

Brighton & Hove
Older People's Council



Annual Report

2009-10



Supported by

**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Our mission and vision

We are elected to serve older people. We work to ensure that all older people in Brighton & Hove 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 making decisions that affect their daily lives and the communities in which they live.

Chair's Foreword

As an independent OPC supported by the City Council we have established strong links with Councillors and Council Officers. We are grateful to the Leader of the Council Cllr Mary Mears for attending regular meetings with our Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. The meetings have an agenda and where appropriate the manager of a particular service joins us. Thus we have established strong links with Customer Services, City Clean and Environmental Services. As the spending cuts deepen it is essential that we are able to articulate our concerns at a senior level. We are also grateful for the past attendance of Cllr Dawn Barnett at our monthly meetings, and thanks too to the Chief Executive, John Barradell for introducing himself to us early on in his tenure. Whilst our nine OPC members give their time and energy without remuneration, it would not be possible for us to function without secretarial and administrative support

The scope of our current activities is well illustrated in the personal profiles of our members. We are sometimes told "but they are all men". The remedy is in the hands of the voters in 2011 and we hope women will

stand for election and thus create a balanced Council.

I would pick out two highlights from our past year. First, our conference organised jointly with Age Concern in response to the Government Green Paper on funding the future of home and residential care. We sent our report to Whitehall but delays and the General Election have put a decision about establishing a National Care Service on hold for another year. Our second foray into national affairs was to promote a hustings called "Older people ask the questions" for five of the local parliamentary candidates. Assurances were given about free bus passes and the winter fuel allowance. We may need to remind the politicians about these promises as events unfold this autumn.

In conclusion I must thank all who have helped to make my year as Chair of the Older People's Council constructive and enjoyable. My special thanks go to John Barry, our secretary, without whom much of what we have achieved would not have been possible.

Jack Hazelgrove

Jack



Commitments

The OPC has a work programme built around a series of commitments:

- 1 Commitment One:** We will listen to older people in the City and work closely with other local older people's groups and organisations.
- 2 Commitment Two:** We will publicise our work through meetings, and the local press and media.
- 3 Commitment Three:** We will monitor the 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 Commitment Four:** 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 Commitment Five:** We will highlight goods, services and opportunities that promote dignity and support older people to live independent lives where they want to.
- 6 Commitment Six:** 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.

In pursuit of these commitments we have identified six key areas where we are seeking improvements to support older people:

- **pavements** – free from obstructions;
- **public seating** – more of it, and suitable for older users;
- **public toilets** – more of them, higher quality, and open at sensible times;
- **public transport** – reliable services to and from the outlying parts of the City;
- **green waste disposal** – help with green and non-compostable garden waste;
- **social care** – protecting and promoting better services for older people.

Members' Profiles

Jack Hazelgrove, Chair (Stanmer & Hollingdean and Moulsecomb & Bevendean)

One of my main interests is public transport for older people and I chair the Central Sussex Bus Users Group which meets regularly with the Council and the bus companies. I am also on the committee of Community Transport, which provides much-valued door to door services for those less able to use the buses.

One of my roles as OPC Chair is to get our message across to the media. I commented on BBC TV on Gordon Brown's speech to the Labour Party Conference, praising his wish to create a National Care Service and to provide free home care for those most in need. I was also interviewed for a French journal about our fully elected older people's council.

The area of Brighton and Hove that I represent on the OPC contains both the Brighton University and the new Amex sports stadium at Falmer. We have good links with both bodies, and Francis and I are participants in university-led research on older people's well-being.

Members' Profiles - continued

John



John Barry, Secretary (East Brighton and Queen's Park)

Most important have been community meetings with older people. Very impressed by the crime prevention and community meetings in Kemptown, Whitehawk, and the Bristol Estate, and by the work for a Neighbourhood Forum in Whitehawk and Manor Farm, but there remains the serious problem for older people of access to the new Wellsbourne Health Centre. I support work by the Sheltered Housing Action Group for better carer support for vulnerable residents.

As Secretary of the OPC, there's a lot of paperwork, but it leads to many useful meetings on housing needs and mental health services, and on older people's involvement in decision-making with the S.E. Network of Seniors; lobbying our MPs about high energy costs; discussing older people's needs at the Green Party National Conference; and planning work on community safety issues with members of the Brighton & Hove Youth Council.

Jim



Jim Buttimer (Central Hove and Westbourne)

In one of my key areas of concern, governance and strategy, this has been a year of anticipation with regard to the management of the City Council. The new Chief Executive of the City Council has made clear that the status quo is not an option. We do not yet know how older people will be affected by the changes he proposes. All the OPC can do is to be very vigilant, and use our good relations with City Councillors and Council Officers to ensure that services to the most vulnerable are protected. Voluntary Sector organisations will probably be asked to do more, and probably with less public funding.

Planning decisions affect almost everybody, and on behalf of the OPC I have intervened when possible to retain public amenities such as church halls, residential care and nursing homes, and sheltered accommodation providing they offer an acceptable level of care.

Colin



Colin Carden (Rottingdean Coastal and Woodingdean)

Over the last two years I have been involved with the Older People's Housing and Support Working Group, contributing to a complete overview of older people's needs being carried out by the City Council. The papers from this review are available at local libraries. I also represent the OPC at Board Meetings of Age Concern Brighton Hove & Portslade, attend the Housing Management Consultative Committee, and meetings of the Community Safety Forum.

Ed Cruickshank-Robb (Hangleton & Knoll and Hove Park)

With a lifelong involvement in health care, I take a particular interest in the health and welfare of older people. I am a member of AGILE, a special interest group of Chartered Physiotherapists dealing with such issues as balance, falls prevention and older people's well-being, and I also follow closely the work of the British Geriatric Society. I am deeply concerned about leaseholder rights, and about local pavements which have become an obstacle course for the elderly due to A-boards, pavement furniture and inconsiderate cyclists.

John Eyles (Brunswick & Adelaide, Goldsmid and Regency)

I have made contact with many groups and projects related to older people's welfare, including the Vallance Group and with the Brunswick Older People's Project. I have sat on Scrutiny Panels for community safety. A spin-off has been working on the NHS report on alcohol and the older person. I have taken up concerns with road safety and pavement obstructions, attended meetings on new NHS osteoporosis equipment and treatments, and been invited to comment on cycling safety. I attended the Council's Core Strategy Open Day. I am part of the Dignity Panel and was involved with the Dignity Day and April Falls Day events (having just fallen myself, this was quite apt!). An OPC visit to the Council waste disposal plant was very useful, highlighting some of the problems relating to re-cycling within the city.

Bob Gunnell (Patcham and Withdean)

During another busy year I made submissions to three enquiries on behalf of the OPC. First, to a national enquiry into car parking at hospitals: we were able to include examples of the poor parking provision at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. Next, the City Council's consultation into its cultural strategy: I drew attention to the fact that no mention is made of the work of Brighton & Hove Arts Council, and that the Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra, unlike similar orchestras, operates without any grant from the local council. Thirdly, the City Council launched an inquiry into its waste disposal strategy. Brighton & Hove does not have a green waste collection, unlike most UK local authorities, and the OPC proposed a paid-for collection – appropriate in difficult financial times and fairer for council tax payers. Discussions are still ongoing. The OPC successfully opposed the movement of the local history centre to the Jubilee Library. I am chairman of Grey Matters Productions CIC and am greatly involved in shaping the OPC radio programme.

Ed



John



Bob



Members' Profiles - continued

Harry



Harry Steer MBE (North Portslade, South Portslade and Wish)

During the past year I have continued to concern myself with the difficulties and abuse experienced by older people as my main priority. To this end I attend meetings of the local PAVA group (Practitioners Alliance Against Abuse of Vulnerable Adults) and am made fully aware of effective action which can be taken on behalf of the abused elderly.

As Chair of my Local Action Team in Portslade, a police liaison group, I am also concerned with the problems and fears which confront older people in my community, and of our local police response. I also chair the Hove-based Bluebird Society for the Disabled which gives help and support to those with impaired mobility, mostly older people, and appreciate the difficulties they encounter, particularly the wheelchair bound. In March this year I represented the OPC in London at a seminar on tackling social exclusion, and spoke on Giving Older People a Voice in Shaping Services.

Francis



Francis Tonks, Vice-Chair (Hanover & Elm Grove, Preston Park and St Peter's & North Laine)

It has been a busy year for me on the OPC. I am helping to preserve and develop the green spaces around St Nicholas Church in central Brighton, which includes plans for an area for physical exercises for older people.

I have also been involved in the consultation on the re-development of the Level, covering plans for integrating activity areas for young people (play area and skate park) with spaces for older people, such as the gardens and cafe. I joined the LINK, and we have looked at services in hospitals which can affect older people, including food, mental health care and hospital discharge. Also I have been involved with the consultation for the re-development of the Royal Sussex County Hospital. I was on the Board of the Bridge, a community centre which provides valuable adult education and training for people in north Brighton. My happiest memory of the year: being Father Christmas at my local primary school.

Wider Concerns and Issues

Domiciliary and residential care:

The ever-growing number of older people and the cost of health and social care engaged the Labour Government in promoting a national debate about the organisation and funding for care in the future. A Green Paper was produced setting out options including insurance, sale of assets, government subsidy, etc. Together with Age Concern Brighton Hove & Portslade, we organised a well-attended conference and sent a submission to Government. Many at the conference believed that a National Care Service should be established, fully funded from taxation. However government had made it clear that this was not an option. Further progress on legislation was delayed in the House of Lords and finally by the General Election. A commission is currently undertaking further research into the funding issue. Meanwhile the budgetary constraints mean that local authorities have to impose stringent means tests for those seeking home and residential care. The problem requires urgent action but the state of the nation's finances does not encourage optimism.



Problems for Leaseholders:

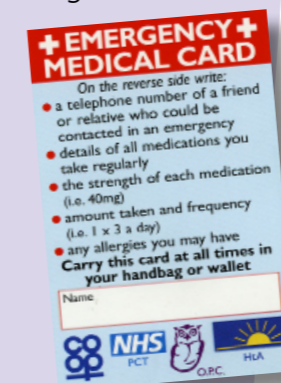
Since 1954, there have been sixteen Acts of Parliament on the residential leasehold system. The 2002 Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act enables leaseholders to purchase the properties in which their flats are located or to seek the right to manage them. However, leasehold is still the only way to occupy many flats in Brighton and Hove and purchasers are often unaware of the pitfalls of leasehold. Leaseholders do NOT own any property, just permission, subject to covenants and conditions, to live there for the time left on the lease. Leaseholders pay the freeholder for the management, maintenance and upkeep of the building. As time passes, maintenance of the building and services costs more, and the lease also gets shorter. When a lease ends, the homes are still there but a leaseholder has to leave or may rent it back from the freeholder but without long term security. The OPC is seriously concerned that there are so many leaseholds, including retirement flats, in Brighton and Hove. We are lobbying our local MPs to urge the Government to end this archaic and unfair system.

Community Safety:

On this important issue we have supported recent Scrutiny Panel enquiries and public meetings for action on key concerns: cyclists on pavements, anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug-related incidents, doorstep/distracted burglary, hate crimes and road safety.

Emergency Medical Cards:

The OPC has for some years distributed these cards to pharmacies and surgeries, enabling older people to carry at all times details of their essential medication. Discussions about community pharmacy services with a University of Brighton senior lecturer have led to plans for his students to use our medical cards during their training, helping older and vulnerable people to use their medicines safely.



Cold weather plans:

Last winter was hard for many older people. The OPC made a detailed submission to the Scrutiny Panel on the Council's Winter Service Plan, and continues to press for better preparations in future. We all need a better coordinated response next time, with roads and pavements quickly cleared of snow and ice to help everyone get around safely, and for essential services and supplies to be available.



Grey Matters Productions CIC

continues to provide the local community station, RadioReverb, with a 55 minute radio programme, "At Home this Morning", for older people made by older people. It is broadcast on RadioReverb [97.2VHF] at 11.00am on Tuesdays. There is a new programme every fortnight, made in a

special, well equipped studio in Kempton, and broadcast six times in the fortnight. The Company was formed by the OPC, Pensioners' Forum and the local Age Concern. All the team are volunteers. A problem with funding the transmission costs, the use of the studio and business costs has been eased by a grant from the City Council.

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Special thanks to OPC member Bob Gunnell for the excellent photos of OPC members used in this Report, and to Simon Allen for the Cold Weather photo on page 7.

For the last national election the OPC organised a hustings with representatives from all of the main parties. Grey Matters interviewed each of the representatives taking part and then made this into a piece which was included in its regular "At Home this Morning" programme.