

16/11/2016

Melksham seniors report to the Area Board

At the Melksham Seniors public meeting with our local MP there were quite strong exchanges of views around the state of the NHS locally. In particular the lack of sufficient doctors hours to provide adequate medical coverage in Melksham raised the heat quite a bit. A very strong case was discussed for Melksham to have it is own combined medical centre or another doctors surgery possibly on the West side of Melksham both were well supported. There was also a strong feeling that the Area Board should actively monitor the local health services rather than leaving it solely to Wiltshire Health Watch.

The Seniors Forum also raised the problem of lack of revenue funding with our Member and the issues around Treasury Rules which place considerable constraints on LA's. There is a need to change the way local and national grants are made to ensure greater equity in funding local organisations based on their value to the community. The Chair has since met with the our local MP and she has now taken up the issues raised with the appropriate Ministers.

A key issue for a local organisations like Melksham Seniors is getting people to volunteer to give us just a few hours of their time per month to organise activities, perhaps help with refreshments or undertake a few admin jobs. We cannot exist without fund raising, so occasionally organising a fund raising coffee morning, or bring and buy or similar event is essential to our existence. We don't need huge sums just sufficient revenue to pay for venues and the regular projects we undertake to improve the quality of life of our older citizens. It has been suggested that Melksham should have a specific event to promote volunteering. Consideration is being given to linking this with the Community Day event planned for April 2017.

One of our key ambitions is to improve our website and keep it regularly updated, we are having problems identifying an enthusiastic webmaster. It has been suggested that an approach should be made to Wiltshire Online or the Oaks School. We would appreciate the views of the Area Board.

We also need to cater for those people who do not have IT facilities. One way of doing that is to produce a newsletter that can be circulated throughout the community. We proposed to use one of our own IT training sessions as a platform for such a project when we have enhanced our computer facilities.

Producing a good newsletter of course requires IT graphic skills. It was very pleasing to learn some local Secondary schools now have active Technology /IT groups. It would be fantastic if the students who are developing such great skills were encouraged to support the local community as part of the school curriculum. We would love to develop closer intergenerational IT projects with young people by seeking their active engagement in helping seniors to produce a newsworthy newsletter for Melksham older people, one that not only provides news items but is also funny and challenging in its editorial. We believe such a challenge would also benefit the students knowledge around community engagement and social science in a practicable way. Thus linking to other school subjects including art, English and allied editorial skills, graphic design, public affairs, business studies and would also play a key part of any local community intergenerational activity.

Melksham Seniors has a busy period of activities in the coming weeks up to Christmas, with several therapeutic events taking place within the local sheltered housing complexes, carol concerts, and Christmas lunches as well as the Forums own AGM, film show, Christmas activity event and a Christmas Party and entertainment on the 19th December for approx 200 older people at the Assembly Hall.

Brian Warwick
Chairman

