Anglia Regional Pensioners Association (NPC)

Minutes of Executive Committee – 10.00 for 10.30am

Thursday 13 July 2023 – The Denny Centre, Diss

**Attendance**:- Chris Brooks; Ros Hodgkins; Ian Evans; Ron Douglas; Keith and Ros Montague;

Kevin Hilson; Sam Sirdar; Aisha Jermy; Letitia Willins;

**Apologies**: Dave Harris; Betty Constable; Cliff Horne.

**Welcome**: The Chair Chris Brooks welcomed everyone and particularly Sam Sirdar following his recent illness. Kevin has been nominated for one of the four vacancies on the NPC Housing Working Party to be decided at the next zoom NPC Executive committee. If there are five or more candidates it comes to a vote, so the Chair will naturally vote for our Town Planner Kevin. Sam is still a member of the Ethnic Working Party and Letitia is a member of the LGBT Working Party. Chair passed around July Old Grey Matter Report and was really pleased the picture he submitted, which Aisha had taken of the top table was published with the article. A new age dawns.

**Communication**: Ros is not sure whether she has a full list of emails since the original was lost in the system. She has been trying to re-constrict a list. Sam made the point that he has been chasing up members but if they do not respond there is little he can do. Letitia’s list of people she sends surface mail to does not have a feedback request although she has received an occasional request. The Chair suggests Letitia put a note in the next batch asking for her to be rung if they still want the information. Sam confirmed all on Letitia’s list are fully paid up.

**Secretary:** Aisha reported on the recent Regional Secretary’s Meeting which she had to leave early for a family funeral (on line). The consensus was that it was a very good conference at Blackpool which went smoothly. There was a ‘hearing loop’ issue which will be put right for the future. There was also some criticism that the Hotel was expensive and far from the shops and town centre. Thames Valley and a couple of other regions thought the money spent in holding the Special Delegates Meeting on the Tuesday was not money well spent to which Jan stated the two will not be held together again because it was asking too much of those involved. Indeed, Head Office has been closed to allow a break to those who organised the event. No doubt to maintain both physical and mental health of those involved. Our President Rosie McGregor suffered a fall in the train and had to spend a night in hospital. While still shaken at the time of the meeting the bruise on her face had all but gone.

Changes to Anglia Constitution were discussed but we cannot move forward until Draft changes to the National Constitution is received which should be later this month. Chair suggests the item remain on Agenda until it is formalised for the next AGM.

**Treasurer:** Sam presented a full Account for up to July, 2023, pointing out one or two minor errors which did not affect the amount of money in the bank. Net income is shown as £3365.75. Sam explained that amount will be changed when all legitimate expenses for Blackpool has been met. He reported there are currently 34 paid up individual affiliates.

There was a discussion on raising of affiliation fees. Bearing in mind the current financial situation it was not felt that individual membership fees should increase but there was some support for group fees to be increased from £20 a year to £25. The cost of keeping in touch with those not on line has increased this year and will continue to do so. Sam will put a report forward for the next Anglia AGM next year.

**Recruitment Secretary:** Kevin Hilson, reported on the event held at the Former Parcel’s Office on Lowestoft Railway Station when we gave out information and application forms to members of the public. He also spoke about Anglia’s plan for promoting the appointment of a Commissioner for Elderly People and for increasing the membership to Lowestoft and Anglia NPC generally.

Planned Events: Street Presence Lowestoft – outside W.H Smiths Friday 28 July 2023 from 11.00 to 2.00pm.; using foyer in library on a regular monthly time slot for the use of handing out leaflets and chatting with people about the importance of having a thriving Pensioners presence today more than ever before; A presentation in the 60+ club where we hold our monthly meetings. We will follow the national recruitment campaign, with local campaign making reference to what is happing nationally. Ought to stir up interest in NPC if being led from the top.

**Reports on the NPC Events at Blackpool**

**BDC – Special Delegate’s Conference Tuesday 27 June 2023** **– Letitia Willins Note**. Due to ill health and accident Letitia and Ian Evans were only two of the four Anglia delegates who made the meeting in the morning. Aisha got there for 12.30pm but, unusually the business was conducted and decision made by lunch time. Unfortunately Chris did not leave his hospital appointment till 5 pm at Norwich that day so missed it completely, joining the conference the next day with Janet.

On Tuesday we discussed the new structural arrangements for running the organisation. The meeting began with an attempt to reference back standing orders. This was lost 29 for and 41 against so they were adopted. An amendment to the makeup of the working parties was proposed (strictly discriminate membership types) but this was lost as it did not have 2/3 majority.

A new Exec Council is to be elected by September when the first meeting will take place, meeting by-monthly in the third week of that month. There will be a new constitution with rules for membership. The time schedule was considered to be too tight. The new constitution will be sent out in July to all members.

The TT was re-arranged. Nominations will be sent out in September to meet in November. It is hoped the new council will provide new blood. This re-arrangement and concept was welcomed and accepted unanimously 80-0!

**Notes taken by Aisha of Wednesday 27 June and Thursday 28 June – Blackpool NPC Conference**

**Chair President Rosie McGregor**: opened with a video – 21 million older people in Britain ‘Britain’s Forgotten Pensioners – suffering from lack of food, lack of heating, digital deprivation. NPC Women Working Party – carrying out survey.

**First Speaker** – Deputy Mayor of Blackpool Mr. Adrian Hoyle and his Lady Wife.

The Deputy Mayor pointed much of the improvements taking place in Blackpool, some stages have already started with more to come, including a new tram terminal and extending the tram lines. Phase 3, said the Deputy Mayor includes a new university campus funded partly by private investment! He says Blackpool is also looking to improve social housing.

**Second Speaker –** Robert Palmer- Executive Director of Tax Justice – Campaign’s for fairer taxes.

Talk - Aging in the UK – How can we make it better?

He identified a number of different crisis: i) Public Services ii) Disparity in wealth; iii) Environmental issues – sewage in rivers and seas; Run up to general election next year – huge pressure for TAX RISES. The Second Speaker posed the question ‘**Who is it fair to ask to pay more?’**

**Answer – the wealthy. Why?**

Over last 20/30 years wealth inequality has risen yet taxed income remains the same.

Super rich – Rishi Sunak tax rate is 22% same as nurses but he is a multimillionaire. Not right.

Robert Palmer has put forward a series of policies that could bring in £50 billion a year by taxing the super-rich. He says income from wealth should be taxed in same way as income from wage.

When government say not enough money its not true.

Close tax loopholes for companies and the wealthy. Shares attracts inheritance tax yet Hedge Fund managers pay less tax. Care homes – money sucked out to offshore banks yet charging huge rents= no money to improve care.

The Speaker said his optimism is rooted in fact. Says they have been working with others to close tax loopholes and have seen improved tax income. They are working with a Group called Patriotic Millionaires who have contributed t collective good. Check out their Newsletter at taxjustice.uk

**Third Speaker** – Joel Kosminsky – NPC Transport Working Party – Cost Accessibility

Joel has worked in every kind of transport, he said, including airlines, railways. Its his passion. Central government cut funds to local authorities which would allow to keep buses running. Corporation tax is paid on PROFIT when in fact it should be charged on income surplus of expenditure. Private sector hides their profits. He asserts bus companies are making profits. **Greener Journeys Charity – every £1 spent on transport generates £2!**

**Fourth Speaker – did not catch name - Wellbeing of Older People**

Mention of unregulated e scooters on pavements, bike riders who do not stop to let people cross the road, and the police do nothing. Lack of access for planning to travel; cheapest fare online when many older people are not online in fact 11%; 15% of older people have never had computers. 11% is close to 1 million people; 15% is 6 to 8 million people.

There are around 65 million people in the UK and UK state pension is rated 37th in the world.

General Elections next year.

Joseph Roundtree Foundation Findings:

In 1999 – 1 in 6 people were over 65. This increased in 2019 and is expected to more than double by 2050. (Aisha’a view – no wonder they are trying to make us work till we drop)

**Fifth Speaker – Simon Francis - Fuel Poverty Coalition Co-ordinator**

NPC members attended the rally they held in London. Says conditions experienced in 1940s are the same as finding now; the only difference being we have inside toilets now.

Cold homes – increase risk of strokes, 7500 people die every year not being able to keep warm,

Respiratory conditions – impacts physical health.

While energy bills might go down for a while in July, it will go up and be the same as last winter when people have already used up their savings. Knock on effect of cost- of -living increases which continue week on week. Effectively means every company is being paid twice. People need help to repay energy debt. People are being confused with hidden problems since the system is weighted in the energy companies favour.

Running Warm This Winter Campaign – Need to see additional people support this winter. Will be asking for more help this winter. Currently looking at what will help reduction to energy bills.

Cut waste – making homes more energy efficient;

Reforms – cut back on electricity prices; use cheaper renewable should be brought on line;

Systems – heat pumps will reduce oil and gas heat;

1. Exposing firms involved in secret networks;
2. Identify and publicise scams on overcharging;
3. Impact of inflation to energy prices;
4. Grass roots ideas – may be money to help – Not yet sorted. Campaign support;
5. Speak out – need to hear stories of peopling living in cold, damp homes.
6. Media want to support people who speak out – most powerful way.

Contact them if want to know **more https//www.warmthiswinter.org.uk**

**Sixth Speaker** **- Jack Jones Pension Policies Officer TUC – 68 too late**

Most people in deprived areas, says Jack, will not make it to 68 to become a pensioner.

We must resist the government putting the young against the old. Both non-pensioners and current pensioners are affected.

**Overview**

Dignity in work and in retirement – requires a decent wage and a decent pension.

Retirement is a right for everyone, not just the rich. Only 1 in 5 people will reach 68.

Call is for Generations to unite. Campaigning for NO INCREASE above the age of 66. Looking to reduce state pension age. There has been a slow down in longevity.

Not enough to look at the average person. Poor health means you cannot stay in work especially if work is physical, labour intensive.

How much Pension? Currently not enough to keep pensioner below poverty line unless you also have a private, works, pension. Triple lock introduced in 2015. State pension lost 40% value yet the government still suspended it for a year. Triple lock – future pensioner will benefit from ranching up.

AISHA’S NOTE – NOT UNLESS THE FREEZE ON INCREASING THE BAND AT WHICH TAX IS PAID IS REMOVED AND INCREASED to at least £20,000-£25,000. WE GOT THE TRIPLE LOCK INCREASE THIS YEAR BUT BECAUSE OF THAT FREEZE MYSELF AND A GREAT MANY OTHER PENSIONERS DID NOT RECEIVE THE FULL BENEFIT BECAUSE OUR TAX ALLOWANCE WENT DOWN CAUSIING US TO HAVE TO PAY MORE TAX. CRUSHING.

Gender Pension Gap – last year 40% more women in work; they took time out to have and look after children or other relatives (and are penalised by the system). Women still get 5 % less than men under the flat rate system. Older women experience a 25% income gap. TUC have been fighting this issue over the last 7 years. Over the last two years TUC have declared a Gender Gap Day – May 29th

Have launched a Pension Equality Group which is making some gain with government. People in low pay, part time work, black and minority workers can contact the Group via the TUC and they can give advice of what benefits the individual may be entitled to.

JAN SHORTT NPC General Secretary closed the session by stating what we all felt – she saw that day as a New Beginning.

**AFTERNOON SESSION**

Norman Jemison Chair – Call for Commissioner for Older People for England – NPC, AGE UK, AGING BETTER – Campaign

Speakers:

Morgan Vine – Head of Policy and Influencing Independent Age

Chloe Wright - AGE UK – Head of External Affairs

Christos Tuton – Parliamentary and Public Affairs Officer, Aging Better

**Jan Shortt –** NPC Gen. Sec. – Background to date regarding Commissioners for the Elderly

1. Older People’s Champions – Joan Bakewell – never heard from her
2. Tzar – disappeared
3. Minister offered – Northern Ireland – 4 years Minister did nothing.

Why holding out for a commissioner? – want an independent person. NPC, Jan reported, is supporting Scotland’s call for a Commissioner where a private member’s bill is being put forward.

**Speaker Morgan Vine – Independent Age**

National Charity to support older people having financial difficulties. Also campaign to change policies.

Financial Hardship - 1 million pensioners living in poverty. Private renters (of which I am One – Aisha) are forgotten about. Hugely at risk. People going to bed at 5.00p.m. Setting alarm for 03.00a.m. to boil kettle and put hot water in flask.

Not enough money to buy fresh fruit; never rung a charity for help before, volume of work at charity over last year has increased. A Commissioner for the Elderly can help.

Independent Age has joined with over 80 organisations in England and 30 in Scotland, RBNI.

There is a Childrens’ Commissioner and Child Abuse Commissioners who are all doing a good job so there is a clear case for a Commissioner for the Elderly.

Supported by Independent Age:

1 People feel voiceless – Older in poverty; Carers; single people; private renting people.

2 Policy change needed – Power for Commissioner to put forward financial support for people to work up to retirement age. The Charity resisted the government’s efforts to deny 60 year olds the free bus pass and won.

3 Cost of Commissioner- Childrens’ Commissioner costs £2.5 million per annum equates to 7pence per tax payer. There is currently £2 billion unclaimed benefits by eligible people!!

Outcome – Cost of Commissioner would not disadvantage anyone.

**Speaker Chloe Wright – Age UK a network of 130 local charities**

**£**162 million of unpaid benefits have been identified by their partners.

Windrush people still waiting for help/compensation. Looking for cross country Older Persons Plan – Commissioner.

Asking political parties to pledge to have Commissioner. Campaigning for discount tariff.

**Speaker Christos Tuton – Centre For Ageing Better – Research ‘State of Ageing Report’**

**Role of Commissioner**

Get government to consider long term needs of older people. Not meeting needs of current or future aging people. Clear North/South divide. Coloured People – 1 in 20 chance of reaching age of a white person. Little joined up thinking of aging community needed.

Work place pension automatic enrolment has increased – Enquiry under way

**Jan Shortt - ACTION**

Sign Petition 68 too late. Its on Independent Age website.

In Northern Ireland the Commissioner has been given statutory powers – teeth.

In Hackney got Older Person’s Tzar and has a place on Committee and must give input on any Report impacting on older people.

NPC producing a Manifesto for Older People and passing to parties – considering Joint Manifesto with Wales and N. Ireland. Jan says it use to be called ’Pensioners Manifesto’. Will share with all groups co-operating together. NPC national will be contacting MPs.

**Problems with a Commissioner**

1. **Who appoints them**
2. **Want individual appointed and allowed to act independently.**
3. **Wales Commissioner fully independently chosen.**

**NHS and Social Care in Crisis**

Jan explained the campaign in support of change to the NHS and Social Care System has not been making any headway. The working party produced a Booklet ‘Goodbye Cinderella’ – Rees Mog, in a national newspaper had referred to Social Care as a ‘Cinderella Service’.

National Care Service – paid for by NHS free at point of service is what is being sought.

Staff should be given proper contracts instead of the current zero hours contracts with similar terms and conditions as other NHS employees.

**Thursday’s Speakers**

**Gavin Edwards – UNISON – issued strategy for Social Care**

**John Lister – Director of Health Emergency and Keep our NHS Public**

**Judy Downey – Care Leader**

**Dr. Jean Hardiman-Smith Chair NPC Health & Social Care Working Party**

**Gavin Edwards – UNISON**

Views/feedback from members – Social Care acutely underfunded. Damaged by gain/profit at its heart. Depending on goodwill of carers.

Positive message – can change things if we keep campaigning together – when it works, can free people.

Care Workers –Domiciliary – not properly paid for travel time. Do not get sick pay if have to self-isolate. Statutory Sick Pay is minuscule – effect – encouraging care workers to go into work when not well.

Sleep in shifts is not considered as working time. Migrant workers are being exploited. Told to keep working; no rest/no time off. Care workers are being physically and verbally abused and employers do nothing.

Acute, deliberate underfunding – putting profit at centre- POLITICAL choice of government to work in this way. Inquiry going on – Minister not taking political responsibility and the system is allowing him to do so.

Campaign - **‘Let’s Make Care Work’. NATIONAL SERVICE – quality care; national pay and conditions.**

**Fabian Report on National Care Services – ‘Support Guaranteed National Brand’.**

**44 Recommendations are made about strengthening Local Government with national pay and conditions. GOOGLE ‘ Unison Lets Make Care Work’ and vote.**

Speaker feels there has been a fundamental shift which allows this to happen.

**John Lister – Director Health Emergency and Keep our NHS Public**

John is also an academic and has done a lot of work on privatisation in Public Sector – NHS, Social Care. Both need to be in if working together. Mrs. Thatcher appointed Sainsbury to look at social care in 1993 – Result - privatised domiciliary and care homes! These were plundered – NHS funds went up but much of that money went into private pockets (for example useless PPI’s purchased).

Price of private care shot up £5000+. Millions wasted by Tony Blair – moving work from NHS to private sector. Still thousands of COVID patients. Alberta, Canada - tried by Right Wing – complete disaster.

We need to build up the NHS. Mental Health deteriorated.

Primary care, community services – useless. GPs walking away; Nurses, School Nurses, Nursing Homes, Residential Home beds all failed. “If you find yourself riding a dead horse you’d better get off.”

Emergency Section of Hospitals are overrun. No convincing measures to ease pressure on staff.

Labour has not committed to pay being linked to job evaluations. Insisting on long term pay cuts.

No sense training more staff if you don’t change terms and conditions.

S.O.S NHS – KEEP OUR NHS PUBLIC.

Start rebuilding hospitals. £120 billion a year can be collected from the richest in the country.

Need bold commitment.

(Really Passionate Speaker – I would vote for him and Jeremy C – Aisha)

**Judy Downey – Care Leader**

Both political parties have got away with murder. Training, most is done in Care Homes BUT no recognised accredited transferable Care Certificate = Qualified. Carers have to do each care employer’s own training.

Fabian Report still accept training will be done by Care Homes – private sector! Don’t expect hospital to train the doctors they employ! Social Care is not the handmaiden to NHS, it has its own skills.

There is a contemptuous attitude in this country to the young and the old – locking them up in homes- not allowing friends and family to visit. May ask too many questions. Older people turfed out of care if they become too intense- if ask any questions, they push patient out!

We need to ask more of Regulator – 20% of homes need improvement when she was in Department of Health. They had to be inspected twice a year and one was unannounced. NOW its every four years. Rating now rubbish – some ghastly and some good – lottery Only 5% of care homes now in local authority ownership. Can get Open University to provide courses.

Extras - people are asked to pay without knowing why - charging a month’s fee in advance when a person had been dead for four weeks. Why should a person not a tax payer in this country be able to provide services in this country? Why does the CQC not take complaints?

500,000 people in care homes in England. Need trained work force.

People in care homes are NOT taken to dentist or opticians, same for putting on hearing aids.

Lots of ways the government could change things by amending Regulations so Regulator has to investigate complaints. Regulations make no mention of residents being taken out for fresh air – taken to hospital. Reports, nowadays do not mean anything.

2007 – Anyone can be an inspector – no requirement to be informed/knowledgeable about the care field.

**Dr. Jean Hardiman-Smith – Chair NPC Health and Social Care** **Working Party**

How can NPC push forward better health and care? She was born with a disability. Also been a carer from quite young. Been recently treated for Sepsis.

Government policies nearly killed her twice – her husband had to save her. She believes it was done deliberately – Perfect storm: BREXIT/ COVID Used as excuse – dog chasing its own tail.

Ubiquitous – so subtle we are not even aware of it – Ageism matters. Being called ‘old and ugly’ to stop one female from speaking our contributions to society do not seem to matter – only there to look decorative. Losing control over our lives. Similar around the world. Least talked about. Adults treated as children - happened to her when she was seriously ill. Mindset leads to loss of individual’s individuality – become fearful of younger people. Calling yourself a ‘Burden’ – elderly and disabled are being left behind.

Tribe IK – took elders and left them in the desert to die. Reason – not sufficient food. When that changed, no longer necessary so they fed their elders. Not normal behaviour to kill your elders. Weakening of social contract. No longer cradle to grave. Thinking now is that it’s better for people to die promptly at age 75. Someone wrote an essay promoting this!!

In Burma age is a badge of honour. Not so in the UK. Now second most uneven country after Bulgaria. Family Care workers save the government £162 billion per year.

**Conference Roundup – Jan Shortt**

What can we do? Need a new way of thinking that places humanity not profit at its heart.

Need total paradigm shift.

Quality/availability of housing for elderly.

Transport – Closing ticket offices not good.

Need to increase trust.

Get big money out of Care.

Can’t be timid must fight back.

Choice – increasing privatisation only hides the true situation.

Stakes are high- impact on our children and grandchildren.

Cannot rely on one or two voices. We ALL need to step up to the plate.

Society is all we have.

**Future AngliaNPC Events** –

Burston Strike School Rally – Sunday 3rd September stall set up 7.45 am

International Day of the Older Person – Sunday 1st October -

Agreed a Leaflet stall Mon. 2nd Oct. 11.00 am till 12.30 pm (Meet Haymarket, Norwich.)

**Dates of future meetings**

**Joint General Meeting of Anglia & Eastern Regions (NPC)** – Wednesday 19h July 2023 – 12.30 for 1.00 pm Moreton Hall Community Centre, Symonds Rd, Bury Saint Edmunds IP32 7EW.

**General Meeting of AngliaNPC** – Wednesday 27th September 2023 – 10 for 10.30 am Stella Maris Hall, Lowestoft, NR32 1NL – Speaker on ‘Tax, Care and Toyboys’ at 11.15 am followed by Pensioners Lunch.

**Next Anglia Exec meeting at Diss –** Thursday 19th October 2023 – 10 for 10.30 am

**Next Norfolk Branch meeting** – Nelson Hotel, Norwich – Thursday 7th September 10 for 10.30 am

**Next Suffolk Branch Meetings** – 60+ Club, Clapham Rd Sth, Lowestoft – Fri. 1st September, 6th October

**Any Other Business –** Unite Union Petition Sheets were available for the ‘68 is too late’ campaign.