

Political Thinking

Chiltern U3A 'Political Thinking

Meeting No 14 16th October 2017 and meeting No 15 20th November 2017

The discussion on the same topic extended over two meetings and no vote was taken in respect of the topic.

Topic: "The Voluntary Sector; past, present and future"

Discussion

Members gave an account of their personal experiences of contributing in some way to the voluntary sector.

Some themes emerged

1. The extent of the voluntary sector.

Until we started to consider the matter none of the group members had fully appreciated the extent of the voluntary sector. In many aspects of life, some provision of some important service is by way of a voluntary sector organisation.

Some examples of voluntary organisations to illustrate the extent, (in no particular order.)

National Trust, Charities generally.

The Church.

Political parties.

Lifeboats.

Salvation Army.

Football for children, Scouts, Guides, many organisations arranging sport and other activities.

Red Cross, Rotary, u3a.

School Governing bodies

Medicins sans frontieres

Etc etc etc.

2. Motivation of those who provide services within the voluntary services.

Considerable discussion of why people put their time into such causes.

Some reasons suggested were

Social contact with others;

Giving something back; personal satisfaction; right thing to do.

Characteristic of human civilisation, what makes us human.

Most of those with experience of “working” in the sector found it rewarding.

.

3. Some issues.

The Welfare State and the Voluntary sector.

Should I look after my neighbour in some sense.

Is there a difference for a person to give time or to give money in support of the VS?

Coordination of voluntary services; overlaps, gaps.

Efficiency of a voluntary service; is this an appropriate criterion for determining whether it should be delivered?

Communication to the public about the availability of voluntary services.

Increasing availability of healthy retired people able to provide such services.

“Having to do it voluntarily” eg the increasing dependence of families on grandparents for routine child care as both parents have to work.

Companies, Corporate responsibility is a relatively new idea for business.

4. Examples that crystallise the essence of the VS.

RNLI lifeboats; people who will never be rescued give money in support; the service helps all those in need, deserving or not; at some risk and danger to those who provide the service.

Blood donors; People provide essential support to others whom they do not and will never know.

A fascinating and wide ranging discussion from which we all learned something!