

ROPF Chairman's Annual Report

Introduction and Thanks

Firstly I want to thank the Management Committee (Bill, Linda, Val and Iain) and our Development Worker (Barbara) for all they have done during this challenging year. It's been a privilege to work with you over the year.

2020 has been quite a year. I and the other committee members were appointed and ratified at last year's AGM and a subsequent EGM. At that EGM we made some revisions and updates to our constitution. This made our banking arrangements more flexible and resulted in our changing bankers to the Yorkshire Bank

Meetings

We continued to hold members meetings at the Town Hall on the first Wednesday of each month. The Management Committee met each month on the Wednesdays before at AgeUK offices.

We also had two meetings of a Fundraising Sub-Committee to explore sources and bids for money to support our work. After meetings, several of you enjoyed going to Hope Church for a meal and get together which they called, "World-Changers".

When the Covid-19 lock-down began on 20th March, all our lives changed. We stopped having members' meetings, but did continue with weekly on-line management committee meetings for a couple of months but to better support you, we have been meeting weekly ever since.

Communication

The most important part of ROPF's work has always been to listen to your issues, give you a voice to organisations and authorities and get us involved in local and national campaign.

Early in the year we set up a Facebook group and we more involved with a Twitter feed. This has been useful for some members and for us to share issues with others who use those media. We have informative webpages which are a part of the AgeUK Rotherham site. We've used this to point you to other sources of support and information.

But we are aware that many of our members are not into computers, so when meetings became impossible, we used a variety of means of keeping in touch with you.

We started a fortnightly newsletter which we send by email and a significant number by Post Office mail. VAR also publish this in their regular news. A number keep in touch by telephone and some write letters to us. We have had permission to share some of your stories with other groups.

I've been writing a more personal letter to all members which goes out with our newsletter. I hope it encourages you. It also helps me to keep my sanity by writing it.

I also had the opportunity to be interviewed about your issues on BBC Radio Sheffield.

With the development of the Covid-19 Testing Centre on Forge Island, I was involved in making a promotional video to show you how to get tested and take you through what is involved.

Events

In January, we had a very successful Health and Care Workshop at Clifton Park Museum. This was facilitated by people from AgeUK who were going around the country with a sort of roadshow. Our members were commended for their informed engagement.

After that event, with lockdown, we couldn't go ahead with the things we have done in previous years. But we sent out messages reflecting these regular events and such things as VE Day celebrations etc.

Before the lock-down, I represented ROPF at two meetings of the RMBC Community Reference Group, an opportunity to be a voice of our age groups on issues of council services and policies. This resulted in us inviting key people to our ROPF meetings.

Since the lock-down, we have relied on feedback from RMBC hubs and other meetings via staff of AgeUK Rotherham, especially their Engagement Officer, Iain Cloke, who is on our Management Committee.

NPC and other Campaigns

ROPF is affiliated to the National Pensioners' Convention. ROPF have reported on and been involved in their campaigns over the year. I am on the National Council of NPC representing another organisation. This has proved valuable to keep us fully informed about key issues.

I and our treasurer, Bill, were planning to go to the NPC Annual Convention in Southport, but that cancelled along with the many other events.

We have also kept up with news and campaigns of other organisations such as Independent Age Silver Voices and The Centre for Ageing Better.

We now have good working relationships with RMBS, Clinical Commissioning Group and Healthwatch.

The Future

This pandemic has highlighted and put into focus many issues affecting our members which must lead to reforms and changed priorities if we are to cater for the needs of our increasingly ageing population. Locally, it is ROPF and my personal mission to promote an "Age-Friendly Rotherham"

This will involve ROPF and others keeping issues of the elderly on the agendas of all who are planning for Rotherham's future.