

## **Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum**

### **Providing a Voice for the Older People of the Borough**

How fortunate today's older people are: they have been given 10 extra years of life above any past generation. Lucky indeed if they have enough income to live healthily; a home that is safe and warm and are fit enough to stay independent. Not so lucky if living longer is a continual struggle against poverty and loneliness, especially for those alone and childless. Someone needs to look out for them.

Older people are often demonised and accused of being a drain on society – the cause of everything from hospital bed-blocking, to causing a housing shortage by not moving to a one-bedroom home. The truth is that this new longer-living generation is invaluable; what about the significant contributions made by them? Their economic activity by way of taxes, spending, investment, employment and entrepreneurship amounts to £billions each year. And where would the country be without the dedication and resilience of the later-life volunteer? Older people provide an average of 326 hours each per year in free care for grandchildren and other family members, an estimated value of over £15 billion. It's to everyone's benefit to keep this valuable group socially included, independent and appreciated, then they can continue to contribute to the economy and society. We should all try to safeguard this.

The Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum (TWOFF) is an organisation that provides a voice to the ageing people of the Borough, making sure that decision-makers always keep the needs of the elderly in their sights. TWOFF is non-party-political; it has a seat on TWBC Town Forum; the Transport Forum; the Access Group for the Disabled and a link to the Alzheimer's Society and Citizens Advice Bureau, ensuring that members' concerns are heard. TWOFF is not a club but it does hold 4 public meetings a year, each with relevant speakers and ending in refreshments. In addition to that, quarterly newsletters are sent to each member, giving important updates and useful information.

Membership is free of charge and everyone is welcome; the more voices TWOFF has, the louder they can shout!

For a registration form or more information please call chairman Denise Watts on 01892 518 951 or email [wattsdenise@googlemail.com](mailto:wattsdenise@googlemail.com) . Maybe you have skills that could help TWOFF's organisers? if so, they'd love to hear from you.