



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

July 2016 Special Newsletter

***Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of
Islington Pensioners Forum
11.30 a.m. Thursday 21 July 2016
Committee Room 1, Islington Town Hall
join us for refreshments and friendship***

Dear Islington Councillors and Friends,

You are warmly invited to join us on the important occasion of the 30th Anniversary of Islington Pensioners Forum to meet our members and to give us the opportunity to thank you for your support and solidarity. We are pleased to say that the new Mayor, Kat Fletcher has accepted our invitation.

There is much to do! Right-wing think tanks, much of the media and many politicians are trying to create divisions between young and old, saying that we have escaped the austerity measures and are damaging the life chances of younger generations as well as the economy itself. Not true! It is rich against poor, not young against old. We are campaigning to build "generations united" in solidarity with the young (our children and grandchildren!)

From 10.30 to 11.30 on the day we will be holding our Annual General Meeting to elect the new team -- officers and committee for the coming year, and we are pleased to say that an important number of new members are coming forward to strengthen our work.

You will see from the annual report included here that we have had a busy year -- meeting, campaigning, holding social events and producing goods for our fund-raising Christmas Fair.

We hope you can find time to join us to celebrate the milestone of our 30th Anniversary. We look forward to seeing you.

Many thanks and best wishes,

George Durack CHAIRMAN

Dot Gibson SECRETARY

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM : REPORT TO AGM : Thursday 21 July 2016

Introduction:

You will see from the following report that 2015-16 has been a busy year. None of the issues of concern are going away and so we expect the next 12 months to be just as busy. We now have the results of the Euro referendum. Islington voted 70% for staying in, but the overall decision was to come out. Millions of people hit by austerity: the cuts and privatisation of public services, the housing crisis and low pay, have been swayed by those who say that this is the fault of immigrants. No! The austerity measures handed down by government are to blame; failure to build social housing but encouragement to the millionaire property rich.

We in the Forum are proud of our multi-cultural organisation with many members who came here as immigrants. We see the future as building even more collaboration across all communities, recognising the enormous importance of the health care and public services we receive from our neighbours from overseas. Immigrant workers should not be blamed for low wages. Millions of people are on low pay, zero-hour and short-term contracts and it is big business, the corporations that make huge profits from their exploitation.

While the big corporations set up shop and reap profits all over the world and register in tax havens, working people are vilified for seeking employment away from their home countries so that they can feed and clothe their families. So where are we going from here? Leaving the EU and so without the European Directives protecting human and other rights, the new government leadership, continuing with the cuts and privatisation and armed with the Housing and Planning Act, will mean many struggles ahead. In the Forum we know from experience that proper wages and conditions and basic rights were achieved when we joined together, united in our trade unions across borders. It is now up to us to encourage all workers, immigrants included, and the young to once more see the importance of solidarity and united campaigning with the IPF playing its part in this.



The Forum and Islington Council:

The Council is doing its best to keep jobs and services and to support local charities despite government cuts (£200m since 2010), and on 20 June 2015 Council Leader, Richard Watts spoke at a well-attended event for voluntary organisations, including IPF, at the Town Hall. We acknowledged the Council's problems at a meeting of our officers with Richard Watts and deputy leader, Cllr Janet Burgess on 5 January 2016 to discuss our campaigning work and the problems of adult social services affecting domiciliary and nursing home care. Then on 1 February 2016 (National Dignity Action Day) the two councillors joined us on our demonstration outside the Town Hall. The Council and Islington "Hands Off Our Public Services" organised a number of meetings against the government's Housing and Planning Bill during the year and IPF was represented at these. The Mayor, Councillor Richard Greening and the Lady Mayoress joined us on 11 July 2015 at our garden party held at Highbury View Sheltered Housing. The Mayor also addressed our Forum meeting on 17 September 2015 and a collection raised £77.75 for his charity "Music First".

A number of members participated when Islington Council opened up the Town Hall for donations for refugees and migrants in Calais, and also attended the meeting in the Town Hall organised by Keep our NHS Public with the support of Richard Watts on the Future of the NHS in Islington. Councillor Raphael Andrews addressed the February 2016 meeting and councillors have supported us in many ways, especially with donations to ensure that we keep up production and circulation of our newsletter and we put on record in this report our heartfelt thanks for this.

Election of London Mayor:

The election of a London Mayor and GLA was on 5 May 2016, and on 11 April we had an election hustings in the Town Hall. Kristina Glenn, Director of the Cripplegate Foundation chaired; the candidates who spoke were: Jennette Arnold (Labour), Caroline Russell (Green), Terry Stacy (LibDem) and Sam Malik (Conservative). The main issue was housing; also the underlying problem of public service cuts and privatisation was reflected in all the questions. The NPC London Region manifesto was presented, and in our June 2016 newsletter we published the response from Sadiq Khan, the new Mayor. We are initiating "North London Pensioners" and are planning to invite him to speak to a meeting of all North London Forums and Action Groups in the coming period.

Affiliations:

(a) National Pensioners Convention:

The Forum is affiliated to the London Region of the NPC and we were represented at its AGM by George Durack and Annette Thomas. We also took part in the region’s demonstration at the Houses of Parliament in October 2015, sending black balloons into the air to mark the sad and disgraceful death from cold-related illnesses of 43,900 older people.

On 4 November an IPF delegation attended the NPC lobby of Parliament meeting in the House of Commons, and 17 of us took part in the NPC Pensioners’ Parliament (14-16 June 2016). Reports will be published in our August Newsletter.

(b) Greater London Forum for Older People:

IPFis also affiliated to the GLF and we have been represented at their special meetings during the year.

Forum Meetings:

Our president Jeremy Corbyn MP spoke at our July 2015 AGM at the start of the campaign to elect a new Labour Party leader, and later we were pleased to congratulate him on winning that election.

As well as the the Mayor and the Councillor mentioned above, speakers at our regular monthly meetings have included: John Hilary, Executive Director of War on Want, Bob Archer of the Greece Solidarity Campaign, Caroline McGraw, Public Health lecturer at City University, Catherine McLene on befriending schemes for lonely people, Organisers of the Noah’s Ark Children’s Hospice, Eric Hill, Secretary of Islington Unison’s retired members (and our Treasurer), Eric Gordon of the Islington Tribune and Camden New Journal, Judy Downey Chair of Relatives and Residents’ Association.

During the whole year we have been following with great concern the NHS Junior Doctors’ dispute, and Ed Palmer from Whittington Hospital addressed two of our meetings. As we prepare for our AGM the junior doctors are considering proposals for their contract put by the British Medical Association after discussions with the government chaired by ACAS.



Campaigning:

Members joined junior doctors’ pickets at Whittington Hospital on all the strike days. For us to hear and see them standing up for the NHS and the patients has been one of the most important and heart-warming experiences this year. We believe we have built lasting and important friendships and understanding. We were also represented on demonstrations opposing the government’s Housing and Planning Bill, (now an Act of Parliament). There will be more actions as Councils are forced to sell their social housing at market prices and hand over the proceeds to central government; also housing association tenants now have the right-to-buy which will put more homes into “the market”, and badly affect sheltered housing. On Older

People’s Day, from our campaign stall at the end of Providence Place, we handed out leaflets, served tea and cake to passers-by and collected signatures on our “generations united” petition.

Other activities:

On 11 July 2015 we had a garden party at Highbury View, joined by the residents of that sheltered housing scheme and their relatives. We also had afternoon tea at Highbury View on 20 August as we don't have a Forum meeting in that month and on 24 February 2016 we had our "Beat the Winter Blues" party there. On all these occasions Steve Poole generously donated wonderful cakes, pastries and sandwiches.



On 12 December 2015 we held our first Christmas Fair and raised nearly £500 from hand knitted goods, hand-painted glass candle holders and greetings cards, lots of donated gifts and books and refreshments. You will see from the picture that we had two little elves to help us on the day. Father Christmas also came along, but he seems to have been hiding when we took this picture!

We are now preparing for the 2016 Christmas Fair and lots of suggestions are coming in for this.

The monthly newsletter:

Central to all our Forum meetings, campaigns and other activities is the Newsletter. This announces up-coming events, reports our monthly meetings, has articles on issues of concern and every month George Durack writes his "Chairman's Notes". We also welcome short letters and poems from members.

This year we have had articles on: the Housing and Planning Bill, Social Care, the NHS and privatisation, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the State Pension, Universal Pensioner Benefits, Meals on Wheels, the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee's Intergenerational Fairness Inquiry, the Attendance Allowance, the Junior Doctors' Contract, Frozen Pensions, the National Union of Journalists' "Local News Matters" campaign.

Our thanks:

First -- a big thank-you to the Newsletter team -- photocopying, collating, putting into envelopes, franking and posting hundreds each month. This is the biggest and the most important job of all. So thanks to Blanche, David, Pam, Annette, Viv and the rest of the team. And again thanks to all those councillors who have made donations without which we would find it very difficult to keep our Newsletter going. Then there is the web-site -- thanks to David and Sean. Also thanks to Myrna who keeps our office clean and tidy, and Mohammad who keeps us on the straight and narrow as far as our accounts are concerned.

Last but not least, our thanks to wonderful Ann, and especially this year as she now has a job with the National Pensioners Convention replacing the office manager who is retiring. This means that she will not be working for IPF. We have asked Bronwen to replace her and we hope that you will be able to meet her at the AGM.

