

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 24 March 2016

Officers at the meeting Alice Morgan

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Present: Cllr Oldham (CO, Co Chair NBC), Roger Rumsey (RR, Co Chair), Ann Timson (AT Independent), Brian Nicholls (BN, Independent), Hazel Tuttle (HT, Independent), Martin Price (MP, Men's Sheds), Alice Morgan (AM, NBC), Mike Hill (MH, Independent), Tony Mallard (TM, NBC), Christina Owusu – Akuffo (COA, Independent), Sarah Hayle (SH, Community Law), Nisha Mejer *(NM, NBC), I Beere (IB, NBC), David Hewitt (Independent)

*Took minutes

Apologies : Liz Carroll- Wheat, Veronica Male, Matthew Torreson, Maureen Hill, Malcolm Mildred, Mary Dyer- Atkins
RR Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes and matters arising:

Please add Michael Hill to apologies for last meeting.

ACTION: NM to recirculate pothole presentation.

BN: Residents of Burwood Road have won their case. A surface dressing will be placed over the potholes. A very pleasing outcome. BN thanked everyone for their support.

TM: Our Residents Association signed a petition and I will congratulate them for that.

ACTION: To return to this issue in future. NM to email NCC to ask Highways to return in 6 months.

Cllr O: Asked Forum members to refer to categorisation of potholes as this is useful information.

DH: The speed to which potholes appear is alarming which is why it is important to ask Highways to return.

3. COMMUNITY LAW - NEIL JOSHI

SH gave presentation on behalf of Neil Joshi.

SH explained that CL is based in Hazelwood Road and the One Stop Shop. The organisation provides advice on welfare, debt, money management, immigration, employment law.

ACTION: Drop in times for the OSS to be circulated electronically to the Forum. SH then gave a presentation called energy Best Deal encouraging Forum members to review their energy bills and to look for better deals. Leaflets were brought to

meeting for Forum members to take away.

ACTION: Presentation to be electronically circulated.

SH: There is a lot of information about your bills. Suppliers have to treat you fairly.

Notice should be given before tariffs come to an end. You can also complain to Ofgem if you are unhappy with the supplier. People are concerned about changing tariffs. Prices are coming down and you could save approx. £30 per month.

SH gave advice on how to switch suppliers and there is no risk of gas and electricity supply being switched through the transitional period. The process is straightforward.

SH explained the Priority Services Register (PSR). If you are pensioner, disabled or chronically sick, have a sight or hearing difficulties, you can qualify to go on the PSR and access services.

SH explained the warm home discount. This is a discount of £140 which is deducted from the electricity bill. The scheme is closed at the moment and will reopen in May. Contact CL for more details.

AT: Is a council tenant and lives in a flat and lives on ground floor. Meter on higher floor and locked away.

SH: Advised AT to go on the PSR and the meter will be read for you.

MH: Feels that Ofgem can do more. MH paid by bill by direct debit and the supplier insisted that MH should go on the reduced rate. At the end of the year MH was charged extra money. Would like to know what is being paid monthly and not have an unexpected bill at the end.

Has also been advised that electricity is cheaper at night. However it is also reported that it is not safe for electrical appliances to be used at night. There is confusion surrounding this.

SH: Economy 7 is not always the best option.

DH: Have changed to Sainsbury Energy which is part of British Gas. Have had suppliers come to change the meter but are unable to do so. The meter is illegal as it has a lead pipe attached to it. I ask for paper bills which cost £24 extra. Have a friend who has never changed. The system is fragmented.

How long will the winter fuel payment be available for?

RR: Have been told that the budget for pensioners will not be touched.

Cllr O: There are 6 different suppliers. Is there actually much difference in them?

DH: Smaller companies are cheaper

RR: Agreed and added that the service is friendlier with smaller companies.

Cllr O: Sheltered housing area has had solar panels fitted.

SH: There has not been much saving yet.

DH: There are not enough engineers for solar panels. If we had a national installation scheme we would create employment and cut costs.

AT: Received a phone call asking if she would like a new boiler and was asked personal information. Suppliers should know the ages of customers and should look after the more vulnerable. People are afraid to give personal information over the telephone.

DH: There is a fragmented energy market. There are changes in the County Council. Will CL be affected?

SH: CL should still be here. The CC is not the only funders.

Contact details for Community Law: 01604 621038.

ACTION PLAN

SCHOOL OF LIFE - LIZ CARROLL WHEAT

Not discussed.

MEN IN SHEDS

Men In Sheds

MP: There was a study done in Australia that showed that women meet together more than men. This helped the mental wellbeing for women. A movement called MIS was established to deal with this. MIS is providing an opportunity for older men to get together to do activities or project.

MP visited a group in Milton Keynes. Activities such as woodwork, metal work, and electronics were undertaken. A movement in Northampton was started in June 2015. NBC and AGE UK have been supportive of this. The group is small at the moment with four committee members and would like to have more. Applied to NBC for funding and donations are appreciated.

MP went on to talk about Goodwill Solutions. This is not a business but a commercial and social enterprise. MIS will be preparing timber for one of their projects.

MP is looking for volunteers to be "Shed Masters" to lead projects.

MP can be contacted on 01604 700339 mprice@engagementworks.com

Cllr O: Also suggested to MP to apply for councillor empowerment funds.

ACTION: AM to approach Cllr Eldred about this.

TM: Invited MP to the Residents Association meeting. TM is also on the board of NPH and will let them know too.

BN: There seems to be manual projects. Are there social projects too?

MP: There are all sorts of possibilities. By doing things together men can satisfy their social needs.

AT: Why is this for only men?

MP: Women meet together when children are small but men often do not as they had to go to work.

AM: Did door knocking – lots of social isolation in men. AM spoke to someone who suggested that men do not come together perhaps due to lack of confidence. AM will put MP in touch with someone who might be interested in the group.

MP: In Northampton and more people are retiring early. There are skills which can be used.

DH: The world of work has changed. The age of retirement is getting longer. A number of elderly people attend U3A so it would be a good idea to contact this group. Men and women are isolated and we need to start somewhere and this may go in different directions.

ACTION NM: Presentation given to be circulated.

5. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE

Dementia Awareness Week – 15th – 21 May. There will be an Awareness Day at the One Stop Shop. The forum agreed to be part of this.

ACTION: AM/NM to contact Veronica.

AM: Discussed a Fraud Awareness session and will arrange an activity and will ask the following organisations to be involved:

Police, Barclaycard Fraud and Trading Standards.

Cllr O: Suggested that trading Standards could bring signage to stop cold callers.
RR: Explained that this is a complicated process and prevention is important.
Cllr O: The issue with prevention is that it is not measured.
TM: Friends of Eastfield Residents Association hosting an event on Easter Sunday.
2.30pm – 4pm.

6. SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Would like to know statistics on how many rough sleepers there are in Northampton.

ACTION: NM/ AM – to invite Cllr King

MH: Raised a concern about the Sixfields Stadium. Will the loan be repaid?

Cllr O: There are three enquiries – Police, internal audit and external. No further comment can be made at this stage.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

BN: Discussed the Over 65s bonds. They pay good rates however the form is not easily understandable. It is very complicated. BN has written to Michael Ellis to complain.

DH: The seven planters on Abington Street are a disgrace. They need maintaining as rubbish is dumped in them. Litter on road side verges also a huge problem.

ACTION: Cllr O said he will speak to Cllr Bottwood about this.

DH: There is an issue with the new lampposts in Kingsley. They have affected the footpaths.

Cllr O: The County Council should deal with this.

8. DATE AND VENUE OF FUTURE MEETING

May 12th The Jeffrey Room, The Guildhall. 2-4pm.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified