

## **Zac Goldsmith - Conservative Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Richmond Park and North Kingston**

### **1. What do you think are the main issues facing older people in the Borough?**

There are lots of problems faced by older people here, as elsewhere. The cost of living is a major issue, lack of mobility, the quality of care, fear of low level crime all combine to undermine the quality of peoples' lives. I believe a civilised nation is one that not only looks after its elderly population, but which values their contribution to society.

### **2. How do you propose to address these issues?**

Locally, we want to do more to enable elderly people to receive care in the home (rather than in a home). We will actively support existing organisations like Age Concern and others to avoid duplicating their valuable work, and we will identify sites for community hubs that will provide a variety of services for the elderly, including recreational activities and day care.

### **4. What do you think are the main issues facing older people nationally?**

Nationally, we have a pensions crisis. We have massively eroded what was a world-class system. Given that nearly 13 million jobs have no pension provision, this obviously needs addressing now. Many of today's pensioners need immediate support. 66% of pensioners are cutting back on the gas and electricity they're using, and more than half are buying less, or poorer quality food. Many of these pensioners are already entitled to Pension Credit, but because the system is so complicated, 1.7 million haven't done so, even though half of these are living in poverty.

### **5. At a national level, what is there for older people in your party's manifesto?**

In the immediate term, we will freeze council tax, worth about £200 for each household. We'll dramatically simplify the pension rules. We'll protect the Winter Fuel Payment. Our plan to make available up to £6,500 for energy efficiency improvements, with the costs being repaid through the savings made, will deliver significant reductions in energy bills.

Crucially we will end the grotesque situation where 45,000 older people are forced to sell their homes each year to pay for residential care at the end of their lives. People reaching retirement will have the option to pay a one-off joining fee that we estimate will be around £8,000, in return for a guarantee that absolutely all fees for permanent residential care would be waived – for life.

One area that needs to be looked at more closely is retirement which I believe should become more of a process, and much less abrupt. For example Conservatives are looking at whether grandparents and other family members should be able to access the money that the government currently spends on child care.

### **6. Do you think that organisations like Age Concern Kingston should be fully resourced?**

Age Concern already has a service agreement with RBK where it receives a yearly grant for services. Finances permitting, I'd like to see the Local Authority make more use of the organisation as it is uniquely placed to deliver important services.

### **7. Transport barriers and their effect on the quality of life of older people in the capital and the local area are a hot topic at the moment. What do you propose to do to tackle the problem?**

Access to transport is a major problem for many older people. According to the Government, nearly half of people over 75 struggle to walk 200 meters or use a bus. We therefore need to find alternatives. For example taxi tokens, community transport and dial-a-rides should be considered. We can also build on the work of the Kingston Enterprise, which provides a door-to-door travel service for elderly, frail and disabled local residents.