter and agenda for details of our speakers - hope to see you there.

'Active Ageing' Community Event **Saturday 29th September 2012**. Your OPA is hosting the day with support from Southend Victoria Shopping Centre Management team- see page 8 for more details

Electing an Essex Police & Crime Commissioner

Your Vote Matters

Are you aware that **you** have a vote in the election of the Essex PCC. Elections of **Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in England and Wales** are direct elections in each police area of England and Wales scheduled to take place on **Thursday 15 November 2012**, having been put back from the originally planned date of May 2012 in order to secure the passage of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 through the House of Lords first. PCC's will replace the Police Authority currently now made up of local councillors and magistrates. The Government considers the elected Commissioners to have a stronger mandate than the "unelected and invisible police authorities that they will replace".

The core functions of Police and Crime Commissioners will be to secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police force within their area, and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of the police and crime plan. Police and Crime Commissioners will be charged with holding the police fund (from which all policing of the area is financed) and raising the local policing precept from council tax. Police and Crime Commissioners will also be responsible for the appointment, suspension and dismissal of the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Plans. What they will **not do** is run the police, that is the job of the Chief Constable. Shortly after their election to office, a Police and Crime Commissioner must produce a Police and Crime Plan. That plan must include their objectives for policing, what resources will be provided to the Chief Constable and how performance will be measured. Both the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable must have regard to the Police and Crime Plan in the exercise of their duties. A Commissioner will also be required to produce an annual report to the public on progress in policing.

All registered electors (British, Irish, Commonwealth and European Union citizens) living in England and Wales (except London) who will be aged 18 or over on Thursday 15 November 2012 are entitled to vote in the PCC elections. As with local and national elections you will receive a polling card which will tell you which polling station you must use. If you wish to have a postal vote or by proxy and aren't currently registered for this option then contact Southend Borough Council electoral registration team.

Its important so use your vote - the new PCC will be setting the priorities for policing in Essex. At the time of compiling this article six persons are listed as candidates:

Captain Nicolas Alston	Conservative	Retired Naval Officer & Director Civil Service
Val Morris Cook	Labour	Deputy Leader of Thurrock Council
Robin Tillbrook	English Dem.	National Chairman of the English Democrats
Mick Thwaites	Independent	Former Chief Superintendent
Linda Belgrave	Independent	Member of Essex Police Authority
John Gili-Ross	Independent	Company Director

Come along to our OPA meeting on 26th September to hear more about Electing a PCC.

BOGOF'S !! Buy one get one free: that's the equivalent to half price per item . When will supermarkets realise that many of us older ones don't want a BOGOF? We often only need the one & being mindful of waste & cost its time we were taken notice of. So keep writing to the supermarkets to add SHOOP (Sell Halfprice On One Only Purchase) as well as BOGOF.

DID YOU KNOW??

***Local Healthwatch** will replace LINK later this year. Its remit is to be “the local consumer champion” establishing relationships with Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), patient representative groups, the local voluntary and community sector and service providers to ensure it is inclusive and truly representative of the community it serves” More information @ www.dh.gov.uk/healthandcare/what-is-healthwatch/*

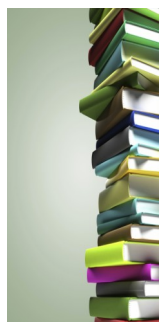


CYCLING UPDATE

It's good to be able to report that progress has been made on addressing the problem of cycling on pavements and in particular in and around Southend High Street. Our OPA Chairman, Derek Iles recently met with representatives of Southend Council and the Police regarding this issue that the OPA and others have been highlighting and for which we had been gathering signatures to petition for action to be taken. The Council and Police at that meeting confirmed that from mid June between 9.00a.m and 6.00p.m. officers would undertake an operation in the High Street and would issue fixed penalty notices to cyclists where appropriate. The Evening Echo of 26th July featured an article entitled ‘Cycling Fines Work’ in which PC Martin Knights says we have so far issued 50 fixed penalty notices to cyclists (fines totally £1500) and since doing this there has been a reduction in the number of cyclists using the High Street, and obviously cyclists are more wary now because the police are addressing the issue. PC Knights said the police are taking a common sense approach to issuing the £30 tickets and if a person complies with the police request to get off the bike and doesn't re-offend then they are unlikely to be issued with the fixed penalty notice. Two people had appealed against the tickets but both had been unsuccessful and the fines were payable.

The OPA welcomes the initiative but will continue to monitor the situation and we have written to the police asking for a regular update on statistics. Our committee members are keeping a note of any ‘dangerous’ cycling High Street incidents they observe and we will of course continue with our campaign; so please keep on with the signature collection as its important that the current initiative doesn't lapse.

Bag a Bag



Southend Libraries are introducing a stylish, light-weight and durable shopping bag to enable readers to easily borrow and return their library items. Made from 100% recycled material and with soft carrying handles, the distinctive purple bags cost just £1.99 each and are now available from all branches. For more details call Simon Wallace, Community & Diversity Manager on Tel: 01702 534144 e-mail simonwallace@southend.gov.uk

SOCIAL CARE REFORM - ITS A LONG TIME COMING!

We have all been eagerly awaiting the government making real, meaningful commitment and progress and the Dilnot report gave us all some hope. However apart from the recent announcement where the government accepts that there should be a cap on the maximum an individual should pay for care with a figure of £35000 having been reported in the press, there has been very little to report. Government acknowledges that as yet they have not identified any funding stream to meet the cost of this and its looking very much like it will be late next year before they make up their minds. So for now we still have the situation where there are people who are forced to sell their houses to fund continuing care .

Julia Unwin, Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commented on July 2012 :

While we welcome the publication of the long-awaited Social Care White Paper, we are deeply frustrated that more progress has not been made, and that the decision on how to pay for long-term care has been postponed yet again.

"The Secretary of State says this is a watershed moment. It is not. Extending current practice on deferred payments is entirely sensible, but it is also a sticking plaster. Andrew Dilnot's Commission gave us all hope for a new fair settlement and achieved wide-spread support – it is hugely disappointing his recommendations are not being acted upon now.

"Successive governments have failed to act. Without a sense of urgency more of us face insecurity and uncertainty as we age. The failure to address social care properly will only mean more pressure on the NHS thereby destroying all hopes of a sustainable and functioning health system in the future."

Our friends at Southend & District pensioners campaign article also reported : *The storm clouds Are gathering—when you hear phrases like “pensioners never had it so good”, then it is time to keep your eyes and ears open. NPC and others report that the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) claim the tax and benefit system for older people should be reformed to pay for the future cost of social care. Dot Gibson is quoted as saying, “The government is spectacularly slow in getting to grips with the issue of care funding, we’ve had about 20 reports in the last 14 years that have all showed currently the system is in crisis and needs urgent attention”. The IFS’s thoughts do perhaps give an idea where the governments thinking is going and it’s not rocket science to work it out. The government and IFS highlights that tax and benefits such as free prescriptions., free bus passes, free TV licences, winter fuel allowance, priority seat on trains as well as discounted fares should be reformed to pay for future social care costs. So this would indicate that the IFS wants these means tested to the extent that only those on pension credit would get them. Ipso facto pensioners will be paying for the care of other pensioners. David Cameron insists the benefits will not be touched during this parliament but Iain Duncan Smith last month suggested the commitment would be reassessed in the run up to the next election!*

Both these reports give us much to think about and clearly a subject of great concern to so many of us. The OPA along with others will continue to lobby at all levels for prompter action but we need **you** all to maintain the pressure on your local and central government elected members for a fair and equitable system for Care Home and Social Care at Home to be at the forefront of their decision making.

Related article - Carers Allowances—page 6

GREEN MAN THREAT!



No, not an alien from outer space but much nearer to home.

A Daily Telegraph article "*Green Man is too quick for pensioners to cross safely*" tells us that four in five pensioners cannot cross quickly enough to be safe. When the green man starts flashing it will be five seconds until the traffic gets the green light. University College London used 20ft as their test crossing width and timed 3000 over 65's across this distance. They found that the five seconds given to get from one side the other wasn't enough for 76% of men and 85% of women who participated in the test. After the 5 second time allowed the average man still had 5ft of the roadway still to cross and women 7ft.



The Lesson? If your walking is restricted or slower than most never set off if the green man has already started flashing (don't take that the wrong way!) but wait for a 'fresh green man' and begin as soon as the signal is illuminated when there will be a full five seconds in which to cross the road.

The Conclusion? Do the young determine such things like this without thought for the less able because its OK for them?

KEEP SAFE - BE SECURITY AWARE!



Michael Armstrong - Crime Reduction & Architectural Liaison Officer Southend Police District offers us some advise about home security: Burglary is a horrible crime. There are **FREE** or very cheap measures you can take to radically reduce the risk of it happening to you. All our homes are different but some general rules apply:

Prevent Access to the rear of your home: Fit a Deadlock or Padlock to side gates, add a security light at the rear of your home. Add a trellis topping to easily climbed fences and gates to prevent offenders from just being able to hop over.

DoorSecurity: Most common are Wooden Doors, usually fitted with a rim lock, and perhaps a mortice lock. If you only have a rim lock it should be a deadlocking model and be **deadlocked at all times**. If you also have a mortice lock fitted to the door use it **all the time**. (Remember if others hold keys to your home make sure they have **both** the deadlock and mortice key)

PVC-U doors are normally fitted with a multipoint locking system operated by a Europrofile cylinder. This type of door is only correctly locked if, having closed it, you push the handle up, activating the bolts, and then **turn the key in the cylinder and remove it**. If you only push the handle up it is a matter of seconds for a burglar to unlock your door, from outside, without making noise or causing much damage.

Windows: should be closed and locked every time the room is left empty. It is easy within seconds to lean in through and fully open a window. Little windows left open allow thieves to open the adjacent bigger window!

Essex is a very safe county, and following the above guidance reduces the risk of being a victim ever further. Free, impartial advice is available from your local PCSO or Crime Reduction Officer

AGEISM

Ageism is discrimination or unfair treatment based on a persons age. It can impact on ones confidence, financial situation or quality of life.

Examples that readily come to mind are:

- * How older people are represented in the media.
- * Upper age limit imposed on travel insurance.
- * BBC's apparent reluctance to include older people on the panel of 'Any Questions'.
- * Losing a job because of age

- * Being refused financial services because of age
- * Benefit ineligibility e.g. disability living allowance
- * Being refused medical procedures'
- * Being refused club membership.

There are many more but don't forget that the Equality Act 2010 brought together existing regulations that protected against ageism and extended them to give more equality. If you believe you have been subject to Ageism speak up!



WE ASKED - YOU SAID

Thank you—what a supportive membership you are—so many of you took the time to complete our recent survey, a 30% return which is most encouraging. The objective was to enable you all to have your say about the frequency, day, time and location of our public meetings and also to indicate how you think we are doing. We also asked you to tell us which issues were of most concern to you, your family and carers and what you want us to focus on as our priorities for the future. The following summaries those responses and as is the norm with any democratic organisation results are shown in percentage of survey return only. We Asked :

Attend Public Meetings	75% said YES		25% said NO		
Of those not attending most was because of clash with other meeting dates or family support issues					
Frequency Public Meeting	48% said 2 monthly		48% said 3 monthly		4% did not express a view
Preferred Day of Meeting	8.4% Mon	26.5% Tues	36.2% Wed	16.8% Thur	4.8% Frid 7.3% No pref.
Time of Meeting	15.5% said Morning		56.5% said Afternoon		27% No pref. 1% Evening
Your Opinion of Venue	60% said Good		23% said Satisfactory		7.5% Poor. 9.5% Didnt say
Your Priorities for OPA	12.3% Social Care		14.4% Transport		11.5% Pensions & Benefits
	12.3% NHS		7.4% Hospital Discharge		8.6% G P's
	6.6% Safety in the Home		11.6% Safety Out & About		9.9% Council Budgets
	5.4% Housing		Respondents listed one other priority.		

Survey outcome: Public Meeting frequency will need to be reviewed at end of year. Meetings to continue to be held on a Wednesday during the Afternoons and the Civic Centre remains as our venue. Your top three priorities are: Transport, Social Care, NHS, closely followed Safety Out & About then Pensions & Benefits and Council Budgets. **Our thanks again for your responses & our apologies for printing issue with Q 7 - we will survey again on this question at our meeting on 26th September.**



Carers Allowance — Don't Miss Out !

The latest email update from Age UK's is a reminder about claiming Carers Allowance and has some good information on qualifying for this allowance explained simply and briefly. It also gave links to factsheets with lots more details. So if you look after your partner, or a relative or friend who needs help because they are ill or disabled, then **you are a carer** and if you are not currently claiming the allowance you may be may be eligible and able to claim. The basic conditions you must meet to qualify are:

conditions you must meet to qualify are:

- ? Spend at least 35 hours a week in caring activity.
- ? You don't have to live with the person.
- ? Care for someone who receives at least middle rate care component of [Disability Living allowance](#) or any rate of [Attendance Allowance](#).
- ? Not earn more than £100 per week after deductions
- ? Not be in full time education

The last may not be relevant and the earnings limit may be a little misleading but help is at hand at the Benefit Enquiry line on 0800 882200 alternatively the DWP website www.dwp.gov.uk/carersallowance has all the information you will need.

LAUGH WITH US

A Lighthearted Obituary—Today we mourn the passing of our good friend **Common Sense** who had been with us for many years.

No one knows for sure how old he was since his birth records were lost long ago in bureaucratic red tape. He lived by simple sound financial polices, don't spend more than you earn, reliable parenting strategies (adults not kids are in charge) and he knew that life was not always fair!

His health began to deteriorate when well intentioned, but over bearing regulations were put in place. It worsened when schools were required to get parental consent to administer aspirin to a student, but could not inform the parents when a student became pregnant and wanted an abortion.

Finally **Common Sense** lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband, churches became businesses: and criminals received better treatment than their victims.!

He finally gave up the ghost after a woman failed to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was HOT, she spilled some on her lap , claimed and was awarded a huge financial settlement.!

He was preceded in death by his parents,
Truth and Trust—his Mum and Dad
Discretion—his lovely Wife
Responsibility—their Daughter,
Reason.— Repsonsibility's Sister and their Son.
 He is survived by two stepbrothers:
My Rights and **IMA Whiner.**

Sadly not many attended his funeral because so few realised that **Common Sense** had gone.!



Diamond Jubilee Reflection

Wherever did our Queen find the energy for so much travel and the daily engagements both prior to the wonderful June celebrations and during the days following? She is truly remarkable. The nation certainly had Diamond Jubilee fever and so many areas enjoyed street parties and local events including a modern day 'take' on some of our favorites with the sight and taste of spam & corned beef sandwiches and lets not forget coronation chicken! !



We also heard from grandparents who introduced their grandchildren to the delights of spam fritters as well as corned beef hash!



We'd love to know about your 'old time' favorite recipes - send us a copy and we will publish them in the next edition.

LONDON 2012

What a splendid event London 2012 has been, first we had the Olympic Torch procession around the country and even the rain didn't suppress our enthusiasm with so many crowds along the route

*Our picture:
 Mark Foster in Southend High Street 6th July*



Then we had two super weeks, the Olympic Games were truly amazing and well done Team GB and lets not forget the Games Makers that great band of volunteers who are an example to us all -come on friends keep the volunteering spirit alive!

Well done Team GB - third in the overall ranking of golds:

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
USA	46	29	29	104
China	38	27	23	88
Team GB	29	17	19	65

Apology

If you have visited our website recently you will have noticed that 2012 information is missing, we are very sorry for the problem and are currently working to resolve this. Similarly if you have emailed us using the link: members@southendopa.org.uk we may not have received your message so whilst we are sorting this if you wish to contact us by email then our Chairman Derek Iles is happy to accept your messages . Please Email him @ Derekiles@btinternet.com

SATURDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2012

The Older Peoples Assembly Active Ageing Community Event



**Important
DATE!**

MARK THE DATE IN YOUR DIARY NOW!

Following on from our successful event last October we are holding this years event on **29th September 2012** in Southend (Victoria Shopping Centre High Street Area) and it promises to be a day full of interest with all things associated with 'Active Ageing' Yes its all about keeping us as Active and Involved as we can be in our more senior years. **2012 is the 'International Year of Active Ageing'** and as many of you will recall **UK Older Peoples Day** is always at the beginning of October so what better time than Saturday 29th September to come along and celebrate the huge contribution that over 55s make to society. The theme encourages people to be active and raises awareness of

the benefits that physical, social and mental activity brings, highlights the range of services and activates in Southend that support this. It will bring together a range of local voluntary organisations, service providers, local traders and others to provide residents with information about the services and activities they, or their parents or loved ones, can access. Aside from general information, there will also be a focus on local arts and cultural events, health, volunteering options and much more. This will be a drop in event, residents can come along at any time between **10.00am and 3.00pm**. to speak to service providers or listen to talks or watch performances. Look out for more information and details of the programme for the day in the local press, websites, see the event flyers, listen to the local radio, **DO COME ALONG & SUPPORT US .**

ARE YOU AWARE ?

Some of our members we thought a post script to



from the SBC website: *Over 65-year-olds from Southend are being invited to swim free on Wednesdays at pools in Southend from Wednesday 4th April. This terrific offer for older residents, as part of an ongoing Council scheme, will be available at any public swimming session at Southend Swimming and Diving Centre, Garon Park Eastern Avenue, Southend SS2 4FA, Belfairs Swim Centre. Fairview Gardens Off Eaton Road, Leigh SS9 3PES and at Shoeburyness Leisure Centre Delaware Road, Shoeburyness, SS3 9NS,*

Its free to swim on a Wednesday for 65+s!!

have told us that they didn't know about it so all might be useful and the following is

OLDER PEOPLES ASSEMBLY MEETING DATES 2012

CIVIC CENTRE – THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
Come and join us 1.00pm registration for 1.30p.m. Start
WEDNESDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER
WEDNESDAY 5TH DECEMBER

Visit our Website at www.southendopa.org.uk