



Caerphilly County Borough 50+ Forum

Annual Report – November 2016 - October 2017

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Foreword by Chair of Forum - Dr Ralph Stevens

My overarching mission when I was elected as chairman of the Forum 4 years ago was to revitalise the Forum. Progress was epitomised by the Annual events we held in Pengam Boys school and Llancaiach Fawr. Over the first few months of this year it looked as though things were going into reverse. External events caused a number of resignations from the Steering Committee and the time available to us from Mandy Keenan was dramatically reduced. But, as you will learn from this report, we were not daunted and have actually continued to go forward.

Key to our success is reaching out to others. We have held our first meeting with Councillor Barbara Jones (our Champion on the Council) and Dave Street (Social Services manager) to discuss how we can cooperate in the face of continuing constraints on Council budgets. We have committed to hold quarterly reviews. We have held our first meeting with Ffriend I mi and, as a first initiative in cooperating with them, have offered to give them prominence in our next newsletter.

I am particularly pleased with the link we have established with the Carers Group in the Council. This has enabled both parties to extend their reach in communicating to a wider audience. Providing information is one of our key roles.

A number of significant pieces of legislation have been, or are being, introduced to change the way services are delivered and to integrate Health and Social care. We have made significant responses to 2 of these this year. It remains to be seen if our concerns are addressed. All of these are intended to improve services at a time of severe monetary restrictions. We would love to get feedback from you over the next year about your experience. Is it working?

Our website continues to receive plaudits; "The website is fantastic. Especially, with only one person handling it- well done to you!". We now have the ability to craft the structure of the website internally and Committee members are making excellent contributions to the content. Many improvements have been made but there are more to come.

Many 50+ Forums (or Fora, if you prefer) have struggled to sustain their existence. To prosper, we need to keep innovating and developing. Probably the greatest risk to our future is recruiting Committee members with experience and time. The greatest challenge to us in the coming year is to determine how an organisation such as ours can develop something that looks like a succession plan.

Always remember that the Forum belongs to the residents of Caerphilly Borough and is run for you. We welcome your feedback, ideas and constructive criticism. You will find contact information at the end of this document, on all our literature and on our website. We really would like to hear from you.

Introduction

This Annual Report describes the main achievements of, and issues addressed by, the Caerphilly 50 Plus Forum in the last year and sets out the new direction that the Forum has agreed it should take for the future.

Background

The Caerphilly Borough 50+ Forum was established in 2004 as part of the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales. A key role of the forum is to be a voice for those who are 50+ across the borough, and a group that the Local Authority and other organisations can consult with on issues effecting older people. The Forum is established as an independent voluntary organisation with a constitution, elected officers and its own bank account. It is run by an elected Steering Group. The Forum is supported by Caerphilly County Borough Council (the Council). The aims and objectives of the Forum, summarised from its constitution (November 2016) include:

- To promote the interests, participation and engagement of people aged fifty and over in Caerphilly County Borough and provide them with an opportunity to express, publicise and present their views, opinions or complaints. This will aim to contribute to an improvement in the quality of their lives and help to address the effects of isolation, loneliness and poverty.
- To provide information relevant to residents of the Borough particularly to those over 50 and friends and relatives who care for them.
- The Forum will fulfil the aims by identifying any area where they can influence the improvement of the well-being of the residents of Caerphilly County Borough over 50 years old.
- To achieve this, the Forum must seek the views, ideas, opinions and even complaints of members. It must publicise the existence, role and achievements of the Forum. It must encourage the expansion of membership to further the extent of input from members.
- creation of age-friendly communities in Caerphilly County. (new aim from August 2017)

Steering Group

The Steering Group has met on a monthly basis throughout the year, with a meeting room provided courtesy of South Wales Fire Service to whom we offer our thanks. At the last AGM, 13 Volunteers were elected to the Group but unfortunately 5 members had to resign for differing but valid reasons. However, the remaining members have not let this deter us and a purposeful and structured agenda has been followed to give a new direction for the Forum (see below). Recruitment of new members including strengthening of the Steering Group has however been identified as a priority. The Council has offered to utilise its publicity resources to help raise awareness of the Forum and help recruit new members and also through its

Volunteering Policy for staff examine whether any suitable individuals can be identified to support the Forum. Over the last few months two new Steering Group members have joined us to bring us up to 10 in strength. Over the coming year, finding further new Steering Group members and increasing our membership will continue to be an important objective. We would like to record our thanks to Mandy Keenan our Strategy for Older People Co-ordinator for her sterling work in supporting the Forum's Steering Group over this and many other years.

Older People's Champion

In June 2017 following the Local Elections, a new Older People's Champion was appointed for the County and as a Forum Member. Councillor Barbara Jones was first elected to Council in 2012, she represents St. James ward in Caerphilly. Barbara is a former Children's Social Worker. She has also been a member of the Gwent magistrates bench for many years sitting in criminal and family court. Barbara is also a Community councillor in the Van Community Council. Following an early meeting of the Chair, Vice Chair and new Champion, we welcome Barbara to her new role. We also offer our sincere thanks to Councillor Christine Forehead as the out-going Older People's Champion for all her work in supporting the Forum and Older People over many years.

Speakers

During the last year, the Forum received a number of interesting speakers at the Steering Group meetings:

December – Caerphilly County Borough Council - Ruth Betty re Blue Badge Application/Approval process

January - Macmillan Advance Care Planning Pat Worlock, Facilitator

March - Cymru Older People Alliance (COPA), Gaynor and Ken Davies

April – Welsh Government, Andrea-Nicholas-Jones, Isolation and Loneliness – Quality of Care in Care Homes (Implementation of Regulations post 2016)

July - Caerphilly County Borough Council, Geraldine Powell Carers Coordinator

Business Plan

For the first time, the Steering Group finalised and agreed in August 2017 a Forum Business Plan which will cover the next 14 months up to October 2018. The Business Plan is based on a Business or "SWOT" analysis of the Forum, completed by the Steering Group to identify where it should focus its energies and priorities to facilitate further development and improvement and address the challenges that are likely to threaten its reputation and efficient management. An Action Plan was devised to set out a positive but realistic response that would provide a new direction for the Forum that encompassed its strengths and achievements but addressed the gaps and challenges presented. This was subsequently discussed with the Council

(Director of Social Services and the newly elected Older Peoples Champion) who gave their full support to our plans. The implementation of the Business Plan is now been regularly monitored and reviewed and any risks identified to achieving our objectives are being managed.

Creating Age Friendly Communities

It was agreed in August 2017 that a priority aim for the Forum would in future be creating age-friendly communities in the County. This will be taken forward using the Guidance on “Making Wales a Nation of Age-friendly Communities” issued jointly by the Commissioner for Older People in Wales and Cymru Older People’s Alliance (2017). The main principles underpinning this approach are set out in 8 domains that encapsulate the Forums objectives, covering:

1. Outdoor space and public buildings
2. Transport
3. Housing
4. Social Participation
5. Respect and social inclusion
6. Civic participation and employment
7. Communication and information
8. Community support and health services

Communications

Effective communications are vital to the Forum achieving its aims. In the last 12-months we have published two informative and well received colourful Newsletters of which 3500 copies of each have been distributed to members and more widely in the community (e.g. GP surgeries, libraries, social centres etc) and sent to nearly 100 recipients electronically. Our face book page is kept up to date and is regularly used to inform readers about important issues impacting on older people, with “boosting” paid for to reach more people in respect of particular campaigns e.g. improving GP surgeries, shingles vaccination. The Forum website which was set up 3 years ago has undergone a comprehensive review and update of its content. We have improved its design and ease of accessibility and readability. Further work on this will continue. Over the year, there have been examples of Forum officers visiting other organisations to talk about the work of the Forum and this is an area we would like to expand in the coming year to increase the impact and reach of our work.

COPA

The Forum have been supporting through the Vice Chair’s role as a co-opted trustee, the establishment of Cymru Older People’s Alliance (COPA) as a new Charity with a process for democratically electing members. The revitalised COPA brings together the views, opinions and concerns of local older people’s forums and organisations to the national, all- Wales level, so as to strengthen the impact of, and provide coherence to, the representations made to Government and others. There will be no interference with local issues or decisions but two-way communication between the local, regional and national levels is essential if the interests of older people are to be properly represented and national decisions influenced. The Forum have agreed to appoint 2 members to the COPA regional committee for the Gwent

area – the Chair and Vice Chair were nominated at the June Meeting. Each regional committee across Wales will have 2 of its members as COPA Trustees. The Chair of the Caerphilly Forum has now been accepted as a new trustee of COPA. These changes will improve Forum communications from and to the regional and national levels and extend the reach of its voice.

Carers

A high proportion of older people are unpaid carers for their spouse, family member or friend. Over the last 6 months, the Steering Group have therefore sought to build strong linkages with the cohort of carers and their representatives in the County. The Caerphilly Carers Co-ordinator has joined the Steering Group and joint events including the Forum AGM have been held. Further discussions and initiatives to make joint working to pursue mutual interests between the Forum and Caerphilly Carers Group in a meaningful and productive way will be prioritised over the coming year.

Isolation and Loneliness

Loneliness and isolation is being addressed by Welsh Government and through a National Assembly enquiry as a priority public health issue to improve the health and wellbeing of Wales. 75,000 older people in Wales have reported 'always or often' feeling lonely. The Steering Group is ensuring the Forum is contributing to the County responses to this new national policy objective to tackle the adverse impacts of isolation and loneliness amongst older people. This is in the first instance being taken forward through partnership working with the Local Health Board co-ordinator for the Friend i mi/Friend of mine initiative (meeting held in August) and examining how the Forum could develop a volunteer Public Spaces Gardening Support scheme. Further ideas can be considered as the capacity of the Steering Group and volunteers is increased.

Consultations

Responding to consultations about proposed developments impacting on older people from Government and other Public Bodies has been an important means of getting the "voice of local older people" heard. Over the last 12 months the Steering Group have responded to the following consultations:

January - Welsh Government – Draft Strategy "Together for a Dementia Friendly Wales - 2017-22"

March – Welsh Government - White Paper Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed

April - Welsh Government - Improving local bus services in Wales

August – National Assembly for Wales - Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales - Interim Report

September – Welsh Government White Paper Consultation "Services fit for the future - Quality and Governance in Health and Care in Wales"

Finances

The Forum held in its Bank Account £5,300 at the end of the 2016-17 financial year. The expenditure items that were included in the budget for 2017-18 are:

- Newsletter
- AGM costs
- IT costs
- Web site/Facebook costs i.e. enhancements
- Project Costs

The balance available in the Forum's Bank Account at the end of September 2017 is £5026.49.

The Steering Group receive monthly reports from the Treasurer and have arrangements in place to ensure that there is effective usage, management and safeguarding of the monies that the Forum has received.

Conclusions

This Annual Report has summarised the main achievements of Caerphilly 50+ over the last 12 months and has highlighted the good progress made despite a number of challenges. If you want further information or have questions about the Forum or you are interested in becoming involved in its work, please contact:

Ralph Stevens 50plusforum@mail.com

or call Mandy Keenan on 01443 01443 864277 or keenam@caerphilly.gov.uk

1 October 2017

Appendix

Steering Group Members – Caerphilly 50 Plus Forum

Dr Ralph Stevens – Chair
Steven Milsom – Vice Chair
David Regan – Treasurer
Phil Bryett - Secretary
Peter Jones
Joy Mathews
Roger Carr
John Elliott
Jayne Lee (from August 2017)
Judith Pritchard (from August 2017)

Officers

Mandy Keenan – Strategy Coordinator
Geraldine Powell – Carers Coordinator