



Kilmarnock was part of a series of meetings for older people's groups around Scotland between January and April 2015. The format included an introduction by Provost Jim Todd and a presentation by Tom Berney, SOPA Chair on the growing role of SOPA in supporting and challenging policy. 44 participants from older people's forums in East Ayrshire discussed SOPA Action Plan 2015 statements and identified their priorities. Then these questions were addressed:

How can SOPA work with you? and How can you work with SOPA?

SOPA's Communication Adviser, raised awareness of events in the local press and media, and publicised them afterwards on SOPA's Facebook site - <https://www.facebook.com/scotopa>

Results from 39 returned standard forms.

Some people gave priority to more than one action from each topic and all of these priorities are included in the totals shown below in Figure 1. The top four priorities are shown in Figure 2 ¹.

Fig.1

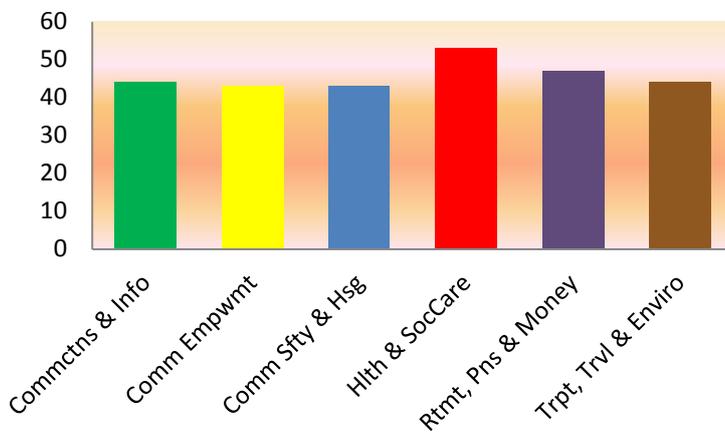
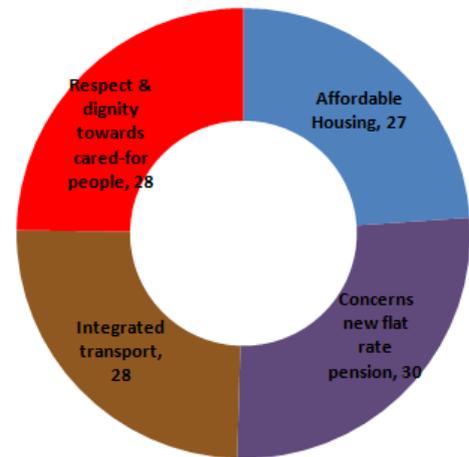


Fig.2



The action points break down as follows, with the number of votes in brackets:

Communications & Information: accessible Internet access (7), solidarity between generations (20), and SOPA reaching out to groups of older people (17)

Community Empowerment: clear communication on how the Community Empowerment (CE) (Scotland) Bill will operate (16), reach out to the LGBT community and ethnic groups (5) and SOPA extending its reach to as many older people as possible (22)

Community Safety and Housing: all communities have access to affordable housing (27), street safety - traffic control and a police presence (8), clear comparisons between energy companies (8)

Health and Social Care: respect and dignity towards cared-for people (28), National Care Standards (25)

Retirement, Pensions and Money: pensions concerns over flat rate (30), expense of funerals (5), acknowledgement of unpaid carers and savings to the national purse (12)

Transport, Travel and Environment: integrated travel policy (28), public spaces for social life - including rest areas and toilets (16)

¹ A full ranking of priorities is available on request.



Comments on the meeting

37 participants completed an evaluation form and of this number:

- 83% valued the meeting as very or extremely useful;
- many appreciated getting to know all that SOPA does for older people and sharing information:

"Meeting people from other communities, sharing information with each other. Learning what SOPA stands for, and how it works for elderly people."

"The speakers were informative and clear, very good orators."

"It would be good if local authorities organised a meeting of local groups once per year to discuss subjects helpful to older people."

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The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a 'voice' for older people.

Visit the SOPA website for up-to-date information about events and activities.

www.scotopa.org.uk

How SOPA can work with local groups

Suggestions focused on communications and contributing to local activity:

- ✓ Keep us updated regularly on current issues by both email and paper information
- ✓ Have more meetings at a local level
- ✓ Contribute to local meetings
- ✓ A local co-ordinator should be council led to ensure remote locations are included
- ✓ Local advert and newsletter to each household
- ✓ Provide clear, concise information about meetings with Ministers.

How the local group can work better with SOPA

Suggestions focused on assisting local participation, lobbying, gathering local evidence and sharing information:

- ✓ Attend meetings locally and communicate on issues that affect everyone
- ✓ Lobby MSPs and local councillors on issues being raised by SOPA to add weight to their cause
- ✓ Gather information at local level and feed back to SOPA
- ✓ Have a representative to work with others and pass on the information at a local level
- ✓ Put our weight behind SOPA, contribute by fundraising
- ✓ Organise local groups to carry a voice forward and ensure the voice is being heard and acted upon.



Lively debate at Kilmarnock on 25 Feb.