

DRAFT

DISABILITY ADVISORY AND ACCESS FORUM

9th October 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. K. Peacock (Luton Disabled Sports and Social Club)
Mr. D. Gower (Luton Senior Peoples Forum)
Mr. M. Chapman (Substitute for Mrs. S. Fever Sight Concern)
Mr. P. Gomm (Luton Senior People's Forum)
Ms. A. Farthing (Victim Support)
Mr. S. Abbas

IN ATTENDANCE Mr. R. Nayer Policy Officer, (LBC)
Ms. S. Goldsmith, Children and Learning Department, (LBC)
Mr. A. Williams, Assistant Engineer Engineering & Transportation (LBC)
Mr. K. Toye, Passenger Transport Unit Manager Environment and Regeneration Department, (LBC)
Ms. Maureen Drummond, Equalities Support Officer, Environment & Regeneration (LBC)
Ms. Rosalind Paul, Team Leader Equality & Diversity, Children & Learning (LBC)
Mr. P. Barton, Research & Intelligence Team Leader, Environment & Regeneration (LBC)
Mr. Adrian Entecott, Performance Review Manager, Corporate & Customer Services, Human Resources (LBC)
Mrs. S. Rowland, Democratic Services Officer, Chief Executives Department (LBC)

54 ELECTION OF CHAIR

In the absence of the Chair, (Mr. Mick Dillon) Mr. P. Gomm was elected Chair of the Forum for this meeting only.

55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF:2)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Mr Mick Dillon (Chair), Disability Resource Centre, Mr Bob McPhillips Bushmead Disabled Bowling Association, Mr Vince McEvoy Beds Tenant Participation Group, Mr Roy Gerrard Luton Disabled Sports and Social Club, Mrs Christine Hunt Luton Shopmobility, Mr. P. Vyas Milan Day Centre Users Group, Mrs. S. Fever Sight Concern, Ms. Gillian Malins University of Bedfordshire.

56 ELECTION OF SPOKESPERSONS (REF: 3)

Resolved: That this item be included on the agenda for the next meeting in order to appoint a second spokesperson.

57 MINUTES (REF: 4)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th August 2008 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

58 STATISTICS ON WILLINGNESS/ ABILITY OF TAXI DRIVERS IN HANDLING DISABLED PEOPLE (REF: 7)

The Licensing Manager explained that the Council was reviewing the Hackney/Taxi Drivers regulations with a report being submitted to Regulation Committee in December.

The Chair enquired how disabled people were catered for as there appeared to be no consensus.

The Licensing Manager stated that Hackney Carriage vehicles must be wheelchair accessible.

He further explained that Hackney Carriage vehicles charges were set in line with the scale of charges but private hire vehicles operated under their own contracts and could set their own charges.

Mr David Gower enquired if taxi drivers were trained in handling disabled people. At Milton Keynes 30/40% drivers per shift were trained in handling and helping disabled people.

The Licensing Manager explained that a Trades meeting was held every 3 months where suggestions such as the needs of the handling of disabled could be raised. It had been pointed out that taxi drivers were not tested under the DSA testing procedure.

Members suggested that the Licensing Manager reported the outcomes of the Regulation Committee due to be held in December 2008 to the Forum at its meeting on 5th February 2009.

Resolved: (i) That the Licensing Manager be requested to raise the issues discussed by the Forum regarding taxi drivers' handling of disabled people at the next Taxi Trades meeting.

(ii) That the Licensing Manager be requested to report back on the decisions of Regulation Committee with regard to the Review of the Hackney Carriage Regulations discussed to the Forum on 5th February 2009.

59 ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT (REF: 8)

The Chair had made enquiries as to whether the Government would extend free travel for elderly and disabled people to include all train stations and had been informed that no further concessions would be

made available. People within the Luton area were fortunate and enjoyed the benefit of concessionary travel on the rail network from Bedford/Luton.

Ken Toye, Passenger Transport Unit Manager informed Members that the Council offered a better concessionary scheme to eligible members of the public than required by the Government. 'Smart card' holders were able to board any bus within the Luton area at any time. The Government offered concessionary travellers off peak travel commencing after 9.30 am each day. These additional benefits were offered on a yearly basis and could be withdrawn as part of the budget process on a yearly basis.

Ken Peacock enquired when all buses would be accessible for disabled people and that the ramped buses were not suitable for scooters. He did not feel that some of the Arriva bus drivers were helpful and enquired if they were regulated by the Council.

Ken Toye, PTU Manager confirmed that ramps and accessible doorways/floors were being introduced on all new buses. These ramps were designed for wheelchairs but were not suitable for scooters. All buses should be accessible by 2015. The Arriva bus company was regulated by the Department of Transport.

Resolved: That the report (Ref: 8) be noted.

60 ACCESS TO COUNCIL BUILDINGS (REF: 9)

The Forum received an update on the progress made towards compliance with the requirements of Part III: Service Provision of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

Council buildings where there were still outstanding issues:

- Luton Museum and Art Gallery further details of the scheme had been requested by the Planners, awaiting listed building consent, a Contractor had been appointed, the work will be programmed to suit the Museum's operational requirements and exhibition dates.
- Limbury Community Centre, discussions with the local community regarding a possible extension had delayed the scheme.
- Putteridge Recreation Centre, the scheme had been completed.

Resolved: That the report (Ref: 9) be noted.

61 AN INVESTIGATION INTO MEASURING THE WORKING AGE DISABLED POPULATION OF LUTON (REF: 10)

The Research and Intelligence Team Leader explained that the Team had taken the lead on establishing the baseline working age of the

disabled population in Luton. Data collection on disability was complex. There was not a dataset large enough to adequately measure the population. 10.6% of the population classed themselves as disabled, although individual people had differing self perceptions of disability.

The Research and Intelligence Team Leader stated that the next annual survey would be conducted next year. He further explained that the Council would continue to lobby Government for the inclusion of specific questions relating to disability within the 2011 Census and other national surveys so that more accurate statistics could be produced on the number of working population classed as disabled.

It was suggested that the Research and Intelligence Team should be encouraged to work with partners and agencies on all aspects of equalities and the feasibility of developing a more comprehensive system and report the findings back to a future meeting of the Forum.

Resolved: (i) That the Disability Advisory and Access Forum notes the lack of definitive baseline data on the size of the disabled population impacts upon policy monitoring.

(ii) That Disability Advisory and Access Forum requests the Research and Intelligence Team Leader to continue to lobby for the inclusion of specific questions relating to disability within the 2011 Census, Annual Population Survey and other surveys.

(iii) That the Research and Intelligence Team Leader works with partners to assess the feasibility of developing a more comprehensive system of understanding the population of Luton that includes all equalities indicators.

(iv) That the Research and Intelligence Team Leader investigate the implications of developing a comprehensive system indicated at (iii) above and report these findings to a future meeting of the Forum.

(v) That the Research and Intelligence Team Leader updated the Forum on the 2008 Annual Population Survey data on disability in Luton once this data is available for 2009.

62 ACTION PLAN ON DISABLED PARKING (REF: 11)

The Assistant Engineer, Engineering and Transportation explained that consultation had recently been undertaken that identified areas of concern about disabled parking around the town. The Forum received a report on the finding of that consultation at their meeting on 5th June 2008 had requested an action plan that identified the shortcomings of consultation be brought back to the Forum on 9th October 2008.

The Assistant Engineer, Engineering and Transportation had produced an action plan attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 that showed the areas where parking for disabled people needed to be reviewed. He explained that an investigation of all of the areas of parking for disabled people needed to be reviewed and was likely to be expensive.

The review would be dependent on the section being successful on the financial resources within the Transport and Highway Maintenance Work Programme.

Resolved: (i) That the report (Ref: 11) be noted.

(ii) Disability Advisory and Access Forum agreed the initial Action Plan (attached at Appendix 1 and 2 to Ref: 11)

**63 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENTS – TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE
(REF: 12)**

The Team Leader Equality and Diversity Children and Learning reported on the recently completed Equality Impact Assessment that considered the education support to Gypsy, Roma and traveller children with a view to increasing the access for these children within the educational system.

The Forum were informed that had been 120 roadside encampments and each encampment and had been visited by the Traveller Education Team. There were 85 Gypsy, Roma and traveller children living temporarily on the roadside, 56 of those, were of statutory school age and 14 stayed in the vicinity long enough to access school in Luton for more than 1 day.

The Equality Impact Assessment considered in depth the level of impact on disabled children. The Traveller Education Service (TES) work with families whose children suffered from congenital conditions their work had a positive impact on equality of access as schools were made aware of the needs of the children and were able to plan for their arrival. Appropriate agencies were quickly informed of newly born or recently arrived disabled Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. The TES worked with Lady Zia Wehner and Putteridge High Schools to ensure effective transition.

Members enquired what percentage of children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families stayed in education after they were 16 years old.

The Team Leader Equality and Diversity Children and Learning replied that some children had progressed to Barnfield College and continued with post 16 education.

She further explained there were not enough permanent sites available that allowed Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families the opportunity to settle for a period of time that enabled their children to continue their education and gain qualifications that enabled them to pursue careers. The Government had recently instructed all local authorities that more permanent sites were required.

The impact of the service on areas of equality was positive with the exception of sexual orientation which was neutral. Members acknowledged the difficulties of working with hard to reach groups such as

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and were very appreciative of the work being undertaken by the Equality and Diversity Traveller Team.

Resolved: That the Disability Advisory and Access Forum notes the completed equality impact assessments carried out to date.

64 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENTS – ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION (REF: 13)

The Blue Badge Scheme

The Equalities Support Officer, Environment and Regeneration, reported on the outcome that the impact assessment on the Blue Badge Scheme was considered positive for disabled residents. Since the service had been transferred to the Parking Shop turnaround time had been reduced from 8 weeks to 4 weeks.

The Equalities Support Officer explained that the service was not currently monitored by key equality groups, in the near future a separate monitoring form will be sent out with the application forms. Satisfaction forms would include monitoring information.

Review of Consumer Advice Service Request

The Equalities Support Officer reported that following the Consumer Advice Service Request Equalities Impact Assessment in 2004 a satisfaction survey had been carried out but demographic information was still not being collected at the first point of contact.

Consultation methods had been expanded and included Citizens Panels. Pest Control and the Dog Warden Service could be booked on line. Officers who were able to assist customers with translation skills were being utilised and one dog warden was undertaking training to be competent in British Sign Language.

Service information was available via radio, local newspapers, and places of worship. Performance and consultation results were published on the website.

Luton and Dunstable Busway

The Equalities Support Officer reported on the impact assessments for The Luton and Dunstable Busway. The Busway would be a dedicated rapid transport route for buses from Luton Airport through Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis that provided a change in the bus usage within the area. The overall aim of the Busway was to reduce car travel, congestion and pollution etc. The Forum was advised that other groups were being consulted on the Busway and included the Race Advisory Forum and the Young Persons Forum.

Members asked when the Busway would be operational.

The Equalities Support Officer explained that the Busway had received financial approval from the Government it was estimated that the Busway would be completed in 2011. Phil Cunningham from the Engineers would be attending the Forum in February to speak about the proposed Luton/Dunstable Busway.

Resolved: That the Disability Advisory and Access Forum notes the completed equality impact assessments carried out to date.

65 UPDATE ON DISABILITY EQUALITIES ACTION PLANS (REF: 14)

The Policy Officer presented the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan. In the absence of Paul Curry, the Disability Policy and Access Officer it was agreed that a more detailed discussion of this item be deferred to the next meeting. However there was an oral report from Customer and Corporate Services details of which are summarised below.

Customer and Corporate Services 1 – Corporate Procurement

The Performance Review Manager reported that all contracts had a full equality assessment at the point of tendering and re-tendering. Most of these contracts included equalities as a standing item at review meetings.

Customer and Corporate Services 2 – Investigation into Recruitment Statistics to Identify Reasons/Differential Outcomes

There had been no recruitment statistics produced since January 2007 as Human Resources had introduced a new data system. It was expected that there would be enough reliable statistical data from the new system to produce reports from April 2009.

Customer and Corporate Services 3 – Employees Differences in Impairment Types

The workforce statistics report to be submitted to Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee on 16th October 2008 included an impairment category.

The comparative working age data still required additional work. A final report would be submitted in March 2009 as the timetable had been delayed by the implementation of the new Human Resources computer system.

Members enquired whether the Equalities Bill would be included in the Queens Speech this year. The Policy Officer did not think it would and doubted whether it would make Royal Assent until 2009 even if it made the Queens Speech in November 2008. He was of the opinion (based on information from Government sources) that the Bill was unlikely to become law until 2010.

Resolved: That in the absence of the Disability Policy and Access Officer that discussion of this item (Ref: 14) be deferred until the next meeting of the Forum.

**66 DISABILITY ACCESS AND ADVISORY FORUM WORK PROGRAMME
(REF: 15)**

The Democratic Services Officer submitted the latest version of the Forum's Work Programme for consideration and updating.

Members suggested that the following items be added to the work programme:-

- Review of the Hackney Carriage Regulations be submitted on 5th February 2009.
- Costs of Developing a Comprehensive Understanding the Population of Luton be submitted to a future meeting of the Forum.
- Update on the Disability Action Plan be deferred until 3rd December 2008.
- The proposed Luton and Dunstable Busway be discussed on 3rd December 2008.

Resolved: That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to update the Work Programme in accordance with the suggestions made by the Forum set out above.

Note: The meeting ended at 4.15 p.m.