

DISABILITY ADVISORY AND ACCESS FORUM

3rd December 2008 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr M. Dillon (Chair)(Disability Resource Centre)
Mr. G. Ellis (Luton Shopmobility)
Mrs. S. Fever (Sight Concern)
Mr. P. Gomm (Luton Senior People's Forum)
Mr. D. Gower (Luton Senior Peoples Forum)
Ms. G. Malins (University of Bedfordshire)
Mr. V. McEvoy (Beds Tenant Participation Group)
Mr. P. Vyas (Milan Day Centre Users Group)
Mr. S. Abbas

IN ATTENDANCE Councillor H. Simmons, Leader of the Council (LBC)
Mr. K. Crompton, Chief Executive (LBC)
Ms. S. Goldsmith, Children and Learning
Department, (LBC)
Mr. P. Cunningham, Engineering and
Transportation, (LBC)
Ms. A. Malik, Engineering and Transportation, (LBC)
Ms. S. Legate, Equalities Manager, Housing and
Community Living Department, (LBC)
Ms. K. Bhargal, Complaints & Representations
Manager, Housing and Community Living
Department, (LBC)
Ms. J. Dowsing, Change Manager, Luton Excellence
(LBC)
Mr. Adrian Entecott, Performance Review Manager,
Corporate & Customer Services, Human Resources
(LBC)
Mrs. M. Hussey, Democratic Services Officer, Chief
Executives Department (LBC)

67 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 2)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Ms. A. Farthing (Victim Support), Mr Roy Gerrard Luton Disabled Sports and Social Club, Mr Bob McPhillips Bushmead Disabled Bowling Association, Mr. K. Peacock (Luton Disabled Sports and Social Club).

68 ELECTION OF SPOKESPERSON (REF: 3)

Resolved: That Mr. George Ellis of Luton Shopmobility be elected Spokesperson of the Forum until the next Annual General Meeting.

69 MINUTES (REF: 4)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2008 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

70 QUESTION TIME WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE & THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (REF: 7)

The Chair welcomed Kevin Crompton, Chief Executive, Luton Borough Council and Councillor Simmons, Leader of the Council, whom had been invited to attend the Forum to answer any questions Members might have.

The Chair commented that the Forum were concerned that several departments within the Council were not fulfilling their duty by completing the Disability Equality Action Plans, which were a legal requirement.

Paul Curry, Disability Policy and Access Officer added that some departments of the Council were very good at meeting the requirements of their Disability Equality Action Plans, however, certain Departments were still experiencing difficulties. He added that the Equalities Bill and a new Equalities Framework would be introduced next year, which would pose several challenges to the Council.

A Member of the Forum referred to the recent closure of the Bus Station and commented that, in future, Council Buildings should not be closed before an alternative replacement had been constructed.

Councillor Simmons replied that the replacement Bus Station would be built on the same site as the old one; therefore it would have been impossible to transfer services over to the new site immediately.

A Member of the Forum raised concern that coaches could not drop passengers directly on to the kerb at the temporary stops on Manchester Street used by National Express and Stage Coach services, due to congestion. This caused considerable discomfort to both elderly and disabled passengers.

Phil Cunningham, Engineering and Transportation, replied that there was limited available space, and that this did on occasion create capacity problems resulting in buses not always being able to drop off passengers directly to the kerb. He added that once the Bus Interchange in Station Road had been completed, services would be much improved. He went on to say that the Council could only request bus/coach companies to use the facilities provided in the correct manner.

A Member of the Forum commented that several buses used bus stops as a rest stop, which prevented other buses/coaches from

using the stop, and suggested that the Council should enforce parking regulation on offending drivers.

A Member of the Forum enquired whether stops in Silver Street and Church Street would also use the new Bus Interchange.

Phil Cunningham, Engineering and Transportation, replied that stops in Church Street and Silver Street would be transferred to the new Bus Interchange, with some stops remaining in Silver Street to provide as much penetration of services to the Town Centre. He added that the new Gateway project would provide a high quality link to the Town Centre from the railway station and the Bus Interchange.

A Member of the Forum enquired what impact the 2012 Olympics would have on Luton.

Kevin Crompton, Chief Executive replied that although Stockwood Park Athletics Track had been recommended as an official Olympic Training facility, the impact on Luton would not be known until nearer the time. He added that the majority of Olympic funding would be granted to London Boroughs. He went on to say that Council would apply for funding for the new swimming pool in Luton, but unfortunately this would not be completed by 2012.

A Member of the Forum raised concern that Councillors no longer attended meetings of the Forum.

Councillor Simmons replied that she would encourage Councillors to attend meetings of the forum in future.

The Chair commented that the Forum wanted to be proactive, and available to the Council for consultation and advice rather than have issues brought to them after decisions had been made.

Paul Curry, Disability Policy and Access Officer commented that the Council had in place a robust Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in place, and had consulted the Forum on a number of issues.

Kevin Crompton, Chief Executive commented that a great deal of pressure was placed on Officers of the Council, to comply with different legislations. He added that there had been a great deal of progress made on implementing EIA's. He added that effectiveness of both the Disability Advisory & Access Forum and the Race Advisory Forum needed to be reviewed, and that an undertaking would be made in the new year.

The Chair commented that the Forum recognised the effort and actions undertaken by Officers to help the Forum run effectively. He went on to say that he had recently attended a meeting in regards to the new Aquatic Centre, which had been attended by the majority of swimming clubs in the area. He added that this would be an ideal project for the Forum to be consulted on issues relating to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Kevin Crompton, Chief Executive remarked that Luton Borough Council welcomed challenges and change. He added that Luton was a Council that delivered and punched well above its weight.

Councillor Simmons, and the Chief Executive both thanked the Forum for inviting them to attend the meeting, and suggested that they attend a meeting of the Forum in 6 months time.

Resolved: (i) That the above questions be noted.

(ii) That the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council be requested to attend a future meeting of the Disability Advisory and Access Forum to answer any further questions the Forum may have.

(iii) That the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council be thanked for attending the forum and answering the questions put to them.

71 ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT (REF: 8)

There was no information to report on accessible transport.

72 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.

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

73 LUTON EXCELLENCE PRESENTATION (REF: 10)

The Change Manager from the Luton Excellence Support Team gave a presentation on the main objectives of Luton Excellence.

The Change Manager informed Members that Luton Excellence's aims were to deliverer better services more efficiently by applying a 'lean' approach. The 'lean' approach had successfully been used by private sector firms that included Toyota, Amazon and also by the public service.

Luton Excellence was an indefinite change programme, which would help the Council to take the best 'lean' principles, and use them to improve service delivery that provided customers with what they needed, when they needed it.

Resolved: That the presentation (REF: 10) be noted.

74 TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT (REF: 11)

Phil Cunningham, Engineering and Transportation, updated the Forum on progress made on Town Centre projects, in particular the

demolition of the footbridge between the railway station and Bute Street and its replacement with a ground level facility.

A Member of the Forum raised concern that the proposed Bus Interchange and ground level walkway facility were very closed to student accommodation owned by the University of Bedfordshire, and that it was likely that objections would be received.

Phil Cunningham replied that it was inevitable that objections would be, and had already been received on the proposal. Therefore, a public enquiry would take place next year. He added that finances created by the purchase of Network Rail/Council land in front of the station would be reinvested into the redevelopment/refurbishment of the railway station, which would be DDA compliant and of high quality. He added that the central railway station was very high on Network Rails agenda, and architects had already been appointed to look at designs.

A Member of the Forum enquired when the footbridge would be replaced with the ground level pedestrian facility.

Phil Cunningham replied that it was hoped that the ground level facility would be in place by early 2010. He added that the scheme had been modified since the initial notice had been published in May 2008; therefore, it had been necessary to re-advertise the scheme. He went on to say that by 2010, the new multi storey car park would be completed, which would enable the new route to be car free across the existing car park.

A Member of the Forum enquired how long the demolition of the footbridge would take.

Phil Cunningham replied that to reduce any adverse impact, a new walk way would be constructed before the demolition of the footbridge, which was estimated to take approximately one to two weeks.

Members of the Forum raised concern at the possible risk to pedestrians, if the ground level walk way crossed Station Road through the proposed Bus Interchange.

Phil Cunningham informed Members that raised crossings would be introduced to complement the existing speed cushions, and that pedestrians would have right of way. He added that although Station Road was a private road, the Council would adopt the middle section of the road.

A Member of the Forum raised concern that wheelchair users would not be visible to other road users at the proposed crossing points.

Phil Cunningham replied that the raised crossing could be widened, which would enable all people crossing the road to be visible.

Resolved: (i) That the Report (REF: 11) be noted.

(ii) That the Disability Advisory & Access Forum support the demolition of the footbridge between the Railway station and Bute Street and its replacement with a ground level route as detailed on Plan Number P1234 – 004A.

(iii) That the width of level crossings at the proposed Bus Interchange be investigated.

75 HOUSING & COMMUNITY LIVING COMPLAINTS REPORT (REF: 12)

Kam Bhangal, Complaints & Representations Manager, Housing and Community Living Department, reported on the number of complaints received by the Housing and Community Living Department, between April 2008 and August 2008. It was noted that the complaints received were not representative of both BME Communities and people with disabilities; therefore a further complaints survey had been undertaken. The results had shown an increase of complaints from BME Communities from 20% in 2006 to 42% in 2008. Also, the results had shown an increase in complaints from disabled users from 27% to 41% in 2008.

She went on to say that there had been a total of 204 complaints. She added that complaints were dealt with on a three-stage basis, with Stage 1 as minor complaints to Stage 3, which were serious complaints of which only 4 had been made.

A Member of the Forum suggested that the details of the types of complaint needed to be expanded, for example were the complaints on service delivery. She also suggested that the type of disability, if any, should also be included in the findings.

Kam Bhangal replied that it would difficult to obtain information on whether complainants were disabled as it they were not required to disclose such information as the complaints were often anonymous.

Resolved: (i) That the Report (REF: 12) be noted.

(ii) That the Complaints & Representations Manager, Housing and Community Living Department be requested to submit a further report on complaints to a future meeting of the Forum. **Kam Bhangal**

(iii) That the Equalities Unit investigate how the Council could begin to link the equalities data of complainants to the complaints they had made, so that the Council could use it as a way to meet it's Disability Equality Duties.

76 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DISABILITY RIGHTS COMMISSION GUIDANCE ON HOUSING UPDATE (REF: 13)

Sandra Legate, Equalities Manager, Housing and Community Living Department updated Members on the Housing and Disability Equality Duty and what the Department was doing to meet the relevant action in the Corporate Disability Equality Action Plan. The Forum were notified that the Landlord Service Division, that in addition to its consultation with the Tenants and Representation Panels and the Tenants and Consultative Committee, had also established a 'Sounding Board'. She added that the Sounding board had proved so successful, that the Private Sector Housing division would also undertake a similar exercise.

Resolved: That the Report (REF: 13) be noted.

77 WORKFORCE STATISTICS 2007/8 (REF: 14)

Adrian Entecott, Performance Review Manager, Human Resources reported on the workforce statistics for 2007/2008, which contained the basic statistical information on which the Council could review both its equality targets for employment together and determine any relevant action planning.

A Member of the Forum commented that the classifications used for different disabilities were very broad.

Adrian Entecott replied that it was difficult to give the right level of detail on the different categories of disability as of the 355 employees who had disclosed information on their disability, 500 different disabilities, including long term illness had been identified. He added that statistics could only be reported if members of staff had disclosed certain information.

A Member of the Forum commented that the number of BME employees that had been dismissed was high.

Adrian Entecott replied that BME employees were highly represented in areas of the Council where gross misconduct was more common.

A Member of the Forum suggested that more in-depth categories of disability should be included in further reports.

Resolved: (i) that the Report (REF: 14) be noted.

(ii) That Performance Review Manager, Human Resources include specific categories of disability in future reports on workforce statistics.

**Adrian
Entecott**

78 UPDATE ON DISABILITY EQUALITIES ACTION PLANS (REF: 15)

Paul Curry, Disability Policy and Access Officer reported in regard to progress against the Disability Equality Action Plan (DEAP). Members were reminded that the Forum had voiced its concerns on the lack of progress made on some actions in the plan, which had

been referred to the Executive in June 2008. In turn, the Executive had requested that the Social Inclusion Scrutiny Committee monitor the progress made against the action, and a further report would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in April 2009, once the majority of the actions in the Plan had been completed.

Resolved: That the Report (REF: 15) be noted.

79 EQUALITIES MONITORING UPDATE (REF: 16)

Paul Curry, Disability Policy and Access Officer reported on the progress made against the action in the DEAP to address issues raised in the Disability Rights Commission Guidance on Gathering and Analysing Evidence to Inform Action for monitoring services. He went on to say all Departments had been requested to list services that they provided to the public, and identify whether or not they would be monitored by each of the six equalities Groups. He added that he would meet with all Departments to establish a draft set of priority services, and that a further report on progress made would be submitted to a future meeting.

Resolved: (i) That the Report (REF: 16) be noted.

(ii) That the Equalities Unit, on behalf of the Disability Advisory and Access Forum, work with all Departments with the aim of establishing a draft set of priority services which were to be monitored by disability and impairment type, and reported back the the Forum for agreement or amendment. **Paul Curry**

80 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:-

- Luton Aquatic Centre
- Luton Gateway Project
- Presentation from Roger Kirk on the Personalisation Agenda (February 2009)

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 5.30 p.m.)