

## **DISABILITY ADVISORY AND ACCESS FORUM**

**22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2002 at 2.00 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Mrs. G. Malins – University of Luton (Spokesperson – in the Chair)  
Mr. K. Peacock – Luton, Dunstable and District Sports Association  
Mr. G. Menczer – Luton Shopmobility (co-opted member)  
Mr. G. Ellis – Luton Shopmobility  
Mrs. P. Morris – Sight Concern

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs. M. Harrison - Inland Revenue  
Mr. V. McEvoy – Thomas Becket Foundation  
Mr. I. Slater – Head of Planning, Luton Borough Council  
Mr. D. Sutton – Head of Leisure, Libraries and Culture, Luton Borough Council  
Mr. T. Nicholls – Assistant Manager, Lewsey Park Pool, Leisure, Libraries and Cultural Division, Luton Borough Council  
Patricia Moynihan – Disability Sports Project Officer, Leisure Libraries and Culture Division, Luton Borough Council  
Nina Boston – Democratic Services Officer, Luton Borough Council

### **ACTION**

The Chair welcomed Pauline Morris, the new representative of Sight Concern, to the Forum.

#### **42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr. M. Dillon (Chair), Mr. M. Webster (Alban Neve Centre), Ms. M. Luther (Bedfordshire Disability Forum), Mr. and Mrs. Vyas (Milan Day Centre Users Group), Mr. D. Childs (co-opted member), Mr. J. Worth (Transport Matters), Councillor Hussain, Samantha Jones (Disability Policy Officer, Luton Borough Council) and Mrs. Y. Bacon (Licensing Manager, Luton Borough Council).

#### **43 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)**

In considering the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2002, the Chair referred to the first paragraph of Minute 36 and enquired if members had received any information with regard to the visit that had taken place to the hydrotherapy pool at the Pasque Hospice. Members had not and the Democratic Services Officer suggested placing the issue on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Democratic Services Officer referred to Minute 37 and reported that she had been advised by the Head of Customer Services that there had been nothing further to report with regard to the One Stop Shop at the present time.

The Chair referred to Minute 39 and requested that the Forum's amended Terms of Reference be circulated to all members with the agenda for the next Annual General Meeting.

The Chair referred to Minute 40 and requested members' views on the priority that should be given to the suggestions made at the last meeting for 2003: Year of the Disabled. Members were of the opinion that raising the profile of the Forum, a brokerage scheme and the Council's aids and adaptations policy should be given priority.

George Ellis referred to Minute 41 and commented that, as the invitation had been open to the Forum as a whole, he felt strongly that the Council should have provided transport to Police Call Handling Centre.

On a general issue, the Chair commented that there were limitations with regard to the venue for the meeting (Wigmore Hall and Conference Centre) and enquired whether the building had been included as part of the Council's access audit. The Democratic Services Officer responded that she would make enquiries.

Concern was expressed at the length of time taken to resolve issues raised by the Forum. The Democratic Services Officer advised that the Forum were entitled to recommend that an item be placed on the agenda for a meeting of the Executive.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to place an item on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum regarding the visit made to the hydrotherapy pool at the Pasque Hospice. Nina Boston

(ii) That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to circulate the Forum's Terms of Reference, as amended at the last meeting of the Forum, with the agenda for the next Annual General Meeting. Nina Boston

(iii) That it be agreed that priority be given to the following suggestions for 2003: Year of the Disabled:

- (a) raising the profile of the Forum
- (b) brokerage scheme
- (c) the Council's aids and adaptations policy

(iv) That, if invitations are extended to the Forum to undertake visits in the future, the Disability Policy Officer be requested to take account of any practical implications regarding transport requirements. Samantha Jones

(v) That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to make enquiries as to whether Wigmore Hall and Conference Centre had been included as part of the Council's access audit. Nina Boston

(vi) That any issue which has not been resolved to the satisfaction of members following 2 meetings of it having been raised, the Forum recommend that the issue be placed on the agenda for a meeting of the Executive.

(vii) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2002 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **44      £1 MILLION PILOT PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (REF: 3.1)**

Members were advised that the Early Years and School Standards Minister had announced a £1 million pilot programme to help young children with disabilities. The early support pilot programme would offer children with disabilities, up to the age of two, and their parents, practical help.

**Resolved:** That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to circulate the newspaper article provided at the meeting regarding the £1 million pilot programme for children with disabilities to all members of the Forum. Nina Boston

**(Note: The above item was considered by the Forum pursuant to Sections 100B(4) and 100E(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair having considered that the item should be dealt with as a matter of urgency in order that members of the Forum could be made aware of the programme.)**

#### **45      LUTON GATEWAY PROJECT (REF: 6.1)**

Ian Slater, the Head of Planning, reported on the current position with regard to the redevelopment of Luton railway station.

The Forum were advised that officers of the Council had been working on the project for the last 4 years but the Government had now put Railtrack into administration.

Ian Slater further reported that the network had been split into two organisations:

Network Rail – a non-profit making company which operated the track and associated buildings, including the station itself, and

Railtrack Developments Ltd. (a private profit making company) which would be sold off. Railtrack Developments Ltd. owned Power Court where the retail development part of the project was due to be undertaken.

The Council were currently obtaining legal agreements to ensure that the profits from Railtrack Developments Ltd. were given to Network Rail in order to pay for the railway improvements. A new planning application was then anticipated for the retail development, the bus station and the station square.

The Forum were advised that most of the changes in ownership had only settled down about 4 weeks ago and therefore the best part of a year on the project had been lost.

Ian Slater advised that little would take place with regard to the railway station before 2004/2005 but he understood that it would still be on the basis of the plans that the Forum had previously been consulted on.

The Chair enquired whether the Council had any plans to refurbish the bus station in the short-term. Ian Slater responded that the Capital and Asset Management Division were currently undertaking a property review in which they had identified problems surrounding the bus station and were looking at the most cost effective way to deal with the issue.

The Chair suggested strongly that an information point should be established as the Tourist Information Centre was no longer in the area as it was very difficult to find out information and the information that was available at the bus station was very limited. She also commented that seating was non-existent.

George Ellis commented that improved lighting and CCTV in the bus station was required as users felt vulnerable.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Head of Planning be requested to pass on the Forum's comments with regard to the bus station to the appropriate officers within the Capital and Asset Management Division and the bus operators.

Ian  
Slater

(iii) That the Head of Planning be requested to provide a progress report to a future meeting of the Forum regarding the railway station redevelopment project.

Ian  
Slater

#### 46 NEW SWIMMING POOL DEVELOPMENT (REF: 7.1)

Dave Sutton, Head of Leisure, Libraries and Culture, reported on the current position with regard to the new swimming pool development for the Borough.

The Forum were advised that the Council had submitted a bid for PFI (Private Finance Initiative) credits to the Government. This meant that the Government would provide the Council with credits instead of money.

The new swimming pool project would cost £13 million. The bid submitted to the Government had been in the sum of £10 million and the balance of £3 million would be generated through the sale of the existing site at Bath Road.

The Council were due to be informed at the end of September, 2002 as to whether the bid had been successful but to date the Government had not made any announcement.

Dave Sutton reported that if the Council were not successful in obtaining PFI credits the project would be required to be revised downwards in terms of design and that financing would be required to be re-addressed, possibly by way of a private partnership.

Members were informed that it was hoped for a 50 metre pool including a diving pit and teaching pool; the facility would have moveable floors/walls for configuration and that at design stage the Forum would be consulted.

The Chair enquired whether final determination had been reached with regard to the site of the new pool. Dave Sutton responded that Stockwood Park had been determined as the preferred site but planning and environmental considerations had to be investigated.

George Menczer commented that it was an exciting and ambitious project but if PFI credits were not forthcoming, would it be a possible option to build the pool in stages when finances were available as opposed to revising the project downwards.

Dave Sutton responded that in terms of the size of the pool that would not be an option as it was not intended to have 3 separate pools but added that it could be an option in terms of the ancillary facilities, such as café provision, etc.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Head of Leisure, Libraries and Culture be requested to submit a progress report on the project to a future meeting of the Forum. Dave Sutton

(iii) That the Head of Leisure, Libraries and Culture be requested to consult the Dave Sutton Forum at the design stage of the project. Sutton

#### 47 SWIMMING POOL HOISTS – UPDATE (REF: 8.1)

Terry Nicholls, Assistant Manager of the Lewsey Park Pool, reported that he was due to attend a meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October with the design company who manufactured hoists.

The Forum were advised that there were only 8 such hoists in the country and the nearest was at Stoke Mandeville but that due to Stoke Mandeville's internal policy they would not allow people to visit.

However, arrangements could be made for a hoist to be viewed at either Colchester or Canterbury. Terry Nicholls reported that he would identify possible dates to undertake a visit and he added that the design company had indicated that it would provide transport for members (up to 6 people) but the transport did not have a facility for clamping down wheelchairs.

Ken Peacock commented that the visit should be undertaken by wheelchair users as they would be the people who would use the facility.

Terry Nicholls informed members that the Lewsey Park pool would be measured at the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October to ensure that the hoist would be compatible with the size of the area around the poolside.

The Chair enquired whether there were any alternative suppliers. Terry Nicholls responded that there were alternative styles of hoist but they were provided through the same supplier.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Disability Policy Officer be requested to liaise with the Assistant Manager of the Lewsey Park Pool, Bernie Chant and Bob McPhillips to identify a convenient date and time to view a hoist and to make arrangements for transport.

Samantha  
Jones

#### **48 ACCESSIBLE TAXIS – UPDATE (REF: 9.1)**

The Forum had before it a report by the Licensing Manager which provided an update on MIDAS training for Hackney Carriage drivers.

In the absence of the Licensing Manager, the Chair enquired whether members had any questions or comments to raise on the report.

George Menczer commented that scooters had not been catered for and suggested, if it was within the remit of the Council, to lobby manufacturers on this point.

**Resolved:** (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Licensing Manager be requested to make arrangements to invite the new postholder mentioned in her report to a future meeting of the Forum.

Yvonne  
Bacon

#### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

It was suggested that the following issues be placed on the agenda for a future meeting of the Forum:

- (1) Provision for disabled parking at the bottom end of King Street, George Street West and Chapel Street.
- (2) Free of charge town centre ferry bus.
- (3) Provision of a byelaw to protect disabled spaces from unauthorised users.

**(Note: (1) In the absence of John Worth and Chris Langley, Agenda Items 5.1 (Accessible Transport) and 10.1 (Occupational Therapy Service) respectively, were withdrawn at the meeting.**

**(2) The meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.)**