

# SCOTTISH SENIORS



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 53 October 2019

## SPF Challenge Decision on Free TV Licence for Over 75's

In direct response to the BBC's consultation decision to means test the free TV licence for the over 75's from 2020, the Scottish Pensioners Forum joined other demonstrations taking place across the UK on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019 to protest against the decision.

Over 60 protestors from across Scotland joined the SPF at the BBC's headquarters in Glasgow to voice their concern on the impact the loss of the concession could have on many older people across Scotland.



SPF Chair Maureen Gardner argued "We are angry and disappointed by the decision to means test the free TV licence for over 75's which means that at least 40,000 older people across Scotland, many already living below the poverty level, will lose out."

Speaking on BBC Radio Scotland's Good Morning Scotland programme Maureen challenged "How can the Westminster Government say they are making loneliness and isolation a priority for older people yet hand the responsibility to change social policy to the BBC whose decision will now have a detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing."

The decision means that older people aged 75 or over across Scotland and the UK will only receive a free TV licence if they are in receipt of pension credit however many people do not apply for the

benefit because of the complicated application process. In addition to this, changes to the benefits system in 2019 could mean that those formerly in receipt of pension credit and therefore entitled to a free TV licence could also lose out.

The SPF argued "Many older people don't apply for pension credit as the process is lengthy, confusing and time consuming and they have their pride."

"This decision has not only stripped many older people of their free TV licence but of their dignity too."

Age UK's "Switched Off" petition, which initially set out to gather 50,000 signatures and which the SPF endorsed, reached a staggering 634,334 signatures and was handed into Downing Street in August but as yet has received no formal response from the Prime Minister.



*"This decision has not only stripped many older people of their free TV licence but of their dignity too."*

Maureen Gardner, SPF Chair

# SPF Annual Conference, Dundee 2019

Maureen Gardner, SPF

Chairperson welcomed the 128 delegates to the Conference and introduced Provost Ian Borthwick to deliver the formal civic welcome which would open conference proceedings. In his address Provost Borthwick warmly welcomed delegates to Dundee and called on delegates to continue working together to ensure that older people were heard within their communities and would be better provided for in their later years.

Following the Civic Welcome, the Conference was addressed by Minister for Older People and

Equalities, Christina McKelvie MSP. In her delivery to conference, Ms McKelvie spoke on the SPF's work on helping to create the Scottish Government's Older People's Strategic Action Forum, which Ms McKelvie now chairs, giving older people a direct voice to government and in helping to shape policy.



Ms McKelvie then went on to discuss the recently launched "A Fairer Scotland for Older People", the Scottish Government's new framework for older people which the SPF contributed to. Ms McKelvie



then took some questions from the floor and indicated that she was looking forward to continuing to work with the SPF on older people's issues in the future.

Under formal conference business, delegates adopted the SPF Annual Report of work, the Financial Report, and the

Auditor's Report and elected Watson & Co Chartered Accountants as auditors for the period 2019/2020. The new Executive and Standing Orders Committee members for 2019/2020 were also elected.

Several motions to conference were then submitted for consideration by delegates and these were in relation to changes to the SPF Constitution and included slight name changes to organisations, a reserved seat to be made available for an LGBT organisation, provision for not only Scottish churches but also faith groups, and the removal of a reserved seat. **All of the motions put to conference were carried.**

The next speaker was John McAllion, Dundee Pensioners' Forum, who spoke on the issues facing older people in Dundee and the campaign on the removal of historic shower charges on rental properties in Dundee (highlighted later in this edition).



The first speaker of the afternoon session was Ian Tasker, Scottish Hazards, who spoke on the survey on workplace bullying he carried out alongside the SPF. Ian was followed by Lyn Marie O'Hara, UNISON member and campaigner on the Glasgow Women's Strike on Equal Pay, who spoke to delegates on the decade long struggle for equal pay by the caring and support staff of Glasgow City Council.

The final speaker of the day was Mick Rice, Convenor of the Unite Union Song Club, who gave delegates a bit of history on the club before leading them in a singalong of union songs which added a sense of camaraderie and nostalgia to proceedings.



As in previous years, the conference ended with an open debate on the year ahead before finally being brought to a close by Chair Maureen Gardner

# CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992



## Dundee Pensioners' Forum SHOWER CHARGES CAMPAIGN

At a Dundee Pensioners' Forum Public Meeting held in November 2018, the issue of Shower Charges levied by Dundee City Council was raised. *These charges are £5 a week for an over-bath shower, and £10 a week for a walk-in shower (on top of rent).*

The programme was introduced in 2007 – and some tenants have been paying this weekly charge since then (12 years) - totalling thousands of pounds.

Dundee Pensioners' Forum was sufficiently outraged at these charges to lead a deputation at the Council's meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee in January 2019 – calling for the charges to be removed immediately – on the basis that tenants had already paid over and over again for the cost of the shower installation.

### SHOWER CHARGES

#### Enough is Enough!

£5 every week for 5 years = £1,300

£10 every week for 5 years = £2,600

£5 every week for 10 years = £2,600

£10 every week for 10 years = £5,200

**£10 every week for 12 years**

**= £6,240**



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There was cross party support for our stance in the Chamber – but since the charges generate income of £570k annually to the Housing Revenue Account—no solution was offered or agreement on how these charges could be removed without a corresponding increase in rent.

Interest grew across the City – and the local Evening Telegraph ran a campaign in support of removal of these charges with

Dundee Pensioners' Forum featuring prominently—and also in interviews on BBC Radio Scotland and STV News. The Forum also demonstrated and lobbied at every opportunity.



DPF meet with Council Officers

Meetings were held between DPF and the council's Director of Neighbourhood Services and her senior management team.

No progress was made – the stumbling block was always the black hole that would be left in the budget if the charges were removed.

DPF then took the campaign directly to the decision makers – the elected Councillors.

Separate meetings were held with the four political groupings that form Dundee City Council, including with the SNP Council Leader, John Alexander.

**Every councillor pledged support for DPF's campaign – and the Council Leader was persuaded that he should ask his Director of Finance to look again at the budget to see where adjustments could be made to remove these charges from April 2020.**

The Scottish Pensioners Forum are always keen to hear about what our members are getting up to, so don't be shy, please get in touch.

The more we know, the more we can help publicise your event and help get you the recognition (and audience) you deserve for your hard work and effort. So whether it's an event in your local area or you are planning a campaign on a much larger scale we'd like to hear about what you're doing on behalf of older people.

If there is something you would like us to include in our next newsletter, for example a certain forthcoming event, please get in touch with us to have your say.



**CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992**

# SPF ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2020

The SPF Executive Committee are pleased to announce that the 29th Annual Conference of the Scottish Pensioners Forum will take place on **Tuesday 2nd June 2020 at the City Chambers, Glasgow.**

The event is open to all SPF members and affiliated organisations and formal paperwork will be circulated in due course

We hope that you can come along and celebrate another successful year for the SPF.



## OUT AND ABOUT



Since our last newsletter the SPF have been in attendance at several events including the Festival of Ageing at Glasgow Caledonian University, the STUC LGBT conference where we delivered a workshop on LGBT and dementia with our colleagues from Outside the Box, delivered a presentation on our workplace bullying survey during Mental Health Week at several events, attended the Contact the Elderly: A Connected Forth Valley conference, had our information stall at the Action on Elder Abuse conference in Glasgow and spoke at the GMB Retired Members Congress. As well as this we also had our yearly demonstration at the Scottish Parliament to celebrate UN International Day of Older Persons which we shall report on in our next issue.

Remember if you have any forthcoming events you would like us to attend with our information stall, please get in touch. We would be more than happy to come along.



### Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

[www.scottishpensioners.org.uk](http://www.scottishpensioners.org.uk)

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