

**COUNCIL
30 JANUARY 2002**

**FIRST REPORT OF THE PENSIONERS CHAMPION
(Councillor Clifton Thompson)**

1. The members post of pensioners champion was established in July 1999 by resolution of the Council. I was appointed to further the needs of local pensioners in all aspects of the Council's activities. I had responsibility to liaise with pensioners and their organisations and to represent their views throughout the Council.
2. Champions were given formal recognition under Article 10 of the Council Constitution of November 2001 and I was appointed Pensioners Champion. Other champions appointed are Voluntary Sector Champion, Tenants Champion, and Childrens Champion.
3. The role and function of the Pensioners Champion paraphrased from Article 10 is "To act as a positive focus for the local community at elected member level Pensioners so as to ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of Council activities and decisions upon Pensioners"

Key tasks are identified. These are: -

- (a) To make contact with local organisation concerned with Pensioners and to establish effective and regular consultation arrangements with those organisations.
 - (b) To represent the views of such organisations to the Council ,Executive , Overview and Scrutiny and other Committees and to officers in all relevant aspects of the Councils activities
 - (c) To act as an advocate on behalf of Pensioners within the Council as an organisation and to the wider community.
 - (d) To become familiar with the needs and priorities of Pensioners and to weigh up interests expressed in order to provide advice on the implications of alternative courses of action
 - (e) To feedback decisions of the Council and to explain the Council's position on specific issues of concern to relevant organisations and to individuals involved
 - (f) To publish an annual report on work undertaken over each year for consideration by the Council
4. There is provision giving Champions power to appoint Panels to support their work. I have thought about appointing a Panel but am deferring formal action until the Constitution has attained a regular mode of working. Pending this Councillors Simonds and Mrs Mattick have agreed when a Panel is formed they will become panel members and in recent months they have given me their assistance.
 5. The Executive has called for this Report
 6. My activities as Pensioners Champion in the last year have included regular meetings with Bracknell Senior Citizens Forum at Easthampstead House, attending meetings of the Forum as a member of its Executive. I have also regularly attended meetings of the Bracknell Forest Elderly Persons Forum. I have visited Forest Care's

premises and other properties. I am the Council's nominated representative on Bracknell Age Concern and attended its meetings.

I have attended various meetings organised by the Council. I have considered and responded to consultation documents. I have attended meetings of the East Berks Community Health Council as a nominated representative the Health Panel and the Primary Care Group. I have had meetings with representatives of the Primary Care Group concerned with a Virtual Resource Centre for Older People. I have met with representatives of the Voluntary Sector. I have spoken about the work of the Pensioners Champion. I have attended the Look In on a weekly basis to meet Pensioners. Latterly this has been extended on a monthly basis to Sandhurst Day Centre.

7. I have attended conferences concerned with the elderly, most recently "Independent Living For Older People" in November at the LGIU attended by representatives of various authorities .I have reviewed agendas minutes consultation papers and plans with regard to the interests of Pensioners and made representations. I have attended meeting for the setting up of a Conference for Pensioners later this year to follow on from the Voice of Experience Conference of 2 years ago. I am a member of the Best Value Review Reference Group on Services for Older People.
I have contributed to Town and Country from time to time. I have made representations on behalf of Pensioners in regard to services provided by the Council. I have concerned myself generally in my activities with the interests of Pensioners and taken note of what is being done elsewhere.
8. As an advocate for Pensioners I have followed a general role identifiable as such in conferences, consultation, and meetings and a particular role making representation on behalf of individuals.
9. Bracknell Forest has a resident population of some 110,000 with about 10% Pensioners. I have sought to familiarise myself with their needs and priorities. It is my view that Pensioners when they think about it wish to be treated with as much respect as the populace generally and not regarded as having crossed the threshold of progressive incapability. They are aware that with added years they become less mobile and more in need of help and then have more need of certain services but wish to continue lead their normal lives with dignity. Where they have need of services they wish to access these without difficulty and for services to be provided as for the rest of the population. They wish to pursue normal interests. As a general observation Information Technology is of growing interest.
10. General concerns I meet are transport, health, accommodation, home security and security in the environment.
11. Matters I have given attention to include bus services, bus stops and shelters, assistance in the home, smoke alarms, home decorating, changes in scheme management in sheltered homes, petition for a larger activity centre, continued provision of toilets, closure of care homes, parking problems, provision of help line, house maintenance, questions on Joint Review, communal satellite dishes, plumbers charges for services, concessionary bus fares, transport to and waiting at Heatherwood, discharge from hospital , policing, cycling in Bracknell Centre, traffic management, consultation on charges for Social Services to older people and carers, availability of information technology, older peoples designated flats, landscaping and ground maintenance, gift of a 32inch TV from local company, Voluntary Sector Compact, community transport, Town Centre, Joint Investment Plan for Older Peoples Services, Supporting People (related to Housing Benefit), Eligibility Criteria for Adult Services, National Service Framework for Older People, Contact the

Elderly, Skimped Hill User, housing and Council tax benefit, Modernising Adult Services, Brief for Transportation Survey, sale of fireworks, garden refuse, service assessments.

The list shows a variety of involvement and reflects concerns in individual cases where often an initial communication has provided the answer. A Pensioner may not know what to do or there may have been a failure of one sort or another. The intervention of the Pensioners Champion will draw attention to enable it to be rectified. Generally I have found my correspondents helpful.

12. I have sought to represent the Pensioners Champion as a person who is a pensioner who will listen to and take up pensioners concerns and represent their interests. No recurring issue that is not being addressed in connection with the Council's services has come to my attention as pensioners Champion in the year.
13. I have found the contact with outside agencies helpful and in particular Ron Crew and the Senior Citizens Forum give a good link for which I express my thanks. I also wish to thank members and officers for their positive responses.
14. In the year it was reported that I was the first Pensioners Champion in England and others are being appointed. I believe that helps to show that the concept is well founded.
15. I submit the report to the Council.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Councillor Thompson

Doc. Ref

22 January 2002