



**Older People's Assembly
23 September 2025 - 2:00pm to 3:30pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre
Minutes**

	<p>Registration, refreshments, information stalls.</p> <p>Attendees arrived from 1:30 pm, where they were welcomed by the customer engagement team. Refreshments were served and various information stalls were available to participants. The team emphasised their role in facilitating these events and expressed gratitude for the continued participation. Those present were informed there were no planned fire alarms, but instructions were given in case of an emergency.</p> <p>The location of toilets was specified, and a request was made for mobile phones to be set on silent to avoid interruptions. Speakers used microphones to ensure audibility, with guidance provided for audience members who required clarification. It was announced that copies of the presentation slides would be made available for anyone interested, as some content projected was noted to be in small print and, therefore, potentially challenging to read</p>
	<p>Cllr Jane Palmer, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care – opening remarks</p> <p>The Assembly commenced with Councillor Palmer representing the Leader, who had sent apologies for his absence. Councillor Palmer warmly welcomed all participants, expressing appreciation for their role in the borough and reiterating the significance of the Older Peoples Assembly for shaping local policy and service delivery. Participants were encouraged to offer their time to the steering group and were assured that their contributions were of substantial value. Councillor Palmer highlighted the calibre of speakers for the afternoon and welcomed residents to raise questions about Council matters during or after the session.</p>
	<p>Welcome, housekeeping and introductions</p> <p>The formal welcome was given by the event organisers, reiterating the earlier safety and housekeeping instructions. Details for reporting issues to the Council and retrieving contact information were reviewed. Attendees were reminded to seek assistance if they did not receive the latest edition of the school magazine, which features key telephone numbers and practical information. The team also encouraged use of the Council's website for</p>

	<p>reporting concerns. The session transitioned smoothly to the introduction of the first speaker.</p>
	<p>Introduction to Steering Group Members & reminder to join</p> <p>It was conveyed that the steering group had not met recently due to other commitments, but expressions of interest for new members were warmly invited. A summary explained that the group's remit included reviewing the effectiveness of assemblies and suggesting future agenda items. Recognition was given to existing members in attendance. The organisers affirmed that joining the steering group was an opportunity to influence assemblies and future Council initiatives. Contact information for reporting Council issues was reiterated and more details were available in the Hillingdon's Peoples magazine.</p>
	<p>Presentation 1: Accessibility to Literature – Robert Sisk, Events & Promotion Officer, Uxbridge Library</p> <p>Robert Sisk's presentation focused on promoting access to literature, especially for residents unable to visit libraries. He described services such as the Home Library Service, which delivers books and audiobooks to people with disabilities or mobility limitations. This free service allows patrons to request preferred genres, and feedback is used to tailor future selections.</p> <p>The mobile library schedule was discussed; this service brings books to geographically remote borough locations, care homes, and schools. Patrons can reserve books online for delivery via the mobile library. Special programmes such as reading groups were highlighted, including spoken word sessions for those with visual impairments or print disabilities, utilising USB sticks which can be returned by post. Annual events such as Sight Awareness Fortnight were referenced, designed to increase community awareness of visual impairment resources, with national and local organisation participation.</p> <p>Robert detailed digital services such as BorrowBox, offering thousands of eBooks and eAudiobooks with flexible loan periods and renewal options through an intuitive app interface. He compared BorrowBox with the 'U Library,' noting that multiple platforms are necessary to provide a comprehensive range of authors, akin to streaming platforms offering exclusive content.</p> <p>The PressReader app was outlined as a resource offering free access to 700 UK newspapers, magazines, and 7000 international titles via library membership. Robert also introduced Transparent Language, an application for learning over 110 languages, suitable for adults and children alike. The library's own app enables patrons to check out books directly and monitor accounts. Membership is free with two forms of identification, and cross-borough joining is permitted.</p>

Questions regarding digital access and licensing of eBooks were addressed by explaining the credit systems used by providers. Attendees were informed they could receive documentation about all these services after the Assembly

**Presentation 2: Brunel Older People Reference Group –
Dr Elmar Kal Senior lecturer in Physiotherapy, Dr Christina Brunel
University of London**

Dr Elmar Kal, with Professor Christina Victor, presented a thorough overview of the Brunel Older People Reference Group (known as Borg), a participatory initiative embedded at Brunel University London. Borg was established sixteen years ago, originally led by Dr Elena and Professor Marie Julie, with the guidance of local older adults.

The group has thrived on the ethos of community involvement, focusing on collaborative improvement of academic research and curriculum on ageing. While Dr Kal now serves as the academic facilitator, he emphasised that the group's unique value lies in its members, who are local older people shaping activities and direction.

Borg's core mission is to integrate the real-world perspectives of older adults into the university's research and educational programmes, thereby increasing both relevance and impact. Dr Kal noted that Borg supports research projects addressing critical issues such as loneliness, balance and falls, Parkinson's, and other long-term health conditions commonly faced in old age. In addition to academic research, Borg also produces significant social capital for the community.

The group regularly organises seminars, social events, and outreach activities, including annual barbecues, coffee mornings, and the spring research festival. These gatherings provide members with opportunities to build friendships and partake in enjoyable, meaningful activities, ensuring that participation is fulfilling beyond the academic realm.

Dr Kal highlighted Borg's key role in informing university curricula, especially in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and nursing. Members contribute not solely as research subjects, but as co-educators, sharing both professional expertise and personal lived experience. This contribution ensures that students receive hands-on, real-world perspectives, improving the quality and relevance of educational content.

Efforts have been actively made to diversify the membership profile. The group now has over 300 members, with an average age of seventy-six and a predominance of women. Dr Kal mapped the geographic and demographic spread of members and candidly spoke of the ongoing challenge to recruit more men and individuals from ethnically and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds. Targeted recruitment is underway to broaden representation and make the group more reflective of the wider local population.

Members' feedback has repeatedly affirmed that involvement in Borg is both stimulating and meaningful. Several participants described the experience as giving them a sense of purpose, as well as "a buzz," especially when their insights are applied in shaping student projects and service developments. A notable example shared during the presentation was a design student's successful prototype modification of a wheelchair, created in partnership with Borg members to solve a genuine mobility challenge. This, among other initiatives, highlights Borg's interdisciplinary engagement, reaching beyond health into technology, design, and community services.

Regular seminars and events showcase campus facilities and new research equipment, and members are invited to contribute their opinions about inclusivity and accessibility. Dr Kal reassured attendees regarding access to university events, confirming that arrangements for ramped and ground-floor access and free parking for events can be made, and provided contact details for those interested in joining.

The group's inclusive ethos means there is no minimum expectation for participation; members can be as active as they wish and are welcome simply to passively receive information if preferred.

Borg's work has also positively influenced research funding, student training, and the broader culture of the university. Continued involvement with the local Council and outreach at age-friendly festivals reinforce the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

Dr Kal concluded by expressing gratitude for members' generosity in sharing time and expertise. He invited those present to join Borg or to attend future campus events, noting both the educational and social benefits. The university's ongoing commitment to supporting Borg was recognised, and the presentation ended with an open invitation for all to be involved, in whatever capacity suited their circumstances.

Presentation 3: Active Ageing: Staying Fit and Healthy in Hillingdon – Angie Brydges, Community Sports Manager, GLL

Angie Brydges shared insights into community sport and leisure engagement. GLL operates as a charitable social enterprise, reinvesting profits to improve local leisure facilities and extend inclusive activities. Centres in Uxbridge, Botwell, High Grove, and Queens mead were mentioned, each providing accessible environments via solar panels, air-source heat pumps, and equipment catering to mobility-impaired users.

Angie emphasised GLL's focus on tackling health inequalities and supporting rehabilitation through the Healthwise scheme, which allows GP referral for membership. Options such as pay-as-you-go and special memberships for older people, carers, or those in receipt of benefits were described.

Free swimming is available for those aged 67 and over, and facilities include accessible pool entry, lifts, and specialist exercise classes like aqua aerobics, Pilates, and yoga. Regular seniors' groups encourage social connection and give participants a sense of purpose and wellbeing, with sessions designed to nurture friendships and promote healthy ageing.

Angie noted improvements at centres, such as gym refurbishments and enhanced changing facilities, and invited attendees to discuss eligibility and offers in person after the session.

In addition to structured classes like aqua aerobics, Pilates, and yoga, GLL prioritises the social aspect of physical activity. Regular senior group activities are scheduled to foster community bonding, encourage friendships, and enable older residents to maintain independence and wellbeing. Membership options include pay-as-you-go and special rates for carers and benefit recipients, with improvements to gym equipment and changing rooms supporting continued enhancement of user experience.

GLL also places strong emphasis on inclusive programming, particularly in response to community feedback and evolving local needs. Angie described events and workshops targeted at older adults to help build confidence in physical activity and overcome barriers such as social isolation, low mobility, or lack of previous fitness experience. She highlighted recent collaborations with healthcare professionals to ensure classes are adapted for people with chronic conditions, enabling more participants to join regardless of ability level. This approach not only improves physical health but also supports mental wellbeing, giving participants a renewed sense of purpose and belonging within the wider community.

Further, GLL staff actively engage with members to gather feedback, adjusting activity timetables and amenities according to residents' preferences and suggestions. Angie explained that the leisure centres are committed to continuous improvement, ensuring every older adult feels welcome and supported, whether attending alone or with friends and family. She encouraged participants to approach staff with requests or requirements after the session, assuring a personalised response to every enquiry and a strong commitment to removing practical barriers to active ageing in Hillingdon.

Hillingdon and Botwell leisure centres we have 2 x senior sessions that are multi-sport mornings, including short mat bowls, badminton, table tennis, strength class (Botwell) and stretch class (Hillingdon) and darts! These sessions are about keeping active and developing and maintaining social connections - there is always tea and coffee and time for a chat included.

These may be of interest to some of the council's older tenants (60 years plus).

- Cost per session (pay as you go) is £5.00
- Hillingdon leisure Centre is based at the end of Gatting Way, UB8 1ES in Uxbridge
- Monday and Friday 9.45am to 11.45

- Botwell leisure centre is on East Avenue, UB3 2HW in Hayes
- Tuesday and Thursday 9.30am to 12.00

If you think that coming to a housing meeting to do a presentation on rehab the leisure centres can offer would be beneficial then let me know.

Presentation 4: Community Equipment Service Update – Gary Collier, Health & Adult Social Care Integration Manager, Hillingdon Council

Gary Collier provided a comprehensive update on the Community Equipment Service, which supplies, installs, repairs, and maintains a broad range of assistive living equipment, from walking aids to powered beds. He explained the recent provider change from NRS Healthcare to MediaQuip and reassured attendees that service continuity is guaranteed; those with existing equipment will not be affected.

The service operates jointly between health and social care and supported approximately 12,000 clients last year at a cost of £2.6 million. The scope excludes wheelchairs, which are managed by a separate contract via the NW London Integrated Care Board, with distinct contact procedures.

Gary highlighted assessment pathways: anyone with a demonstrated need may request equipment, regardless of age or benefit status, subject to a professional assessment by a therapist or health professional. The Council's Resident Hub or online self-assessment portal was recommended for initial applications.

A charity, 'Living Made Easy,' offers impartial advice on suitable equipment. The importance of recycling and safe disposal of outdated or surplus equipment was emphasised. Questions on eligibility and cost were answered, confirming assessments and provision are free, following a validated need

Presentation 5: Vaccinations – Sarah Durner – Senior Public Health Officer, Hillingdon Council

Sarah Durner reported on national vaccination programmes for older adults, including flu, COVID-19, shingles, and RSV. For flu, vaccinations began on 1 September for children and pregnant women, but those 65+ could access them from 1 October, though practical commencement was delayed until 3 October. COVID-19 boosters this year are targeted for people aged 75+, immunocompromised individuals, carers, and certain workers, effective immediately.

Sarah demonstrated NHS resources, including pharmacy maps for walk-in flu vaccinations and promoted direct bookings via NHS link, app, or by calling 119 (with a text-phone option 18001 for the hearing impaired). Details about the dual-dose requirement for shingles vaccinations for newly eligible adults were clarified. Queries regarding eligibility by age and medical status were

explicitly addressed, with advice to consult GPs on special vaccination needs. Sarah reiterated the event schedule for health fairs and relevant activities during the month-long age-friendly festival, with specific events and vaccination opportunities at key borough venues.

Questions and Answers

Q1: A participant asked if being 74 years old would qualify them for the upcoming COVID-19 booster.

Answer: Sarah explained that eligibility is set for individuals aged 75 and older by 31 January, so those aged 74 do not qualify this year.

Q2: An attendee expressed public thanks to Sarah for providing swift support in resolving a personal issue.

Answer: Sarah acknowledged the thanks and noted her commitment to assist anyone in need at future Assemblies.

Q3: An audience member queried whether eligibility for aids from the Community Equipment Service required being over 75 or on benefits.

Answer: Gary Collier confirmed that the criterion is simply demonstrated need – assessments and provision are free after application via the Resident Hub, irrespective of age or benefit status.

Q3: A participant asked about the new shingles vaccination schedule, noting that previously only one dose was required.

Answer: Sarah clarified that newly eligible adults must now receive two doses, administered six months apart, according to updated guidance. She advised consulting their GP for further details.

Q4: Several people asked about practical access and parking at Brunel University for events or seminars.

Answer: Dr Elmar Kal confirmed that parking arrangements can be made for free for event attendees and that the facilities provide ramp, ground-floor, and lift access as standard. He welcomed direct queries via email or phone and encouraged further campus engagement.

Q5: A participant sought advice regarding access to digital library services and asked for help with downloading library apps.

Answer: Robert Sisk explained the practical steps required and reassured that personal support is available to anyone needing assistance with digital services, both during and after the Assembly.

Q6: An attendee questioned if recurring shingles vaccinations would be needed or offered in future years.

Answer: Sarah clarified that, per current medical advice, the new double-dose protocol is not repeated once completed. She recommended follow-up with GPs for individual circumstances.

Q7: There were inquiries about access to social activities, leisure centre options, and Healthwise scheme eligibility.

	<p>Answer: Angie Brydges outlined free senior swim memberships, pay-as-you-go exercise, inclusive activity adaptations for mobility-impaired members, and multiple arrangements to make sports accessible for older adults, carers, and those receiving benefits.</p> <p>Q8: Practical topics such as equipment repair, recycling, and booking procedures for Council events were raised.</p> <p>Answer: Gary Collier and other organisers provided detailed contact information and assured prompt support. Feedback forms were distributed to guide future sessions, and the next meeting date was announced as 16 December 2025.</p>
	<p>Items of interest</p> <p>Key items of interest included notification of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Conference, now rescheduled to 29 January. Information was provided on special interest groups available to Council tenants and leaseholders, including panels focused on accessibility, editorial matters, and building safety. Attendees were invited to suggest topics for future meetings and reminded about open opportunities for joining special panels or groups.</p> <p>Future agenda items will focus on services provided by 'Gained in Advance Partnership' and Fiona from the Museum Service, who will report on developments in museum and heritage services. The next meeting's agenda remains open to suggestions, and participants were encouraged to submit their ideas.</p> <p>The event concluded with a thank you from organisers and an invitation to complete feedback forms, reiterating a commitment to continuous improvement and further engagement.</p>
	<p>Agenda for next meeting and close</p> <p>The next meeting is scheduled for 16 December 2025. Key topics anticipated for discussion include presentations from the 'Gained in Advance Partnership' and a speaker named Fiona from the Museum Service who will provide updates on museum and heritage services within the borough. Attendees are encouraged to suggest additional topics for the upcoming agenda to ensure relevance and engagement.</p> <p>The meeting will close with thanks to all participants and an invitation to complete feedback forms to help guide future meetings. There will also be reminders about ongoing engagement opportunities and a reaffirmation of the Assembly's commitment to listening to and acting upon the interests of older residents.</p>

