



Haverling
LONDON BOROUGH

COUNCIL CHAMPION FOR
OVER 50S

ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR

MANDY ANDERSON 2022-2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Councillor Introduction _____	1
Champion for Over 50s Policy _____	2
Committee Engagement _____	3
Closing Message _____	6
Contact Information _____	8
Upcoming Events _____	8

COUNCILLOR INTRODUCTION

Councillor Introduction

As a newly elected Council Member in May 2022, it was an honour to be able to take up the role of Over 50s Champion. This happened at a time of change within the Council Administration and being faced with several new roles at once, representing the Over 50s has been a thread through so much of my experience in this first year.

With a professional background in education, I embraced the remit of Over 50s Champion as an invaluable learning opportunity. I greatly appreciate the guidance, support and advice that so many people have freely and enthusiastically offered. This will certainly enable me to further develop my representation of the role and within the Council this coming year.

As a 'younger' representative of the Over 50s group, I've been proactive, curious and at times tenacious in finding out about key concerns, issues and opportunities that the older population of Havering are presented with. I have been able to enhance my own understanding of the challenges faced and how those are best approached in a positive way by working together within the Council and community.

Champion for Over 50s Policy

- We should expect to be able to age well in Havering.
- During the budget setting process, it was clear a large number who responded to the public consultation represented the 'Over 50' age group. 42% of the total responses came from those aged 55 – 74. This is a significant number of people.
- Being an active participant in events, consultations and discussion forums across the year has kept my focus clear not just on Council policies and strategies, but more importantly striving to attain tangible outcomes that make a real difference to the lives of older residents and their families.
- I have been able to represent the Over 50s in debates and make recommendations on policies, services and agencies that affect them most, such as Social and Health Care and Policing. This has not been at all easy in the current financial climate.
- I will continue to keenly represent as Over 50s Champion where I can.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

- Havering continues to have one of the largest older populations in London and this is reflected in the casework I receive. Older people that I meet are always at the forefront of my mind when considering barriers and obstacles that can sometimes be presented to them.
- I have encouraged many older residents I speak with to become more active and vocal within their local community-led events. There are a large number of groups active across Havering that are invaluable to the Over 50s. Those I have been fortunate to meet and learn from include Di's Diamonds, Diamond Geezers, Age UK, Digital Champions, Health Champions, Local Area Co-ordinators, Peabody Trust, the Communi-Tea Project and Community Health Connectors. This also included working with and for Citizens Advice Havering to ensure they continued to receive funding to support those who are most in need, many of them from our older age groups. This is not an exhaustive list by any means and with apologies to those I've not listed, I give my thanks to Havering Dementia Action Alliance for the production of their Pocket Telephone Directory that lists so many great organisations that are there to help and support.
- Wherever I can, I will promote and raise awareness of events, share news and give updates from the Council. I advocate relentlessly for support where needed with accessibility and engagement, especially when getting information from the Council or trying to contact services. This is especially important for those residents who are not able to utilise online methods and those less able or comfortable with using the various IT systems that are becoming so prevalent in daily life.
- In the Over 50s Champion role this coming year, I will support older residents who are challenged by the current cost of living crisis. I will continue to work hard to

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

represent those who need our very best care and consideration, campaigning and lobbying for better provision in our Council, NHS and Police services.

- I also hope to encourage those that would like to renew skills to continue or change how they work as they grow older and will be working closely with the DWP on this.

MOTIVATION AND EMPOWERMENT

- It is worrying that loneliness, isolation, depression and other mental health issues have increased within our older population. Enabling the success and wellbeing of others and helping people to feel they are understood in challenging situations is a key motivational factor in the way I approach my work as a Councillor.
- In the role of Over 50s Champion, being open and approachable goes a long way in getting to the heart of a problem very quickly. With this in mind, I have ensured I am available to contact by telephone or email with a prompt response. I make myself available before and after events, even if only for a chat. That is sometimes just enough to change the day for someone who has been struggling.
- By promoting regular advice surgeries and when out and about in the community, I encourage residents that I have helped to let their older neighbours and family members know that I am here to help if I can. I may not have all the answers but I know some things and I know other people. I will ask questions on behalf of those who don't always feel able to manage alone or know where to turn. Some older residents I meet are overwhelmed by the many hoops and obstacles that can be perceived to be insurmountable. If I am able to alleviate anxiety, worry or offer reassurance, I am always happy to do so.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

- In reviewing the existing and emerging picture of what our Over 50s population looks like now and how that will change in the future, the Council can better

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

consider what services and support will be most needed. Within the Over 50s group of residents, there is a wide spectrum illustrating the differing needs of our Havering demographic. By working closely with the Equalities and Diversities Champion and Champion for Young People, we can continue to build a shared understanding of our growing community.

Events

- It was a great pleasure to attend the Over 50s Forum Garden Party last summer and spend time with the Chelsea Pensioners that attended. Unfortunately, the Garden Party cannot be held this year and this is in part due to the Over 50s Forum Board Members who organize such events, themselves aging and looking to reduce the demands on their time as they take a well-deserved rest or retirement.
- I am very keen that both the Forum meetings and the associated events can continue to be such an active and informative feature of our Havering community and encourage more people to join the group to maintain the energy and momentum that has been created.

CLOSING MESSAGE

Closing Message

I'd like to thank the many residents across Havering that have taken time to speak with me and offered advice. That very much supported my efforts throughout this year of development and learning as a new Councillor and Over 50s Champion. I am privileged that I am entrusted to help with worries, fears and personal issues, especially in older people. I have learned a lot while still doing my best to support and represent your voices to improve the quality of Over 50s life in Havering.

Thank you to Cliff and Jean Reynolds and all at the Over 50s Forum who continue to represent, support and push forward for our older residents. I have felt very welcomed in the group and I'd like to especially mention Councillor Christine Smith, who has been so supportive.

My Labour Group colleagues have helped me in this role with their enthusiasm, endless encouragement and supporting me when I've felt challenged by the task at hand. I thank them for keeping me focused and realistic on what can be achieved in the current circumstances.

I will continue to advocate for and support the NHS Community Connectors Volunteers and thank Kelly McBride and all involved with this programme for their outstanding efforts encouraging people to help each other live healthier and more fulfilling lives, especially as they grow older.

The Harold Hill and Rainham Foodbanks are seriously stretched and I ask that they are supported to continue helping the increasingly worrying number of clients that they are seeing, including many elderly residents.

I am a trustee of the Communi-tea Project, a charitable organization that aims to combat isolation and loneliness in older people. I hope to support them further in this coming year to raise funds so the terrific work they do can reach many more people.

CLOSING MESSAGE

In closing, I hope to build on the positive relationships I have formed with the many special, dedicated and committed people who strive within their jobs or voluntary activity to support the Over 50s. These all come together to form such a rich, vibrant and 'young at heart' community - something to nurture, guard and treasure.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Information

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Upcoming Events

The Over 50s Forum meets at the Town Hall every 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Town Hall. I continue to be available at regular Heaton Ward and Harold Hill advice surgeries. I will aim to attend as many community events that are related to the needs and interests of the Over 50s as they arise in the coming year. I look forward to meeting many more residents there.