

DISABILITY ADVISORY AND ACCESS FORUM

5th December, 2002 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mr. M. Dillon – Disability Resource Centre (Chair)
Mrs. G. Malins – University of Luton (Spokesperson)
Mr. M. Webster – Alban Neve Centre
Ms. M. Luther – Bedfordshire Disability Forum (Spokesperson)
Mr. B. McPhillips – Bushmead Disabled Bowling Association
Mr. G. Ellis – Luton Shopmobility
Mr. G. Menczer – Luton Shopmobility
Mr. P. Vyas – Milan Day Centre Users Group

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. V. McEvoy – Thomas Becket Foundation
Mr. I. Brodie – Luton Cares
Alan Williams – Assistant Engineer, Environment and Regeneration
Department, Luton Borough Council
Samantha Jones – Disability Policy Officer, Equalities Unit, Luton
Borough Council
Simon Ayres – Senior Passenger Transport Officer, Environment and
Regeneration Department, Luton Borough Council
Chris Langley - Team Manager Physical Disability, Housing and Social
Services Department, Luton Borough Council
Matthew Hussey – Democratic Services Officer, Luton Borough
Council
Sandra Paradine - Democratic Services Officer, Luton Borough Council

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mrs. M. Harrison (Inland Revenue), Mrs. P. Morris (Sight Concern), Mrs. Vyas (Milan Day Centre Users Group), Mr. Gerrard (Luton, Dunstable and District Sports Association), Mr. K.J. Peacock (Luton, Dunstable and District Sports Association), Mr. R. Evans (The Parksiders Physically Disabled Club) and Mr. B. Chant (Bushmead Disabled Bowling Association)

50 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

The Democratic Services Officer referred to Minute 43, paragraph 6 with regards to Wigmore Hall. She reported that an access audit had been carried out, and that the total cost to bring the building up to the requirements of the DDA would be approximately £24,000 excluding signage.

In considering the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 22nd October 2002, Bob McPhillips referred to Minute 47 and apologised that he had not been able to attend due to the taxi not turning up on time. The Disability Policy Officer referred to Minute 43(iv) and advised the Forum that if invitations were extended to the Forum to undertake visits, it was the responsibility of the invitee to arrange transport. The Democratic Service Officer added that Ken Peacock had attended the meeting, and had been very happy with the hoists, which had now been ordered.

The Chair referred to Minute 48, and suggested that Licensing Manager (Yvonne Bacon) should attend a future meeting of the Forum.

Bob McPhillips raised the issue of grants and insurance in respect of stair lifts etc. Chris Langley advised Members that a report on Aids and Adaptations would be submitted to the Executive in January, and the decision of the Executive in respect of future arrangements, would be reported to the Forum. Members of the Forum were advised that during the interim period the Social Services Department would endeavour to deal with any servicing or insurance issues.

The Chair suggested that it might be appropriate to mention this in the Forum newsletters, he also felt that the Council should be pro-active and advise all those affected by the issue of the interim measures which were in place.

Resolved: (i) That the Licensing Manager (Yvonne Bacon) be requested to attend future meetings of the Forum.

(ii) That Chris Langley be requested to report back to a future meeting of the Forum on the decision of the Executive in respect of the Aids and Adaptations report..

(iii) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 22nd October, 2002 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

51 VISIT TO HYDROTHERAPY POOL AT PASQUE HOSPICE (REF: 4.1)

The Chair reported that the Forum had been invited to attend both the Bedfordshire Police Headquarters in Kempston and also the Hydro Therapy Pool at the Pasque Hospice. He raised concern at the low attendance of both visits which had been very embarrassing. He felt that as Members of the Forum had requested that these visits be arranged, every effort should be have been made to attend.

He advised the Forum that the pool was a wonderful facility which was underused. The current charge were £4.00 per person for a minimum of an hour and longer if available, £6.00 for a disabled person with a carer. He said that although numbers were limited, fully booked the pool could hold 10-12 people, the facility was available 24 hours a day and families are welcome. He added that Lifeguard issues have to be confirmed prior to attendance. The pool featured steps, a ramp and hoist to aid access into the pool, a Jacuzzi was also available although this maybe inaccessible to some.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

52 TOWN CENTRE FERRY BUS (REF: 5.1)

Simon Ayres, Senior Passenger Transport Officer reported on the Stoplinker bus service. He reported that with the termination of bus routes through the town centre, cross-town bus routes did not join up. The Council had received complaints, as people could not get to their destination without interruption of the service. He added that the Council had measured the distance between central bus stops and it had been discovered that some stops were half a kilometre apart.

He informed the Forum that the Government had launched the Urban Bus Challenge Competition, and on its second attempt. The Council's scheme had been approved. The Stoplinker scheme would use a low entrance, low floor minibus type of vehicle, with anchorage for wheelchair users, which would run a circular route around the town centre, linking all existing bus routes together including bus and rail stations. Although this service would be free, passengers would be required to show either a bus or rail ticket in order to use this linking service.

The route would run anticlockwise, and would take approximately 10 minutes to complete the loop. He added that the service could possibly be used for elderly and disabled people to get across town, but the scheme was primarily to make better use of public transport. The scheme was still in its infancy and any suggestions would be taken onboard.

A member of the Forum asked if the bus would use pedestrianised areas.

Simon Ayres replied that the bus would not use pedestrianised areas.

A member of the Forum suggested that if there were a bus stop at the Arndale entrance in Church Street, Shopmobility would be able collect people from the stop.

Simon Ayres reported that two drivers would be available during that daytime, and that the tendered cross town bus routes would resume in the evening.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That Simon Ayres be requested to arrange a meeting with George Ellis, George Menczer, Margaret Luther and Samantha Jones be arranged to discuss the finer details of the Stoplinker Scheme in respect of disabled users.

53 TOWN CENTRE DISABLED PARKING PROVISION (REF: 6.1)

Alan Williams, Assistant Engineer, Environment and Regeneration Department reported that the Council would be reviewing disabled parking provision in the Town Centre commencing in May 2003. The bottom end of King Street, Chapel Street and George Street West had been identified as possible areas for disabled parking although these areas were deadends and may pose turning difficulties. Spaces were limited due to other demands, but the Council gives high priority for disabled users.

Bob McPhillips commented that the proposed disabled parking areas were all on slopes, which could present problems for wheelchair users.

George Ellis commented that not all disabled badge holders were wheelchair users, and suggested that King Street should be used. Samantha Jones added that due to the geographical location of Luton, it was very difficult to identify level areas.

A member of the Forum commented that people who are not eligible to use Disabled Parking bays abuse the scheme.

Samantha Jones reported that parking attendants target problem areas.

The chair commented that too many blue disabled badges were issued, and Mary Luther added that it was very easy to obtain discretionary badges.

Alan Williams advised Members that the scheme was under review nationally.

George Ellis raised the issue of taxis parking on the dropped kerbs along Manchester Street, and that when confronted, the taxi drivers use abusive language.

The Chair advised that under such circumstances, the taxi or private hire number should be taken down reported to the Licensing Manager.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That Members submit any further suggested locations for disabled Parking Bays to Samantha Jones.

54 PROTECTION OF DISABLED PARKING SPACES (REF: 7.1)

Alan Williams, Assistant Engineer, Environment and Regeneration Department reported that provision was made for disabled parking places under the Borough of Luton (Street Parking Places)(Consolidation) Order 1998. He informed Members that holders of an orange or blue badge could apply for a disabled parking bay to be marked out in a residential area. He advised Members that parking attendants had powers to prosecute unauthorised users of bays, but the bays could not be made exclusive for the applicant, any badge holder had the right to use them. If there was more than one disabled badge holder, the bay could be extended. He concluded that there was no charge for applying for a disabled bay.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

55 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (REF: 8.1)

George Menczer raised concern that the elderly and the blind were in danger of being knocked over by cyclists in George Street. He said that the existing no cycling sign was too small, and that improved signage and policing was needed.

The Chair advised that the Council had imposed a no cycling policy within the last six months. Alan Williams added that the Council were looking to improve signage in the pedestrianised areas, but were limited by regulations.

George Menczer reported that a temporary pavement/crossover outside the Lady Zia Wernher School, Ashcroft Road had been left which was uneven and dangerous.

Alan Williams agreed that he would request the relevant department to look into the matter.

George Menczer commented that there should be a focus on what the Forum had achieved, and suggested that bullet points of the Forums achievements and outstanding items could be included in the report. He also suggested pre-arranged timeslots for officers to present their reports at the meeting to enable better use of their time.

Samantha Jones, Disability Policy Officer replied that many council officers found the Forum useful and that it was time well spent.

George Ellis reported that more dropped kerbs were needed, especially where traffic islands had been installed with no wheelchair access to them.

Alan Williams advised the Forum that the Council had a rolling programme where dropped kerbs were installed in suitable places on an area basis.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

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

- (1) Occupational Therapy Service – Chris Langley
- (2) Re-provision of Day Care – Chris Langley
- (3) Outdoor Bowling ramps – Samantha Jones

The next meeting of the Forum will be held on 6th February, 2003.

(Note: The meeting ended at 4.05 p.m.)