

**Sevenoaks District**  
**Seniors Action Forum**

*Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus*

Email: [comms@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:comms@sdsaf.org.uk)

### **Message from the Chair**

If you are reading this then you have survived a very difficult winter and hopefully experienced a joyful Easter. It's such a wonderful time of year when nature displays all the beauty of Spring and gives us so many signs of hope. And the prospect of coming out of lockdown provides further hope. Even so, there is no doubt that our society will face challenging times ahead as we all adjust to new ways of living. Many people of all ages will be affected in ways we may not realise and it will be more important than ever for us all to support each other.

I read a story recently about three small children in South Africa who were challenged to a game. A basket of delicious fruit was put by a tree and the first person to run to it would get all the fruit. The start signal was given and the game leader was surprised when the children held hands, walked together to the tree and shared the fruit. When asked for their rationale, the children said 'Umbutu' meaning 'My happiness depends on yours - we are all connected'

Let's reach out each day and do our best to support each other and maintain our friendships and connections. And if you feel that you would like to volunteer to help in our Forum in any way we will welcome you with open arms and huge gratitude. We need all the help we can get so if you feel that you can commit even a little of your time to assist please email us: [comms@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:comms@sdsaf.org.uk) or phone 07775 568 834 to discuss.

*Eileen Murray Giles*

### **Singalong Concert - 7.30 p.m. on Saturday 24 April 2021**

Following on from the success of our first Singalong evening in February, we are planning a second event on Saturday 24 April at 7.30 p.m. by Zoom. Our much loved Jean Bentley and Frank McConnell will be joined by Ken Clarke, Carol Oakley, Frank Payne and Chris Towers, who have all kindly agreed to lead and perform some well known pieces for our entertainment. It should be another relaxed and fun event lasting 60-90 minutes with a little break in the middle for a chat and a cuppa. If you would like to attend please email [comms@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:comms@sdsaf.org.uk) to book your place and we will send the Zoom link and some of the lyrics a day or two before the event.

### **Telephone Scams – Unsure Who's Calling? Put the Phone Down!**

Please be aware that you can no longer trust Caller ID because scammers have discovered a way of hijacking genuine telephone numbers. Scammers will ask you to verify who they are by giving you a number to prove that they are genuine, but you need to be aware of any unknown telephone callers who are demanding any of your personal details as they have found a way 'Spoofing' genuine telephone numbers.

[Remember -No One Lost Money by Putting the Phone Down  
on Rogue Callers](#)

## Every Step Counts

Every Step Counts walks have resumed and include a gentle new walk by the river Darent, cricket pitch and field at Eynsford. Join as many walks as you like, you will receive a warm welcome.

DAY	TIME	MEETING POINT
Monday	11 am	From the Riverside Tea Room (Eynsford)
Tuesday	10 am	From the Pavilion in Dunton Green
Tuesday	11 am	From the Castle Inn in Chiddingstone
Wednesday	10 am	From the Otford Recreation Ground
Wednesday	10.30 am	From the West Kingsdown Pavilion
Thursday	10 am	From The Bricklayers Arms in Chevening
Thursday	10 am	From the Café in Swanley Park
Thursday	2 pm	From the Recreation Ground in Greatness, Sevenoaks
Friday	10.30 am	From the Kemsing Village Hall car park

*Irene Collins, Director & Co-founder*

## Wellbeing Seminar for Seniors – 2 p.m. on Monday, 10 May 2021 Via Zoom and phone - Facilitated by West Kent Mind

Just like our physical health, our mental health is affected by our own personal circumstances as well as by the world around us. Older people, including those living in care homes, can often experience depression, loneliness and low levels of wellbeing. The last year has brought further challenges for many of us and it's more important than ever that we prioritise our mental health.

So why not join Ceri Hodgkiss from West Kent Mind to explore the small things we can all build into our daily lives to help us stay well and feel satisfied with life? Whether you are finding things hard, are supporting loved ones, or would just like some tips for staying well, come along to this short session on Zoom (45 mins) and join the conversation. To take part email [comms@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:comms@sdsaf.org.uk) to book a place.

## Falls Prevention

More than 75 per cent of falls amongst older adults occur in or near the home, so here are some quick and simple suggestions to minimise our risk of falling, with thanks to Lynn Payette:-

1. **Upgrade your bathroom :** Install grab rails around the bath and toilet and place a non slip rubber mat in your shower.
2. **Improve your lighting :** Have clear lighting at top and bottom of stairs and motion activated lighting outside. If you need to climb a ladder to change bulbs, consider asking for help as ladder falls can cause serious injury.
3. **Clean floors carefully :** Wall to wall carpeting can cushion falls. When cleaning hard floors consider replacing commercial cleaner with a cup of vinegar in a bucket of warm water to clean without leaving a slippery film.
4. **Secure your furniture :** Bookcases, furniture, TVs and appliances that tip over can cause severe injury. Consider having them anchored to floors and walls.
5. **Get rid of hazards :** Clear clutter e.g. pet toys, shoes and electrical cords from areas you frequently use e.g. hallways, stairs and route to bathroom. Sort out uneven flooring and ditch rugs which slip.
6. **Stairs and Steps :** Consider adding a second stair rail on the opposite side and repair outdoor steps that have become cracked or wobbly. Paint edges of individual steps to help see them better.

## Health

**Prescriptions :** We would like to reassure those members who have in the past complained to us about the Prescription Ordering Direct service, used mainly in the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley areas, that we continue to be in contact with the Clinical Commissioning Group about this.

The swift move to digital methods of communication in the NHS and other areas of life makes it even more important for the Forum to campaign for alternatives to computers and all services to be available in a responsive and accessible way. We will publish an update when we learn what the future holds for the repeat prescription ordering service.

## The MHRA Yellow Card Scheme

Following the roll-out of the Covid vaccine there has been a focus on the side-effects or adverse reactions to medicines and how to report them. This is helpful to all parties : patients, the Department of Health and the pharmaceutical industry alike, so that these side-effects can be collated to see if there are things which patients have in common and consideration given to prescribing alternatives.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide an early warning that the safety of a medicine or a medical device may require further investigation. It is important for people to report problems experienced with medicines or medical devices as these are used to identify issues which might not have been previously known about. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) will review the issue and if necessary, take action to minimise risk and maximise benefit to the patients.

Reports can be made for all medicines including vaccines, blood factors and immunoglobulins, herbal medicines and homeopathic remedies, all medical devices available on the UK market and safety concerns associated with e-cigarette products. The MHRA is also able to investigate counterfeit or fake medicines or devices and if necessary, take action to protect public health.

It goes without saying that if you start taking a medicine which makes you experience side-effects you should contact your GP and Pharmacist as soon as possible, but also consider reporting this via the MHRA's Yellow Card Scheme.

## Rivermere Care Home

The Forum were made aware of a request from Rivermere Care Home in Chipstead, part of Avery Healthcare, for donations to provide Easter eggs for needy local children, in return for all the kindness which had been shown to their residents during the pandemic. We therefore made a small donation to support this, but with the caveat that some of the money also be used to purchase an Easter egg for residents in the home who would otherwise go without.



## **Happy Memories and praise for Scottish Stovies**

Some of you will have heard about, or tried this traditional Scottish dish, sometimes called Stovie Tatties. There are many recipes, but in reality it's a make up as you go along dish, dependant on what ingredients you have to hand.

In our family in the 1950s one of my errands on a Saturday morning was to collect the joint of meat my mother had ordered for the weekend, a favourite was an Aitch bone of beef. You don't see them around much nowadays, but it was a large joint and cost about 12 shillings or 60p in today's money. It provided for the Sunday lunch for 5 to 7 of us as we listened to the wireless before and after: Two-way Family Favourites beforehand and the Navy Lark or Round the Horn afterwards.

There was always some meat left over for Monday, and having been an evacuee to Scotland mother used it for making stovies. Simply, it was a pot of mashed potatoes with the diced up beef stirred in with onions and beef stock gravy all mixed up together and gently heated and stirred, served with cabbage or greens. Any left over meat can be used and other ingredients put in as take your fancy. A drop of stout was not unknown. It's not unlike Corned Beef Hash, but tastier.

Nowadays, the traditional Sunday Lunch seems to have become a rare occurrence and those who do like a traditional roast seldom have a joint big enough for leftovers but there is a simple and easy way of making some stovies by buying a tin of good quality casserole steak and combining it with left gravy and vegetables, not least the Scottish favourites of neeps and tatties.

*With thanks to Alan Dixon*

## **Banks**

Santander announced on 26 March that it was intending to close 100 of its branches, citing the fact that footfall had fallen in recent times and more people were using on-line banking. The Editor is unsure what world Santander has been living in for the past year, given their shorter opening hours and the fact that people were told to stay local and not travel.

Before the pandemic the Sevenoaks branch of Santander had a very busy flow of customers, with clients having to patiently queue and this may not have been the case in other parts of the country, but messages on-line seem to paint a similar picture.

Many people who have not had to sort out complex financial issues with banks (for example as Executors of Wills or Power of Attorney) and will fully appreciate that there are some matters which require proof of identity and signatures which simply cannot be done on-line or over the telephone.

It is hoped that other banks do not follow Santander's example and use Covid an easy excuse for cost-cutting, but perhaps as customers we need to be more proactive in seeking to lodge our savings with institutions which give good and responsive customer service and take into account our needs.

## **Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve - Car Parking Charges**

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 Kent Wildlife Trust introduced car parking charges at many of its reserves, including Sevenoaks. There is now a charge of £2.50 on weekdays and £3.50 at weekends.

Payment is via Smartphone but if you do not have one you can pay on-line or pay by phone. Payment can be made before, during or after the visit as long as it is made by 23:59 on the day you visited the reserve. To pay by phone call the number on the sign: 0203 046 0175 and have the location number ready. The parking is run by Euro Parks, who will benefit from any parking fines incurred.



## CleanUp Sevenoaks Campaign

Special thanks and appreciation go to the organisers of the CleanUp Sevenoaks campaign. The picture opposite shows just a tiny fraction of the 222 sacks of waste amounting to 2 tons of rubbish which were collected around the district by volunteers and community groups in March.

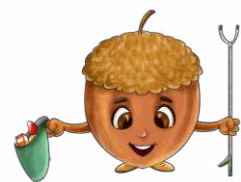
During lockdown many of us have discovered some little-known pathways and walks, only to find that people with no thought for the beauty of the countryside feel it is their right to carelessly dispose of their litter.

We all have a part to play in keeping our environment litter-free so we would encourage everyone to do their bit, however small, to ensure that we can enjoy a litter-free outlook.

It really is amazing what a difference dedicated, grass-roots action can make. Well done, CleanUp Sevenoaks. You can see more information about the aims of the group on their website <http://cleanupsevenoaks>



**CleanUp Sevenoaks** have designed an Acorn mascot to use in their campaign to publicise their aim of reducing litter and fly-tipping across the District. If any of our members who knit would like to make some of these please send your details to our website or telephone 07707 757201 when we will arrange for a pattern to be sent to you.



## Sevenoaks District Council Local Housing Plan

On 8th April Sevenoaks District Council were informed that they did not have permission to challenge the judicial ruling on the Planning Inspector's rejection of the Local Plan. The Inspector rejected it on the grounds that it failed to comply with "The duty to cooperate" in the way it set out to off-set a forecast under delivery on the Government's housing targets for the District. This means that we do not yet have an acceptable adoptable Local Plan.

The Forum's Housing Action Group have over the last 3 years challenged the SDC housing plan on the grounds that the Council initially accepted the Government's target, when it had the opportunity to get reductions on the grounds of our large proportion of Green Belt and A.O.N.B. land, but failed to do so. Our contention has always been that The Local Plan on the one hand seeks too high a target for new homes which are not in line with projected local population growth while on the other hand under-delivers on "really Affordable housing" and suitable housing for an expanding elderly population.

In the meantime new building continues and there seems to be more housing to satisfy the aspirations of people wanting to move into the District than the needs and affordability of local people. We will continue to campaign for lower targets, but an increase in the right type housing in the right places, with comprehensive plans for the infrastructure to cope with new developments is also imperative.

## **Praise**

- Patients who have gone without treatments which could be postponed whilst giving the NHS the opportunity to get back to full capacity.
- The tireless campaigners for a better society and environment, e.g. reporting potholes and writing to their MPs and Councillors to raise issues of concern.
- Those who have organised food distribution, often free of charge, to members of the community during lockdown.
- All the little acts of kindness that go unpublicised.
- The churches giving pastoral care to their members as well as the wider community.
- Befrienders who listen and share friendship with those who are isolated.
- Supermarket staff who have worked tirelessly and cheerfully throughout the past year.
- Alan Dixon, our Vice Chair, who has diligently analysed Covid statistics for the District and circulated them to Committee members to keep abreast of the number of cases around the area.

## **Finance**

**2021/22 Budget :** The state pension has increased by 2.5% from 6 April 2021. State pension recipients who are entitled to the full level of new single-tier state pension will get £179.60 a week from 6 April 2021, up from £175.20. The change means that some pensioners will be up to £228.80 better off by the end of the 2021-22 tax year, resulting in a total state pension income to £9,339.20.

Those who reached state pension age before April 2016 receive the basic state pension. At its full level this is worth £134.25 a week, which will rise to £137.60 per week this financial year. The increase equates to a £174.20 pay rise in 2021-22, taking the total over a year to £7,155.20. Both old and new state pensioners can receive more than the full amount if they have previously built up additional state pension.

BBC Radio 4's Money Box programme (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000v23q>) recently had a very interesting feature on the State Retirement Pension on 10 April, exploring the complexities around the amount of pension we receive. We urge anyone who receives a very small retirement pension to check that it has been correctly calculated and also to investigate their eligibility for Pension Credit which many people are entitled to but do not claim.

**BBC TV Licence:** From April 2021 the annual licence fee will increase from £157.50 to £159 per annum. Please be aware that there are various scams doing the rounds regarding the TV licence.

**Postage Stamps:** We seem to have this notice as a recurring theme in our Newsletter, the fact that Royal Mail have increased the cost of postage. As a reminder, the price of stamps rose on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and the cost of a first class stamp is 85p and a second class stamp costs 66p.

**Economic Fraud :** Economic fraud has grown by an enormous amount in recent years and has deterred people from engaging with banks and other services. The sums of money are eye watering and very few of the scammers are tracked down and prosecuted. There is a Bill currently in Parliament looking at On-Line Harms and we hope that legislation will follow to try and do more to reduce these occurrences.

## **Connectivity and Information Technology**

We are sorry that members who are not on line will be unable to join in the events we have publicised in this newsletter. The forthcoming Singalong and Wellbeing Seminar are both via the internet but later in the year, once the Roadmap has been completed, we hope to be able to host some face to face meetings, fingers crossed.

In the meantime, for any members who are tempted to start using the internet or Smartphones, we would like to make you aware of the opportunity to have the loan of devices, free of charge, for 3 months. To be eligible for this you need to be over 65 or over 50 with a long term health condition. Not only will participants have a loan of the device but also have tuition and coaching from a team of Digital Ambassadors who will advise on how to use the equipment safely.

We recently had a meeting with Empowercare who made us aware of an EU funded project to combat loneliness and isolation through the use of information technology. Details from Empower are as follows:

### **Would you like support with Digital Skills?**

Our network of volunteer Digital Ambassadors can help you get to grips with technology, whether you have a device that you want to make the most of or would like to take advantage of our device loan scheme and learn from scratch, we would love to help you get some new skills.

We can show you how to:

- Complete online shopping.
- Make video calls to your family and friends.
- Access community services e.g., libraries.
- Do anything you think would be useful to you!

It is completely free. Initially, contact with your Digital Ambassador will be over the phone but we aim to roll this out in person as soon as we are able.

If you would like to sign-up you can either give us a call on 03000 422 122 or email us at:

[empowercare@kent.gov.uk](mailto:empowercare@kent.gov.uk)

### **Want to help people in your community improve their digital skills?**

We are currently recruiting for volunteers to become digital ambassadors across Kent to offer skills training and support for over 65s in the community.

Digital Ambassadors will receive three days of free training to ensure they have all the confidence and resources they need to be able to support individuals with their digital skills. The first training sessions begin in April.

Our volunteers do not need to have excellent digital skills, just be a good communicator and able to support someone in learning the basics.

**If you are interested in becoming a Digital Ambassador or would like to find out more about the project, please contact [empowercare@kent.gov.uk](mailto:empowercare@kent.gov.uk) or call 03000 422 122.**

# REMINDERS AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## Buses

GO COACH have reinstated their local pre lockdown bus services to and from Sevenoaks Bus Station as follows:

Route 1	Route 2	Route 5	Route 6
Westerham	Swanley	Tonbridge	Kemsing

Route 8, the Sevenoaks circular service has been reintroduced, there are some extensions to **Route 429** West Kingsdown to Dartford via Swanley and the Edenbridge town circular has a £1 flat fare.

Full details for all routes are in their latest brochure which is available from their office at the bus station which has reopened, 10 am until 3pm Monday to Friday. All services are still free for those with a bus pass out of peak hours.

The Go2 on demand service is still available exactly as before but even with a bus pass you will have to pay 50% of the standard fare with a fixed fare of £1 for any adults with you. Should you wish to contact Go Coach direct for whatever reason you can by phone: 01732 469 800 or go to one of their websites: For routine services: [info@go-coach.co.uk](mailto:info@go-coach.co.uk), for go2: [office@go2now.co.uk](mailto:office@go2now.co.uk)

ARRIVA bus services 308 and 401/402 are unchanged

## Census

The census for England took place on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021, when every household was asked to submit details of who resided in their dwelling. If you have not yet completed the Census you need to do so as soon as possible as it is a legal obligation to supply this information to the Government. If you require support to complete the Census this can be accessed via Citizens Advice Sevenoaks from trained Census Support Advisers on 0330 053 7333 at the following times: Wednesday from 1pm to 4.30 pm. Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

## Elections

Elections will take place on 6 May 2021 for :

The Police and Crime Commissioner for the Kent police area

Election of councillors to Kent County Council : Sevenoaks West Division

Sevenoaks District Council: Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge Ward

## Passport Waits

The definitive situation around whether foreign holidays will be allowed this year is still awaited but if you are contemplating going abroad and your passport needs renewing you need to bear in mind that the current wait to get this done can be up to 10 weeks.

## Public Libraries

The libraries in The Eden Centre, Edenbridge, Sevenoaks and Swanley reopened their doors to the public on 12<sup>th</sup> April. Browsing is now allowed and computers can be booked. If you do not want to browse the bookshelves yourself KCC Libraries have introduced a Staff Picks option which is accessed on-line or by phoning 03000 413131, and staff will choose the books for you in line with your preferences.

Happy reading!

## Keeping in Touch

To contact the Forum Committee email Eileen Murray Giles at : [chair@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:chair@sdsaf.org.uk)

or write to us "Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum"

22 Lambarde Road, TN13 3HT

SDSAF Website: [www.sdsaf.org.uk](http://www.sdsaf.org.uk)

**If you would like to receive the Newsletter in large print please let us know**