

Staplehurst Access Group Sobell Lodge 5th June 2009

Just as I had begun to think that the Group was a dead duck here was a meeting well attended and with some clear aims and objectives discussed. This was largely due to the fact that a young lady from Leonard Cheshire was present. She was the London and Kent campaign organiser and part of her responsibilities is organising action against shops or other places which are reluctant to do as much as they should regarding disabled access.

As you are well aware this is something that the residents of Sobell Lodge and indeed most other disabled people in our town feel strongly about and rightly so.

Much discussion took place concerning the future direction of the group, whether to stay under the auspices of LCD but welcoming input from any parishioners as at present. Or to set up as a separate group and seek Parish Council 'affiliation' as per the Transport Forum. The general consensus was for it to remain as is because Sobell already has a PC rep on the Support Group and no advantage would be served in altering the status quo.

Further debate took place on the thorny subject of a hoist at the dentist. Much old ground was gone over but Mr Wright told us that there is a specialist dentist who treats severely disabled patients on a peripatetic basis. This dentist already visits 24 surgeries and Mr Wright said that he/she would be glad to add our health centre to that number. This is very encouraging and is to be looked into further.

Mr Wright went on to say that he had received an invitation to a meeting about forming a Patient Practice Group as per much discussion earlier this year. I have no further information on that issue but will be making enquiries.

Mr Wright also told us that he had organised a place for the SAG at the Carnival this would be sharing with CILK-Centre for Independent Living Kent. He hoped that the mobile display vehicle would be there.

The lady from the Parish Church who helps out at Sobell with the tea and coffee and sits in on our meetings promised that she would make enquiries as to getting wheelchair access to the church without the need to use the road or the mini-bus. It was suggested that the alleyway next to the opticians might, with the owners permission be re-laid so as to make it wheelchair usable. She would also enquire if access could be then made from the end of the alley to the church door.

The meeting ended with Mrs Wright being voted Chair of the group for future meetings. It was stressed that any Parish Councillor would be welcome at future meetings and that they would also be welcome to visit the Home if they wished.

After the meeting Tracy Haith asked to see me for a chat. She told me that Sobell Lodge had commissioned a survey from a university into how they work. This was because they wanted to get an accreditation which would give them something akin to a centre of excellence status. I am sorry to be vague but I am awaiting more details of this scheme from Mrs Haith. As part of this she asked me to give a 10 minute presentation on my work with them as a Parish Council rep and my other work on the SAG and Transport Forum in as much as it affects them. I said that I would be delighted to do so and trust that you agree. This is to be held on the 30th June running all day and is open to visitors who would be offered a tour of the home and be able to listen in on what ever is going on at the time. Those taking a full part would be invited to have lunch.

I will try to get this put on the agenda for next week by which time I should be able to give you more information.