

MELKSHAM AND DISTRICT SENIORS FORUM 55+

SERVING THE OLDER GENERATION IN HARMONY WITH EVERY GENERATION

ANNUAL REPORT

The last 12 months have been both hectic and groundbreaking. Forum 55+ has for the 7th year running gone from strength to strength in providing informative, entertaining and community services to its membership which is open to every person aged 55 and above residing in the greater Melksham area.

Before recount our activities for these past 12 months we must first offer our sincere thanks to those whose financial support made our activities possible. Most notably we wish to record our gratitude to the Melksham Area Board through its Health & Well-being Committee and to Melksham Town Council, both of whom recognised our value to the community through their generous donations. Of course we must not forget the numerous others especially our members who donated on a weekly basis.

One of our greatest assets is our volunteers, those citizens who tirelessly give up their time and often their money working at every event, organising and hosting with absolute dedication. We salute you all without whom our organisation would not exist.

Our year commenced with facilitation a public participation meeting at the Assembly Hall regarding the proposed NHS STP Health Plan. We followed this with a very successful humorous play intended to bring about public awareness regarding the activities of 'scammers'. The play's message was how to spot the scammers, their methods and how to stop them.

Our next success was the launch of the Melksham Community Age Friendly Project at the Town Hall. This was the culmination of many hours of research, sending members of our Management Committee to Bristol to observe its own launch and recruiting the services of Tony Watts, OBE in assisting us in Melksham.

Each month we provided our membership with a film matinee in the Assembly Hall, the average attendance was 60 comprising an audience from all parts of greater Melksham.

Once every month we host a health and wellbeing club at Forest Community Centre where our members participate in exercises, games, sing-along and general anti loneliness activities.

Twice we were able to host a Food Tasting event whereby our members were able to taste and comment upon the packaged ready meals of one of Wiltshire's largest provider of meals to older citizens.

In collaboration with Wiltshire Adult Services we celebrated Older Peoples Day with refreshments and a presentation including a public survey.

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Probably our biggest success was our organizing and hosting our 2nd Annual Melksham Community Day. This year, with overwhelming support from the Town Council, it was held in the Assembly Hall which was bursting at the seams with over 600 members of the public enjoying visits to the 49 voluntary organisations who participated. Councils, Local Housing Providers, Police and Emergency Services also participated while the Neighborhood Plan Group took the opportunity to showcase their work to date.

Of course we should be remiss if we did not mention the parties we held to celebrate the Queen's Birthday and our super well attended legendary Christmas Party, again we must thank local businesses and volunteers for their support.

Recently we have begun hosting Thursday morning events at The Riverside Club. Each Thursday we host a different activity which range from a public discussion on the roll-out of the new Prescription system and how it affects our older population. This took the form of a well attended vigorous question and answer session with representatives of the local GPs, Pharmacies, CCG and NHS. Other events at The Riverside Club have included keep fit classes, 'Those-were-the-Days' sing-alongs and a wonderful presentation on the flora and fauna to be found along the banks of our own River Avon. !2 other events have already been planned for.

Administratively, we are under-going some structural modifications, our Chair is scheduled to resign in June this year making the recruitment of a new chair an urgent task. We are advertising in the local media. We also recognize that in this age of austerity we need to reach out to a greater financing pool and to this effect we have appointed a Fund Raising Organizer, this will require a change in our accounting practices; an exercise that is now on-going with a professional accountant. In keeping with our ever expanding menu of activities we are in the process of appointing an Events Organizer. We have also reached the conclusion that to meet all our promises and responsibilities we have to review our constitution; once the revisions are fully drafted they will be put to the general membership for review and adoption.

In addition to our services we have contributed three thousand pounds to Melksham Town coffers through our payment of rental fees in respect of the Assembly Hall

Happily, our annual attendance figures have now topped over three thousand, an increase of 28% over the previous year. This is an indicator of what can be achieved when the Area Board and local Councils join with us in improving the lives of our older citizenry by reducing the incidence of loneliness and isolation and increasing participation in community affairs

BRIAN WARWICK

Chair, MELKSHAM & DISTRICT SENIORS FORUM 55+