

# **Maidstone Borough Older Persons Forum**

**Hazlitt Exchange, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010**

*Cllrs Buller and Spearink attending*

## **International Older Persons Day.**

This quarter's meeting was timed to coincide with the above celebrations and was, as usual, extremely well supported. Approx 100 members attended. Such is the popularity now that many members arrived between 10 and 10.30 before the doors officially opened to ensure they got their favourite tables.

Today's meeting was special because we had not only the Mayor giving a short welcome speech but also Kent County Councillor Mike Angel whose remit is as the Older Persons Champion on the council. Mike had just come from the OPF in Canterbury and was leaving us to go to Sevenoaks to speak at their meeting. A busy day for him.

As you know I am heavily involved in Maidstone's Forum and a Steering Group member largely responsible for finding speakers. I was delighted to be told on Thursday that our MP Helen Grant could after all attend for an hour. We had invited her way back in May but she originally thought that she would be in London, so after a frantic exchange of emails all round and a little re-scheduling, we welcomed her as well. She chose not to speak but to sit in on the Mayor's speech and then join him in mingling among the tables during a half hour break in proceedings to meet as many of our members as she and he could. The reaction of our members afterwards was extremely positive. They were all so pleased that three politicians all took the time to visit and hear some of their moans and groans. Helen said to me afterwards that she was quite surprised at how aware and feisty they were. A lesson for all politicians-beware the power of the gray.

Our speakers today were preceded by a short introduction by Cllr John A Wilson followed by a presentation by Jane Kendal of KCC who commissions and oversees the opening of new Gateways in the county and she was joined by Sandra Marchant who is the Manager of our own Gateway. They told us of all the facilities and services that can be accessed at the Gateway.

After them I had the pleasure of introducing the Mayor who as always gave a very good little speech of welcome. We then had the 30 minute break during which he and Helen sat in on the tables and got to know our members, listening to their views on all kinds of subjects and generally having a good time.

It was then time for Mike Angel who I know as a very hard working and dedicated champion of the needs of our elderly residents. I was able to greet him as a colleague because I sat next to him during the morning workshop at a conference this summer. So I can vouch for his enthusiasm for the subject.

Finally we had a talk from Charlotte Osborne-Forde, a well known lady in Volunteering circles because she runs the Maidstone Volunteer Centre and spoke about what older people can contribute in the way of voluntary work.

After that it was time for lunch and today we had a choir from Parkwood 'Energise' come to sing to us during lunch and then a lively sing along session. I think the average age of the singers was about 80 but what they may have lacked in tempo they more than made up for in enthusiasm and we hope they will come along again.

I was accompanied again by Cllr Joan Buller who seems to have caught my enthusiasm for this event. It is still a shame that no one from Staplehurst attended despite the posters and flyers that have been up for several weeks. At least we did get one new lady from Marden so there is hope for ours yet.

***Peter Spearink 2-10-2010***