

# Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum

*Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus*  
[email comms@sdsaf.org.uk](mailto:comms@sdsaf.org.uk)

## Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter.

We hope that you have all managed to have a good summer and have enjoyed and made the most of the better weather. Sadly the days are beginning to get shorter now and we will soon be in our winter woolies!

Our AGM on the 5<sup>th</sup> July was a success and we were pleased to see many attending, especially as so many had a very late night/morning watching the results for the General Election. We were pleased with the informative talks from our guest speakers from Hi Kent, on hearing loss and the services available and we also thank Kent Police for attending.

A lot has changed since the last offering, being that we have a new Government and already there have been a major blow for pensioners, with the winter fuel allowance being withdrawn for many and only those on certain benefits will qualify in the future. We urge you to check to see if you qualify.

Other areas of policy changes will include housing targets, an article from our Housing SubGroup is included.

The next big event is Silver Sunday Week, and we shall be working with Sevenoaks District Council to hold an event as follows;

**10.00a.m. – 1.00p.m.**

**Friday October 4<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**at the Plaza Suite, Stag Theatre Sevenoaks.**

(tea and coffee available)

Sevenoaks District is a great place to be a senior and the event will be showcasing the many organisations we can join. It will be an informative day, so do try and come along.

Our next Committee meeting is being held very soon and the Committee will be working hard to ensure that we prioritise and work towards making life better for older people in the district.

Best wishes, Eileen and Gill,  
Co. Chairs

## **New housing targets for the SDC area**

The government have issued a consultation to be completed by 24<sup>TH</sup> September. This is for their plans to meet their manifesto commitment to achieve 1.5 million new homes in this parliament.

No rationale is provided as to why we need this level of new building, but we are prepared to accept that it is probably necessary in the short to middle term, to mend what has been described as a broken market place, we need new and improved housing stock for the existing population, but no mention is made of the projection that 78% of population growth is to come from net inward migration and what kind of housing will be needed for this and in what parts of England they will want to live in or be sent to.

New targets are planned for every local council using a re vamp of the existing formula. If implemented it would see the current annual assessment of need for the SDC area of 704 new homes a year increased to 1113. This is based on the theory that the higher the ratio of house prices to workplace earnings the more homes that are needed. Sevenoaks has below the all England level of earnings, but well above that of house prices

The result is for higher targets in London and the South East. Sevenoaks target is double that of Newcastle and Sunderland. It presumes all other factors are irrelevant such as the cost of building land, current sizes of property. It maintains that Green Belt should be protected, but will allow building to take place in what they call the Grey belt. We have campaigned to have a factor for reduced targets for Green credentials built into any formula.

The new plans put emphasis on the need for more “social housing” in particular to rent from housing associations. The latest plan from SDC has this built into their aims, and already has a residency requirement to ensure that this housing goes to the existing population. No targets have been set for rentable social housing, which is a requirement for all new local plans. Proposed easing of planning regulations might help, but help will almost certainly be needed to finance these ideals.

We have issued a detailed discussion document analysing the flaws in the formula and asking influencers to take action to have these formulas scrapped and more control given back to local councils.( copies of this can be provided on request)

To get an idea of the scale of uplift this Government want from our District; Sevenoaks proportionate to existing housing stock would be for 615 new homes a year not the 1113 derived from the flawed formula.

Alan Dixon

## **New 20 mph speed limits**

Across the country there are an increasing number of areas that have now introduced this new lower speed limit. From 1<sup>ST</sup> of October much of Sevenoaks Town will see more come into force, the question is, will they work? Data from the Dept of Transport for 2023 shows that where there is free flowing traffic 84% of motorists exceed this limit. However, they do have an effect in reducing speed as the average speed was measured as 25 mph.

The 2023 RAC report on motoring survey of motorists who admitted to exceeding the 20 mph gave their reasons as:-

49% “the speed limit is inappropriate.” 21% ”I drive according to the speed of other road users” 26% “ I Feel pressure from other drivers behind me”

During Nov 2023 The Town Council carried out a consultation and received 2542 replies from the 24,000 adult population

	Responses	as a %age of those surveyed	as a %age of the town adult pop
support 20 mph limit in residential roads near schools	1685	66%	7.0%
support 20 mph for central Sevenoaks	1351	53%	5.6%

Alan Dixon

## Dehydration



If you are feeling tired, a bit light headed, even dizzy then it may be worth checking that you are drinking enough water each day.

Dehydration can be a problem for older people , easy to forget to have regular drinks of water even when you don't feel thirsty .

It is recommended that men try to drink about 2 litres a day and women 1.6 litres.

Sensible to avoid caffeinated drinks , that is coffee, tea , cola. Soda, alcohol. All act to take water out of your body.

NHS website has good information on how to help yourself.

I was feeling tired and confused, a bit wobbly walking, passing very little urine. It took a few days of drinking 5 or 6 glasses of water a day, to start feeling much stronger and happier. I am going to continue this simple task in order to stay well.

Merilyn Canet

## Crime

As with previous issues of the magazine, my contribution as regards the crime and scam scene is to monitor the police newsletters and generally cast around for interesting articles. I was flicking through the Daily Express on Aug 3rd when a comment in the Richard and Judy column caught my eye.

*This is what Judy wrote:*

“Never answer your phone if you don’t recognise the caller’s number. Especially if the screen says something like “Cardiff UK” or “Newcastle UK”. The call isn’t coming from anywhere on these shores. It’s most likely being sent from the Far East or Australia. It’s a potential scam. Answer it and you risk being sucked into a sophisticated con.

If it’s a genuine call they’ll leave a voice message. Even those can be suspect - give yourself time to listen and consider their veracity.

Or they’ll send a text (and the same applies if you do not recognise the number). This week, nearly 50 percent of phone users said they’d received a suspicious call in the last three months.

Be on your guard.”

Well, that sums up what I wanted to tell you in this newsletter. This is part of the latest (but not necessarily brand new) scam attacks. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a growing tool that criminals - scammers - are utilising. It’s not just that they may have researched your details but they may have cloned your voice in an earlier call that you may have answered. The technology is straightforward. I have seen musicians using something similar replicating a voice and playing with it on a keyboard, and now it’s much cleverer.

With any of the various forms of scam attacks, there is an undercurrent of logic in what might be being said to you, that’s how it works; together with an often intense compulsion to believe through “fear” that something has gone wrong or that someone is on trouble.

Just take a deep breath, slow it all down and do not jump into an action. Be careful how you answer any questions and DO NOT give any details of banking or any other financial information and DO NOT be harassed into any action without stepping back and doing a check first.

Roger House

## Invitation to SDSAF members suffering from hearing loss to join Hi Kent monthly coffee meeting.

“Hi Kent” is a Maidstone-based charity some of you know well. It aims to help people living with hearing loss. With its support, a new free social group has been set up and you are welcome to join it. The group meets on the first Tuesday of each month between 11 am and 12.30 pm at St John's URC, St John's Hill, Sevenoaks TN13 3LW.



Figure 1 Picture taken at July Hearing Support Group in Sevenoaks. Jean-Pierre is seated at the front on the left

Maxine Lucas, Chief Operating Officer and Vicky Kirk, responsible for developing social groups at Hi Kent gave a short presentation to members of SDSAF at the AGM on 05 July.

Vicky Kirk was delighted to be able to start this new group in Sevenoaks and to offer local people living with hearing loss the chance to meet up, chat, take part in activities and hopefully make new friends, in the knowledge that everyone there will understand how it feels to cope without such a vital sense.

Jean-Pierre Darque who is the local group coordinator, mentioned that from its initial meeting in May, the most important seems to be that all wish to learn more about how to manage better our hearing loss. This applies to hearing aids, Bluetooth and other assistive technology. We also think that the best way to do that is by sharing information and experience.

We had a concrete example once as Vicky helped one participant connect his hearing aids to the Phonak app. Last time we discussed briefly the merits of a new App called AVA. It seems brilliant at picking up a conversation and showing a transcript on our phone.

We will not be short of ideas and themes. Importantly a warm welcome and lots of advice will be available! Please do come along, we'd love to meet you".

For more information, feel free to contact either:

- Vicky Kirk – Social Group Coordinator - Email: [v.kirk@hikent.org.uk](mailto:v.kirk@hikent.org.uk) Telephone: 01622 691151 - Website: [www.hikent.org.uk](http://www.hikent.org.uk) – also <https://www.facebook.com/HK4HearingLoss/>
- or Jean-Pierre Darque – local volunteer for Hi Kent – email: [jpdarque@btinternet.com](mailto:jpdarque@btinternet.com) and mobile 0788082 8880

Jean Pierre Darque

## A Pothole Odyssey

Here's a little update from our member who was claiming £54.63 from KCC for a burst tyre after an encounter with a pothole in January 2024

Six months of forms, what a delight!  
KCC's maze, a baffling sight.  
At last, a letter—oh, what cheer!  
"Amey's to blame," it said, "don't come here."

To Amey I turned, my hopes held high,  
But they passed me along with a weary sigh.  
"Steadline's in charge!" they sent me away,  
And Steadline wanted proof before any pay

A photo? Unfortunately I had none,  
Seven months gone, no click was done.  
"I'm elderly," I wrote with grace,  
"I took no selfies with the tyre's sad face."

But sense prevailed (after a delay),  
The director returned from holiday,  
Approved my claim without a fuss,  
At last! Some wisdom among us.

So here I stand, a victory small,  
But oh, the patience it took to crawl  
Through systems built to wear you thin,  
For fifty-four pounds—a pyrrhic win!

Now, I need a holiday too,  
To recover from this tireless (tyre-less?)  
crew.  
A tale to tell, a laugh to share,  
Of potholes and a bureaucratic nightmare

## Praise

All those who give lifts to seniors who are no longer mobile

Organisers of town twinning who promote friendship and understanding between communities in our District and in Europe

Intergenerational meetings at Care Homes eg Lavender Fields

All the volunteers of summer fairs fundraising for worthy causes

The Sixteen who gave a fabulous fundraising concert in Sevenoaks and all those who helped to organise it

NatWest bank for making its services more accessible to Seniors through its 'Banking my way' service eg you may be able to ring to get cash sent in post

'Community Kindness Concerts' in aid of cancer research. Entrance is free. Donate what you can at the event or online. Next concert 15 September 19.30 St Peter & St Paul's Church, Church Rd, Ash TN15 7HD. <https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/jan23>

## Loss of winter fuel benefit

One of the first decisions made by the new chancellor, Rachel Reeves, was to axe the winter fuel payment for pensioners except for those who receive pension credit. Whilst some of our more wealthy members may not notice this cut, there are many who will feel the loss of this benefit very keenly and who may be forced into choosing whether to heat or eat on very cold days in winter. This is a cruel blow for pensioners who rely on the state pension and who have been given no notice of what is effectively a 3% cut in income.

We urge anyone who is eligible for pension credit to put in an application as soon as possible as this will unlock the door to winter fuel payments and other benefits.

Pension Credit claim line

Telephone: 0800 99 1234

Textphone: 0800 169 0133

Or <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim>

## Recipe - Baked apple

This is the time of year when apples are plentiful and it's a joy to pick them straight from the tree. This recipe is very simple to make and may bring back childhood memories of scrumping and collecting windfalls in local orchards. It's a good source of vitamins and polyphenols. Choose apples that are firm and crisp that won't disintegrate too quickly - Bramleys, Granny Smith and Pink Lady work well.



### Ingredients

2 large apples

1-2 Tablespoons brown sugar

1/4 cup lightly crushed nuts ( try walnuts, brazils, pecans, pistachios)

1/4 cup dried fruit ( try raisins, cranberries, apricots, dates)

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon and cardamon (or mixed spice)

1 tablespoon mild extra virgin olive oil

Water or orange juice

Core the apples using a corer or sharp knife, leaving a hole about an inch wide. Combine the dry ingredients and stuff into the cored apples. Drizzle the olive oil over the apples together with a few splashes of hot water or orange juice. Bake for around 30 minutes in a moderate oven ( try not to overcook as they may collapse , but they will still taste delicious)

If you prefer, simply slice your apples, toss in the other ingredients, mix well and bake for approx 20 -25 minutes.

Serve with vanilla ice cream or a dollop of Greek yoghurt.

## Supermarket self checkouts - a Dutch initiative



All around the world, seniors face the issue of loneliness and isolation exacerbated by the move towards self checkouts at supermarkets where all you have to talk to is a machine. Our district has its share of these efficient but impersonal self checkouts, with roving staff who can be called on in case of difficulty.

Maybe our decision makers could take a look over the Channel to the Dutch town of Vlijmen where the “Jumbo” supermarket started a slow checkout lane for people who want to chat. The particular aim was to encourage socialization amongst seniors who want someone to talk to. The move has proven so successful that they have installed the checkouts in 200 stores. They have also added a chat corner where locals could meet for a cup of coffee and a chat. We would be interested to know what you think about self checkouts at supermarkets. Do you love or hate them?

## Tips from South East Water

Water is a precious resource at any time of year and using it wisely helps the whole community

Here are some simple ways to use water more wisely:

- Dishwashers and washing machines use less water and energy when they are full, so save it up and **go for the full load**.
- Sneaky leaky loos are one of the most common water wasters in the home, and can be as much as 4 full baths a day! [Order free LeakyLoo™ strips here](#) or contact Customer Services at South East Water
- Don't pour leftover cooking water from your pots and pans down the drain. **Pour on your plants instead**.
- **Tap off** when you brush your teeth, wash your face or whenever it doesn't need to be running. It all makes a BIG difference.

Remember you can sign up for the Priority Services Register for extra support (eg exemption from hosepipe bans, delivery of bottled water if needed, help with admin). Just call Customer Services South East East Water 0800 952 4000



## Milk Deliveries

Remember back in the really old days when we used to have electric vehicles and recycle the bottles....



Some people believe electric vehicles are a new invention. But many of us remember the whine of the electric milk float with its motor starting and stopping and it's gold and silver topped bottles rattling in their cages during night time milk deliveries.

Recently one of our committee spotted the blue spark from an early morning milk delivery float and found that it is still possible to have milk and other produce delivered in the old fashioned way in our district. Our member Pam tells us she has her milk, eggs, bakery and other produce delivered every Monday, Wednesday and Friday by Milk & More and Dave tells us he has a delivery every Friday. Deliveries are free and you can request kefir and non dairy milks. You can order and pay online or call them on 0345 606 3606 or write to 'Freepost Milk & More'. Do tell us if you know of other suppliers.

And we heard this terrible joke -

Mick the milkman said "Do you want your milk pasteurised?"..... Customer replied "Mick, I'll be happy if it comes up to me chest"

## A word of warning for blue badge holders

We have heard that some blue badge holders have received unexpected fines for not paying for parking when they had assumed the parking was free.

For instance Europarks will give you the right to a disabled space but there is no payment concession. The same applies to some Councils. We thank our member Anne for reminding us to check terms and conditions before we park our car.

## Monthly FORGET-ME-NOT Cafes

The amazing Forget-me-not team of volunteers is committed to providing support and companionship to those in Sevenoaks District who are recognising issues with their memory or cognition as well as their carers, family and friends.

The cafes across the Sevenoaks District are free to attend and there is no need to book. Just turn up for some companionship over a cuppa

### SEVENOAKS AT KNOLE

In collaboration with National Trust Knole

When: 1st Friday of the month

Time: 10.30am-12.00pm

Where: The Hayloft, National Trust Knole, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HU

### HILDENBOROUGH

In Collaboration with St John's Church

When: 2nd Wednesday of the month

Time: 11am-12.30pm

Where: St John's Church Centre, Foxbush, Hildenborough, TN11 9HT

### BAT & BALL STATION

In Collaboration - Presented by Sevenoaks Town Council

When: Last Wednesday of the month

Time: 10.30am - 12pm

Where: Bat & Ball Train Station, Bat & Ball Road, Sevenoaks, TN14 5AP

## WESTERHAM

In Collaboration with Westerham Parish Council

When: 3rd Friday of the month

Time: 11am-12.30pm

Where: The Congregational Church, Fullers Hill, Westerham, TN16 1AB

## Get moving!!

Have you been sedentary for too long, watching tele or sitting in front of your computer? Try some seated upper body stretches to keep yourself flexible. Here are some suggestions

- arms up overhead
- arms overhead and bend each side
- arms behind head and open chest
- elbows touch in front to stretch neck
- clasp arms behind you to stretch chest and shoulders
- seated lower back twists
- reach arms around chair to stretch shoulders
- turn head from side to side then move it up and down
- rotate shoulders frontwards and backwards

## EDENBRIDGE

Please note: There is no Cafe in March 24

In Collaboration with Home Instead TW

When: Last Friday of the month

Time: 10.30am-12.00pm

Where: The Eden Centre, Four Elms Road, Edenbridge, TN8 6BY

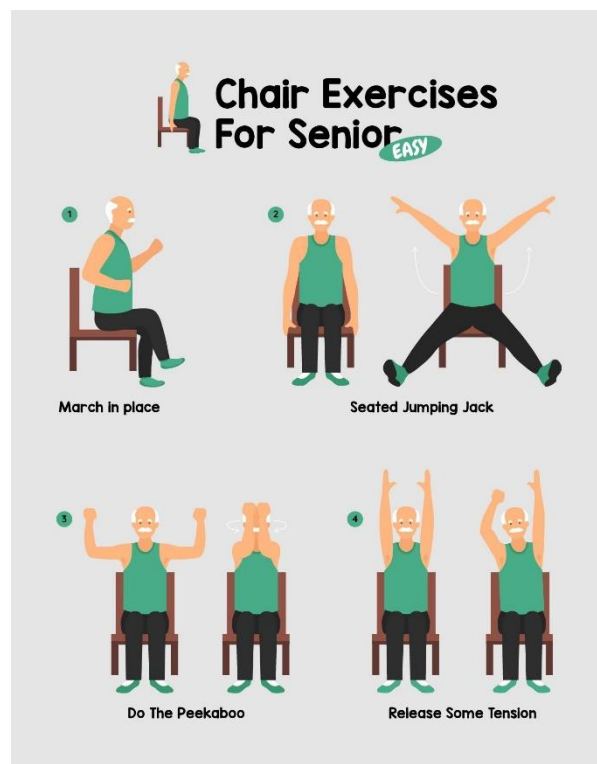
## OTFORD

In Collaboration with Otford Parish Council

When: Last Thursday of the month

Time: 11am-12.30pm

Where: Otford Village Memorial Hall, 28A High St, Otford, Sevenoaks TN14 5PQ



## Elephant Experiences

I have been lucky enough to have spent quite a few holidays in Africa such that my time there adds up to almost two years.



I and the friends I go with are particularly interested in elephants and given the chance will spend 6 or more hours a day just watching them and learning about their behaviour and how they interact with each other. I have also seen Indian elephants on trips to Nepal and India.

A herd consists of a matriarch and her sisters, daughters and younger male relatives, who she will turn out of the herd when they get near breeding age. These males then join what are called bachelor herds where they can learn life skills from

older males. I have mostly found these, particularly the fifty to sixty year olds to be placid and on occasion have been lucky enough to be standing in the open, looking up (they are about 11 feet tall) from about twenty yards away at a dozen or so of them at a waterhole. They are one of the few animals who, if you look them in the eyes, will if they are relaxed look back at you. It is fascinating to me to wonder what such intelligent animals with long memories think of me.

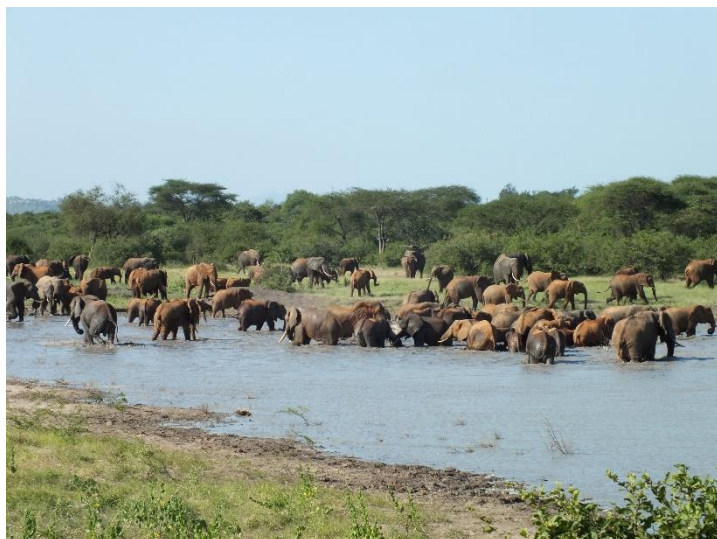


Talking of long memories, my friend Elizabeth, who spent a month feeding a very young orphan with substitute milk every few hours night and day, had the lovely experience of having that elephant recognise her and come straight up to greet her 6 years later when she came back to visit. I have visited that place several times but cannot remember which elephants I have seen previously.

The matriarch is responsible for deciding where the herd travels to and finding them water and food. She also gives instructions to teenagers, particularly the males when she wants them to protect the mothers and calves from danger presented by lions, hyaenas or humans.

Earlier this year, we were in Akagera National Park, Rwanda when we found ourselves following a herd of about 25 elephants who were walking down the track that we were on. Two females were at the back of the line with very young babies doing their best to keep up. Because the vegetation was high on either side, the youngsters would not have been able to leave the track so they and we had to keep going in the same direction. The matriarch who was at the front of the group, realised that we were following and that the mothers at the back were getting anxious even though we were keeping a fair distance behind. She therefore sent two young bulls off to plough through the undergrowth at right angles and make a wide half

circle allowing them to place themselves defiantly between us and the babies. We did not realise that they were coming until they arrived and trumpeted a warning to us to back off.



Elephant communications are made using low frequency rumbles that carry over a long distance but are usually inaudible to humans, although I heard them once when a matriarch decided that it was her turn to use a mud bath! Any such communication is accompanied by head shaking, ear flapping and if really frustrated kicking stones on the ground as a child would.

Recent research using AI has shown that elephants give names to other members of their family and individuals responded when recordings of their name were

played to them.

There is much to observe in elephant behaviour. Earlier this month I was watching Indian elephants at Whipsnade Zoo. One was trying to reach a net full of hay high above its head. It simply went to the other side of the enclosure, picked up a log, put it in the right position and stood on it to get the hay. I noticed that it only had room to stand up on one foot, always the left one, so is it left side dominant? If they have tusks, these wear in the dominant side but as most zoo elephants are tuskless, this does not help. Now I want to study what proportion of elephants are left or right side dominant, but I will have to wait until I am back studying them in the wild to find out.

*Chris Towers*

### **FORUM CONTACT DETAILS**

To contact the Forum Committee:- email Eileen Murray-Giles at :  
chair@sdsaf.org.uk, or write to  
"Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum" C/O 22 Lambarde Road, TN13 3HT  
or ring 07784 677626  
SDSAF Website: [www.sdsaf.org.uk](http://www.sdsaf.org.uk)

Please let us know if you would like to receive the Newsletter in large print and an audio version can also be made available