



WOLVERHAMPTON OVER 50s FORUM
Secretary: Mr. Roy Russell MBE
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SPEAK AND BE HEARD

**MINUTES OF O'50s FORUM HELD ON 17th March 2004 COMMITTEE ROOM
3 CIVIC CENTRE**

Apologies: R. Jones, R & J Girdler, J. Speakman, G.Wade, I. Sammonds,
T & J Russell, J.Purshouse, A. Farmer

Present: 31 members plus Barbara Nelson, Rose Powell

ACTION

1. Speaker

Peter Rhodes gave a brief history of the Express & Star and explained how the paper is open to all political views and that continues to be the aim. With regards to social responsibility they listen to what people tell them from over 1000 employees, councillors and the huge range of opinions from the 1000's of letters received every year. A huge range of opinions come in via these letters and allows the paper to gauge public opinion on most matters. Often opinions are seen to change quite dramatically. In the case of the poll tax it was viewed as the fairest tax with a lot of enthusiasm for it but by looking at the reader's letters the paper was able to see how it fell out of favour and was doomed.

A recent report on 'crisis in care homes' was brought about by concerns raised in letters received. This was initiated by a small piece asking for readers to tell their stories. They were then inundated with letters in response which formed the basis of their campaign.

There was an ongoing discussion with Peter and members of the forum.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Mr J. Ray said that he had asked to sit on the Regeneration & Transportation scrutiny panel and that it had not been minuted. The request was made at the AGM in February and appears in those minutes not the January minutes which were being discussed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2004 were then agreed to be a true record and were proposed by M.Wedge and seconded by R. Russell.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's remarks

The chair reported that he felt that the AGM had been very successful.

5. Treasurers report

There is currently £863.96 in the bank. He has received 54 individual subscriptions and 10 group subscriptions.

6. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report..

7. Sub committee reports**Communication**

J. Ray chair of committee said that the communications sub committee was set up by the forum for specific reasons. To highlight various problems with agencies including the police, fire service, city council etc. In November only two members of the committee attended and last months meeting only three members attended. He felt that the apathy is due to the frustration of not achieving what it was set up to do. Mr Ray was referring to a report that Councillor Shelley had said would be presented to the appropriate cabinet team of progress made on the issues raised by the over 50's forum and that a report should be produced within the current municipal year and a further meeting should be held in the early part of 2004 in order to discuss action/position in relation to the various issues. As this has not happened Mr Ray felt that there was no longer a need for the sub committee to meet as it had not achieved what it had set out to. He said that the committee felt that the forum needed 'to get more teeth' in order to achieve. He felt that the committee should only meet when asked to by the forum or by the council to address specific issues, though this was not held to be a unanimous view. He asked what the forum thought of this? He feels that as the forum met with Councillors and Officers last July and was still awaiting the outcome of the report that they are not being taken seriously and that the forum should reconsider its position. He pointed out that issues are not being taken seriously and are continually being brought to forum and not being resolved.

A discussion followed and the Chair pointed out that the forum has been successful on a number of issues. He was not sure that 'getting more teeth' was the appropriate term and felt that by continuing to press the Council for a reply to this particular matter was a more relevant course of action.

A. Morris said that you should not give up at the first obstacle but that you should keep on requesting the relevant information. She felt that members need more commitment and that they were there to monitor services for the

over 50's and continue to report what is wrong and that change will be brought about by that. C. Sammonds pointed out that the forum does not have the authority to change services but that by continuing to highlight issues such as the toilets in the city, that the Council is encouraged to make changes. T. Russell commented on the fact that there was not enough notice given for sub committees, Rose asked that all chairs should be aware of this and could longer notice be given for future meetings to ensure that the maximum number of members were able to attend.

J. Ray said that it was the frustration of nothing being done that led to members not attending, not the length of notice given for meetings.

Bereavement Centre

Although this is not a sub committee of the forum M. Wedge sits on the centres committee and wished to report back to forum as it was one of their original initiatives.

Marjorie chaired the annual meeting held on 3rd March 2004 which was very well attended. During the period 1st April 03 – 29th February 04, 2797 deaths were registered and of this number 79.47% used the service. If the number of deaths of young adults, children and babies who do not use the service were taken into account the percentage could be as high as 90%.

A discussion took place that a large number of people still do not understand what the service offers and that it is not a counselling service. New publicity was discussed.

Several other local authorities have shown an interest in the bereavement centre and representatives from Worcester, Poole, Peterborough, Salford, Nottingham, Stafford and Halesowen have visited Wolverhampton to see the scheme. Marjorie agreed to bring a copy of the video about the centre to a future forum for anyone who wishes to see it.

K. McNish said that she had occasion to use the bereavement centre and that the service given was excellent.

8. AOB

J. Ray requested that an attendance list of management committee members should be issued prior to next years elections to help members make up their minds about who to elect to the management committee. Chair agreed that was a good idea and would be implemented immediately.

J. Mellor pointed out that there is a similar system in place to check on how many councillors attended sessions. This is open to the public to check.

He also told the forum that if any members were ex-services or families of ex-services that there was the opportunity to apply for financial or welfare support. SSAFFA is a national charity who are committed to helping people in need, suffering or distress regardless of age. The telephone number is 01902-621174.

C. Peat said that she had a local problem with graffiti. She has reported it on numerous occasions and there had still been nothing done. When she came to the Civic Centre she was passed from department to department and does not feel that this is acceptable.

J. Mellor said that there is a complaints procedure in place and that she should put in an official complaint, after a month if she has heard nothing she should then complain to the ombudsman.

J. Ray then complained that the meeting was not being controlled as he had his hand up and other people were being spoken to first. Chair reminded him that the previous speaker had signified his opinion first.

The meeting closed at 12.00

Rose to provide complaints forms and arrange speaker to attend forum

Date of next meeting

**10.00am Wednesday 21st April 2004.
Committee room 3, Civic Centre**