

Age-Friendly Whalley Range & Chorlton Annual General Meeting 4th March 2022

Chairs Report

It is more than 2 years since the AFWR&C group met at an AGM. So this report covers 2020, 2021 and part of 2022. Everyone here knows that those years were the pandemic years when, for a large part of time, older people and clinically vulnerable people were restricted or advised to stay at home.

However, the AFWR&C Steering group after a steep learning curve, started and continued to meet throughout the pandemic via Zoom. We shared information, fed back issues of concern from older residents and organised events.

We had started 2020 full of enthusiasm because of the award of OPeNS funds which were awarded on a neighbourhood basis for the Whalley Range, Chorlton and Fallowfield wards. All of the funded projects were due to start after 1st April 2020 and all of the projects had to be adapted to fulfil their objectives. Groups included in the OPeNS projects were Alexandra Park Heritage Group, Asian Older Men's Group, Health Pride on the Range Group, Food & Nutrition Group and Young at Heart IT classes in Whalley Range and Chorlton Good Neighbours and St Clements Church in Chorlton.

Sometimes the groups joined forces to, for example, deliver Alexandra Park Calendars and Christmas cards to a large number of older people throughout Whalley Range and Chorlton at Christmas 2020. Using funds from the Food and Nutrition Group, the Real Food Community Whalley Range ran a diabetes support programme which proved so successful that they have now been funded by the NHS to run further courses.

Our Forum/Age Friendly worker used different funds to provide essential welfare and wellbeing packs to the regular attendees of the Festive feasts - and to keep in touch with all the usual group attendees and isolated older people, via telephone calls and socially distanced visits. Packs were again provided in 2021.

Meetings on Zoom were good but, in 2020, the Steering Group decided that we should celebrate International Day of Older People on 1st

October by taking a socially distanced walk round a route in Whalley Range that included most of our Age Friendly Benches. The walk was enlivened by the wearing of signs indicating that older people are: **‘Knowledgeable and Wise’ ‘Valued not Vulnerable’ ‘Feisty not Feeble’**. It was a lovely emotional occasion for all of us to see each other after many months meeting on screen. On the same day, Chorlton Good Neighbours organised some safe visits to coffee shops and their own signs such as **‘Helpful not Helpless’**.

On 1st October 2021 using a grant from Ambition for Ageing, events were organised by Age-friendly Whalley Range, the Forum and partner organisations – and were aimed at older members of the community to mark the day, to welcome people back to our community centres – and to make a stand against climate change as older people.

We made some placards with slogans about issues that concern us, met at JNR8 at 10:30 am for a short walk round the age-friendly benches route – displaying actions we can take to address climate change and to show older people’s concerns as we approached the UN Climate Change conference in November. This was followed by an age-friendly community event at JNR8 with information stalls from partner organisations, taster sessions of the exercise and activities we run at JNR8 for older residents, refreshments and some entertainment.

There is not space to include everything that has happened – classes resuming, Celebrate walks, etc. but in all of the work that we have done over the last 2 years we have been supported by the Buzz workers Yasmin and Aron but most of all by our Whalley Range Community Forum/Age Friendly worker, Chris. Thanks are also due to funders from OPeNS, Manchester City Council, Neighbourhood Investment Funds and Ambition for Ageing.

Here’s to the future!

Mary Watson