



# GREY MATTERS

## COME TO HAILSHAM AND MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD

APRIL 8th, 2006, 10am - 12 noon

**Do you feel that older people suffer from negative stereotyping?**

**Is there an issue affecting older people in East Sussex which you feel needs to be brought to the attention of people who might be able to make a difference?**

The Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership Committee would like to invite you to come along and air your views at a meeting to be held on Saturday, April 8th 2006 in the Charles Hunt Centre, Hailsham. The meeting will begin at 10.00 am and we have arranged several speakers, including the Wealden Citizens' Advice Bureau. Refreshments will be available and the meeting will conclude at around noon. Ring June Street on 01435 867497 to let us know you are coming. The Charles Hunt Centre is situated at the back of the Waitrose car park accessed by car from Vicarage Lane, or by foot, through the Vicarage Field shopping area to the right of Waitrose.

### WSCP Website

**We are pleased to announce that the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership Website is now up and running. We invite you to log on to [www.wealden-scp.org](http://www.wealden-scp.org) and take a look.**

### DO WE GET A FAIR FUNDING DEAL FROM THE GOVERNMENT?

East Sussex is a relatively poor county when compared to the rest of the South East. Average earnings are the lowest in the region but the cost of living and house prices are high. We also have a higher number of older people and others on fixed incomes, which puts a bigger burden on services.

Changes in the way Government funds local councils have seen millions of pounds of funding transferred from councils in the South East to other parts of the country. The Government says this is fair because it is distributing money to poorer regions in the North of England and the Midlands. However, what it means is that East Sussex residents pay much more for their services through council tax than the national average, with 40% of services funded through Council Tax compared with a national average of 25%. So our Council Tax bill in East Sussex is higher than elsewhere for similar types and levels of service, and it is becoming increasingly hard to continue to provide the current level of services without either putting up council tax or making cuts. A recent press release from Care for the Carers warns that spending cuts will put even more pressure on the County's health and social care resources. Both Care for the Carers and Crossroads, organisations that have been providing support, information and respite services for many years in East Sussex, warn that recent cuts will seriously affect their ability to provide essential support to carers.

**Let us know at WSCP if you are affected by these issues.**

### A STRONGER VOICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Government is interested in improving the engagement of local people in decision-making and in improving service delivery through effective partnerships. As a body of senior citizens we have a chance of contributing to these aims to our benefit, and the more members we have, the stronger will be our voice. Hanno Fry, the Chairman of WSCP, has been asked to take part in a consultation led by David Milliband, the Minister of Communities and Local Government, on how to achieve these improvements. For further details or to make any comments, contact Hanno on 01825 712410.

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**Please complete and return this slip if you would like to become a member of the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership and receive future editions of the Newsletter**

NAME.....ORGANISATION (if any).....

ADDRESS.....Email Address.....

Please include my name on the mailing list for the Wealden Senior Citizens' Partnership, and keep me informed of future events.

Return this slip to: Linda Graham, "Four Oaks", 5 Rectory Field, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4JE, ring 01892 770487 or e-mail [linda\\_graham@ntlworld.com](mailto:linda_graham@ntlworld.com)

## WSCP TRANSPORT INITIATIVE

You told us at our Launch Meeting last September that one of the most vital issues affecting older people in Wealden is a lack of public transport. For instance, many people have great problems getting to doctors, hospitals or even relatives' houses when they need to.

Our Chairman, Hanno Fry, has been in talks with a local cab firm about a project which could provide a service to residents living within a 20-mile radius of Uckfield, including Crowborough and Forest Row, and eventually work as an umbrella service with other firms in Wealden areas such as Hailsham. The firm has offered to give a sliding discount, which means the more customers they serve the cheaper it will be. WSCP also aims to contribute funds to the project to make it more affordable for users. We are in the early stages, but we believe this will be a practical system which would work, and the aim is get a pilot scheme off the ground in the next few months.

Watch out for more information on our website and in our next newsletter.

### EQUITY RELEASE SCHEMES

WSCP Committee Member Ann Haig McVitty warns members to be very careful to consider all their options before taking a decision to sign up to an equity release scheme in order to unlock some much needed capital from their home. These schemes are not always as advantageous as they seem and you might find yourself ten years later with a large debt based on the value on your home, which would make it difficult to sell if you wish to.

### TAKING IN A LODGER

On the other hand, letting out a room in your home in order to increase your income, is also not without its pitfalls. Anyone living alone and benefiting from a 25% discount on their Council Tax should bear in mind that taking in a lodger will automatically disqualify them from the discount. A potential lodger should be made to understand from the outset that they will be expected to pay their share of the Council Tax due on your home.

### THE SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND FAMILIES ASSOCIATION

**SSAFA** **FORCES** *Help*  
The SSAFA - Forces Help is the national welfare charity helping serving and ex-Service men, women and their families in need. They help to provide a safety net for all ex-Service personnel and their dependants, whether they left the Forces last week or many years ago. Services which can be provided include:

- financial assistance
- help organising and funding home adaptations or special equipment
- practical and emotional support
- a care home for the elderly
- purpose built bungalows for disabled people
- specially designed holiday apartments for the disabled, or anyone in need of a rest
- a Housing Advisory Service

If you feel you might qualify for this kind of help, contact the Divisional Secretary, Martin Turner, on 01892 783803. For more information about SSAFA, visit [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

### COULD YOU BENEFIT FROM A VISIT TO A CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU?



Citizens' Advice is a problem solving organisation, dealing with a vast range of problems including social welfare, benefits, housing, etc, and is the largest provider of money advice in the UK. In conjunction with East Sussex County Council and Age Concern, with offices in Uckfield, Crowborough and Hailsham, Wealden Citizens' Advice has an excellent record in achieving improved benefits for people over 60 receiving disability benefits.

Why not come along to our meeting on April 8th to hear a representative of Wealden Citizens' Advice speak about the work of this worthwhile organisation?

### MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT MISSING OUT

Are you finding it hard to make ends meet? You may not realise that there is a whole range of benefits which you might be able to claim, just two of which are Pension Credit and Council Tax Benefit.

The Pension Service now provides you with a full benefit entitlement check in your own home. We are hoping to arrange for a representative of the Pension Service to speak at our meeting on April 8th, so come along and hear more, or else ring 0845 6060265.

### RNID • )) RNID LAUNCHES THE FIRST EVER TELEPHONE HEARING CHECK!

breaking the ~~physical~~ barrier

If you are not hearing as well as you used to, or you feel someone near you is missing out, there's a simple answer

Call 0845 600 55 55 NOW and take a five-minute telephone hearing check.

Full instructions are given at the beginning of the test. You will be asked to listen to recorded sounds and use your telephone keypad to respond to what you heard. At the end of the test you will be given the result straight away and advised whether or not it is advisable to consult your GP.