

Minutes of the West Berkshire Council's Disability Equality Scheme's External Scrutiny Board Meeting 29th September 2011

Item	Notes
Board Members in attendance	Jan Rothwell (Chairman), , Keith Hester, Sue Hinks, John Carr, Kate Green, Mick Hutchins
Others	Councillor Pamela Bale, Councillor Joe Mooney, Nigel Owen (Project Manager Community Services), David Baker (WBC Policy Officer), Peter Hayes (Digital Uk), Val Witton (Access Officer).
1. Introduction and apologies	<p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting,</p> <p>Apologies: There were apologies received from Councillors Julian Swift-Hook and Joe Mooney, Jan Evans (Head of Adult and Community Services), Alan Fleming (Vice-Chairman), Norma Weaver, Maggie Allison and Graham Hunt.</p> <p>Kate Green gave a short reading in memory of Colin Parker which was followed by a minute's silence as a token of respect for Colin.</p>
2.- Minutes	The draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 th June 2011 was approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.
3. - Matters arising	<p>Two outstanding actions were raised from Elaine Cox's presentation on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan:</p> <p>Action 1: EC to investigate the option of providing guided walks for the visually impaired and feedback to the board</p> <p>Action 2: EC to provide a response to the request that each individual footpath improvement work item should carry its own Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) a rather than a single EIA for the whole programme of improvements.</p>

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<p>4. – Presentation on the Digital TV Switchover Help Scheme</p>	<p>Peter Hayes gave an informative presentation about the services and assistance that was available under the Digital TV Switchover Help Scheme. This scheme was designed to provide help to vulnerable groups when the switchover of television programmes from analogue to digital TV transmission services takes place on the 8th February 2012. The presentation reviewed the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is digital switchover? • What is the Help Scheme? • Who is eligible? • What help is available? • Free Help? • Security in the home • How do people get help and when? • How else do we reach people? • Resources available <p>Sue Hinks raised a concern that the helpline staff did not have any specific training or knowledge in how best to deal with blind callers. Peter Hayes took an action to follow up Sue Hink's concern and provided a specific response back to Sue.</p> <p>Councillor Pam Bale commented that some users with a freeview box may need to install an improved aerial to receive all the new channels. Councillor Bale confirmed that registered helpers were working well in the Pangebourne area and that a presentation on Digital TV Switchover Help Scheme was planned for the next parish council conference in October.</p> <p>John Carr commented that under the new digital service VCRs would only record the programme that you were viewing.</p> <p>A copy of the presentation will be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.</p>
<p>5 – Update on Personal Budget and changes to Social Cares</p>	<p>Nigel Owen provided a progress report on Personal Budgets (PBs): Nigel attended an open meeting of the Independent Learning Network (West Berkshire) (ILN) which covered issues and concerns which would be published as a report by ILN and fed back into West Berkshire Council's review process.</p> <p>Main concerns raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to streamline the process • A requirement for more work internally within WBC to educate Officers • A need to build up greater consistency and knowledge and to provide better sign-posting <p>Over the next three months WBC would be simplifying the process and associated paperwork. Roll-out of PBs was continuing. Early experience indicated that the more direct the control the better it was seen to work. Since July WBC and MH had been working through MH's written statements and WBC's responses.</p>

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	<p>KH & AF commented that they had not been able to negotiate care services after 9.30 p.m. MH said it felt like he was working against a cartel of care agencies that had no interest or understanding of the need to customise their care services to individual clients' needs or wishes. It was important that WBC over time applied pressure on care agencies when SLAs were renegotiated.</p> <p>It was agreed that the ILN would become the main focus point for managing PBs in terms of WBC providing information, guidance and progress reports and client users providing feedback and raising any issues or concerns. It was thought that the ILN was regarded as a more trusting environment for PB users and this would lead to an improved quality of feedback being achieved.</p> <p>Changes in Adult Social and PB update would remain a 10 minute standard agenda item for DES board meetings with a 1hour agenda item to receive an annual report at the July DES Board meeting.</p>	
<p>6. – Update on WBC's Housing Policy</p>	<p>Mel Brain briefed the meeting on the housing allocation scheme. WBC maintained a single housing register, (there was no separate register for the disabled). All registered individuals were assessed under a points system that determined each individual's need. The assessment did take account of medical and disability needs. The Council operated a choice based lettings scheme where registered clients could apply for properties as they became available. The letting system identified which properties had been adapted for disabled use and preference would be given to those with a need for that type of facility.</p> <p>The supply of housing in the current economic climate was dire, with 4,800 clients on the housing register and typically 2 new lettings becoming available for allocation each week. The Council did operate a limited shared ownership and Equity Loan schemes. Funding of National schemes was frozen for the time being.</p> <p>VW confirmed that there was a set of design standards for disabled clients that was applied to rented or shared affordable housing units. It was noted that the Newbury Racecourse development had a significant number of new affordable housing units in plan, but plan details had not yet come before the Access Panel</p> <p>A request was made for a break down report of the number of housing registered clients by type MB to action</p> <p>Mel Brain confirmed that the housing allocation policy would be reviewed in the next twelve month period. A formal consultation process would take place and the DES Board would be notified when the report was available for them to read and comment through the consultation process. MB to action.</p>	
<p>7 – AOB</p>		
<p>7.1 Transport</p>	<p>MH</p>	<p>Transport Forum Update: MH confirmed that there was nothing to report from the Transport Forum as the</p>

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Forum		<p>last meeting had been cancelled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH noted that the signage on the three main entrances into Newbury Town Centre did not provide a consistent set of information.
7.2 Home Care	AF	<p>Home Care User Group Update: The last meeting had taken place in Tilehurst and the next meeting was taken place that same afternoon following the DES Board meeting. It was agreed that the Home Care User group should feed into the ILN and that they were setting up a home care user group on PBs.</p>
7.3 Access Panel	JC	<p>Access Panel Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JC confirmed that there was nothing to report from the Access Panel as the last meeting had been cancelled. • Two items of interest had arisen from the dedicated answer phone service: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A young person in Reading was setting up a music group for disabled young people – JC and VW would follow up details. 2. A lady living in Hungerford had recently become blind and needed advice – Sue Hinks would be put in touch to provide general advice and guidance. • Two access programmes were in progress: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of the access and disabled parking plans for the Newbury Racecourse Hotel 2. Review of the disabled access arrangements for the Wormstall and Luker housing developments. • JC had circulated details on the new Blue Badge renewal system and charging. WBDA had replied to the consultation process on the planned policy changes and charging arrangements
7.4 Parkway Shopping Centre	VW	<p>Val Witton provided an update on the planned opening of the Parkway Shopping Centre in October:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visit by VW, KH and SH was in place to review arrangements for the visually impaired; • It was noted that bus services were being removed from Northbrook St and it would be kept traffic free between the hours of 10.00 am and 5.00 pm. Changes in the bus schedules would be made available on the day the Parkway Centre was opened; • A number of arrangements were being put in place to support the disabled:- trained 'meet and greeters' would be available to show people around and answer questions. A personal shopper scheme was being planned. Information on revised bus services and pick up points was to be published shortly. Reading Buses were carrying out a programme of disability awareness training.

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		JC was encouraged by the support being provided by the Parkway Centre manager Neil Carter.
7.5 Next meeting	All	<p>Meeting closed at 1.00pm.</p> <p>Next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 26th January 2012</p> <p>Main Agenda Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Commissioning Process for Care Service Providers – Tandra Foster - Discussion on commissioning, contract management and service standards for care service providers 2. Mental Health progress report – NO/JE – Verity Murrucane to be invited from Eight Bells project
8 Meeting dates for 2012/13	<p>Dates agreed for future meetings:</p> <p>Thursday 22nd December 2011 in Council Chamber, Market St, 10.30 - 1.00p.m. Special Meeting</p> <p>Thursday 26th January 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday 26th April 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday 26th July 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday 25th October 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday 31st January 2013 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.</p>	