

## **DISABILITY ADVISORY AND ACCESS FORUM**

**10<sup>th</sup> April, 2003 at 2.00 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Mr. M. Dillon – Disability Resource Centre (Chair)  
Mrs. G. Malins – University of Luton (Spokesperson)  
Mr. B. McPhillips - Bushmead Disabled Bowling Association  
Mr. V. McEvoy – Beds. Tenants Participation Group  
Mr. K. Peacock - Luton, Dunstable and District Sports Association  
Mr. G. Menczer (co-opted member)  
Mr. George Ellis – Luton Shopmobility  
Mr. R. Evans – The Parksiders Physically Disabled Club  
Mrs. P. Morris – Sight Concern

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr. I. Brodie – Luton Cares  
Mr. F. Roy Willis Serjeant – Carers UK Strategic Forum  
Mr. T. Larder – Transport Project Co-ordinator, Disability Resource Centre  
Mr. R. Cameron – High Town Action Trust Business Development Manager  
Val Grant - Head of Equalities, Luton Borough Council  
Samantha Jones – Disability Policy and Access Officer, Luton Borough Council  
Paul Thomas – Heritage and Conservation Assistant, Luton Borough Council  
Steve Heappey - Head of Customer Services, Luton Borough Council  
Alan Williams – Assistant Engineer, Luton Borough Council  
Chris Goldson – Support Services Manager, Luton Borough Council  
Bob Ashforth – Head of Resources and Performance Review, Housing and Social Services Department, Luton Borough Council  
Joe Borg - Area Leisure Manager, Luton Borough Council  
Yvonne Bacon – Licensing Manager, Luton Borough Council  
Nina Boston - Democratic Services Officer, Luton Borough Council

### **ACTION**

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

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Mr. M. Webster (Alban Neve Centre), Mrs. M. Harrison (Inland Revenue), Ms. M. Luther (Bedfordshire Disability Forum), Mr. P. Vyas (Milan Day Centre Users Group), Mrs. S. Vyas (co-opted member) and Councillor Hussain (Luton Borough Council).

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

In considering the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2003, the Chair referred to Minute 2(i) and reported that he had received a response from the Senior Passenger Transport Officer at Luton Borough Council with regard to the Stoplinker Town Centre Minibus.

In relation to Minute 4, the Chair reported that the finance built into the Council's budget for maintenance costs had now been approved and that the Department of Housing and Social Services were in the process of writing to service users with regard to the future arrangements.

George Ellis referred to Minute 9 and reported that he had attended a meeting of the Safer Luton Partnership Stakeholders Group. At that meeting he had requested statistics with regard to how the number of incidents which had involved disabled people and the outcomes of those incidents. He had been informed however that those statistics were not available.

Bob McPhillips reported that the issue he had raised with regard to withdrawal of services by Dial-A-Ride had been omitted from the Minutes.

**Resolved:** (i) That the Democratic Services Officer be requested to circulate the response to the Chair from the Senior Passenger Transport Officer relating to the Stoplinker Town Centre Minibus with the Minutes. Nina Boston

(ii) That the Transport Project Co-ordinator of the Disability Resource Centre be requested to follow up the issues relating to the Stoplinker Town Centre Minibus and the withdrawal of services by Dial-A-Ride on the Forum's behalf. Trevor Larder

(iii) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2003 be taken as read, approved as a correct record subject to:-

- (a) substituting the word "Carers" for "Cares" under the heading "Future Agenda Items", sub-paragraph (1);
- (b) the inclusion of the issue raised by Bob McPhillips with regard to the withdrawal of services by Dial-A-Ride

and signed by the Chair.

## 12 **DISABILITY POLICY AND ACCESS OFFICER (REF: 3.1)**

Samantha Jones, the Disability Policy and Access Officer, reported that she would be taking up a post as Equalities Officer at Bath and North East Somerset Unitary Authority and this would be her last meeting of the Forum.

Members thanked Samantha for her help and support over the years and, in particular, Bob McPhillips thanked her for all the assistance she had given on the issue of aids and adaptations and wished her the best of luck.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## 13 **SIGHT CONCERN (REF: 3.2)**

The Chair reported that he had received a letter from Sight Concern which raised concerns about the way the Forum's agenda appeared to be driven by issues arising from the Council rather than issues initiated by disabled people. Upon the Chair's request, the Democratic Services Officer read the letter to members.

Members felt that the comments contained in the letter were rather unfair as the Forum did try to cover a wide range of issues pertinent to disabled people.

In addition, Samantha Jones added that the Forum had been established by the Council to act as an advisory and consultative body to it.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## 14 **HIGH TOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE (REF: 4.1)**

Rob Cameron, High Town Action Trust Business Development Manager, reported on a new community, sports and arts centre project, in partnership with Barnfield College, for the community of High Town.

Members were informed that public consultation had been undertaken over the last two years. A plan of the project was tabled.

It was intended that the centre would open in July/August 2004. The architects on the project were DDA registered and so had taken into account access issues in the building.

The Chair commented that the Forum appreciated the opportunity to discuss the project.

George Ellis suggested that perhaps Bob McPhillips and Roy Gerrard could be consulted on the design with regard to the physical access issues.

Gillian Malins commented that if the design was properly thought through then it could be used as a template for other new buildings.

The Disability Policy and Access Officer suggested that a Sub-Group could be established to look at building design in general.

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

(ii) That the Head of Equalities be requested to arrange informal training on reading drawings for Forum Members in order that a specialist working group could be established.

Samantha  
Jones/  
Val Grant

## **15 ACCESS AUDIT UPDATE (REF: 5.1)**

Samantha Jones, on behalf of Graham Spademan, provided an update on access audits.

The Forum were advised that budgets from previous years had been rolled over.

Val Grant, Head of Equalities, referred to the accessible toilets at the Bus Station and informed members that temporary radar keys were available from the Tourist Information Centre situated in the Central Library while keys required on a permanent basis could be obtained from the Town Hall.

Gillian Malins commented that the Bus Station continued to be a problem for disabled people in relation to the timetabling information and waiting areas.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **16 PARKING ISSUES (REF: 6.1)**

Alan Williams, Assistant Engineer, reported that time restrictions for parking for people with a Blue Badge was 3 hours on a single yellow line but there was no limit in on-street parking bays.

The Forum were advised that the only byelaws in place were those set out in the conditions sent out with Blue Badges.

Alan Williams reported that he had spoken to the Parking Operations Manager with regard to abuse of parking bays for disabled people at the "Gap" in St. George's Square. He had been informed that a parking attendant always patrolled the area on an evening shift which was when most of the abuse occurred. However, the evening shift only operated 3 days per week.

George Menczer suggested that a sign could be erected stating that a fine would be imposed and also that a byelaw be introduced to that effect to deter unauthorised use of parking bays for disabled people.

Alan Williams reported that all accessible parking bays were enforced regularly and he urged members to notify the parking attendants if a bay was being occupied by an unauthorised vehicle in order that the appropriate action could be taken.

The Forum were advised that 73 Penalty Charge Notices had been issued over the last year for the abuse of accessible parking bays. In response to a suggestion by a

member of the Forum, he added that the Council did not have the power to clamp vehicles.

Bob McPhillips commented that markings for accessible parking bays should be located outside the bay as opposed to inside so that it was clearly visible.

George Ellis enquired what criteria had to be taken into account for the provision of a designated disabled parking bay.

Alan Williams responded that the driver (but on some occasions the passenger) must have a Blue Badge, the level of parking in the road had to be taken into account and the ability of whether the applicant could provide on his/her own property.

George Ellis further enquired what the rule governing the size of the bay was. Alan Williams responded that the minimum length of a bay was 6.6 metres.

The Chair enquired how long it took to receive a decision on a request for a space and was advised that it currently took up to one year.

Gillian Malins enquired, on average, how many applications for designated accessible parking bays were made per year and Alan Williams responded that approximately 50 applications were made.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **17 DRAFT LUTON LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY (REF: 7.1)**

Chris Goldson, Support Services Manager, reported on the Luton Local Education Authority (LEA) Accessibility Strategy - a consultation document.

The Forum were advised that under the DDA, strategies and plans were required to be drawn up by LEAs addressing three elements of planned improvements in access for disabled persons:

- improvements in access to the curriculum
- physical improvements to increase access to education and associated services
- improvements in the provision of information in a range of formats for disabled pupils

Chris Goldson further reported that the LEA were looking to adapt one primary school to be totally adapted access for disabled people in each of 6 different areas.

Gillian Malins commented that the audit should not just include physical access issues but those relating to teaching as well.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

## **18 SOCIAL SERVICES JOINT REVIEW (REF: 8.1)**

Bob Ashforth, Head of Resources and Performance Review (Housing and Social Services Department), reported on a review being undertaken of social care services provided by the Council.

The Forum were advised that the Joint Review Team assigned to undertake the review comprised members of the Audit Commission and the Social Services Inspectorate of the Department of Health.

A report would be produced at the end of the review measuring how well the Council is currently performing in meeting people's needs and what its prospects are for improvement.

Bob Ashforth outlined the timetable and reported that, as part of the process, a questionnaire had been sent out on 6<sup>th</sup> March to users and carers.

Details of the review would be publicised through the local press so that people who would not be directly involved could make comments.

Gillian Malins enquired whether the Joint Review Team could impose any special measures. Bob Ashforth responded that it could make recommendations to the Secretary of State in exceptional circumstances, but it would produce a report highlighting both good practice and areas recommended for improvement.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

**19      MULTI-GYM EQUIPMENT FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS AT RECREATION CENTRES (REF: 9.1)**

Joe Borg, Area Leisure Manager, reported that the Council sought its recreation centres to be fully inclusive. He had been in contact with the English Federation of Disability Sport who ran an Inclusive Fitness Initiative through which accredited manufacturers had been identified.

Members were advised that the equipment would be of the resistance type compatible for wheelchair users.

Joe Borg further reported that it was intended that the Regional Sports Centre, at St. Thomas's Road would be equipped first and that it was proposed to place an order in August with the installation of equipment by December.

In addition, plans were also being looked at for the same provision at the Wardown Centre.

The Chair enquired whether the equipment would be leased or purchased. Joe Borg responded that it would be on a lease-back basis.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

**20      HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE ISSUES (REF: 10.1)**

Yvonne Bacon, Licensing Manager, updated the Forum on a number of issues:

- in order to introduce the taxi card scheme in Luton funding outside of the Council was attempting to be identified
- the mogo licensing system whereby luminous plates were placed in the front of vehicles had proved effective in reducing the number of complaints received
- leaflets for disabled users on how to complain had now been distributed throughout health centres, community centres, etc.

In addition, the Forum were advised that a successful prosecution had taken place with regard to overcharging a wheelchair user and Yvonne Bacon reiterated to members that it was worthwhile making a complaint.

The Chair enquired in that particular instance whether the driver's plate had been withdrawn.

Yvonne Bacon responded that if the licence was up for renewal within 6 months it would be considered by the Licensing Panel. Otherwise, it would be submitted to the Licensing Panel for a review of the driver's licence.

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

(ii) That, upon the suggestion of the Chair, the Licensing Manager be requested to undertake a “mystery shopper” exercise.

**21 ONE STOP SHOP (REF: 11.1)**

Steve Heappey, Head of Customer Service, provided a progress report with regard to the Council’s One Stop Shop facility.

The Forum were advised that work was behind schedule on the call handling centre. Although the One Stop Shop facility had also fallen behind schedule, work would commence in May with the facility becoming available in November. The facility would operate on a single level from Upper George Street.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted.

**22 GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS (REF: 12.1)**

**Resolved:** That, in the absence of the Head of Policy and Performance, this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

**23 2003 YEAR OF THE DISABLED (REF: 13.1)**

Samantha Jones updated the Forum on events planned to mark 2003 Year of the Disabled.

The Arndale exhibition had been booked and space reserved in the Council’s newspaper “LutonLine”.

The Chair advised that the space reserved in LutonLine could be used to promote the work of the Forum and to encourage more feedback on the issues that affect people.

Bob McPhillips suggested that the Games at Putteridge which used to be held be re-established. The Chair commented that the English Federation of Disability Sport were a very active organisation and could be a good umbrella for that.

**Resolved:** That the Chair and the Disability Policy and Access Officer co-ordinate, on behalf of the Forum, an article to be placed in LutonLine.

Mick Dillon/  
Samantha Jones

**(Note: The meeting ended at 5.15 p.m.)**