

Brighton & Hove Older People's Council

Annual Report

2014-15



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**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Introduction

This has been a transitional year for the Older People's Council (OPC) where the old members gave way to the new.

In the final year of the old administration, work focussed on paving the way to the elections in July. This was somewhat overshadowed by the budget threat to dissolve the OPC. We had to work hard to publicise and get the support that finally overturned this proposal.

As can be seen in the Secretary's report, we also did a lot of work in the

community so feel that the year has led to many successful outcomes.

We are now starting on a four year term for the newly elected OPC members, all working voluntarily to represent the older age group in Brighton & Hove. So we will begin with solidifying our links with community groups and identifying areas where our voice can make a difference.

The Pensioner Magazine

The closure of Pensioner Action in June 2013 resulted in a loss of funding for The Pensioner magazine. However five issues were successfully produced and distributed with volunteer labour and with the printing and design costs being covered by advertising revenue. This work was overseen by an independent Committee on which three OPC members sat. In addition, a supporting website was launched in July 2014 with the help of a grant from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust. However, the grant ended in December 2014 and the volunteers found themselves unable to raise other funds to continue with all the work involved in creating such quality products.

So, sadly, publication of The Pensioner magazine and work on its website had to be suspended after the November 2014 issue.

Survey results and informal feedback have both shown how very much the older people of Brighton and Hove value the magazine (which began publication in 1999) and therefore Age UK Brighton and Hove are, at the time of writing, considering options for re-starting the magazine (or a variant of it) under their auspices.



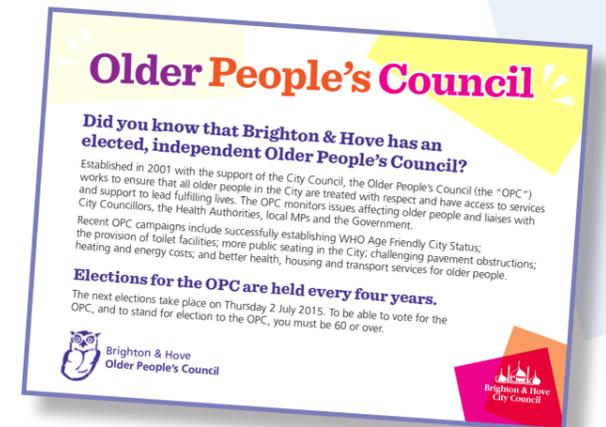
OPC Elections July 2015

During May and June, members of the OPC publicised the election and sought to attract eligible candidates to stand in the nine zones across Brighton & Hove.

Leaflets were distributed and email notices sent to city libraries, the town halls, sheltered accommodation schemes and to community and voluntary sector venues. Notice was published in the Brighton & Hove Independent, and it was covered on BBC Radio. The emphasis of the publicity was to encourage:

- older people in the city to register to vote for their OPC;
- older people to vote in the election for the OPC;
- candidates to put themselves forward for election to the OPC.

Despite the hard work to promote the election and encourage participation, opposing candidates came forward in only one of the nine electoral zones. An election, therefore, was held in Brunswick & Adelaide, Goldsmid and Regency.



The successful candidate here was John Eyles. Thanks and commiserations must go to the defeated candidate Bernard Katz, who showed great commitment in standing. Candidates in all other zones were elected unopposed.

Thanks must also go to the Electoral Services team who worked hard to organise and ensure a good turnout.



Our Mission and Vision

We are elected to serve older people.

The OPC work to ensure that all older people are treated with respect and dignity and have access to services, support and the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life.

- We are working to create a city where:
- The contribution of all older people is acknowledged and valued
 - The needs of older people are recognised and met
 - Older people are involved in decision making that affects their daily lives and the communities where they live.



Chair's Foreword

Mike Bojczuk (Central Hove and Westbourne)

It has been a privilege to serve this year as Chair of your city's OPC – elected by over 60s and strengthened by co-option of additional members. We continue as a critical friend of Brighton & Hove City Council, lobbying to present the older person's perspective on issues, taking part in consultations and scrutinising proposals for change.



After the election in July we are now at the start of a four year term with newly elected representatives. The previous four years saw changes to the structure of the OPC. We expanded membership by increasing co-option, which helped to improve the gender balance of the OPC and the diversity of membership experiences. Our support moved from Adult Social Care to the council's Scrutiny team. This gave us an early awareness of proposals being made that may affect older people. Our work included contributions to palliative care research, active ageing, older people's days, housing and health.

energetic work of our Secretary, Penny Morley, the proposals were withdrawn.

It serves as a warning though that in an age of austerity, the OPC have to demonstrate a positive contribution to the city and the well being of older people if we are to continue to be supported.

I would like to thank all the members who worked so hard in contributing to the successes we achieved in the last term. Thanks especially to Jack Hazelgrove who chaired the OPC for two of those years, and Geoffrey Bowden who was our link Councillor.

The new term of the OPC brings many challenges. We need to work a lot harder to publicise the work we do and attract more people. Only around 10% of the 60 – 70 year old age group had registered for the OPC elections this year. We need closer involvement with our community groups and to better publicise our work. For services affected by recent cuts, we need to be aware of difficulties this causes and continue the scrutiny of proposals affecting the well being of the elderly. The emphasis on preventative services and the promotion of well being imposed by the Care Act also gives us the opportunity to propose and

OVER 1000 

activities are available citywide for older people

champion initiatives that promote healthier lifestyles.

The OPC continues to evolve in order to meet the new challenges thrown up by a changing city. Our main aims and objectives, however, as set out elsewhere in this report, will still form the focus of our work, and we look forward to continuing to make a difference.

Mike Bojczuk, Chair OPC

Secretary's Report

Penny Morley (Hanover & Elm Grove, Preston Park and St Peter's & North Laine)



The last year has seen the OPC tackle a range of issues and deal with the unexpected proposal to abolish the OPC which we were able to successfully challenge.

We have consistently sought to promote the needs of older people with the council's administration. Members of the OPC have worked well together to make sure that the voice of older people has been heard. My thanks go out to everyone involved and especially to those that are retiring this year for their contribution over many years.

Housing has been a continuing theme this year. We participated in the consultation process for the Housing Strategy which includes a number of recommendations to benefit older people relating to sheltered housing, adaptations to stay in homes and support regarding downsizing.

The council's initial budget contained a number of proposals, which in our view, adversely affected older people including calling for the OPC's abolition. We prepared and circulated a brief challenging a range of cuts in home care, city clean, housing, parks and public toilets which would adversely impact on older people. We lobbied councillors and political parties and argued vigorously against the proposals with the Leader of the council.

At the beginning of the year we held a joint event with BHESCO called 'Keep Warm & Save Money' about energy

The new housing strategy included



specific actions to support older people.

We have had public meetings which covered Adult Social Care Services, the impact of the Budget on older people's services, the Better Care Fund, the Care Act & the OPC elections and processes.

In 2014 **37** events celebrated Older People's Day, attended by over **1000** people

Perhaps our biggest achievement was the city's adoption of the Age Friendly City initiative to improve all aspects of the city for all ages, which still continues to this day. We were also able to fight off a proposal in the last budget to withdraw our officer support and to stop the OPC elections. Thanks to campaigning members and the

efficiency, how to change providers and the problems of fuel poverty. It is estimated that 20% of households with older people are fuel poor so it is an important issue for older people across the city.

The OPC initiative for Brighton & Hove to become an Age-Friendly City has continued in both a Steering Group and a forum of older citizens putting forward their views co-ordinated by Age UK. Thanks go to Jackie Duncan and Annie Alexander for all their work on this. A range of areas have been covered which include better communications between service providers across the city, warm homes, housing & transport policy changes by the council, Older People's Day and food & older people.

High on the agenda this year has been a range of issues relating to Health & Adult Social Care. Changes to the NHS and in



particular to GP practices across the city have involved the OPC in a range of consultations.

We have continued to work with a range of organisations in the city which have an interest in the needs of older people. We are seeking to ensure that we reach out to a range of diverse groups across the city in the next four years.

The Older People's Council...

Colin Vincent
Vice Chair

Stanmer & Hollingdean
and Moulsecoomb &
Bevendean



This report summarises my activities over the past twelve months together with a review of developments, local and national, in my areas of special interest – social care, health and well-being, licensing and the scrutiny of council committee decisions. The scrutiny process included the OPC as co-opted members on the HWOSC (Health and Well-being Overview Scrutiny Committee) which meet regularly to oversee these vital activities. However following the disbandment of the Council's dedicated scrutiny team as an economy measure, the oversight of council decisions are now the remit of a new Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) that scrutinises on a 'needs only' basis, though at least the OPC retains their co-opted seat.

Last September I represented the OPC as a member of a joint group of council staff and representatives of voluntary organisations concerned with the care and well-being services being provided for older people in the city on a visit to Edinburgh. This was to take part in a project funded by the European Commission with other representatives from Edinburgh and four other European cities on the theme of active ageing. Joint discussions and presentations took place and visits made to local authority and voluntary projects around Edinburgh providing both residential or day care for elderly people.

My interest in social care issues led me to take part in, with representatives from the voluntary sector, the user satisfaction consultation on the councils' provision and quality of social services for the elderly and disability groups. One area of concern was social isolation and my ideas on safety concerning meals on wheels and



OPC Commitments

- 1: We will listen** to older people in the city and work closely with other local older people's groups etc.
- 2: We will publicise** our work through meetings, and the local press and media.
- 3: We will monitor** Brighton & Hove City Council, local health trusts and other providers of goods and services by making sure that we are represented on the appropriate committees and forums.
- 4: We will challenge disadvantage** experienced by older people by being watchful to ensure that all older people, regardless of race, creed, sexuality or ability, are given the same access to opportunity as every other member of society and are not discriminated against.
- 5: We will highlight** goods, services and opportunities that promote dignity and support older people to live independent lives where they want to.
- 6: We will promote** the human and civil rights of older people by encouraging the provision and maintenance of a physical and social environment that enables older people to live productive and fulfilling lives.



Community Meals providers have now been incorporated in the new contract and is termed a 'safe and well check'.

The 2015 Social Care Act has already made a dramatic impact on the way social care is funded and administered. However the recent announcement on a delay in implementing the cap on costs to the service user is a cause for concern. As a consequence we will investigate the effect that this will have.

Lynn Shields
(East Brighton and Queen's Park)

I have been a Brighton resident since 1969. I have a degree in ceramics and Social Policy & Administration and have maintained a keen interest in the arts as well as health and social care.



I am a member of The Age Friendly City Forum and Steering Group. I am particularly interested in the ways in which our support groups for older residents (state, council, private and voluntary) are working together to minimise the detrimental effects of reduced funding in a time of increased need.

I believe my experience as a retail and human resources manager at board level has helped me develop a "business head" - but my heart is firmly tied to the community and the belief that it is our duty to support one another and to protect those most vulnerable.



Members of the OPC on a fact finding trip at the local city recycling plant.

I intend to engage fully with the groups currently active in Queens Park and East Brighton as well as individual residents to establish needs, promote community action and be a voice for those groups in the OPC.

Francis Tonks
(Rottingdean Coastal and Woodingdean)

For most of the past year we have been arguing for the retention of the OPC.



At first it was proposed that it should be abolished as a result of Government cuts in funding to the local authority. Though we have some funding from the council, we are an independent voice for older people in the city. Fortunately we made our case and our work continues. Similarly we had to insist on the need for an Older People's Day.

Previously I represented Central Brighton and helped set up the new development

of The Level. Now I represent Rottingdean Central and Woodingdean as I have moved house. I have been an active member of the Council's Community Safety Forum. This gives a valuable opportunity for local people to meet Police and Fire Services and raise issues of common concern.

I also attend the Age Friendly City Forum. We aim to make Brighton & Hove an Age Friendly City and clearly our interests include transport, health, housing, social care and a host of other matters that affect older people.



Katrina Byrne
North Portslade, South Portslade and Wish

I've lived in West Hove for 34 years and know it well.

My working life was as a graphic designer and fundraiser.

I've always wanted to make a difference. Amongst other things earlier, I was a Poets Corner Community Society (PCCS) Trustee/ Chair for West Hove for 13 years. Our successes included: cleaning and greening Stoneham Park, free festivals and events, a café in the park (older peoples' lunches).



Older People's Day Activities



I produced the West Hove News newspaper for 6 years, highlighting news and events in West Hove. I volunteer as Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) Assessor. Although assessing intergenerational problems, I am aware of the fear surrounding debt, care for themselves and housing of older people. The CAB points people in right direction. I can bring to the OPC my experience of graphic design, fundraising, social activism, to listen to older people and then act on behalf of them through OPC. I will passionately represent older people in terms of ageism, poverty and disregard of the needs and value of older people in the city's society. My other passions are animals – both domesticated and wild, nature, social justice for all peoples and all animals, reading and my grandchildren.



Val Brown
Co-opted member
 Hangleton & Knoll
 and Hove Park

These last four years as a member of the OPC has

shown me that the voices of the older Brighton & Hove citizens should be more readily heard and not continue to go unnoticed. That after many years of work and payment of both national and local taxes, the life requirements of our older people should attract attention: their obvious needs carefully weighed and clear deprivations investigated.

The OPC is insistent that the ease of transport around the city and attention to the ready availability of seats and safe places in and around Brighton & Hove should not slip past the intentions of the local council.

We know ourselves that that older age is a time for enjoyment of life. We enjoy sea, sun, picnics, days out and evening entertainments: and will work hard to ensure that these pleasures are fully accessible to all the generations of Brighton & Hove citizens.



Boules on the seafront

John A. Eyles
 Brunswick & Adelaide,
 Goldsmid and Regency



I feel honoured to have been re-elected for a further four year term with The OPC, and currently am co-opted on both the Environment, Sustainability & Transport and Housing Committees. The past year has been challenging with varying demands required by new legislation, council administration and economic cuts.

The changes in legislation, pensions and health care will affect us all, particularly the older person and we will monitor these closely with regard to council policies and decisions.

I have been privileged to provide input and comments on a number of strategy panels in the past and again hope to

continue to reflect the views of older people on council policies and strategies.

These have and will include:-

- The quality of life and independence of the elderly, and reduction of isolation within the city
- Concerns about older peoples perception of 'danger and threat' throughout the city
- Alcohol and the older person is a concern highlighted by a city report published in March 2014

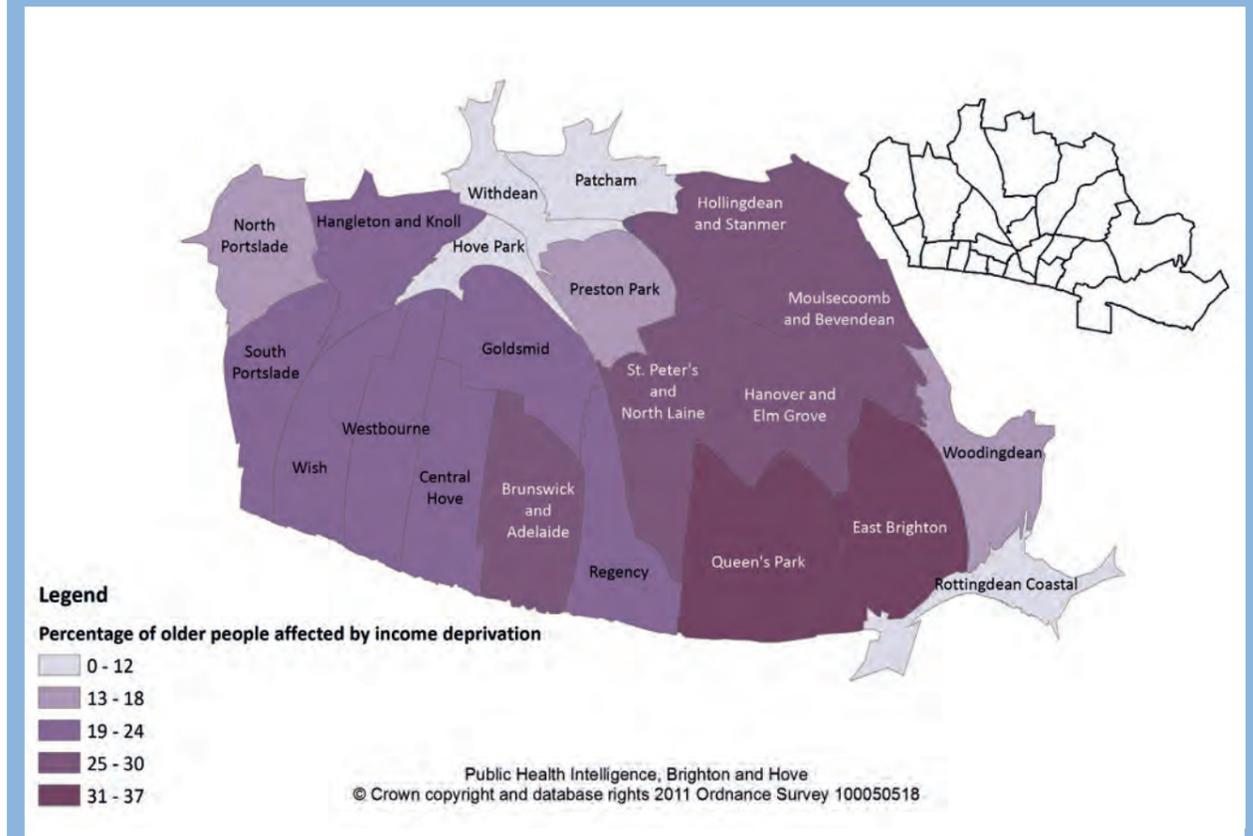
- Increasing quantities of domestic waste, collection methods and future developments

- Publicly accessible toilets are a major concern to the older person, we will push to maintain existing provision

- The poor condition of pavements is another major concern which affects freedom and accessibility, particularly for those with walking difficulties.

Local action teams (LATS) are developing and I will support them in developing a network of support to maintain all of our aims.

Cartogram of the percentage of older people affected by income deprivation by ward, Brighton & Hove, 2013



Source Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010, updated to 2013 ONS population estimates by Brighton & Hove City Council Public Health Intelligence team, 2015. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health Brighton & Hove 2014-15



older people aged up to 82 play ping pong every week at King Alfred.

Fairness for Older People

The new Labour administration has set up a Fairness Commission and the OPC want to ensure that the needs of older people form a full part of the Commission. There are a wide range of issues that need to be addressed that impact on older people across the city.

Social isolation is a key issue for older people for Brighton & Hove as 41% of those over 65 live alone. There remains much work to be done to ensure that older people in the city can enjoy a healthy and happy older age. Whilst life expectancy has risen, there are wide variations in this across the city. Healthy life expectancy for women is nineteen years below life expectancy and for men it is sixteen years. So, whilst many may be living longer, they have health problems for many years in older age.

Despite the rhetoric many older people in the city are in poverty and the Fairness Commission needs to look at why in 2013 it was estimated by Independent Age that 5,200 pensioners in the city were not claiming what they were entitled to despite being eligible. An example is that 12% of households in the city were 'fuel poor'. In this day and age it is a disgrace that older people are suffering from fuel poverty with many choosing between heating or eating.

Whilst many older people are active and energetic we expect the Fairness Commission to look at the more difficult areas of life for older people. In particular, the voice and views of older people must be heard and action on their needs wherever they live in the City must form a key part of the Commission.

Grey Matters Productions

Grey Matters Productions continues to provide a 55 minute radio programme, 'At Home this Morning', made by, and for, older people. It is broadcast on RadioReverb [97.2VHF] at 8am on Sundays, 11am on Tuesdays or online at these times at www.radioreverb.com Archived programmes are on the OPC website. Programmes are made every fortnight and broadcast six times. All the team are volunteers. Funding towards the transmission, use of the studio and business costs was obtained by a grant from the city council. Contact the OPC if you have ideas for programmes.



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