

Suffolk Group Newsletter: August 2022



Membership No:

SUFFOLK GROUP MEETING WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

We will hold our next Suffolk Group meeting on Wednesday 21 September at the Methodist Church Hall in Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF. The meeting will start at 11.30 am with tea/coffee available from 11.00 am. We feel that this is a make-or-break meeting when we will be discussing the future of the Suffolk Group. Our speaker will again be CSPA Deputy General Secretary David Luxton who will bring us up to date with our campaigns on State Pensions and the cost-of-living crisis plus the `New CSPA` programme; along with all that is going on at CSPA HQ and the work of other groups, NPC, Age UK etc.

The last meeting of the Group was on 15 June. Muriel Palmer was unable to attend along with eleven other members of the Group who sent their apologies. Neville took the chair and welcomed our guests David Luxton, and Frank Edwards, EC member for Eastern Region and Mike Holbrooke, Chair of the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, (NFOP) Ipswich Branch.

We have, you will remember teamed up with them along with members of the National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO), our partners in Later Life Ambitions. With the three pensioner groups together, we represent over 250,000 pensioners when we campaign on issues of interest to pensioners.

The 15 June meeting was our first meeting since February 2019 when COVID-19 put a stop to meetings. The number of members who came along to the Methodist Church Hall in Black Horse Lane was very disappointing, but understandable given that members would be a little hesitant about meeting indoors after over two years of not being able to hold meetings. As it turned out we had plenty of room to be socially distant as we meet in a very large room with windows that allow for fresh air.

We had a lively discussion with true to say everyone joining in to tell of worries and fears for the future. The discussion covered many points of concern of members, the broken manifesto promises of maintaining the triple lock, the cost of living going up at an alarming rate. Banks are still closing branches with over 4,685 closed since 2015

and another 226 more scheduled to close by the end of this year, we have also lost 12,178 ATMs since 2018 and shops encourage us to use cards rather than cash.

That little plastic card we tend to use without a thought, is in fact very important in this modern world. In the wrong hands, anyone can spend up to a hundred pounds of your money, again, and again and again, so keep it safe.

The digital world is affecting our lives more than most of us like, the fact that we need a smartphone now to park our car, we need a smartphone to get the benefit of offers from the major supermarkets. We now must download theatre tickets to a mobile phone. Many of us have no idea if our phone can do this, if it does not then what do we do?

It is proving impossible to speak to a human to give us advice. Strange as it sounds, the Daily Mail is running a campaign asking their readers to write to their MPs, asking that phone calls are answered within ten minutes, so it is not just us "Old Folk" who are getting frustrated with having to hold on waiting for someone to condescend to pick up the phone.

No wonder we look back at the 60s and 70s with fond memories. It is understandable that many of today's pensioners are not Happy Bunnies

David Luxton went back to Head Office with plenty to think about, but he assured us he would come along again, he has a far better idea of life in rural areas where often you cannot find a phone or internet connection and buses and trains are things, we read about, but rarely see.

As you know Muriel Palmer is standing down from the committee. Muriel joined the committee back in 2007 and gradually took on more of the workload until she was left covering all four Officer positions following the death of Delia. Now with a combination of age, ill health, together with a lack of help the time has come for her to stand down. This in turn means that we as a Group are looking for a full committee. One or two members have voiced interest in helping with the running of the Group, but we need more volunteers to step forward. **Now is decision time.** The Group needs new committee members who will help carry the Group forward. We all need the CSPA as much now as ever, in these uncertain times, especially with the cost of living crisis looming, financial pressure and the impact on your pension.

Could we ask you please, to think about how you can help the Suffolk Group? But do not stop there. The next step is the most rewarding. When you join the committee and really help the Group.

Each of the tasks on the Group committee will on average take less than half-an-hour per week, with only four members meetings each year and four committee meetings. Several duties we have are the Group Committee members, i.e. Secretary, Membership Secretary, Chair etc. Duties cover ideas of what to put in the quarterly newsletter, what to pursue in the way of campaigning if any, the social side and assist in the smooth running of the Group Its ideas that are needed as much as anything else.

Whether or not you are able to join the Group Committee, it is most important if you can attend our next meeting on the 21 September where discussions of the future of the Group will take place. It is important to the Alliance that you come along and have your say. Should we just close the Group and walk away? or should we meet via ZOOM online in the future? should we merge with a local Group? or will you volunteer? All your suggestions are important and would be appreciated.

Over the years we have had some very good speakers, our Christmas buffets were looked forward to, and in general the fellowship we all enjoyed with the aims of the CSPA and pensioners in general always to the fore. We will miss the meetings and friendships, no doubt you will as well.

Independent Age records poverty in later life. More than two million older people are living in poverty in the UK. The Experiences of Poverty in Later Life project by Independent Age aims to amplify the voices of some of these older people, by highlighting the experiences of people facing financial hardship in later life. In-depth interviews were conducted with older people who were experiencing financial hardship. The government gave bus companies extra money to help them to keep running while a number of people worked from home, now that they have returned to the workplace and are again using the bus services that money is being withdrawn and no doubt our bus services will be reduced. **How can we say that the CSPA is not needed today?**

The Charity for Civil Servants. The Charity can help with all sorts of financial issues at this time with the cost of living going up in the manner it is. The charity is there for you so if you need help give them a call. For confidential help and advice go to, www.foryoubyyou.org.uk or call 0800 056 2424 or email help@foryoubyyou.org.uk

You may be aware that two long serving members of headquarters staff have retired. Darlene Vendryes, Office Manager after 21 years, and Linda Smith after 13 years will also be finishing her duties as Minute Secretary. Marion McAuliffe has been promoted to the position of Office Manager. After being Deputy Office Manager/PA to General Secretary for 9 years. We are also pleased to welcome a new member of staff, Sally Tsoukaris who will be Deputy Office Manager/PA to the General Secretary.

The CSPA publish two very interesting documents, which I am sorry to say that while they can be sent to you free of charge, the service is only available if you have an internet connection. One is called Group Circular and is available about every 6 to 8 weeks and the other is available this is an E-Newsletter issued again every 6-8 weeks. Go to enquiries@cspa.co.uk and ask to be put on the mailing list. Its free to members and keeps you up to date with all that the Alliance is doing to help members.

With Muriel standing down from the committee your current committee members are:

Neville Jarvis (Social Secretary) Tel: 01394 275490

email neville.jarvis1@btinternet.com

John Medlen: Tel: 01473 612799

You are very welcome to contact Neville (contact details above) if you can offer any assistance to volunteer in the Suffolk Group in any way, this would be very much appreciated.

All are welcome to attend meetings.

All Best Wishes

Neville Jarvis & Frank Edwards