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# *The Link*

The Newsletter of the London Older People's Strategies Group

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## **Participants meeting, 18 March 2002.**

Our March meeting on the theme of transport was well attended and very successful. Henry Abrahams, Head of Transport at the GLA gave a clear and informative talk and answered the many questions from members clearly and sympathetically. Contributions from the floor were of a high order and were an encouraging indication of the commitment of London's older people's groups to the consultation and lobbying facilitated by LOPSG.

Graeme Matthews, Secretary

## **Mayor's Advisory Cabinet, 5 March 2002**

The final outcome of the discussions on this year's budget between the Mayor and the Assembly was an overall increase of £13.8 million. This was considerably less than the original figure but was enough to enable the Mayor to implement his plans to employ 1,200 more police and continue with his improvements in bus services as well as other schemes to improve the quality of life in London. This was the first year of negotiating the budget and it was felt that the process would go more smoothly in the future. There was a report back on the successful St Patrick's Day Festival, which is a sponsored festival for all Londoners. A new four year Street Environment Improvement Programme to make London a cleaner city was outlined and discussed.

There was no meeting in April. The next meeting will be 13 June at 10 am at the GLA, Romney House, Marsham Street, SW1P. Visitors are welcome to attend.

Graeme Matthews, Secretary.

## **Events**

### **Next meeting**

The next participants meeting will be held on:

### **Wednesday 5 June**

Refreshments from 1.30 pm

Meeting from 2-4 pm

At the GLA, Romney House, Marsham Street, London SW1P 3PY

The meeting will discuss the future structure of the group and there will be a presentation from the GLA on a subject to be confirmed.

## **The Assembly explained**

The Mayor and the Greater London Assembly formally took up office on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2000. Along with the Mayor, there are 25 elected Assembly Members, all elected by voters in London.

Within the Authority there is a clear separation of powers between the Mayor – who has an executive role, making decisions on behalf of the GLA – and the Assembly, which has a scrutiny role and is responsible for appointing GLA staff.

The Assembly:

- Provides a check and balance on the Mayor
- Has powers to amend the Mayor's Budget (subject to a two-thirds majority decision)
- Appoints the GLA's staff
- Investigates issues of Londonwide significance
- Scrutinises the Mayor's performance and makes proposals to the Mayor

The Assembly also reviews and comments on the Mayor's draft strategies in meetings that are open to the public.

The Functional Bodies of the GLA provide services and work through:

- Transport for London is responsible for most transport in London.
- The London Development Agency is responsible for promoting economic development and regeneration, including tourism.

- The Metropolitan Police Authority oversees policing in London.
- The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority oversees the London Fire Service and Emergency Planning in London.

I hold a number of positions at the GLA, including:

- Chair of the GLA Appointments Committee
- Vice Chair of the GLA Budget Committee
- Vice Chair of the London Development Agency
- Chair of the Labour Group

I have also recently been appointed as Chair of the London Health Commission.

The Assembly is new, and over time I hope it will establish itself as a forum that holds the Mayor to account, but constructively, and uses its scrutiny powers to influence in a positive way.

Len Duvall OBE  
Greater London Authority Member,  
Greenwich & Lewisham  
May 2002

The Mayor and Assembly are elected for 4-year terms and the next elections will be in May 2004. See the insert for Assembly members' names, parties and constituencies. All Assembly meetings are open to the public and details can be found on the GLA website, [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) or by ringing the Public Liaison Unit on 020 7983 4100.

## **Is the Mayor listening?**

A national newspaper implied that the Mayor was not taking the views of Londoners into account in his measures and plans for the Capital. This is an unfounded criticism.

Our London Older People's Strategies Group, has the Mayor's full support, and has the channels to ensure older citizens views are put before all the relevant personnel and departments. Moreover, our secretary, Graeme Matthews is on the Mayor's Advisory Cabinet.

Over the last eighteen months we have built up a strong and representative Group, with Older People's Committees on Transport, Development and Culture all lively and active. On behalf of our Co-ordinating Committee I invite all readers of *Link* to get involved too. There's always room for more on these committees and others now being set up.

Joe Harris, Chair LOPSG

## **Updates from the sub-committees**

### **Transport – Peter Rayner**

The Transport Committee is now well established with 12-14 members at each meeting. We have a good balance of organisations represented and are dealing with some strategic issues. We also send our detailed complaints and observations to TfL - and subject to getting the help we are asking for - all is well. The committee are reviewing the Dial-a-Ride report and getting to understand better the detail of the

Freedom Pass and its funding. The committee are studying the MORI report on responses to the draft transport strategy consultation sent out by the mayor's office. Anyone wishing to raise an issue can do so by writing to Peter Rayner c/o Matt Dykes at the GLA.

### **Culture - Joan Matthews**

The Culture sub-committee now has eight members. It has met regularly and has resubmitted its proposals to the Mayor's Cultural Strategy Group for London and to the GLA Cultural Strategy staff. It has recently met with Rosie Greenlees, Senior Cultural Strategy Officer, where there was a discussion about resources for projects and events and the relationship of the GLA with the boroughs. A meeting is to be held shortly with Jude Woodward, Cultural Events Manager. An interesting proposition is likely.

### **Theatre tickets – thanks from Southwark Pensioners Centre**

In a joint initiative between the Mayor and the Society of London Theatres (SOLT) a number of free theatre tickets were distributed to older people's organisations in London earlier this year.

The Southwark Pensioners Centre was delighted to be offered 20 tickets to 'Stones In His Pockets' under the GLA scheme. With only a few days, we were worried if we could make full use, but they were 'snapped up'! As well as being an excellent (award-winning) play, it was a special and rare delight for people to attend a first-rate West End Production and Theatre, which is usually quite impossible for

people on a pension. Please convey our thanks to all concerned and we would be delighted to publicise any future opportunity of this kind.

## **Spatial Development – Bert Newbrook**

The consultation document, The London Plan is due to be published in May. The sub-committee will be preparing a response once it is published.

## **Equalities – Teresa Lefort**

Teresa will be meeting with the GLA Equalities Group shortly to discuss the role of older people in the GLA's Equalities work.

**The sub-committee desperately needs more members.** If you are interested in joining, please contact Susie Rabin on 020 7346 5962 or email [srabin@aclondon.org.uk](mailto:srabin@aclondon.org.uk)

## **Freedom Pass Uptake**

Take up of the Freedom Pass varies greatly across the London boroughs, from only 70% in Westminster to 88% in Ealing, (looking at the number of Freedom Passes issued to pensioners in the period February to September 2000, from Transport for London).

While some pensioners in the capital may have chosen not to apply for their Freedom passes, there is evidence that for some individuals and groups there are barriers that discourage application for, and use of, travel concessions. These barriers include:

- problems associated with applying, such as not being able to understand the process and

- perceptions about public transport in the capital, including fear for personal safety.

A table of borough take up rates, produced by Help the Aged, is available from Susie Rabin at Age Concern London.

### **Published by the London Older People's Strategies Group.**

Edited by Susie Rabin and Les Evans.

**The Link welcomes any news, ideas and contributions, which should be sent to:**

Susie Rabin, Age Concern London, 54 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY. Email: [srabin@aclondon.org.uk](mailto:srabin@aclondon.org.uk)

### **Co-ordinating committee:**

Secretary: Graeme Matthews - ARP 050, Chair: Joe Harris - GLPA, Teresa Lefort - GLF, Irma Critchlow – GLF Black & Ethnic Minority Elders, Les Evans - NPC London & SE Region, Peter Rayner - British Transport Pensioners, Susie Rabin - Age Concern London, Mervyn Kohler - Help the Aged, Zelda Curtis – AGLOW, Joan Matthews – ARP 050, Mark Windisch – Morley College, Bert Newbrook – GLF.

**The LOPSG is grateful to Matt Dykes of the GLA for his continued help and assistance to the group**

### **Thank you**

LOPSG would like to express its appreciation to all the groups and individuals who have given their support. Special thanks go to the London Area of the National Federation of Post Office and BT Pensioners for their financial support in the group's first year and to Help the Aged for their small grant to support Graeme Matthews in his work as member of the Mayor's Advisory Cabinet.