



Brighton & Hove Older People's Council

Annual Report

2015-16

The Annual Report of the OPC is the report of elected members of the Older People's Council. The Older People's Council does not form part of Brighton & Hove City Council and the report is not a report of Brighton & Hove City Council.



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**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

The Older People's Council

We are an elected body set up and supported by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) in terms of the provision of meeting space and other administrative support.

Our members, all of whom work on a voluntary, unpaid basis, represent wards across the City. We attend relevant council and health related public meetings. We have participated in Citywide Connect which brings together health and social care providers in community "hubs" throughout the City to strengthen ties with service providers and groups dealing with older people.

It has been a tumultuous year in politics and the future is unclear. What is clear is that the work of the OPC is more important than ever. Please come to our public meetings and tell us how you are faring, visit our website to get lots of useful information about our work (though one of our bugbear is digital exclusion - and we voice that complaint a lot!) or phone us if you have identified an issue that you would like to bring to our attention.



Our Purpose

- We listen to and represent the views of older people in Brighton & Hove to influence change.
- We challenge disadvantage experienced by older people and promote their human and civil rights.
- We scrutinise and actively promote the needs of older people to achieve good quality public services.
- We promote dignity and we support the aspirations of older people wherever they live in the City.
- We publicise our work through networking, public meetings, ward events and local media.



Lynne Shields supporting Time to Talk befriending at Woodingdean Carnival.

Chair's Foreword

Mike Bojczuk (Central Hove and Westbourne)

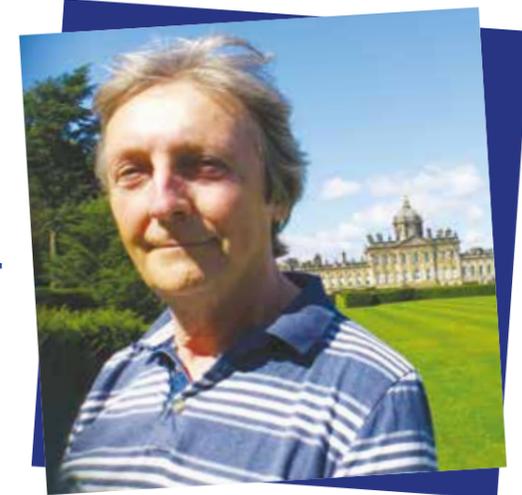
It has been a privilege to serve a third year as the chair of the OPC, the only publicly elected representative older people's group in the UK.

This year we have widened our connections with other community groups and have co-opted members to give us a deeper understanding of what really affects older people in all parts of the City.

We have also strengthened our links within the council and continue to attend relevant council meetings to voice our concerns. It has been a very difficult year for the City, as central government cuts in funding have greatly impacted on many areas of council services, including The Older People's Council. As unpaid volunteers, we rely heavily on council support, and I must thank the Scrutiny Team for answering queries, administering meetings and

other general help. This year we managed to secure a small grant which will help publicise our work to the many elderly residents who do not have internet access. We have had a very busy year and our efforts on behalf of older people continue to demonstrate excellent value with minimal costs to the council given our activities.

Mike Bojczuk, Chair OPC



Secretary's Report

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



OPC members have worked well as a team to push forward our objectives for this year and I would like to thank them all for their commitment and support.

Member changes this year have included the resignation of Val Brown as a co-opted member and we thank her for all her work over the years.

In 2016 the OPC has held public meetings on a range of topics including

- Budget cuts and older people
- Adult Social Care
- The Fairness Commission
- NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plan
- Age Friendly City (AFC) update
- Public Health & older people.

The minutes of all OPC meetings are available on the council's website at www.present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=685, and on the OPC website at www.olderpeoplescouncil.org

There have been staff reductions at Brighton & Hove City Council. The OPC would like to thank those staff who worked to support us and have now left the organisation. We recognise the pressure put on those who remain and very much appreciate their efforts on our behalf.

The budget cuts to Adult Social Care have been a dominant feature of this year. The OPC has regularly lobbied Brighton & Hove councillors on a range of issues. We have had meetings with

the Council Leader and councillors and officers on subjects such as Tower House, Housing and Adult Social Care. We also met with our local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to discuss a range of local health concerns.

A Senior Housing criteria review was undertaken this year with the participation of the OPC and OPC members regularly attend tenants' meetings.

The Age Friendly City (AFC) work has continued through the Steering group but the Forum, a network of older people feeding into the process, has not met regularly since our support worker at Age UK Brighton & Hove left. We have been in talks with Age UK and are hopeful that support will be forthcoming. Meanwhile, OPC members organised a Forum meeting in July 2016 to update members and obtain feedback on a range of issues including, community engagement with older people and the need to reflect their opinions in the AFC process.

The above gives a flavour of our activities during the year which has been extremely busy, but worthwhile when we have been able to see the recommendations in the Fairness Commission that will benefit older people and the Falls action plan to help improve services for older people.

The Older People's Council Activities in 2016

Adult Social Care and budget cuts

We scrutinised the proposed changes to Adult Social Care (ASC) as this affects the services received by older people. This work took place in the context of cuts of £20.5 million (P&R 11/2/16 p66) over the next four years to the ASC budget.

The budget proposals impacted on older people in a variety of ways. The OPC argued that this level of cuts would hurt the most vulnerable in our City. We wrote to the Director of Adult Social Care raising our concerns about issues such as; home care, community meals and Tower House. We issued press releases on these subjects as well as raising our concerns about access to public toilets and argued for no reduction in this service. We campaigned against cuts to day centres, particularly Tower House a specialist day centre run by BHCC for elderly and disabled people. OPC officers have held meetings with users of Tower House and with councillors and council officers to try to mitigate the worst aspects of this closure, whilst recognising that Tower House users are unhappy about the impact this will have on their lives.

The OPC reviewed the areas that were targeted for reductions in the service's budget. We established how community meals will be made available, by which providers and what Home Care contract conditions will apply. The OPC are pleased that the Living Wage & travel expenses will apply to care staff of all

ages in the new Home Care contract and that Unison's Ethical Charter has been adopted as part of the contract process. The new contract starts in September 2016 this year and will be more tightly monitored than previously.

We monitored information about residential care and had a speaker from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which has a responsibility for ASC in Brighton & Hove. They rated 66% of ASC services in Brighton & Hove as 'Good', but 34% 'Required Improvement', with 0% 'Inadequate' but also 0% 'Outstanding'.

The Fairness Commission was set up in Brighton & Hove in September 2015. It had 12 Commissioners whose job was to ask residents and organisations what they thought was fair and unfair about living in the City. The OPC held a public meeting in February 2016 and invited one of the Fairness Commissioners, Bill Randall, to address the meeting. The OPC then arranged a number of meetings with older people to get their views and redesigned the form to elicit more replies to the Commission. We made two submissions to the Commission challenging disadvantage, attended a number of public meetings and spoke to the commissioners at the meeting which focused on older people.

The Fairness Commission have now reported and a number of issues raised by the OPC have been taken on board, including the low level of life expectancy in some parts of the City.

The Commission has made a number of recommendations that are Age Friendly including:-

- **The Council to aim for the city to become fully accessible by 2020**
- **Take action to remove street clutter**
- **Maintain bus routes and the essential need for community transport**
- **Consider the gaps identified by residents in relation to the Age Friendly City criteria (which was initiated by the OPC) and develop a revised action plan by April 2017.**
- **Greater promotion of "Use our Loo" scheme. The Council should lead by example by promoting the scheme in all of its buildings across the City.**

Health

One of our key priorities in 2016 has been to look at health services for older people, so we have engaged with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) about a range of issues. It became clear to the OPC that changes in the NHS, and the way that services were being delivered were problematic, so we prioritised work in this area.

We had a public meeting which discussed the proposals for the NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plan and such was the concern about these at our May public meeting, we then met with the CCG. We raised our concerns about GP practice closures across the City in Bevendean, Whitehawk, Hangleton & Knoll, and in the city centre at Boots. We challenged the

proposal that older people be expected to travel outside of their local community to access GP services, which will be particularly stressful when they are unwell and may have mobility issues.

The OPC also raised concerns about the funding of the NHS, the local funding deficits and how these could not be reduced without impacting negatively on local NHS services. We felt that the CCG needed to improve its community engagement and that older people had to be communicated with in a clearer way. We are concerned that the fragmentation of responsibility in the NHS has led to a lack of clear accountability and leadership for services that impact on local people.

The Patient Transport system has been inadequate with regular coverage in the local press about problems for patients. The hospital appointments system had severe delays causing difficulties and distress for patients. Finally, hospital waiting times were of concern, going way beyond the 18 weeks, which is not acceptable for patients.

Overall, the local NHS was under severe pressure and urgent steps need to be taken to improve local medical services to older people. The OPC has been in touch with Healthwatch and had a presentation by the Chair, Fran McCabe, at our June 2016 meeting. We are exploring ways in which we can work together to improve health services for older people in Brighton & Hove.

Social Isolation

The social isolation of older people has been a continual strand of our work and OPC members have participated in a range of related initiatives across the City including, Time to Talk Befriending and Know My Neighbour. We fed ideas into the

Sussex Elders Police Commission which was acknowledged in their final report. We have maintained links with Community Works, Healthwatch, the Fed (now Possability People), Lifelines, Age UK Brighton & Hove and a range of other voluntary sector organisations working with older people. We acknowledge the significant support being provided to older people by faith groups including luncheon clubs, cafes and food banks. See www.hangletonfoodbank.org The Brighton & Hove faith group email is bhfa.sec@gmail.com.

The OPC attends Health & Well Being Board Committee meetings. During the campaign re: Tower House we also attended the Policy & Resources meeting where the final decision for closure was taken. We are concerned about the vulnerability of some elderly people and have been in communication with Action on Elder Abuse and will be considering safeguarding at a future OPC meeting.

Moving around the City

The Council proposed to restrict the use of the concessionary bus pass until after 9.30am and before 11.00pm. This would have affected 39,500 older people and 5,839 disabled people. We wrote letters to the press, lobbied councillors and argued what a negative impact this would have for older people across the City. Our campaigning was successful and the proposed restrictions were not introduced.

We have also raised with Southern Water the costs to the NHS when falls occur due to poor maintenance. We will continue to challenge organisations that create potential dangers for the older resident.

The OPC proposed to Southern Rail that the bus pass should be used on local rail services connecting the outlying parts of

the City (e.g. Moulsecoomb and Portslade) on short journeys but to date they have not agreed. We will continue to campaign on this issue with Southern Rail which would benefit older people in the City.

Digital Exclusion

These days, all useful information – from companies, government and councils is kept online. Costs mean there is very little available in print. If

you do not have internet access or the skills, you are becoming more and more disadvantaged. There is help available, so if you feel excluded please ask at any public library where you can get help.

There are many such examples where digital exclusion can lead to disadvantages and a poorer quality of life. Most who use computers have learned through work where there is plenty of help and training. In our city there are 12,000 people aged 75 – 84, and 6,000 aged over 85. They retired before computers became commonplace in the home. Few of our 18,000 residents aged over 75 used the internet at work and the majority do not have the skills or the inclination to spend a lot of time on learning. 45% of over 75s also live alone and have to rely on personal contacts or leaflets for information on services. It is these we should be helping, as every time a new document or service information is put online, there could be thousands who will be digitally excluded. The OPC has also raised this with the Council leader as many older people have raised this issue with us.



The Older People's Council...



Colin Vincent Vice Chair

Stanmer & Hollingdean
and Moulsecoomb &
Bevendean



Last year the OPC has faced an increasing number of challenges to its founding ethos. Adult Social Care health issues have continued to be affected by cuts in spending, organisational changes and performance problems. For example, the 16/17 draft budget savings identified savings of £6.2 million across the Adult Social Care budget (P&R 11/02/16 p66) as a consequence of reduction in Government funding.

One of the effects was the decision of the Council to close Tower House, a day centre which provided services, support and companionship to mixed age adults. At the same time the council decided to remodel the community

meals contract and the OPC pressed to ensure that a new contract retained the safe and well check and it was with enhanced procedures. The OPC lobbied hard through meetings with the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), Council Leader and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as a co-opted member, against both proposals. Although changes were agreed by the Council, we continued to offer support to the users of Tower House in their attempts to make suitable alternative arrangements.

Brighton and Sussex University Hospital Trust has been told by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) that it must make significant improvements in quality of services and issued a warning notice with three main areas for improvement. The announced closure of five GP practices will result in thousands of patients across the City, many frail



Nick Goslett with a group from one of his 50+ trips

and elderly, having to find alternative GP service providers. A change in the commission of the Patient Transport provider contract has proved problematical with many out patients put at risk. All these issues have, or are being, pursued by the OPC through the HWB, HOSC, or directly with the CCG.

The OPC, through its affiliation with the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), is able to lobby contacts at a national level on a range of issues of interest to older people (such as benefits, pensions and transport). I represent the OPC on the South East Branch of the NPC. My other involvements include Grey Matters, a not for profit radio broadcasting company founded by the OPC. Programmes go out twice weekly over local Radio ReVerb.

Lynn Shields

(East Brighton and
Queen's Park)



I have been a Brighton resident since 1969. Since joining the Older People's Council I have established links with many organisations and individuals in East Brighton and Queen's Park. Reduced funding for essential services, increased costs of basic needs, and considerable inequalities within these wards have made it a challenging year for those delivering and needing services.

I have been heartened by the dedication and determination of all those working "at the sharp end" to deliver the best



possible services with, sometimes considerably reduced resources. There is a strong sense of community in these wards and great efforts are being made to identify and care for those most in need. Reaching those who are isolated and lonely appears to be the biggest challenge of all. Third Sector organisations are developing ways of working in partnership which will be much more creative and productive than working in competition.

I am proud of the part the OPC has played in ensuring older residents have a "voice" through our meetings with those who make and implement strategy and policy. We may not yet be an Age Friendly City but I feel more confident that when decisions are being made about any aspect of the City Plan, consideration is being given to the effect those plans will have on the lives of our older residents.



Francis Tonks

(Rottingdean Coastal and Woodingdean)

At a time of uncertainty and change the OPC has been necessary to ensure the needs and hopes of pensioners in our city are not overlooked or forgotten.

During the past year I have attended meetings of the Pensioners Association, Kemp Town Society and the National Pensioners Convention. My particular interest has been in conservation and preserving the rich heritage of Brighton and Hove. This is not just for us but also for generations to come. I have attended Blue Plaque unveilings and the exhibition on the Great War in the Jubilee Library. Other work has been to promote the planting of trees in our streets and the restoration of the old street signs.

Older People play an important role in our community. I believe we should be active in defending the NHS and ensuring the very best education is reality available for us, our children and grandchildren.

In spite of all our problems I am confident that our campaigns will be successful and the authorities will listen in the year ahead.



John Eyles

(Brunswick & Adelaide, Goldsmid & Regency)

2016 has been an eventful year, a year of change - the biggest being the Referendum!

I regularly attend the Environment, Sustainability and Transport committee, which has considered a wide range of topics including the expansion of 20mph schemes across the City, siting of communal bins with possible cosmetic screening in heritage areas, changes to refuse collection which included the suspension of basement collections.

Transport issues included proposed amendments to several bus routes and times, vehicle cross-overs and, of course the major issue of Bus passes for the elderly. I contributed to the consultation on City Taxi provision and was a part of the team proposing the possible use of local train services in conjunction with bus passes.

Environmentally, the introduction of a 'green' collection service and planting of community trees in areas across the City will improve the visual effect. Air quality was reported to be improving with 'hot spots' in North Street and Lewes Road being closely monitored.

Major development proposals in the Hove Station area have been to public consultation with a plan in preparation. Having had a short stay in hospital I compliment the service provided and will continue to monitor GP provision.



Nick Goslett Co-opted member

Hangleton & Knoll and Hove Park

I am a member of the Hangleton & Knoll 50+ Steering Group which helps to start new groups, plans and puts on the annual Tea Dance and the annual October Event.

I have responsibilities for Community Development and I work closely with our 50+ Community Development Worker to share OPC actions and information to all our groups.

I put on about eleven trips a year, 10 with 16-seater minibuses and one with a 49-seater coach. We have a database of 240 people and try to be fair in the allocation. Grants from Brighton & Hove organisations help to subsidise these trips.

I have helped to set up and manage our Community Garden in the Wayfield Resource Centre. Now in its second year, it is full of vegetables but we need more people who want to chat and grow stuff. See details at www.hkproject.org.uk

The Trifold: I maintain a double sided A4 sheet in which we list, by day and time, all the activities we know about in H&K that are relevant to people over 50. I am involved with applying for grants to organisations like the Council and the Sussex Community Foundation. These grants are our lifeblood.



I am also a member of the H&K Health Forum and have been involved in the discussions around the closing of the Hangleton Manor GP surgery

Jack Hazelgrove Co-opted member

I have been honoured to have been co-opted back on to the OPC for another term. As I also chair the National Pensioners Convention local action group I hope this will facilitate liaison between these two voluntary groups whose members give of their time freely on behalf of their fellow older citizens. In March I caught my foot on a Southern Water metal cover and required a major operation on my left shoulder when I was sent stumbling into the nearby tree.

I have nothing but praise for the health service treatment after being rushed to A&E on a busy Saturday evening. I was operated on early the next morning and emerged with ten stainless steel pins holding the fractured bones together. Since then I have had five months of physiotherapy and two reviews by the orthopaedic surgeons.

However Southern Water has rejected my claim for compensation saying it wasn't their fault. I didn't want any money for myself but the cash-strapped NHS should be compensated for the cost of the medical treatment. Will keep you posted on this and similar other issues.



Age Friendly City

The OPC persuaded the Council in 2013 to join the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age Friendly Cities. The OPC participates in the Council run Age Friendly City Steering Group, and the AFC Forum meetings for older people on related topics. The Forum have fed suggestions to the council on topics as diverse as falls prevention and sexual health. The Age Friendly City is a project identified by the Fairness Commission as beneficial to all, so they recommended a revised AFC action plan by 2017 to make better progress with the original objectives.



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 web site. 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 Grey Matters if you have ideas for programmes.



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