

# STOIC MEETING – NOTES & INFORMATION

## Age Concern Hall, Linden Road – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2009

The first part of the meeting comprised our first **Annual General Meeting** to recognise that STOIC – ‘the voice for older people in Southern Test Valley’ has been in full operation for just over one year.

*Please refer to the minutes of the AGM for a detailed report.* Our Chairman (Anne Meader) reminded members of our chronological journey from our first exploratory meeting back in January 2008, then becoming the ‘Older Peoples’ Forum’ and later the ‘Older Peoples’ Voice’ right through to the formation of today’s STOIC. During this period we have discussed and brought forward many of the issues that older people in our area have to face in the daily lives. These have included community and passenger transport, food safety and hygiene, non-clinical services and patient care in hospitals, and also a unique insight into the role of a councillor across all 3 levels – town/borough/county. Testament to the value of STOIC is that we now have 2 representatives regularly attending the Hampshire county-wide forums to take our concerns and issues forward to the next level.

Anne advised that we currently have some vacancies on our Committee and would very much welcome new people. Jill Gethin agreed to take on the Membership Secretary role, but we still have openings for a new Vice-Chairman or Treasurer as well as a role for a fund-raiser.

Anne also announced the new STOIC Membership scheme whereby annual subscription costs £5 and offers 6 meetings for the price of 5, a regular newsletter, as well as making a valuable contribution towards the cost of refreshments and other running costs. In all, better value-for-money than the ‘pay as you go’ £1 cost per every meeting. As a one-off special offer people who joined at today’s meeting received an extra 4 months membership through to April 2010. 18 people joined on this basis which was an encouraging start.

Dorothy Baverstock, our Treasurer, presented our first statement of accounts and indicated that we are in good shape financially and thanked Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) for their recent grant of £500 as a very welcome contribution to our funds.

Following the election/re-election of committee members, Anne then closed the formalities of the Annual General Meeting by introducing our guest speaker for the day, Jane Gulliver, from Hampshire County Council Trading Standards on the topic of **Protecting Older People / Reducing Doorstep Crime**.

Jane is a Trading Standards Officer working as part of the Protecting Older People Team within Hampshire County Council (HCC). The team evolved mainly to protect vulnerable people, including the elderly and disabled. However, they provide practical help, advice and guidance to many groups across our community including the WI, residents associations and neighbourhood watch. These are issues that affect all of us in our daily lives, from doorstep callers, rogue traders and all types of ‘scams’ from telephone, postal and internet.

The first category that Jane talked about was rogue traders, normally those associated with household property services e.g. roofers, tarmacers, gardeners, repair work to guttering and fascias. They knock on your door, saying they are ‘in your area today’ and offer to do some work for you e.g. replacing damaged or missing roof tiles (work that may not have needed doing in the first place), initially at a small cost that would significantly increase as ‘extra’ work is done. They would then demand payment at extortionate rates, well beyond what is reasonable and often their work is of a very poor

quality. Sometimes they may try to befriend you in order to gain your confidence, so that you're more likely to trust them. Jane gave lots of examples and showed photographs to illustrate these points.

Jane gave some advice on preventing this from happening in the first place and how we can avoid getting into this position. However tempting the offer, her advice is to say 'no' to cold callers and doorstep sellers. Try not to engage too much in conversation, use the chain before opening the door and don't let anyone into your house. Refer callers to the 'Please Do Not Cold Call' door sticker if you have one (see below).

Hampshire County Council have produced an excellent publication called 'Safe & Sound' which offers general consumer and safety advice for residents in Hampshire and is designed to help people stay safe and secure in their own homes. Also available is a door sticker to discourage cold callers, along with a booklet on HCC's 'Buy with Confidence' scheme which lists businesses and tradesmen who have been vetted by Trading Standards as providing a good, reliable and customer-friendly service (website [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)).

Distraction burglaries are also a problem. This is when people often posing as bogus officials e.g. working for utilities companies, call with the sole intention of getting into your homes with the aim of taking cash, valuables and other portable goods. They are often with an accomplice and they try to distract you with dialogue such as 'we're from Southern Water, we're doing some work in your area and need to check your water flow' to gain access to your home'. Although it's important to check their ID or credentials, please be aware that ID cards/badges may not be proof of genuine identity. Some look very convincing. Good advice is to take a closer look at their ID before allowing anyone to enter; close your front door whilst checking (can also phone the company concerned as a further check). If they are genuine callers they will understand this and wait for you.

HCC Trading Standards have a Quick Response Team who can come to your home if a doorstep caller is causing you concern. Their phone number is 01962 833666.

The last area that Jane covered was telephone scams and junk mail. Typical examples include: you've won a competition prize, but you need a ring another phone number for more details – in this case the phone call will be at premium rates often to a far away country. Another relates to catalogues i.e. to qualify for your prize or free gift, you need to order some items first. Winning money in foreign lotteries is also a well used scam. If you reply in writing to their initial letter advising of your win, a personal agent/representative of the lottery may ring you and ask for money to pay administration fees or local taxes etc. before they will release your prize money. Also anything that requires you to give your bank account details should be ignored. Don't even reply to letters because it actually confirms that you do live at that address and this can result in you being inundated with more junk mail as these people sell on lists of names and addresses to others doing similar scams.

Be aware of a scam currently going around. Initial contact is made via telephone or email claiming to be from BT saying that you have underpaid a small amount on your telephone bill and demand payment by credit card or you will be cut-off at a certain date and have to pay to be reconnected. Generally anyone involved with a scam is advised to contact HCC Trading Standards for advice as soon as possible.

## **TVBC Consultation Process on Sport and Recreation in Test Valley.**

Louisa Rice explained that TVBC is currently asking for public feedback on the provision of sport and recreation facilities in Test Valley to enable improvements to be made and to plan for the future. A simple 2 page questionnaire has been designed for this purpose and that TVBC wants to get as wider a representation as possible of people's views and opinions and as such older people are particularly being asked to contribute. Questionnaires were distributed at the meeting and further copies are available at the Age Concern Hall as well as the Council Offices, Romsey Library, Romsey Rapids and other places. Media coverage includes TVBC News and the local papers. Responses are required by the 11<sup>th</sup> December and results will be available to the public in March 2010.

## **A.O.B.**

### **Older Peoples' International Day – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010**

It was agreed that it would be a good idea to have our own STOIC event to coincide with this International Day i.e. speakers, stands, lunch etc. Also to invite other local community groups, voluntary organisations, charities, businesses to participate and become involved. We have provisionally booked the Crosfield Hall in Romsey for this day. Will need to discuss and plan our course of action early in the New Year.

### **Christmas event – 9<sup>th</sup> December at 9 Love Lane (Romsey)**

Carers Together are hosting a crafts and desktop activities event on the above date between 11.00 -14.00. Entrance is £1 including a snack lunch.

### **STOIC Newsletter**

Your input is welcomed for the next edition. Purpose being to inform people of our latest news and activities, topics of general interest and to advise on future meeting dates and topics. Please submit any input/comments to Veronica Lakey (oakbank21@talktalk.net).

Copies of our newsletter can be found on our website

[www.romseynet.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm](http://www.romseynet.org.uk/STOIC/index.htm)

### **Members Interest Forms**

Completing one of these gives you the opportunity to raise any particular interests, issues or concerns. We try to address/take these forward on our collective behalf. Input can also form the basis of future items and speakers at our meetings. We want to hear your views, opinions and concerns. Please contact Paul Buxton, Age Concern on 01794 521398.

**Our next STOIC meeting will take place on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010 at the Age Concern Hall, Romsey from 2.05 to 4.00pm.** The theme of the meeting will be benefits advice and entitlements with a guest speaker from The Pension Service.

### **Dates for 2010** (Fridays at 2.05pm)

- 22<sup>nd</sup> January
- 12<sup>th</sup> March
- 14<sup>th</sup> May
- 9<sup>th</sup> July
- 10<sup>th</sup> September
- 12<sup>th</sup> November