



Chairman's Annual Report November 2016

Introduction

In the body of this report I describe the main accomplishments that the Forum has achieved in the last year and I think it is important to remind anyone reading this report that we are independent of Caerphilly County Borough Council and any other organisation. Our primary role is to improve the lives of those who are 50+ and living or working in the borough.

Getting Your Voices Heard

The Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Older People recommended each of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales establish a 50+ forum to enable older people across Wales to have the opportunity to get their voices heard on issues that matter to them. The Caerphilly Borough 50+ Forum was, therefore, established in 2004.

This is one of the major functions of the forum that is facilitated by a Steering Committee. An ongoing challenge for us as a forum and steering committee is how we can do this on behalf of the 50 – 60,000 over 50 residents in the Borough.

In the absence of requests from forum members, you will see from the last year's annual report, we have taken the approach, that as steering committee members, all older people ourselves, we feel there is a good chance that our experience and issues are likely to be many of the problems that would face our residents. Like many others we have problems getting a Blue Badge; making an appointment with our GP; trying to obtain a care assessment; email accounts hacked; the list could go on.

Over the year we have kept a close eye on what both national and local governments are doing. We have ready access to Council officials and, to the Office of the Older Peoples' Commissioner for Wales and through them and the Council links into the Welsh Government. Cllr Christine Forehead, Caerphilly County Borough Council Member Champion for Older People, regularly attends our Committee meetings. So, we can AND do take up issues with and make representations to the relevant parties.

But we would like to get input from our members (or, indeed, any Caerphilly 50+ resident). We are pleased to say it was a message via our Caerphilly Over 50 website that started our scrutiny of the changes that the Welsh Government made to the **guidelines for applying for a Blue Badge**. This has resulted in significant activity including a digital story, meeting with CCBC Customer First and subsequent changes to their process and correspondence with the older people's commissioner. [See more at <http://caerphillyover50.co.uk/latest-news/blue-badge-applications-update/>.]

If you have an issue that want to make us aware of, you can use any of the contacts at the end of this report. We would love to see in next year's annual report, the Chairman be able to report on many more items that have been addressed that originate from local residents requests.

Consultations

Our ability to make significant contributions to consultations this year can be attributed to the ability of those on the Committee. Submissions this year were:-

- Welsh Government - Proposal for amendments to the Commissioner for Older People in Wales (Appointment) Regulations 2007 – November 2015
 - *The term of the Commissioner's office extended by 2 years to June 2018 i.e. 2 more years*
- Supporting the Independence of Older People: Are Councils Doing Enough? – Wales Audit Office (WAO) 2015 – November 2015 (advice for Caerphilly C.C.)

- Welsh Government - Setting the Direction for Wales and the Borders Rail - February 2016
- Welsh Government - Improving the recruitment and retention of Domiciliary Care workers in Wales – March 2016
 - *Care Council for Wales now developing a strategy for this sector in Wales*
- Welsh Government - Housing an Ageing Population in Wales – Help shape our thinking - August 2016
 - *We had a very positive response to our comments from Welsh Government and issues we raised will be covered in a Report of Expert Panel to be published shortly*
- Caerphilly County Borough Council ‘The Caerphilly We Want ‘
 - *We were asked to have provided a short video providing feedback from 50+ residents across the borough for use in the wellbeing assessment*

Of course, the age old question is “Do they listen?” Our recent experience shows us they do! As an example, we commented on the style and format of the Draft questionnaire that was to be used for Housing an Ageing Population by the Welsh Government .We were pleased to receive a response from the Welsh Government thanking the Caerphilly 50+ Forum members for taking the time to develop this response and some of our suggested modifications were included in the final version of the consultation and they mentioned that a number of our points in our response to the formal consultation resonated with the thinking of the Ministers Advisory Forum on Aging, Housing Expert Group. Particularly the need for better and more integrated assessment of independent-housing and care needs at local level and the opportunities provided by the Social Services and Well-Being Act in this context; the potential of “smart” technology and the need for trusted equity release schemes. However, it was also stated that there are other interesting ideas in our paper too which will be fed in to the Group’s deliberations. As always, you can read full details of our response on our web site (<http://caerphillyover50.co.uk/latest-news/housing-an-ageing-population-in-wales/>)

The Steering Committee

Unfortunately, we have lost a number of members through this year, mostly due to ill health; either directly or because of commitments to family members. However, we have also gained new members and still maintain a small but active, able and very experienced committee. But please note there is always room for members wanting to be more involved!

Digital Inclusion

We are pleased to say that we are once again able to offer the facility to help residents; groups and organisations help develop short digital stories or videos. These can be used in a number of ways including: helping groups to campaign on issues that matter to them, to help those living with dementia or communication issues to share their likes & dislikes with current and future carers, or as a resource for organisations to listen to the voices of older people on particular issues. However, although this service is free to forum members and older peoples groups other organisations may be charged a nominal but reasonable fee for this service at the discretion of the steering committee.

While we know that not everybody has a computer, or access to one, we also have to note doing mail shots to members can be expensive. So we decided to create a Facebook page and create a new website to enable us to reach a wider audience. The quality of the website has received praise from such diverse commentators as a professional website developer and other 50plus Forums, as well as the Commissioner for Older People in Wales' office.

We work closely with "Get Caerphilly Online". If you think you would benefit from training in improving your computer knowledge / Facebook/ email skills please get in touch and let us know what aspects would interest you. If we have sufficient interest we will arrange suitable courses.

Facebook has been used to provide some light relief. But in addition we have been very successful in posting critical alerts, one of which reached over 20,000 people. We have supported national campaigns,

such as warning about scams. Throughout the year we have run a number of the Caerphilly 50+ Positive Action “Simon Says” campaigns providing advice on such topics as Pensions and Benefits and Attendance allowance, advising who and how claims could be made.

We used our Facebook page to support the Commissioner for Older People’s consultation about use of GP services. By using our contacts through this medium, we were able to significantly increase the responses they received.

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act

The Welsh Government introduced the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act on 6th April 2016. Welsh Government was keen from the outset to hear the views of citizens about the new law and how it is working, so a number of Citizen’s Panels have been developed around Wales. The role of the Citizen Panel is to collect, collate and pass on the views of people affected by the Act to the Welsh Government.

The **Gwent Citizen Panel** was formed in July 2015. Not only is one of our Steering Committee a member of the panel but is actually the Chairman. See our website for an article on how “Provision of Care and Support in Wales is Changing”.

<http://caerphillyover50.co.uk/latest-news/provision-of-care-and-support-in-wales-is-changing/>

Constitution

Probably not the topic to get your pulse racing! However, we felt that we should develop our constitution into a document that gave far more clarity to the purpose of the Forum and Steering Committee and what the residents of Caerphilly Borough could, and should, expect.

Hopefully, we have achieved that and will present the new constitution for approval at this year’s AGM.

Newsletter

Since the first edition of our newsletter arrived from the designer and printers I have to admit that I have been overwhelmed at the high quality

achieved. What has also been a pleasant surprise is that we have been able to generate a wide range of topics for each subsequent edition.

Not surprisingly, we have received lots of complimentary comments. We are now even receiving requests to place adverts in the newsletter. The latest issue will be available by the end of November. We would welcome any articles, images, poetry and interesting 'did you know' facts for either the newsletter or website. Please send any contributions via the contacts at the end of this report.

50+ Positive Action

We continue to work in partnership with Caerphilly 50+ Positive Action, and we now sit on the Caerphilly Living Longer Ageing Well review panel. 50+ Positive Action has facilitated a number of different initiatives for us this year including our links with the Gwent Citizen Panel, making and distribution 22,000 of the Keeping safe POVA DVD across Wales, developing and distribution of our newsletter and responding to a number of consultations also support us with managing our Facebook page.

I hope you will feel that this report shows how proactive and successful the steering group has been on your behalf this year. We welcome any feedback and suggestions.

Ralph Stevens

Chairman (Caerphilly Borough 50+ Forum)

If you would like to contact us:

Email on: 50plusforum@mail.com

Or Call Mandy Keenan (Sprague) on 01443 864277

Write to: Caerphilly 50+ forum, c/o Policy unit, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Penallta House , Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed CF82 7PG

Website: www.caerphillyover50.co.uk

Facebook: **Caerphilly Over 50**