

The Scottish Older People's Assembly Committee
Thursday 19th November 2015
11.30am - 3.30pm

Diamond Jubilee Room, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

Note of Meeting

Participants

Tom Berney	Chairperson & U3A Scotland
Glenda Watt	Co-ordinator & City of Edinburgh Council
Barbara Barnes	Alzheimer Scotland
Mary Benson	West Lothian Senior Peoples Forum
Val Bissland	Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Strathclyde
Diana Findlay	Age Scotland and Borders Older People's Service Forum
Bill Johnston	Scottish Seniors Alliance
Donald Macleod	Highland Senior Citizens Network
Bashir A Malik	Interfaith Association Edinburgh and Scotland
Brian Martin	STUC
John McAllion	Dundee Pensioners' Forum
Bill McDonald	Renfrewshire Seniors Forum
Sandra McGregor	Make It Happen Forum, Falkirk
James Miller	Joint North Ayrshire Elderly Forum
Jeanette Pieper	Scottish Pensioners Forum
Rohini Sharma Joshi	Trust Housing Association
Alan Sidaway	National Pensioners Convention Scotland & Vice Chair of SOPA
Rob Snodgrass	Grey Matters
Eileen Wallace	Stirling Reference Group for Older People
Christine Wilson	Scottish Human Development

In attendance

Alasdair Hutchison	SOPA Communications, Pagoda Novelli
Rosa Ardia	SOPA Administration
David Ritchie	SOPA Research

Apologies

Mike Lynch	Voluntary Action Orkney
Helen Biggins	Seniors Together South Lanarkshire
John White	Dumfries and Galloway Over 50's Group
Tim Puntis	LGBT Age, Scotland
Alison Clyde	Generations Working Together
Betty Milton	A City for All Ages Advisory Group Edinburgh
Ian Glover	Scottish Government
Catherine Hewitt	Scottish Government
Mike Liddle	Scottish Government

1. Welcome new members, Apologies and Opening Remarks

Tom Berney welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Brian Martin, STUC, who attended for the first time. Tom referred to recent meetings that SOPA has been involved with in the last few months and said that what SOPA has done so far is quite remarkable: SOPA has succeeded in raising its awareness and enhancing its public profile, with coverage in the broadcast and print media, and it has become the reference point for events and meetings related to older people.

2. Draft Note of Meeting on 3rd September 2015 and Matters Arising.

The Draft Note was accepted and an update provided on Matters Arising:

- **Reception on Wednesday 9th September 2015**

The reception, held in the Garden Lobby in the Scottish Parliament, was sponsored by Christine Grahame MSP, and Alex Neil, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners Rights, gave a speech. Nearly 200 people attended the event, many MSPs from all parties came along and 22 organisations and forums had a stand. Everyone was very pleased for the opportunity to talk to their MSPs and the organisations valued the opportunity of having their projects displayed.

- **Assembly on Monday 5th October 2015**

The Assembly was sponsored by Christian Allard MSP and was held in the Members Room in the Scottish Parliament, and the workshops in the six Committee Rooms. Cabinet Secretary Alex Neil MSP gave a speech about Social Justice and highlighted the problem of funeral poverty. About 140 people attended the event. A film was taken and the webcast of the six workshops is available on SOPA's website. Analysis of the evaluation forms revealed that feedback from participants was very positive on the whole experience and on the issues for which SOPA has been campaigning. Christian Allard MSP lodged a motion in the Scottish Parliament on 7th October 2015 on the positive contributions from the seventh Scottish Older People's Assembly; the motion was supported by 33 MSPs.

- **SOPA at House of Commons 4th November 2015**

SOPA and the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament delivered a joint reception at the House of Commons. All the Scottish MPs were invited and the programme included: introductions from Nixon Armstrong, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament, and Tom Berney, SOPA chair; short statements from all Irish parties; and speeches by Ian Murray MP (Labour) and Deidre Brock MP (SNP). The event was very constructive, giving the chance to speak about older people's issues. Around 17 MPs stayed for the whole event, including Alex Salmond MP and some members of the House of Lords. It was noted that nobody from the UK Government was present. The reception is a first step towards more collaborative working between older people and MPs from Northern Ireland and Scotland with the aim of improving

the lives of older people in both countries. SOPA Committee members attending the event were: Tom Berney, Glenda Watt, Diana Findlay, Sandra McGregor, Rob Snodgrass, and Bill Johnston.

Tom remarked that, in the meetings in Westminster, in the Scottish Parliament and around the country, MSPs, MPs, provosts and councillors have asked to collaborate with SOPA; therefore the Committee should develop a strategy and take advantage of those offers.

- **Other events:**

- *Living Well in Later Life*, Monday 26th October, Heriot Watt University: this was an event for professionals and older people. SOPA was invited to organise a workshop and the plenary session to include a Luminare poet. Tom Berney, Glenda Watt, Helen Biggins, Val Bissland and Rob Snodgrass attended the event that was webcast worldwide. Information on it can be found on the SOPA website.
- Holyrood event on Age and Isolation, Tuesday 6th October, COSLA: Tom Berney was a key note speaker; Glenda Watt, Bashir Malik, Jimmy Miller and David Ritchie attended the event.

- **Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing 9 December**

SOPA now provides the secretariat for the Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing. The next meeting will be on 9th December and the agenda will be circulated.

3. SOPA's Draft Annual Summary Report

Glenda presented a summary version concerning the activity of the last year. A report on background information and evidence on the business plan, the reception, the Assembly and the local meetings will be uploaded to SOPA's website.

Suggested amendments:

- include reference to the tiered pension system among the campaigning actions
- focus on the achievements, with a view for national outcomes
- include some data about the older people that SOPA represents
- reword the reference to SOPA and the Herald Society award
- Alasdair will provide an update regarding SOPA communications

An updated version of the summary report will be issued next week for comments and the final report will be ready by the end of December 2015.

Bill Johnston said he had not seen a statement of SOPA's expenditure. Tom explained that that SOPA grants were paid into Edinburgh Council's accounts and that the Council were therefore responsible for monitoring and auditing SOPA's spending. Each year accounts are submitted to the Scottish government

showing that we had spent the money in accordance with the bid we had made for it. Responsibility for the financial expenditure of SOPA lies with the City of Edinburgh Council through Glenda Watt and the Principle Finance Manager who verifies expenditure and the reports given to the Big Lottery and Scottish Government. The SOPA Committee does not have any direct responsibility for that, but a copy of the final account could be made available to the committee, if required. We may well have to make new arrangements next year if we lose our connection with the council.

4. The future of SOPA

Tom explained that SOPA's Business Plan for 2015/16 includes identifying another host for SOPA. Exploratory discussions began on this task in the summer but action is now accelerated due to the possibility that Glenda may have to leave her post at the end of December 2015. This does not mean that SOPA will cease or that Glenda will discontinue her role.

SOPA has been supported for several years by Edinburgh City Council in their provision of staffing (Glenda Watt) and general office services like printing, distribution and procurement of communications, research and administration staff.

Now the City of Edinburgh Council, like most others, is facing staffing cuts, some of which will fall on Glenda's area. Therefore the Committee has to consider how SOPA would cope and organise, if it loses Edinburgh's support. Some of the things to consider would be staffing, accommodation, finance and any consequent constitutional amendments.

Glenda and Tom had meetings with Age Scotland and SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) to explore the possibility of having an office space and use their facilities. Both agreed and the financial costs would be similar. However, SCVO only accommodates registered charities, so SOPA should revise its constitution and make an application to become a registered charitable organisation.

It is noted that the Scottish Government appreciate SOPA's work and have indicated the possibility of funding for 2016/17, though initially this would probably be for four months after 1 April 2016 due to the Scottish Parliament Election.

Points of discussion:

- some Committee members were skeptical about being hosted by Age Scotland as they fear it would cause confusion due to it being run as a 'business', while SOPA would be clearly defined if hosted by SCVO
- consider an approach to COSLA
- explore other sources of funding and potential collaborations for projects, e.g. other councils, Big Lottery, universities, etc.
- advantages of becoming a charity, e.g. being able to look for sponsorships

- what SOPA wants to be, think about the bigger picture: composition of the board of trustees; membership organisation, in which case who the members would be, etc.
- interim arrangement until the end of March 2016: SOPA has enough funds to cover the first 3 months of 2016
- distinctive missions for organisations operating at national level, but coordination and cohesion among them.
- consider the financial outlays and develop a proposal for future funding

The Committee agreed that some of the above matters will be discussed at SOPA's strategy meeting on Thursday 21 January 2015.

As far as the options for future arrangements are concerned, the Committee agreed that SOPA's Chair and Coordinator should proceed to explore the possibility of SOPA being relocated with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations from January 2016. SOPA has sufficient funds to deliver this interim arrangement until 31 March 2016.

SOPA's constitution will be revised in order to make an application to OSCR for charitable status. In drafting the revised Constitution, consideration will be given to the number and role and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, how they are identified, and any necessary revisions to SOPA's structure.

The Committee will be kept informed of proceedings and asked to contribute to the decision making. It should be noted that any application to OSCR for charitable status will take up to 3 months for its agreement/registration.

Other Business

Brian Martin said the SPF would be discussing pensions at their meeting on 8th December and invited SOPA to attend. The Chair thanked him and said he would try to get to it.

As this could be the last meeting that Rosa Ardia, David Ritchie and Alasdair will attend, everyone thanked them for their valuable contribution to SOPA over the year.

Dates of future meetings - Thursday 21 January 2015 11.30-15.30, venue European Room, City Chambers; Thursday 3 March 2016 tbc