

Assembly Meeting held at the ISCA Centre, Summer Lane, Exeter on Tuesday 7th February 2010

Attendees:

Abdul Choudhary, Exeter; Andrea Chick, Administrative Assistant; Barbara DeBound, Axminster; Bill Jordan, Exmouth; Bob Bryant, Exmouth; Bob Deed, Tiverton; Brian Clifton, Barnstaple; Frank Hartley, Teignmouth; Gillian Newcombe, Chairman; Graham Bowen, Torrington; Iris Mackie, Crediton; Jane Jordan, Exmouth; Jean Daley, Exeter; Jim Corben, Teignmouth; John Stedman, Crediton; Ken Crawford, Okehampton; Margaret Coles, Holsworthy; Margaret Spencer-Brown, Axminster; Margaret Woolacott, Okehampton; Martin Taylor, Tavistock; Mary Collins, Crediton; Mike Dennis, Tavistock; Molly Walker, Exeter; Pat Davey, Bideford; Peter Spackman, Dawlish; Richard Ashby, Okehampton; Rita Brickill, Axminster; Roger Trapani, Seaton; Ron Roberts, Exmouth; Roy Deeks, Exeter; Sally Lougher, Administration Officer; Sue Waters, Axminster; Sue Watkins, Tiverton; Tim Hall, Publicity Officer; Tina Trapani, Seaton; Tom Reardon, Exeter; Tony Simpson, Honiton and Tony Smith, Honiton.

Apologies:

Alan Rayner, Ann Cowling, Ann Crawford, Ann McClements, Beryl Lambert, Bob Buskin, Carol Barkwell, Catherine Adcock, Cecily Easden, Cliff Bell, Derek Pedder, Derrick Woolacott, Eileen Barber, George Palin, Janet Garland, John Cowling, John Montgomery, Kathy Swain, Linda Corns, Maggie Durkin, Margaret Sloan, Margaret Stimson, Neil Easden, Norman Shiel, Pam Johnson, Richard Watkins, Robbie Robinson, Roma Patten and Yvonne Wardrop (Vice Chairman).

Morning Session

1. SL read out a letter that had been received from YW offering her apologies and giving an explanation of the current situation of the Board. (See Appendix A). Event though she was not present, RT said that he would like it placed on record thanking YW for all of the hard work and service she has given to us in a very difficult time. This was greeted with a round of applause and the suggestion by GN that a bunch of flowers be sent to YW was unanimously agreed.
2. GN welcomed members to the Assembly.
3. There were no amendments to the minutes of the Assembly held on the 22nd June 2010 and these were accepted as a true and accurate record.
4. Matters Arising:
 - i) TS asked JS for a report regarding the SCfD's application to become a charity. JS said that he has recently had a response from the charity commission and they are querying a number of points. One was that the members would appear to be the beneficiaries of the organisation but we are providing services to help deprived people – rural deprivation and rural isolation and disabled people – that type of remit and it is easy to see that we are a conduit to bring that about. JS felt that the SCfD need to get out more into the public and see if we can find the problems that exist within our communities. This will result in changing the wording of our main objective as at the moment it doesn't include the type of wording that the Charity Commission want. JC thought it is important that we make it clear to the Charity Commission that we act for the benefit for all people over 50 with specific reference to the other and that it is not the be all and end all. JS agreed and said that obviously the wording has to be agreed by the Board, but on the receipt of the notification it read: " To reach out to the over 50 population of Devon especially the disadvantaged, vulnerable and those living in rural and urban isolation, to establish their needs and to feed them back to the appropriate authorities for action" . This will form part of the Strategic plan.
 - ii) JS said that he thought that the SCfD is extremely fortunate for GN to take the Chairman's position as she has a wealth of experience in health care and the profession, and also to act as a CEO to keep us all on target. The Board are totally behind her 100% and we are really very fortunate.
 - iii) GN pointed out that when we talk about isolation we don't talk just about rural isolation; eg when people come down to Devon to retire and their partner dies they are very often left on their own. This is

classed equally as isolation and there is a high suicide rate in Devon because of this so therefore you get both rural and urban isolation.

- iv) GN asked the members to report back what is happening in respect of care homes in their area. She said that the SCfD have become recently aware that DCC have not been able to sell their care homes. One reason is because of **toupe?** as they pay their staff more than the independent sector and therefore a private purchaser would have trouble making a living. Secondly, some of these care homes need so much updating work done on them it would work out extremely expensive and there is no way the purchaser could afford to do it. DCC have needed to reevaluate their situation and all groups need to keep their eyes on homes in their area. This has left care home staff feeling very vulnerable and are leaving their employment as well as clients seeking new places in other care homes.
- v) BJ asked what was GN's suggestion re the care homes and how we should relate to the county what is going on. GN informed the meeting that KC is an historian and keeps his eye on what is happening in the different levels of authority, he is brilliant at research and she is really glad she has his support as he keeps the SCfD up to date. KC said that the problems had been outlined by GN but we have to keep our fingers on this issue. We know that technically DCC cannot get rid of the homes but we don't know what they are going to do. Seven of these homes are not included in the externalisation as they give rehabilitation services and there is a contract with the NHS to provide this service, but he can't see what is going to happen in the future. BJ suggested that an early meeting should be held with DCC regarding this but KC informed the meeting that SCfD do have regular meetings with DCC as the next date was the 15th December.

BC said that the main issue is if the staff are leaving our own care homes then we are going to end up with a problem because how are DCC going to cope; if homes are not up to date and the independent sector won't take them on – what sort of conundrum is that and where will it leave us? MB said that it just puzzles him why people would want to go to the private sector as they have safety with DCC so do we know what it is that is making them leave. GN thought that it was almost definitely insecurity and the evidence she has is that the home where she was a director up until two years ago (the company is still run by her brother who is managing director) they were, and still are, getting a lot of people coming from DCC run homes for jobs. She informed the meeting that the council are doing something which she felt they should be made aware of. They are employing agency staff to replace their own staff, they have a contract with one agency and that the pay those staff getting is less than others. They are lovely people but their English has a little bit to be desired and this can be a problem for those like us who have silver hair.

TS said that this was a well worn path with privatisation; we know that where this occurs we get a rundown of facilities, problems with morale and failure of investment. He added that he was opposed to this whole type of thing and hoped we were not suggesting that staff are overpaid as there are appalling wages and conditions in this sector. He considered the whole thing to be obnoxious and asked what is the SCfD's message on this? GN answered the question by saying "the message we have given to Stuart Barker directly is that we are against it. They want to continue with care homes giving care and DCC have said there is to be no change of use or no selling of, or any parts of, council property and this is leasehold and not freehold. This council have built in safeguards and we have supported this. One of the forces for selling, and I have to be fair, is the Department of Health and NHS's decision to look after people in their own homes and they are introducing nursing and care teams to do this so they can get people out of hospital quicker. As a nurse I view that with a dread and we have to monitor the situation closely."

BC thought it may be a good idea to approach other senior councils in other areas to see what is best practice. GN said that the majority of other counties have already sold off their care homes, and BC asked if are there things what we could learn from that. Another member said that it has been mentioned that SCfD is against privatisation but there is nothing in place to say what we want. Should we not have a policy – this is what we propose? GN told the meeting that firstly, this item will be put on the agenda for the next board meeting and more research will be carried out and secondly, she will come up with a policy that can either be torn to pieces or adjusted and then brought back to the AGM. The Health and Social group to take this forward and report back to the next Assembly.

TSth spoke about agency nurses and the comment that one of the problems being that they don't speak very good English, but we hear that they do a wonderful job and we have been hearing that they have to go back where they come from – we can keep highly paid footballers but we cannot keep them. He continually has to tell people in Honiton that we are not a political organisation but he is afraid the SCfD is becoming more and more politically driven because most of the things we are in favour of are political.

RR asked that the NHS, which is also making cuts, also be included when look at issues arising from the current financial situation.

IM asked that the SCfD look at the health services. She said that there were lots of meetings being held regarding changes in the health service and closure of cottage hospitals and need to keep our finger on this. How are the SCfD involved as she thought we are losing it somewhere. GN informed the meeting that she went to a service meeting last week on the closure of Brunel Lodge in Newton Abbot. She is also meeting with the NHS staff on a weekly basis and we are monitoring and fighting as much as we can. She agreed with the TS's statement regarding being political and she thought we are all slightly political and can't fight that. Regarding the employment of foreigners, my company used to employ them and we couldn't have done it without them as they are highly qualified and skilled. Doctors, nurses and OTs stay two years and then go back to their own country.

KC added that over the past few months we have been responding to a number of consultations regarding the NHS on the format of what is due to happen. The four consultations we have responded to are commissioning for patients, improving the democratic legitimacy, regulating health care providers and transparency and outcomes. The overwhelming theme is that there cannot be a division between health and care and we are concerned that they are one and the same. Whatever happens within the NHS, the voluntary sector must be fully involved and we cannot leave it to the suits to deal with it for us. 12,000 replies were received from across the country to each of those consultations and the government has already taken on board that the voluntary sector needs to be working alongside them. KC went on to say that there is a massive divide on how the local networks are working – are we happy or not happy with what they are doing – and it is a 50 – 50 split. We have said in our response, plus others, that we want to be involved with Healthwatch and do not want it to be run by hosts and this is right across the country. At the moment he is in the process of compiling a document which involves all four of these consultations and will get out to the members as soon as he is able.

GN told the meeting that they needed to get on with the rest of the day but she felt it was important that members are fully involved and therefore she was happy to take a few more comments.

- i) BJ thought that the SCfD had been trying to get onto the Overview and Scrutiny committee of DCC. He thought it was SCfD that made DCC look at things in a holistic way and that we should be on that committee. GN informed BJ that we are being considered for it but she went to the last meeting as an observer; we always go as observers so we can monitor and we will continue to do that and continue to push for full membership.
- ii) BB reported that GP surgeries are required to take into account patient views before making decisions. There are patient participation groups in all areas of Devon, so he suggested that it would be a good idea for members to get onto their local group and then the GP will know exactly what patients want - so we will be influencing upwards as well as downwards.
- iii) GN referred to a letter she had received from the Tiverton branch regarding the long-promised director job descriptions. She told the Tiverton members present that these would be out in the 2nd week of January 2011 ready for the AGM on the 4th March. This would give members plenty of time to look at and scrutinise them.
- iv) TS said that he was glad that GN have given time for these other issues as he felt them more important than workshops. He asked what is the future of the SCfD as there were wild rumours sweeping Devon that the SCfD are going in with other organisations. He felt he cannot comment on this to his branch members as he didn't know and would welcome a brief statement. GN explained that the SCfD are in a

big fight for funding. DCC have set up involvement workshops and we are participating in them as they want us to start working together with various organisations and look at what they are doubling up on, and there are quite a few things, so we are presenting our point of view. The first involvement workshop was on the 29th November and it is our case that we represent people at local groups, these groups meet and we have Assemblies, Conferences, ARMs and AGMs. GN said that it became apparent that we had a better method of communication than anyone else in the room so we pushed forward with this and it has gone down very well. There is another workshop next week and her intention is to report what has happened to all groups. Sue Younger-Ross from DCC said that we would probably lose some of our funding but definitely not lose all of it. GN and YW have a meeting with John Hart, leader of DCC, to put forward the case of the SCfD and she promised the meeting that she will keep every group informed.

JS added that the thing that came out was a unique selling point - structure county wide and that no other organisation had that. We work in close liaison with other groups especially Fusion and we are looking at the possibility of rental space in the Fusion building. JS said that we can justify that because we will save costs in other areas and it is important that we do work closer together with other organisation.

GN went on to say that she had attended a meeting the day before with Fusion at Isca House. The presentation was by two officers from national government who had come down from London because they had heard what was happening in Devon – a gold rated county council. Fusion said they were a user led organisation in its day to day services. We are one of the user organisations in their eyes and we actually sit on their Board. GN explained that Fusion is funded by DCC and that the user led Fusion board includes Involved Devon, Westbank, Rejuvenation, SCfD and others. This was the first time she had attended and she was really impressed to see deaf people, people with mental handicaps and people in wheelchairs all being involved in consultations and making decisions – they are a united group in their own right and we are part of that. GN said that she would circulate this presentation to the groups. Fusion is a gateway to DCC for some users and carers.

TS asked again as it felt it very, very important – are we being taken over? GN said that no – we were invited to be on their board. TS asked if the SCfD were moving in to their offices? GN explained that the SCfD don't have an office or anywhere to store equipment etc and that the board are looking at this at the moment. They don't know exactly where this office would be at the moment but we do need somewhere central for you and for us, and that we are looking at other places.

JC asked about Fusion funded by DCC and were they on the same basis as SCfD, eg who employs their staff etc. GN said that there are employed staff but she couldn't tell him exactly what numbers they have but they have a different contract with DCC than we have. She would find out more for him.

IM thanked GN for her responses. IM commented that GN said that the SCfD are the only organisation Devon wide but what about LINK? KC had informed GN that all of the members of Fusion are members of LINK, however Fusion were very much user led so therefore if you go to meetings there are a few officers and all of the rest are users and are voted into office as users, which is different to LINK. GN continued saying she had a meeting with Caroline from LINK the next morning so we are talking to other groups as we have to and we need to start talking to other people who are presenting the same case to make our point of view stronger and all of these organisations involved have older people. GN reiterated that one of the points of this morning's session is to communicate better.

5. GN gave an introductory speech to the meeting. (See Appendix B). Following this, TT said that the branches need to take a huge responsibility for this as well as it is not only at board level that people need to be joining up with other branches. They had four branches communicating within the Seaton area as one of their main aims was to join up with other groups locally.

JS explained that the SCfD had county wide coverage with approximately 2,000 members but not all were active, an estimate of about 200 members are active throughout the county. The organisation is utilising the experience of the people who have retired and is free of charge. He felt that it was important to try and promote this a great deal more, get out there to organisations and to hand out literature to people who are

retiring. A system needed to be in situ to bring in people who have retired with experience to come into the SCfD.

BJ said that his is the importance of branches as the organisation is nothing without active branches. He thought we ought to say that it is for the branches collectively in a region to put on events; we have had these around dementia already and this would be a way forward to demonstrate who we are and help with recruitment.

RR said that he had heard the words consult on many occasions. He a lot of concerns that the SCfD were becoming a talking shop and that he would like to see more action. He said SCfD should actually be taking some action and be seen to be taking action, and not just talking on people's behalf. GN responded by saying that she had already taken that on board; we are acting and we have done some tremendous work but she thought we have not blown our own trumpets loud enough. TH agreed with this point. He said that his job is publicity and development and he would help people to do this by helping them to work with the media, but that the SCfD should identify the need then do something about it. MC responded strongly by saying that an awful lot of what we have been doing is in the Newsletter where there is a big list of all what the groups and the board are doing, as well as articles on members and their branches, and that all can read it every quarter. She felt that people are totally ignoring this form of communication.

BB said the reason he was at the Assembly is because the SCfD is doing a lot but he had only heard about the organisation via YW. He went on to say that he read papers, listen to the radio and watched television on a daily basis but had never heard of SCfD. RT commented that South Korea knew we were here. A South Korean television company had gone on to the Guardian website and found a link for the SCfD and because of that they contacted SCfD because they wanted to do a programme on retired people – so we are out there for some people at least. GN explained about the situation regarding Brunel Lodge. She said that the SCfD have not forced them to stop the closure of this facility but the NHS are taking more care about it and are not going to close it as quickly. They are re-organising care of those with major dementia across the county and that this won't be the only closure. They will be putting dementia cases into ordinary wards and we are fighting this strongly because this could affect all of us. Other patients don't want someone with dementia, and GN herself has worked with these patients, shouting and screaming in the middle of the night, because when dementia sufferers are in this severe situation they need one to one nursing care – putting them into a general ward is wrong and we are fighting this strongly across the county.

6. Workshops:

- i) Communication: From the last meeting at the ARM the group asked for an update on the request for attendance at Board meetings. The Board had agreed that any member can ask to attend the meeting a week in advance and they must put any question in writing. They can then attend the meeting which may need to be in two parts as certain can't be discussed in an open meeting ie employment of staff. The Board meeting minutes should be a summary that goes out within one week to branches then, after vetting by MC so we don't put anything on the website we could get into trouble with, onto the website within 2 weeks. RR had come up with the idea of setting up a bulletin board so we can have questionnaires and surveys and then anyone with an email address can join forum on say care homes and then there could be a direct input from people out in the field. This would be a good way of reaching people and a good chance for people to comment. RR agreed to firm up on this idea and will put it to the Board.

With regard to Assembly members, the group felt that now we no longer have them there was a need for continuity from the groups so that they should not send a fresh person each time. They also felt that some form of job description should be developed to explain what is expected of people attending Assembly meetings and this could take the form of internal or external training.

The group said that it was important that the branches in general and the membership get a précis of what actually took place at this meeting and that it should be done by the administration staff so there was no danger of members putting their own slant on it - just do outcomes not all of the meeting.

With regard to branch link directors their role needs to be established and to encourage groups on good practice. Link directors need to be knowledgeable on what is going on in their area.

We need to encourage area groups and for them to report their ideas and outcomes.

We complain a lot at group level that the board don't tell us what is going on but also the reality is that we don't tell the Board what is going on locally so could there be a return/summary? The question mark is are we loading local officers with more work? Perhaps a standardised form could be used to report on as the current one is designed for monitoring with DCC so doesn't actually best serve us. Also a précis of that summary should be used for the local website. SL commented that some groups were very good at sending out their minutes and other groups were not.

- ii) Intergenerational: This group started with a look at where their discussion had got to the last time they met at the ARM. They then moved on to how can we build on the success of the intergenerational conference. JC asked how many people at this meeting were at the conference and as he suspected, very few. JC went on to say that the conference was a terrific success and there was a 50/50 mix between older and younger people. The younger people made a massive contribution to the sessions and everyone went away with the idea that we should do something again another year with the same arrangement with SCfD, Devon Youth Service and Young Devon. All these parties agreed that they would be prepared to take part in a similar event next year. The group then discussed what should be the future of intergenerational work at county level – would it be a good thing to hold a similar conference? They decided that first of all, the group running the conference this year still have to have their debriefing session – it was supposed to have been held the previous day but was postponed so they couldn't make a report to the meeting. There is a conference report being prepared and it will come out following our debriefing in January. The group felt it should be the responsibility of SCfD to develop a programme for probably the next three years, if not certainly for next year, and ensure this time we have a steering group which consists of young people as well as the SCfD. They had hoped for that this year but the only time they could meet was during the daytime which was not suitable for the younger people so they decided they ought to have early evening meetings.

An idea from BJ at the first workshop was that 2012 was Olympics year and perhaps the SCfD might consider that could be the focus for a county wide conference because there will be money coming forward from the Olympics committee for sporting activities for young and old.

At local branch level, the group thought that if the SCfD are going to have the activities of intergenerational work in the county it should also be given at branch level and they would expect more branches to come forward with local activities, or encouraged by themselves. Branches could also organise them through other existing organisations and bring them together, eg a partnership with a Family Centre that has put forward a project with young and old which involves the tuition side of developing a programme called "Getting Online", or learning to use a computer quickly via courses where young people in schools are inviting their parents or grandparents to learn. The group also wants to give a push to intergenerational work and for groups to decide locally what they can do. They will putting out, under Ann's name, a list of activities and contacts with local youth officers. SL said that from the conference a lot of young people were fired up wanting to know how to get in contact with SCfD and she suggested that they could invite a couple of younger people along to their meeting.

- iii) Profile: BB said that the way the SCfD has behaved with local groups is how they have got to the position they are and if members are not satisfied then changes need to be made. Publicity and media contact should take place from local groups and it is TH's role to make sure that this happens. With the support of the Board, and some enthusiasm, each group needs to have a public relations officer who has been suitably trained by TH an example being PF of Teignmouth. Once you have local public relations man then the local paper will have stories regularly. TH is going to produce an A5 publicity leaflet in the near future.

The group also thought that local branches should be encouraged to get articles into Housing Association, and National Trust newsletters for example, as well as hard to reach groups newsletters so that everyone can read it and is talking about the SCfD. Another suggestion was to get involved in local planning processes as this will give more publicity and also to encourage TH to get more involved with the bigger media.

- iv) Health Care: This group looked at prevention and re-ablement, breaking it down into social aspects, eg vaccinations, fitness and nutrition. In terms of fitness - keep fit classes, keeping all of the local leisure centres available and hopefully not too many cuts ie swimming. U3A can be helpful in terms of activities but

not only physical but mental and on that score, day and evening classes have contracted. The group felt it important for people to keep mentally occupied and this included social events. They suggested that members write to the CQC, NHS Devon and other trusts to get them up and also in terms of the village halls – rural rather than towns – perhaps one could encourage our own generation to start up groups using their expertise.

The group also thought the SCfD ought to hold a conference on this next year. Other items were:

1. Consolidate work in view of dementia, expand on memory cafes and re-engage with Alzheimer's groups.
2. Monitor the DCC council homes and continue talking with DCC
3. Monitor changes in health services eg quality of care, reports of the CQC and to continue contacts with county officer.
4. Homes – keep an eye on occupancy levels. The costs per person of keeping in a DCC home is £800 per week, but in a private home is under 50% of that.

GN said that this is only the beginning and that the groups will be involving members more. She asked them to give some thought how we can involve those who can't get out and about – those who are vulnerable – and that every one of the leads going back with an awful lot of work to do and if anyone would like to join a sub-group, then speak to the lead.

This was the end of the morning session and GN thanked the meeting. (See Appendix C)

Afternoon session

GN explained that members would get the chance to talk to the Directors who have special direction with their group. She then requested that the Directors present to sit at the top table. The Directors' groups would follow on from each other as she did not want duplication of questions/answers. The questions she wanted the groups to consider were:

- i) let us know what you have been doing really important to SCfD over last 12 months
- ii) what you would like to achieve over the next 12 months with special help from your Directors and
- iii) what can the board assist you on.

Margaret Coles – Bideford, Great Torrington and Holsworthy

PT did not have any questions and AR was not present to tell the meeting of Bideford's achievements. However PT did ask if MC would be prepared to attend one of their meetings and MC responded that yes, she certainly would so long as it didn't clash with any other arranged ones. SL said that Bideford did a report on Torrage and that MC was aware of it. No other questions from the other branches for MC.

GN asked all directors if they would be willing to attend meetings on their patches and the unanimous reply was that of course they would.

Cliff Bell – Barnstaple, Braunton, Ilfracombe and South Molton

CB had tendered his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. He lives at top of big hill in a very rural area and because of the extremely cold weather conditions is having to feed his cattle by hand and carry buckets of water. It took him 4 hours to get home from a meeting in Exeter the day before and did not want to take the risk of not being able to get home.

BC spoke for Barnstaple saying that in a way and by accident they managed to raise our profile quite highly – how do you get District, Parish and County Councillor involved in the work that SCfD do? Answer - do the work that they should be doing. BC told the story of the County Council's decision to place a unit Marland School on the Roundswell industrial estate and how DCC had not consulted the residents of the area in the proper manner. This brought SCfD do the attention of DCC again and in the future DCC would listen to SCfD's input, for example if we are against the closure of care homes if we put suggestions in how do we ensure that people get the care they are entitled to.

GN said that she thought this was an excellent point and branches should get involved in something that is happening in their community eg Honiton, and start fighting for the older generation.

Margaret Woolacott – Okehampton and South Dartmoor

MW explained that she is the Chairman of the Okehampton branch but also the Lead for shows and events. Okehampton are a very active group and she has a very supportive committee. They have had plenty of success and attend lots of fairs and functions. KC, ARC and MW have been lucky to open a memory cafe in Hatherleigh. She said for the future TH had tried to set up a branch in Ashburton which had not been entirely successful but this had not been written off and they were going to carry on to see if we can get more interest. MW will be going to their meetings and she will also be willing to go to any branch who wants help and support in arranging their shows and local events. MW will be contacting all chairs to attend the Devon County Show in 2011. It was a very last minute decision this year but now she has more time and does not want it to be wholly the Okehampton branch involved – everyone will have the opportunity to come and promote their own branch, and if it means that she has to go around the county and go to branch meetings she would be happy to do that. MW intends to put the Senior Council for Devon of the Map, she is available to help so members and branch just need to ask.

Ken Crawford – Ivybridge, Kingsbridge and Tavistock

The groups had nothing they wished to ask KC nor did they have feedback at the present time.

Derek Pedder - Axminster, Honiton and Seaton

DP was unable to attend the meeting so GN asked if the groups had anything they had to report back on.

TS asked what is the SCfD's relationship with other senior groups in Devon in which there are several. He said that the National Pensioners convention trying to form a group in Devon and several of them attended the recent lobby on pensions at parliament but he noted that not many SCfD members were there. TS asked "Are we saying this doesn't concern us, we don't take action on this or we don't take that type of action?". He continued by saying "that we have been described as a 'Posh Pensioners' group and he thought that is not fair. When loads of pensioners went on that march in London and with all the cuts in care services, libraries etc. – we are being subjected to this and the quality of life for seniors is being challenged. We are facing quite an attack on their standard of living. We have a direct line with Age Concern which is a top down national organisation and they are not interested in this area. We have active link with Devon Pensioners who we think as a sister or brother organisation. When we look at plan B look at this organisation – they have 1300 paying members. We have talked about disabled groups but where are we with other groups for seniors?". BB responded by saying that if he wanted to be an anarchist then he would join them, but he was sure the SCfD was set up so the views of the elderly were sent up to local and national government so that they were looked after by the country. BJ pointed out that the SCfD are an 'evidence based' organisation.

TT said that she thought that this was a really good example of how branches differ from one another. She knew that TS has very strong political views and he expresses them, but that they are different at Seaton. Their branch works with councils, both town and district and they work with the Police developing the Safer Streets Group who have just had specific successes - barrier to stop dangerous drivers which has made a huge difference to elderly people. A crossing has been installed on the way into the Co-op. Lots of work has been done - RT has achieved huge changes in hospital appointment arrangements so we are doing it very differently. We are not a political organisation and groups are very, very different. TT went on to say that MW has spoken about the work they do with shows and Seaton does the same when they can, but not along their scale and that can be a strength and we can tell you about things we have done, but this can be a weakness as we, like TS, are asking what the actual views of the SCfD, Board or centrally are – what is their policy on this or that and what is going to change. This is not something that she didn't think we will achieve. TS asked the Chairman does one exclude the other?

MW reported that she attended the Age Concern AGM and they had carried out extensive surveys and one of the results was that 36,700 had died from the cold related illnesses. This had upset her to think that this happened in 2010. The following day she went to another meeting and there they had a presentation about what might happen, according to the presenter's computer, in 2050. He thought that part of Exmouth sea front may disappear due to the rise of the sea level, also a shortage of water and because of global warming we would collapse from heat and everyone would be obese. MW said that she was all in favour of looking forward but the presenter said that by that time older people would be an 'unmanageable burden', yet the day before the older people were told they were making a good contribution to the economy. She said that the Government have something in place for heat but not cold. She spoke to the young man and asked if we could we plan a little closer than 2050 – what about the end of 2010 – 2011 just to make sure we don't lose 36,700 then go ahead and buy a fan for all!

KC told TS that he wished he had got his courage to stand up with placards but KC thought that TS should not say we are not doing a lot. KC said that his strength is putting papers and information to people in government, so the SCfD

have made extremely positive points to the government. We have hammered them on concessionary fares and every time KC meets an MP or someone from the Lords he tells them what happens in Devon with transport. He is telling them the £224m they spend on concessionary fares is miniscule in what we are saving the government by reducing the accident rate, we have saved government money for police, health etc. He told the meeting that they will all have the opportunity to go back to their district councils in the next few years regarding the change of council tax. It costs £76,000 per council to collect council tax and a better way would be to collect it through income tax and this we can push this with our elected representatives. KC continued by saying that there are different ways of campaigning and his was with facts and figures. He thought we should be campaigning the rights of the over 50s – everyone in their own individual way and he wouldn't want to restrict TS and he wouldn't want to be restricted but we must make sure that information is fed into the system.

GN thought that we should be talking to Devon pension forums and as TT said, every group is different, we are not a politically led organisation but we are an organisation of members and that is what we are about. However, if the whole membership wants to go political then we would have to look at this as a Board and she suggested that the members present go back to their branches and discuss it. GN said that personally she didn't want to become political as she thought we should do it in a different manner, perhaps like KC, as that way does a lot of work but if members want to change then it must be discussed. JS informed the meeting that if SCfD became political then we would lose our core funding. TS asked why he was being political. BJ said that at the outset the SCfD was to be evidence based and have policies. GN told TS that they were not criticising him or the Honiton branch and TS said it was not politics but policies. GN agreed by saying politics with a small p.

JD told the meeting that the Exeter branch did have two members who went up to the convention. She explained that the Exeter branch are like to say we are different as they have 350 members now that they have taken on Senior Voice. They also lost their administration officer and they have also changed the Executive rather a great deal and the Chairman of Exeter is now NS. To try and address the problem of the socially isolated JD had idea of holding a social event. She explained that when they have their meetings by the end members have gone so they are putting on a social event solely for the Executive to mix with the members to find out who is exactly out there and also find their skills. This event is on the 13th December with 350 members invitations being sent out and quite a few people who are socially isolated are coming along. The White Ensign Club has been very good in allowing members to use the back door instead of using the stairs. JD has spoken to a couple of people recently who said they can't remember the last time they went out as they can't walk.

RT said that he had a question for directors. When SCfD started up in the early days BB and himself stood inside Co-op doorway handing out leaflets for people to join the SCfD. They had this tirade from this man saying that SCfD should never have been set up. TT has since been invited by him to sit on a group and we have changed the perspective of the SCfD from that time to where we are influencing the local policy makers – local town councils etc. RT said that have a meeting with Town Councillors the following day regarding a financial issue and he thought that these are successes that are happening through the county and we should be happy. RT went on to say that locally Seaton are fairly active, most of the issues they could take on they can do without help, but some of them they need help with in either category B or C. Seaton have had two items in those categories for nearly 18 months and they have not had the help they needed. RT asked will, and how will it change in the future. GN responded by saying that this is one of things that she wanted to change as she thought it is happening in more than one area. This was the idea of giving each branch a nominated director and we are trying to achieve this. She recognised that some of the branches have nominated directors that were not present, but that the SCfD are short of members of the board and that they will be looking at the AGM to increase the membership of the board. The work is hard, stimulating and interesting but in the meantime she was happy to come Seaton as she didn't live far away and she will deal with your two items. RT thanked GN for her response but said that it was not just the visit but this issue needs to be taken to Board level. GN confirmed that it would.

BJ told the meeting that the Mature Times (issues had been circulated to the meeting) is a useful publication and that JJ spent a lot of time trying to get these copies distributed to libraries but that JD had now taken over that role. JD explained that she collect 100 of these every month from the St Thomas branch library at and that she tries to take them to each meeting she goes to. She thought it worth reading as there were some good inserts and asked members to let her know if they are not getting them. JD said that she had meant to have thanked the administrators for helping the Exeter branch out, especially AC. She went on to say that she also oversees Crediton and Dawlish, she is in touch with Dawlish and she has been to every Crediton branch as they are trying to relaunch. BJ said that the SCfD have had articles published in the Mature Times so now that is distributed across the county.

He thought that the publicity team now ensure we have groups of people that are prepared to respond to Radio Devon's talk in programme which gives plenty of opportunity to get the SCfD on air and their points across. JD said that GN was on Radio Devon a while ago. GN confirmed that she was and that one of the interesting things in the Mature Times was one of the questions put to the Radio panel. This was in respect to wardens being withdrawn from sheltered housing and the residents still having to pay for this service. GN explained about one gentleman who phoned in and since the programme she has been on the phone five times with him and she is trying to sort it out with CAB. Another caller was from Plymouth and her situation was that although she had been visited by carers at eight in the morning she didn't see anyone until six in the evening. This lady was very poorly and couldn't get out of bed so she was then left all night until eight in the morning again. There had been no redress so GN had spoken to Age UK and other organisations but they couldn't do anything about it. However another person on the Radio panel was from Age Concern Plymouth and she said she would go around and see this lady. GN said that this was a good example social isolation in blocks of flats. GN is in the process of talking to DCC about wardens and what we can do but she thought that it was too far gone but perhaps call systems and the answering service could be vastly improved.

MT suggested that we do need to eventually come up with catchphrases with what we can identify with what SCfD does. He said he could not think of anything we have achieved that has not involved engaging with politics and he went on to say that we do have to recognise we will have, sometime, two hammer blows – climate change and drastic reduction in fuel supplies. He asked that if members were blessed with a transition group in their town, join it and put the SCfD viewpoint on it. He felt is the future of not just ourselves but also our great, great grandchildren.

FH had a message for the Board and that was that the Teignmouth branch had benefited enormously from KC and ARC's input and that they are looking forward to working with GN. GH explained that their branch holds a monthly meeting with 25 – 30 people there. Rarely do they not have a councillor there and at this open meeting they try to find out the needs of the people who come to the meeting. Speakers have been from Trading standards and solicitors, making wills, the police and fire services. Teignmouth branch are responsible for two outlying villages and meetings have been held over there, one was regarding the Bishopteignton care home and Stuart Barker of DCC attended that one. FH said that the other village had problems with transport system so they invited the DCC councillor responsible for transport to attend. JC has told the branch that older people in Teignmouth are not connected up to internet. There is a set up in the local family centre whereby some young people have joined up with older people on a one-to-one basis so they can help. The Teignmouth branch also spend an awful lot of time responding to government circulars - town, local and county and Teignbridge District Council now ask us for advice when setting budget and strategic plans. When asked what Teignbridge really need people said they need Teignbridge to get on with strategic plan. FH also thought that the branch needed to get into participation groups like the one we heard about earlier on and to go forward with their branch leaflet.

SW reported that in the last twelve months the Tiverton branch had held a question time event together with Culm Valley. This event also included Unite and Age Concern with whom they had forged strong links and they managed to sign up some new members. The branch was hoping their membership would grown but were finding it difficult as people were not particularly interested in Tiverton. SW said that in the future they were hoping to hold a Dementia Day in July and also and Alternative Voting event. She said that the organisation could help by continuing to fund the group, give more secretarial and publicity assistance and just generally keep supporting the branch. SW thanked the Board for all that they do.

MT mentioned as a light hearted moment that he would just like to remind all that he thought that where pressure on the government is concerned, the good news is that the BBC have told us that ladies will live to 90 and men to 87.5.

TSth asked if somewhere in the future that the Board could look at the name 'Council'. GN said that she felt exactly the same way but the Board had looked at every name under the sun and The Senior Council for Devon was the most appropriate one. She understood that the word 'Council' did put people off but the SCfD was now extremely well known by that name. Axminster is called Axminster Senior Forum and GN said that it is acceptable for groups to change their own branch name with the approval of the Board.

JS said that he would like to thank Tiverton for the input they have given. They were very helpful in the way they said we hadn't got the strategic plan done. The plan has gone a long way forward since then and this really helped me. JS said that with regard to local funding more percentage wise will be spent on administration, so this really

means that the local branches will need to look at ways they can help fund themselves especially as there will not be as much to share out.

GN asked that all branches give the dates of their meetings to their Directors so that they can attend. She then gave her closing remarks. (See Appendix D)

Appendix A

Dear members,

I apologise for my absence today, but I got myself double-booked and consequently I leave Gillie to welcome you.

However, I wish to explain some of the events affecting the Board and indirectly, you, the members.

Due to resignations, I was originally co-opted onto the board and ultimately elected at the last AGM. Because I saw that the post of vice-chair had been vacant for some 8 months and felt that Bill should have a back-up, I raised the matter with him. At his invitation, 3 board members offered themselves. The directors voted me into that post although I had made it clear at the time that I didn't seek the position of chairman – I only wished to shadow Bill and support him as best I may.

His resignation on health grounds therefore thrust me into the hot seat. The postponements of the AGM, made with good reasons by the Board, left me feeling I could no longer hold the position of Chairman and I asked for someone to take over until the AGM. Two people approached me, Ken Crawford and Gillie Newcombe, offering to stand in. I kept my counsel and left the decision to the Board of directors. Their decision was unanimously for Gillie Newcombe and I should have been more than grateful for the way she has lifted the burden from my shoulders.

I am deeply grateful to Ken for his coming to me with his offer. I value the enormous contribution he has made to the SCfD from its origins. The way that he maintains a watch on the outpourings from the various government departments and other organisations leaves me breathless. He never fails to alert the administrator and the directors when matters arise that concern our members and those we strive to represent. That to me, is his forte.

Since Gillie, like Margaret Woolacott, is a co-opted member of recent invitation of the directors I felt I should offer to continue as her vice-chairman until the AGM. In this way I could ease her into the various boards and organisation where I have sat in Bill's place representing your interests as the SCfD.

Thank you for the support you have given me and that I hope you will give to my much younger successor. By the time of the AGM you will surely know her worth.

Yvonne Wardrop.

Appendix B

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the ISCA Centre and the Senior Council for Devon assembly meeting. Last week we were wondering whether it would be necessary to cancel. Thank goodness for some improvement in the weather. However it might have thrown up some problems that you are able to identify in today's pieces of work.

Today we are going to concentrate on the future, rather than racking up the past.

We have a new looking board and it is our intention to work somewhat differently than previously.

In order to do this we need each and every one of you because what we are able to achieve relies almost entirely on a shared commitment.

On your chairs you will have found a list of objectives which we will be using in our plans for the next twelve months.

In our discussions with the County Council and Devon Health Care Trust re funding, in our discussions with Officers and Councillors, when talking to other voluntary organisations where we have joint interests. (We already know that The County Council and Health Trusts are expecting us to do this), in our planning for shows events, and an annual conference. And most importantly in our involvement with you and your local groups.

We want to represent the real voice of older persons living in Devon and we can only do this with true communication from the groups to the board and by vice versa.

We are hoping this will be improved now each group has a nominated Director and that where you wish, you can attend board meetings.

Many of the objectives are inter-linked. In each of today's think tanks headed by a lead director you will be helping to identify ways and means that each objective can be met, who should be involved in order to reach the right result, and how we can identify that we have obtained that result.

We moved quite a long way when we met a few weeks ago but the board feels strongly that we can achieve far more. This set of objectives is not finite so please feel free to identify others that you feel would

1. Enhance the working of the SCfD
2. Improve the lives of older persons in Devon
3. Enhance the reputation of the Senior Council.

One word of warning, remember our income is almost definitely going to be cut.

Appendix C

Thank you so much for this morning's session. You have been a tremendous help. I can assure you that your hard work will be utilised to the full. This is only a beginning we will be calling on you and your groups frequently. We want everyone to feel involved and we want to be spending time working in a way that will give you support at your local level.

I know that each of the leads is going away with a lot of work to do; I am hoping that some of you will be willing to join the various working parties.

With regard to future catering – if you do not book you do not eat as we are paying out more than necessary sometimes.

Sally has copies of the new Carers Pathway if you want one. I expect you know they are being utilised across Devon and the country and we must thank KC for all of his hard work.

Appendix D

I have to tell you fellow members that I have been blown away by the amount of work and time your directors have spent undertaking their duties. It is a real commitment but I have also found it a mostly enjoyable one (so far).

Prior to the AGM on 4th March you will be able to see copies of the strategic plan, budgets and job descriptions, Chairman's and Treasurer's reports. These will be sent out to each group and can be obtained from the group secretary or Chair. If you require your own copies please contact us. We have made a conscious decision not to send all the paper work to all the members as some members have objected to all the paper work. We will circulate the agenda for the AGM and bullet points.

We are really short of Directors and therefore those who are still on the board have been put under undue pressure, illustrated clearly by Yvonne having to make the decision to retire. Because of our age group we will of course have more retirements than from a normal board also when you retire from work you do want some time for yourself.

I firmly believe that nobody should stay too long and we should all realise that we can get stale.

At the AGM we will be looking for new board members anyone interested is welcome to come along to a board meeting to see how we operate.

Thank you all for attending. Have a good journey home.

Happy Christmas and New Year and do not forget you may have a neighbour who will be on their own this Christmas.

Gillie Newcombe.