

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Report of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 23 May 2023 in Brampton Community Centre Café. 18 people attended the meeting, which took place at 1:30pm after soup, sandwiches and fruit salad in the community café. There were several apologies and lunch cancellations some of which were due to reasons of ill health.

Ann Oswin welcomed members and the guest speaker, Nikki Scott, of Citizens Advice Carlisle and Eden.

Ann explained that the timing of AGMs had been disrupted by COVID but that hopefully we were now back to holding them in May. She gave a brief review of the activities since the last AGM in October 2021 and also told members that the committee had, since that meeting, revised the constitution to make it more appropriate. This new constitution was adopted by a vote of members at the March 2023 meeting. Ann also explained that our original source of funding, Laurel House, had been taken over by Cumbria Community Foundation which requires us to have an adult safeguarding policy and that we have adopted a suitable policy courtesy of the Brampton and Beyond Community Trust, which owns the community centre, though the policy may still require further modification. Ann also took the opportunity to thank the staff at the community centre, which provides an ideal venue for our meetings.

The treasurer, Ivan Whetton, then distributed a summary analysis of the accounts since the last AGM. Because of the reduced level of activity of the Forum both during and since COVID, donations from Laurel House had been largely unused resulting in a healthy bank balance and for this reason the committee had decided not to request funding from the Cumbria Community Foundation this year but would do so next year.

Ann then gave details of upcoming events and activities in the community centre relevant to the group including the Tuesday Happy Wanderers walking group and Bingo on the first Thursday of every month (7:30pm). The full programme of activities available can be found on the community centre website: bramptoncc.org.uk.

Ann then introduced the committee members present. Resignations from the committee were received from Bridie and Geoff Robinson and Sherie Reidford. Carol Saunders, Harry and Margaret Simpson, Julianne DeVonald, Jean Taylor, Ivan Whetton and Ann Oswin were all willing to continue on the committee. From the meeting Viv Harvey was willing to join the committee. Officials will be decided at the next committee meeting.

Ann Oswin then introduced the guest speaker, Nikki Scott, of Citizens Advice Carlisle and Eden.

With the help of an on-screen presentation Nikki reminded us of the services provided by Citizens Advice and that as part of their outreach programme an adviser is based in Brampton Community Centre on Thursdays. You can book an appointment by speaking to the community centre (016977 45023), contacting their office on 03300 563 037 or emailing Nikki at energy@ca-ce.org.uk.

Nikki reminded us of the range of services available. [See the Citizens Advice website www.cac-e.org.uk or the [report of the April 2022 50+ Forum meeting](#) for more information.]

The main part of Nikki's presentation addressed concerns about energy.

The Priority Services Register. If you sign up for this register (done online; Nikki can help with this) additional services are available. For example, if vulnerable, such as through having a long-term medical condition or being of pensionable age, and you lose your energy supply you become a priority for reconnection.

Warm Home Discount. This reopens in October 2023 to individuals who receive qualifying benefits - again Nikki can offer advice.

Cost of Living Payments. These are available to those on low income, those with a disability, and pensioners.

Nikki then talked about tariff switching. Whilst energy prices continue to fall Nikki's advice was "Don't. Not yet." as for now it will likely prove to be the more expensive option. Energy prices are continues to fall during the summer and possibly again in October.

Nikki stressed the importance of checking your energy bills. if you make an appointment with her she is happy to do this with you. Make sure that your bills are based on actual meter readings, which should be submitted each month, and not estimated use - this is indicated on each bill. If you have a smart meter make sure that it is sending out readings - some may fail to do this.

Could you pay less by paying by direct debit or, at an appropriate time, by being on a fixed tariff?

Is your direct debit payment appropriate for the energy you use? If you have a large credit, ask for a refund.

Nikki thought that in most situations having a smart meter was a good idea. In some rural situations they are still not suitable. It was recommended that, if you change supplier or if you have a change of meter, you take a photograph of the meter immediately before and after any change is made and, after the change, ensure that the smart meter is sending information correctly.

During the presentation Nikki responded to comments and questions from Forum members.

Ann thanked Nikki for what had been an interesting session and the meeting showed its appreciation in the usual way.

The date of the next 50+ Forum meeting has yet to be confirmed but will probably be a tea party in July 2023.