

European Union Twin Town Over 50s Project

Older people from Enfield's twin towns in France, Germany and Greece agree that in dealing with health and other issues affecting the quality of life of our ageing populations there is a lot we can learn from best practices in each other's countries. This was one of the outcomes of the two year project which was lead and initiated in 2010 by the Enfield Over 50s Forum.

The project, funded by the European Commission, involved older people's groups from the twinned towns of Courbevoie, Gladbeck, Halandri and Enfield. Each group produced a profile describing the demographics of their respective communities and the care and support services older people received. Three conferences were organised to discuss the findings from the study. The first in **Courbevoie in 2010**, the second in **Strasbourg in 2011** – which included meetings with key Members of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Ageing and a visit to the EU Parliament.



In Strasbourg with MEPs Kinga Gonz (Hungary) & Claude Moraes (UK)

Enfield, **Christiana During**, at which **Cllr Doug Taylor**, Leader of the Council, gave a welcoming address attended by large number of cabinet members and directors of services, indicating the importance of this conference.

The chief purpose of the conference was to further recommendations which delegates had raised with MEPs in Strasbourg in October 2011 and to use the European Union Year of Active Ageing to maintain the momentum. Issues of importance are the prevention of ill health, treatment of stroke including aftercare and concerns surrounding dementia, its early diagnosis and treatment, and the desire to involve people in decisions relating to their care.

Further sessions were led by **Dr Shahed Ahmed**, Enfield's director of public health, **Moira Fraser** from the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, **Simone Olds** from the Stroke Association and **Dr Julia Botsford** from Dementia UK. Of course simultaneous translation was essential, much of which was undertaken by the UK members – who says that our language skills are poor!

In the final section of the conference, which was attended by representatives from the Over 50s Forum, **Jean Lambert MEP** was welcomed, together with **Ray James**, Enfield's director of adult social care. Jean assured delegates that she would promote our concepts and would push forward with developments in the European Union to enhance the situation for senior citizens particularly in the field of development of services for those suffering from dementia.



Forum's steering group at the Strasbourg European Parliament

Ray James was impressed by what he had heard and will take the views of conference members into account when developing his programmes. The conference was hard work but there was some fun involved as one aspect of twinning arrangements is the promotion of understanding between European partners. Our German colleagues were treated to a delightful tour of Capel Manor gardens and both the French and German delegations had an opportunity to visit parts of Enfield.

On the final day of the conference both delegations were able to visit healthcare facilities for older citi-

zens in Enfield. The conference was a tremendous success and we are proud to have forged a good relationship with our friends from France and Germany and hope that we have made some progress in promoting developments for older citizens in Europe.

At a post conference meeting the groups were in unanimous agreement that they should seek to extend the project and to focus on best practice in leading healthy lifestyles and the prevention of ill health. Further it was agreed that either Gladbeck or Courbevoie should take the lead in seeking support for the project from the EU.

Finally thanks must go to the two exceptional officers from Enfield Council **Eleanor Hunter** and **Felicity Margaret Cox**, whose organisational skills are second to none and whose enthusiasm and charm have supported the project from the outset. For fuller details about the project see the website www.eur50plus.org

Christine Whetstone



Jean Lambert Green Party MEP at the Dugdale Centre



Final session at the Dugdale Centre