

# Minutes of the West Berkshire Council's Disability Equality Scheme's External Scrutiny Board Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Item	Notes
<b>Board Members in attendance</b>	Bob King (Chairman), Keith Hester, Mick Hutchins, John Carr, Sabrina McNair, Sarah Gore, Colin Parker (supporting Kate Green), Kate Green
<b>Others</b>	Councillor Pamela Bale, Councillor Julian Swift Hook, Matthew Scalpello (WBC Applications Development Manager), Mike Trevallion (WBC Transport Services Manager), Martyn Baker (WBC Car Parks Manager), Alison Love (WBC Community Care Development Manager), Jan Evans (WBC Head of Older People's Services), Stephen Chard (WBC Policy Officer), Elaine Vincent, (WBC Principal Policy Officer, Equality & Diversity)
<b>1. Welcome and Apologies</b>	<p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Brief introductions were given by all in attendance for the benefit of Elaine Vincent who replaced Joanna Richardson in supporting the Board.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Alan Fleming (Vice Chairman), Sian Cook, William Johnson and Norma Weaver.</p>
<b>2 - Minutes</b>	<p>The draft minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.</p> <p>Elaine Vincent apologised for not having updates to any of Joanna Richardson's actions due to her recent arrival at WBC.</p> <p><b>Action: Elaine Vincent would ensure that all actions allocated to Joanna Richardson from the meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008 were progressed and the Board updated at the next meeting.</b></p> <p>John Carr visited Newbury Library and the museum to review physical access to these facilities. John considered the library to be suitably accessible with hearing loops installed however staff within the library were not sure if they were working. The museum was being refurbished and was therefore not visited, however John advised that he was attending a meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the refurbishment. Sabrina McNair did not review access to Northcroft Leisure Centre. All findings were fed back to Adrian Jones. Mick Hutchins stated that he was producing an access guide to buildings within Newbury in conjunction with WBC. A request was made that the Board be consulted on any changes to WBC office premises as leases end.</p>

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<b>Action Plan</b>	<p>Elaine Vincent explained that the DES Action Plan had not been updated since October.</p> <p><b>Action: Elaine Vincent to update the DES action plan and review traffic lights and layout. Updated action plan to be sent to the Board once complete.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Pamela Bale to raise at WBC Corporate Equality Group that all actions were to be completed by Service Areas.</b></p>
<b>3 - Equality and the Web</b>	<p>Matthew Scalpello requested feedback from the Board on the accessibility of the WBC website.</p> <p><b>Action: All Board members to consider how the WBC website works for them. Any feedback should be emailed directly to Matthew at <a href="mailto:mscalpello@westberks.gov.uk">mscalpello@westberks.gov.uk</a></b></p> <p>Mick Hutchins related that his experience was that it generally takes a number of clicks to arrive at the information required and that the website can be difficult to negotiate. However this is not disability related, just good practice.</p> <p>Sabrina McNair raised the issue that the newsletters she produces after each meeting were not up to date on the WBC website.</p> <p><b>Action: Matthew Scalpello to ensure that the system is updating correctly.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Sabrina McNair to send last two newsletters to Elaine Vincent who would add them to the website.</b></p> <p>Keith Hester spoke of how the headings on the website are often too general to be able to find what you are looking for accurately.</p> <p><b>Action: Matthew Scalpello to contact Keith Hester to understand how the website could be improved.</b></p> <p>Kate Green asked how often the website is updated with regard to reviewing colour and text etc. Matthew Scalpello replied that a tool had been investigated to allow users to alter the colour and text but it was found to be unreliable. This issue was being looked at again but he did not have details with him of when the website might be updated next.</p> <p><b>Action: Matthew Scalpello to contact Kate Green to confirm the date of the next update.</b></p>
<b>4 - Travel Tokens</b>	<p>As Mick Hutchins and Norma Weaver were not able to meet with Mike Trevallion to discuss the Board's concerns about Travel Tokens prior to this meeting, Mike Trevallion invited questions about this issue.</p>

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	<p>Mick Hutchins provided a short recap of some of the issues around this subject.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the value of travel tokens was subject to whether local services were available, however the local services were not necessarily adequate.</li> <li>• New applications to the companions scheme could no longer get travel tokens although they were still accessible to historical users.</li> </ul> <p>Mike Trevallion reminded the Board that the Travel Token scheme was taken over by WBC from Newbury District Council and that this was a non-statutory benefit provided, and paid for, by the Council. It was introduced specifically to cover basic needs and not for longer journeys. He went on to say that companions were no longer able to obtain travel tokens as the cost of a taxi did not increase if an extra person was present. Mick Hutchins remarked that often a companion would need to make a journey to reach the individual before accompanying them on their journey and that the lack of travel tokens for companions disadvantaged them in these instances.</p> <p>Mick Hutchins also requested that the times that travel tokens were accepted was reviewed as the current system does not support disabled people in taking employment opportunities due to the time constraints imposed by concessionary fares.</p> <p>Additional note: Mike Trevallion has confirmed that travel tokens do not have time restrictions placed on their use. Only free bus passes are time restricted.</p> <p><b>Action: Councillor Pamela Bale and Members to review how travel tokens are targeted.</b></p> <p>A further issue was raised about the accessibility of buses to wheelchair users due to upcoming changes to the internal structure of the buses. Issues were also raised around the lack of information about which bus stops were accessible. Mike Trevallion informed the Board that companion bus passes were available to companions and that there was no age restriction on this. The provision of bus passes and travel tokens were not related.</p> <p><b>Action: Mike Trevallion to arrange for information to be made available on the WBC website regarding companion bus passes.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Mike Trevallion asked to be made aware of concerns as they arose.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Elaine Vincent to ensure that Travel Tokens were an agenda item in two meetings time.</b></p>

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<p><b>5 – Parking on Pavements</b></p>	<p>Bob King introduced the agenda item by explaining how parking on, or partially on, pavements could cause a particular obstruction to disabled people. He asked if there was any way that the Board could assist the council in raising awareness.</p> <p>Martyn Baker explained that there was no legal redress for cars parking on pavements unless there were also waiting restrictions (red or yellow lines etc). WBC intended to take over the role of parking enforcement in April 2009 this would only allow the enforcement of waiting restrictions. Obstructions would still be enforced by the police.</p> <p>Bob King requested that consideration be given to awareness raising perhaps by producing leaflets explaining the effects of obstructing the pavements. WBC will look into this</p> <p>A discussion was held around whether WBC should lobby to make pavement parking illegal, but Martyn Baker informed the Board that in some Council areas, pavement parking was encouraged to alleviate town centre parking shortages and that in historical towns, pavement parking was sometimes necessary.</p> <p><b>Action: Martyn Baker to look into providing a leaflet to be put under windscreens of offending vehicles when WBC take over responsibility in April</b></p>
<p><b>6 – Blue Badges</b></p>	<p>Martyn Baker confirmed that action had been taken to address the problems with free parking for blue badge holders in the pay on foot car parks in the Wharf area of Newbury. The new payment system was not able to recognise those who legitimately claimed blue badge parking, and there was understood to be some abuse of this by those not entitled to claim blue badge parking. As a result six further disabled bays were placed in the pay and display car park, whilst those choosing to park in the three pay on foot car parks would now be required to pay.</p> <p>John Carr asked if the decision to alter the provision of blue badge disabled parking had been equality impact assessed. Martyn Baker replied that it had not. Councillor Pamela Bale added that the decision had to be taken very quickly as the previous system was causing delays and stressed that four Members were involved in the decision, but recognised that an equality impact assessment should nevertheless have been carried out.</p> <p><b>Action: Martyn Baker to undertake a retrospective equality impact assessment and utilise this to consider any further action that could be taken to address the removal of disabled bays in three car parks.</b></p> <p>It was further noted that equality impact assessments should be undertaken on all projects.</p>

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<p><b>7 – Pedestrianisation of Newbury Town Centre</b></p>	<p>Councillor Pamela Bale updated the Board on the current situation regarding the pedestrianisation of Newbury town centre at the Broadway at the top of Northbrook Street.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kerb heights had been agreed.</li> <li>• There was agreement for lighting to be placed on buildings instead of free standing. However way-leaves still need to be sought which could take time.</li> <li>• Way-leaves were being pursued for the rest of the lighting on Northbrook Street.</li> <li>• There was no confirmation yet of how the upcoming sewer work would be done.</li> <li>• In the long term, buses would be moved out of Northbrook Street and into Park Way.</li> <li>• Priority had been given to retaining taxi and disabled parking spaces in the Broadway.</li> <li>• Work was scheduled to commence in July 2009.</li> </ul> <p>John Carr requested an update as to when the paving and lighting at Manor House Street would be corrected, and when a courtesy crossing on Northbrook Street would be put in.</p> <p>Issues were also raised about the tactile paving that had been used which was not considered to meet any known guidance, and that the lack of bollards at a courtesy crossing meant that buses drive over the paving risking injury to guide dogs who are trained to wait there.</p> <p><b>Action: Councillor Pamela Bale to provide an update to these issues at the next meeting.</b></p>
<p><b>8 – The Future of Mental Health Day Services</b></p>	<p>Alison Love told the Board about a piece of work being conducted to understand what people want from day services. Sarah Gore believed this work had already been concluded, however Alison Love explained that there was a need to look further into all day services and so the work was still ongoing as part of the System Transformation work.</p> <p>Mick Hutchins spoke about the informal drop in centre previously run from 8 Bells that no longer existed. There was concern amongst the Board about the disappearance of a relatively low cost facility which provided peer-to-peer support for a group of people who might not meet the criteria to attend other facilities. This type of support was felt to best support the well being of people in this position and may prevent them from requiring more specialist support</p>

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	<p>later, thus saving money in the long term.</p> <p>Jan Evans suggested that these views be shared with Lynn Stephens, who was leading on the piece of work to understand what people want from day services and that all day services needs should be considered (including for those who do not meet the criteria for other services). As part of this, Lynn Stephens had reformed the project group. Jan explained that although WBC might not be able to fund such a facility, it could be possible for another partnership organisation to provide a venue.</p> <p>Alison Love said that Pathways to Employment was well used by people with mental health problems and that substantial support was given to these people to ensure suitable work was found.</p> <p><b>Action: Lynn Stephens to talk to Sabrina McNair to discuss previous work undertaken and what solutions can be put in place to support those not meeting criteria and to provide a timetable for any actions identified.</b></p>
<p><b>9 – Homecare Reconfiguration</b></p>	<p>Jan Evans attended the meeting in order to advise the Board, and invite discussion, around the reconfiguration of homecare. An equality impact assessment had been completed and was distributed in hard copy at the meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: Elaine Vincent to circulate the equality impact assessment electronically.</b></p> <p><b>Action: All to consider the equality impact assessment and provide feedback directly to Jan Evans on <a href="mailto:jevans@westberks.gov.uk">jevans@westberks.gov.uk</a></b></p> <p>The area being looked at was 'Prevention and Early Intervention' which provided early help to prevent a greater level of help being needed later, and also promoted independence for older people and those with a disability.</p> <p>Until recently a generic service was provided to all. The reconfiguration would only provide the service that the person needed. The person would be encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves in order to promote independence. The first six weeks of care would be provided by WBC and hours would be slowly reduced where appropriate. After six weeks, in most cases, the service would be passed to the independent sector. Those with dementia would retain specialist support from WBC. The handover to the independent sector would take place over 24 hours during which time the current provision would be observed.</p> <p>The reconfiguration was currently being piloted and although not concluded, there were early positive feedback. The new service was intended to be in place from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.</p> <p><b>Action: Elaine Vincent to invite Amanda Joyce to the next meeting to present findings from the pilot.</b></p>

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<b>AOB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kate Green requested that the Board consider adopting a motto. Kate's suggestion was 'We may have a disability, but our attitudes don't'</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: All to consider whether a motto would be appropriate, and provide suggestions, and feedback to Elaine Vincent on <a href="mailto:evincent@westberks.gov.uk">evincent@westberks.gov.uk</a></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Carr raised a concern about a change of law meaning that people who have hearing loops fitted in their houses no longer receive a reduction in Council Tax.</li> <li>• Keith Hester asked whether WBC had any plans to pay the costs of the RNIB book service (appx £75 a year) for those who use it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: Councillor Pamela Bale to follow up these points.</b></p>
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<p>Dates for the meetings in 2009 have been agreed as:</p> <p>Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2009 – 2:30pm</p> <p>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2009 – 2:30pm</p> <p>Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009 – 2:30pm</p> <p>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 – 1:00pm to begin with lunch</p> <p>All meetings will be held in Committee Room 2 at the Council Offices in Market Street.</p> <p>Items for the next agenda will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home care services provision with Amanda Joyce</li> <li>• Review the DES Action Plan</li> <li>• Mental health update with Lynn Stephens</li> </ul>