

WELCOME TO THE SPRING 2026 GROUP NEWSLETTER

Chairman's Corner

Welcome to 2026. We had hoped that the world would be a better place in the New Year but with Mr Putin still wreaking havoc in Ukraine and Mr Trump behaving like a narcissistic bully I am not so sure. Even at home civilised living was not possible in East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells which were without mains water at the start of the year. A friend and I were enjoying a pint together in a local pub and we got to discussing Roman cities we had visited, then we both realised that the Romans had managed to supply their cities with piped water. We decided it would be a good idea to send the management of Southeast Water to study Roman water engineering so that they could learn how to supply their own customers. I was relatively lucky in that I had a rainwater butt to dip buckets in, to flush toilets and as we were on the priority register, we had bottled water delivered. But after five days when the water returned it was wonderful to enjoy a long hot shower, just like the Romans.

Our landlords for group meetings are Crawley Community Action. CCA who assist and co-ordinate the activities of the voluntary sector in the Crawley area. One of their staff Luke Boucher came to talk to us last year about Social Prescribing, a service which helps the community, and Jemmy Simon from the Chagos Community gave us a fascinating insight into their history. The CCA held an excellent Christmas Social where the groups they support came together to celebrate and socialise and entertain everyone else with something special from their community. It was very enjoyable and demonstrated the wide diversity of the communities in Crawley. Anyone interested in their activities should go to their website www.crawleycommunityaction.org to learn about their activities and see if they can help somewhere, they will be made most welcome.

We are concerned about the longer-term viability of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC). The CSPA a long-time supporter, participating in many of their activities. They have financial difficulties and have issued redundancy notices to their two staff. One of whom Jonathon Safir has been successful in being selected as the CSPA Deputy General Secretary, to fill the vacancy created by David Luxton's retirement. The NPC's loss is our gain.

Whether the NPC can continue is debatable. Given the tremendous impact the NPC has had furthering the cause of older people over the years it would be a tragedy if it disappears.

One of the steps the NPC took to help save itself was to become a limited company by guarantee which is now being considered by the CSPA. The group will be fully involved in the consultation process now being taken by CSPA head office and you will read more about it in The Pensioner magazine. There are strong views on both sides, and you can contribute by coming to the local group meetings and having your say. We will be discussing this issue at a future meeting, so keep your eye on the CSPA national website www.cspa.co.uk where our meeting programme will be advertised.

We all enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch at the Goffs Manor Pub after the December meeting and the two photos below show a selection of the group members. However, there is one important date to be aware of and that is the group's **Annual General Meeting on 11 March 2026**. Every member is entitled to attend. Our guest speaker this year will be Mike Sparham the CSPA National Treasurer, who will bring us up to date on Alliance business especially the proposal to turn the Alliance into a Limited Liability Company. We will be pleased to see you but please let us know if you plan to attend so sufficient seats can be provided. In the meantime, look after yourselves and enjoy every hot shower because we never know when the water will go off again.

Brian Sturtevant Group Chair



Group members enjoying Christmas Lunch at the Goffs Park public house

MEETINGS AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR 2026

The group continues to meet on the second Wednesday of the month except January and August at the offices of Crawley Community Action, 1-2 Gleneagles Court, Brighton Road, Crawley, RH10 6AD. Meetings start at 10.30am with tea and coffee and biscuits and consist of Alliance business followed by a guest speaker, we adjourn to a local pub for lunch at 12.30pm. If you have not been before please come and join us we are a small friendly group and you will be assured of a warm welcome. Where there is no activity or guest speaker or activity shown against the various meeting dates these will be updated and advertised on the CSPA national website www.cspa.co.uk and/or included in future group newsletters.

Group meeting dates for 2026 TBA (To Be Advised)

11 February Guest speaker Caroline Simms – Finances for Older People; **11 March** Group Annual General Meeting with guest speaker Mike Sparham CSPA National Treasurer; **8 April TBA**; **13 May TBA**; **10 June TBA**; **8 July TBA**; **12 August** – Group Summer lunch; **9 September TBA**; **14 October TBA**; **11 November TBA** **9 December** Christmas Quiz and lunch

CAMPAIGNING ISSUES

After a recent Liberal Democrat Parliamentary question to DEFRA regarding a national water tariff, the following response has come from the Government via local Horsham MP John Milne:

This Government is committed to protecting the most vulnerable and is working with industry to keep support schemes under review to ensure that vulnerable customers are supported.

As such we have carried out a consultation on reforms to Water Sure- the statutory scheme which caps water bills for low-income customers with higher water usage due to medical conditions or large households, including whether additional customers should be brought into scope of the scheme.

The Government also expects all water companies to put appropriate support in place for customers struggling to pay their bills and to proactively engage with their customers to ensure they know what support schemes are available and how them if they need help. All companies have measures in place such as Water Sure, social tariffs, payment breaks and holidays, and debt management support.

For those in the Horsham area concerns have been expressed regarding the non suitability of the Belisha controlled crossing on Blackhorse Way between West Street and the Forum where view of approaching pedestrians is concealed from oncoming traffic. An online petition has been raised with West Sussex County Council in the hope of attracting support for a light controlled Pelican crossing which would give greater safety and an improved flow of traffic. Local County Councillors have so far failed to respond to an approach on this issue., though MP John Milne has taken a supportive stand. Latterly Councillor Louise Potter, Horsham Riverside has responded by offering her support and suggesting she would consider encouraging a Highways Engineer to survey the site. Improvements will still rely on local support, and it would help if any interested members respond to this newsletter report.

Noted also is that Horsham Liberal Democrat MP John Milne is showing interest in local NHS services and concerns around the long-standing issue of hospital bed shortages and the related unresolved Social Care package. CSPA has long campaigned for a resolution to this complex matter.

Derek Williams Group Vice-Chair

HUMOROUS OBSERVATIONS FROM THE GROUP PRESIDENT Mike Card

Half a dozen quotes from Mark Twain

He was an American humourist and novelist who lived from 1835 to 1910. His real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens and he wrote the classics 'Tom Sawyer' 1876 and 'Huckleberry Finn' 1885 about Mississippi boyhood, and 'The Prince and the Pauper' 1881.

- 'Man is the only animal that blushes or needs to'.
- 'We were surprised how closely the cuckoo imitated the clock – and yet of course, it could never have heard a clock'.
- 'Water, taken in moderation, cannot hurt anybody'.
- 'I have never taken any exercise except sleeping and resting'.
- 'Humour is like a frog, if you dissect it, it dies'.
- 'The common Welsh name Bzjxxllwcp is pronounced Jackson!'

RENEWING MEMBERSHIP OF OR JOINING THE GROUP

Subscriptions for 2026 are £12 per household. There is no limit on the number of members living at the same address. If you wish to subscribe or donate to the Crawley and District Group, please complete this form and send it with your membership fee and/or donation to the Treasurer, Brian Barton at the address shown below.

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Tel. No: Mob:

Email address:.....

Please return to: **Brian Barton, Serena, 30 Horley Row, HORLEY, Surrey, RH6 8NH**

If you wish to subscribe and/or donate to group funds, please enter the amount below:

Subscription to Group funds: £

Donation to Group funds: £

Total sent to Treasurer: £

Please send cheques made payable to the “**Civil Service Pensioners Alliance Crawley Group**” or use postal orders, thank you.

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