

Council Assembly

Wednesday 22 January 2014

7.00 pm

The Charter School, Red Post Hill, SE24 9JH

Supplemental Agenda No. 1

List of Contents

Item No.	Title	Page No.
3.	Themed Debate - Active Communities and the Elderly	1 - 8

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COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2014

Themed debate on Active Communities and Older People

SOME COMMUNITY VIEWS

Resident 1

It's a very difficult question, to be honest. You see, older people are set in their ways and it's difficult for them to change their ways. They have set habits and you can't just say, change them now after so long. It's a hard question to answer. It is very difficult to think what the council can do to help them change their habits.

Resident 2

They need a club which is nearby to their homes, so they could meet together in the afternoon or evening and enjoy some activities, it would be very good for them. The activities could be walking, as you know sometimes just going outside can help them. The problem in this country is that you don't even know your neighbours; you don't even speak to anybody. It is different if you go to Africa or Asia; you find that somebody who is 80 is more healthy than younger people here. That is because they go out, they meet neighbours, and they sit down and talk. Here you can't even see your neighbours from one month to the next. Those are the things that make people deteriorate, because they don't have that contact. To me, I feel that if they had a club they could meet every evening, about 4ish. They need to meet friends to just chat, do something like play cards.

Resident 3

Older people need to feel safe so that they go out more. A lot of older people don't like to leave their homes and so there can be lots going on nearby, and often there are lots of things people can do in libraries and the parks and at community centres, but if they feel unsafe, they won't go anywhere. And as well, you need to tell them what is happening, not everyone knows where they can go and they just need to be told what is possible.

Resident 4

The council needs to have a better attitude and better understanding for one. Southwark don't do anything for older people do they? And now they want to get us more active! It is quite ironic that the council is asking this because Southwark council have cut a lot of funding to day centres where the elderly would go to get a little bit of activity. So if they want to get older people active then they should re-open the day centres, they are hypocrites.

Well, in that case council officers need to come up with solutions. Because if you ask us we will want the council to do more things to help older people be more active and so healthy, but we all know that councillors have less and less money to spend. So therefore council officers have to come up with ways for the elderly to be more active but in a way that costs less money.

Resident 5

The basic problem older people face is not having enough money to do things and go places, so being active when you can't even afford to heat your own home is a problem. The basic problem is money and the council should help with that.

Resident 6

Bring on extra carers, to help them with their everyday needs, like food and heating. Their rents should not be too high. They don't have enough money to heat their homes, and I also think they could do with more help and support from volunteer carers. I really wouldn't mind being such a carer myself.

Resident 7

I just think we should be supporting younger people more, so that when they get older, they will already be healthy. Personal safety, security and ensuring their children and grandchildren are being looked after well concerns older people.

Resident 8

We should make communities safer, with more visible community wardens, and funding to support their transport needs.

Resident 9

We all need to build better bridges/connections with one another. Setting up a phone network whereby someone or organisation buys a phone line, to allow for a phone conference call could be one way, for people who have difficulty or can't get out. We also need to create [more?] activities, like book, food etc groups.

I've just moved into Southwark, and think loneliness, and the improving the exchange between the younger and older generations are important issues of the day.

Resident 10

The council can only do so much. There's too much emphasis on one organisation or another supplying older people with services but if pensioners don't go to them, it's a waste of time [and resources]. People should really want to be active. How you encourage that, I honestly don't know. Loneliness is affecting lots of people in the borough.

Community views from previous conversations with residents for the March 2012 council assembly:**Resident 11**

I am a Southwark resident, retired, in my early 60s. The council's interest in the role of older people is not visible to me. I participate in volunteering in my local church, which is accessible and obvious. If the council wants to recognise us - go where we go (the supermarket, leisure centres, parks) and talk to us.

In terms of sporting, educational and social activities, we need to know what is available. With the decline of libraries, use your common sense to get out there and tell us what's happening. Lots of us use Facebook, Twitter, and social networking. I found out about this public debate via Twitter.

There's a generational split in the wider community between young parents' groups and older carers. Again, church is a place I go and can mix with other families. Have a look at how churches support active grandparents (don't be put off by the religious content - just see how things are done). Go to churches and other community initiatives and be seen to be interested in their work. Give us a person to relate to, not anonymous phone numbers and departments.

How can the Council work with the NHS and other partners to give older people more choice in the services they receive, enabling them to live healthy lives and stay in their own homes and communities for longer? We spend a lot of time in doctors'

surgeries and hospital outpatients' departments. Get in there, not just with posters and leaflets which nobody reads, but with volunteers of our age (I'd be happy to do it myself) to explain things and take note of concerns. It won't work so well if you send young people as they haven't the experience to share.

Resident 12

In terms of knowing what sporting, educational and social activities are available, I feel that more publicity and information is part of the answer. On a number of occasions in recent years, I have come across, quite by accident, information and news about events and services that would have been of possible interest to me and older people generally.

The same is true for how the council can work with the NHS and other partners to give older people more choice in the services they receive – more publicity and information. Perhaps the various providers need a more co-ordinated approach. Of course, SCC (Southwark Churches Care) is doing some of this already.

Resident 13

We have lots of amenities for older people in Southwark. You only pay £1 to use one of the council leisure centres and just 60p to have a swim. Then there's the Pensioners Centre at Camberwell Green, so we can't complain. There's a lot for us to do.

We have very limited means as older people so it's great that we're catered for at the right price.

Resident 14

The bus pass is a great help too. Don't you ever take that away! It gets you out and about.

Resident 15

What I like about being an older person is the fact that you don't worry anymore about what people think. I've long since ceased to care and I feel freer as a result.

So long as you have your health, then you are freer to do as you want. That really is everything.

Resident 16

I take my inspiration from that Jenny Joseph poem about growing old and wearing purple, and learning how to spit, or gobble up free samples in shops. It makes you realise how we lived a sober life for too long and old age is a time to let your hair down!

Resident 17

Getting out and about to clubs like this (Recycled Teenagers) keeps your mind and body active. I go to a little arts and drama club too and we take part in plays. Then I go swimming and to the gym a few times each week. Life is for living, man!

I like my crosswords too. I'm really enjoying my old age. I never thought I'd be doing these things at my age and I just love it!

Resident 18

A lot of older people are great for volunteering too. We have the time and we like to give it. You can do something that you might like being paid for, but because you don't get paid for it you're freer to do it.

I teach English to refugees, and I've always taught, but now I can teach exactly how I like and who I like. That keeps my brain active too and I like the pleasure of teaching. You gain much more than you could ever give.

Resident 19

I didn't retire until I was 71 and I thought I'd be terribly bored. I am getting that way so I'd like to volunteer but I'm not sure what to do.

Resident 20

Contact the Dulwich Helpline or the Volunteer Centre. They'll have lots for you to do. Then there's all the churches and Southwark Circle. They're always crying out for volunteers.

Resident 21

The Pensioners' Centre in Camberwell is great. They organise all sorts of outings. We went to the Charles Dickens Museum last week!

Resident 22

We spent so much time over the years rearing our families or doing jobs that we didn't have time for ourselves. Now is the time to put things right!

Resident 23

The thing I've found is that for every older person who goes out and gets involved in things in the community, there's another twenty sitting at home watching the bloomin' television all day!

Resident 24

Men are the worst. I think they're scared. It's all about motivation. Some people need encouraging, especially men. You need to take them by the hand.

Resident 25

It's partly to do with your personality. Some people are better than others at mixing. They're more naturally outgoing. That's true of young people too, so it carries on in old age as well.

Resident 26

Some of my older neighbours look at me leaving the house each day and they wonder where on earth I could be going. They don't seem to realise that there's a great big wonderful world out there.

Resident 27

You can still learn new skills as well and meet so many new people and make new friends.

Resident 28

I know that many older people are not in good health, but there's no good staying indoors all day and feeling sorry for yourself. It's a case of mind over matter.

Resident 29

We could always do with a better pension. And now they've taken away some of the lunch clubs and the day centres.

A lot of people rely on those, especially the men. They don't like to cook and they're guaranteed at least one good hot meal a day if they go there. But now they're closing them down because they're losing their funding!

Resident 30

A lot of our houses are cold and the draught whistles through the windows. There must be something the council can do to make them warmer. That's not to encourage people to stay in when they could go out.

With a bit of luck we'll all grow old. Councillors and council officers need to remember that one day they may be in the exact same position themselves as we are. How will they deal with it when it comes to the crunch?

Resident 31

A lot of young parents today depend on the grandparents to look after their children while they're out at work. But a lot of clubs won't let you take the grandchildren with you and then the older people won't come to the club anymore.

Resident 32

Some sons and daughters neglect their parents in old age. They don't visit them at home or in their care homes. But that's often to do with the poor relationship they've built up over the years.

Then others are scattered all over the place for work and they have their own life to live.

Resident 33

You can't generalise about that because your children can be spread far and wide and still remain close to you. Mine are travelling all the time but you've got Skype and email. There's lots of ways to stay in touch but it's all down to the way you bond with each other over the years.

Resident 34

The council needs to remember that pensioners can't keep paying out endlessly. We're all living on a reduced pension and we don't have endless pockets of money. When they get to our age group, let's see how they deal with it.

Resident 35

I have no issues with the council or life in Southwark. We have our clubs in Southwark and without them life wouldn't be worth living. I go to different ones three or four times a week. I learn a little line dancing at one and play bingo at another. I won the top prize last week – 50p!

Resident 36

The only thing is the buses. I have to get three or four buses to get from my place to the club. Then sometimes when the roads are up and the bus can't make the usual stop the driver doesn't always let people know. They end up having to drag all the way back.

I got caught yesterday so today I went up to the driver and asked him to announce it that the bus stop was closed. I told him there were a lot of older people on the bus and they can't do a lot of walking.

Resident 37

You might as well live in the middle of the desert as where I am. That's why these clubs are a lifeline. I look forward each day to see where I can get out and go. People these days keep themselves to themselves. They won't mix, meddle, or make!

It wasn't like that years ago. Black and White lived side by side and we all got on. You could tell people your business. These days you're frightened to even tell them you're going out in case they'll break in.

Resident 38

We could do with more clubs on estates. That would bring people together in their own area.

I have one neighbour next door who looks out for me. Otherwise I'm completely on my own. But I have nothing but drugs on the other side. I've been there for forty years and it's only now that it's all gone this way.

Resident 39

I have no complaints with Southwark. As long as we're left our freedom passes! If they're taken away we'll be housebound. That's all I worry about.

It all depends on who your neighbours are as well. We have a brilliant neighbour and we'd be lost without her. If you were sick she'd do your shopping or bring you in a dinner. Her husband is great too. My radiator was stuck last week and he had it done in five minutes.

Resident 40

I have Greek neighbours and we live in the same house. When it's cold they'll knock on the door and ask if there's anything I need. That means a lot.

Resident 41

A lot of good work goes on in Southwark to support older people but now we're being told that we've all got to become self helpers. A lot of us have served on committees and run things all our lives and we'd like to be able to take a step back at this stage. We don't mind lending a hand but we can't run everything ourselves in this so called Big Society way.

Government decides that they'll cut funding to lunch clubs, thinking that won't make much difference because people can cook for themselves at home. But we come here because we're friends and we need friendship as much as we need food.

Resident 42

If we didn't have clubs like this we would be finished, dead. We need more places like this, not less.

Resident 43

If councils stop funding to places like these (day centres) you're going to have to pay somewhere else along the line, in mental health. Because if people can't socialise they're going to need more social care. The mind has to be fed as well as the body.

Resident 44

I haven't been here (day centre) for several months because my neighbour fell and she's 85. I've been helping her because she has no relatives and is completely alone in the world.

I didn't see her for two weeks during the snow last winter and I discovered that she had been taken into hospital during the night. I went to see her but they wouldn't let me because I wasn't a member of her family. I told them I wasn't leaving without seeing her and in the end I did. I asked her, 'Do you remember me?' She cried and said, 'Yes I do'.

I live on the ground floor in our block of flats and I told her how I baked bread and made soup and brought them up to her during the snow but there was no answer. I also told her that I would come and see her again and that I would be there for her when she came home. Two weeks later she came home and she was crying, 'I want my Mum, I want my Mum'.

I asked her had she any breakfast and she said no. I made some porridge and brought it up to her. Then I sat with her while she ate it and I noticed how cold the room was. I put on the heater and she fell fast asleep.

We have to look after one another, to know who my neighbour is. If I don't know them, I will never miss them. We are our 'brother's keeper' and that's why I was helping her, until somebody phoned social services and she now has a carer. I have no idea how long I did it for because I didn't count the days.

Resident 45

In old age you're supposed to have the time of your life to enjoy yourself and the only way you can enjoy it is by having a club like this. You go on outings and see various places where you meet different people. That helps you and if you're lucky enough to do the computer that encourages you to keep in contact with other people.

Resident 46

We have the bus passes and every year we're threatened with losing them. If we don't have them we are going to die. I was sick for three days and never went outside the door. I was so depressed and we are all the same. We want to shoot ourselves!

Resident 47

I often feel that I'm invisible to others as an older person. Written off. Forgotten. Left out. People think, 'let's sit her in a corner and she'll be alright'. And she won't.

Resident 48

Many of us like the independence of a car but we're disabled and there are never enough parking spaces for us to use. I'm tired of getting tickets.

Resident 49

We're lucky to be alive. Will power keeps us going, and determination. Get up, wash and dress yourself. That's the main thing in life - that and getting involved with other people.

Resident 50

Things have changed in London. People don't want to know you. If you say hello to them on the buses they turn around and face away as if they don't hear.

If you greet someone they think you're going to ask for help.

Resident 51

Society today is very orientated towards youth. Older people are often seen and presented as figures of fun or bloody nuisances. Advertisements, television programmes, are all about youth, youth, youth.

Parents don't talk to their children. So they grow up without a proper grounding in language not to mind anything else.

I believe we're a broken society where family life is not what it should be. Young people are not being brought up with a sense of responsibility to other people.

Resident 52

I feel very sad about the cutting back on older people's services. Older people are expected to be more independent and do more things for themselves.

My worry is that a lot of isolated, vulnerable older people are going to fall through the net. Older people use places like this (day centres) for social interaction and stimulation both physical and mental.

One old person came up to me last week and said, 'I don't believe the health services think of us as people with lives to live. They just look on us as people who are going to die soon'.

Resident 53

I divide my time between living in Devon and living in Southwark. I find that young people here are much better behaved and kinder to old people than they are in Devon. They always get up and offer me their seat on the buses and they're very friendly.

Resident 54

I find that too. They'll help me on and off the buses with my shopping trolley, or on escalators, and when I get back to my block of flats they'll come down and take my trolley up.

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