

**Minutes of the West Berkshire Council's
Disability Equality Scheme's External Scrutiny Board
Meeting 26th April 2012**

Item	Notes
Board Members in attendance	Jan Rothwell (Chair), Alan Fleming (Vice-Chair), Mick Hutchins, Keith Hester, John Carr, Sue Hinks, Kate Green
Others	Councillor Pamela Bale, Councillor Julian Swift-Hook, Elaine Cox (Senior Rights of Way Officer), Catherine Carey (Transport Services Manager), Matthew Metcalfe (Senior Transport Services Officer), Elaine Walker (Principal Policy Officer)
1. Introduction and apologies.	<p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting,</p> <p>Apologies: There were apologies received from Norma Weaver, Graham Hunt (Newbury Town Council)</p> <p>On behalf of the Board, JC congratulated Mick Hutchins on being awarded the Newbury Town Council Civic Award 2012.</p>
2. Minutes and Matters Arising.	<p>The draft minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2012 were approved as a true and correct record.</p> <p>Action 1: EW to invite Elaine Cox to the next meeting to discuss comments on this paper.</p> <p>Complete.</p> <p>Action 2: All to send comments regarding this paper to Elaine Walker as they arise.</p> <p>No comments received.</p>

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	<p data-bbox="412 177 2051 248">Action 3: EW to take forward to the next agenda Mel Brain's action to provide a break down report of the number of housing registered clients by type.</p> <p data-bbox="412 288 900 323">Information provided by Mel Brain:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="412 343 1133 675"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 349 943 427">Total on Common Housing Register (CHR)</td> <td data-bbox="943 349 1124 427">4089</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 427 943 480">Aged Under 50</td> <td data-bbox="943 427 1124 480">2780</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 480 943 533">Aged 50-54</td> <td data-bbox="943 480 1124 533">245</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 533 943 585">Aged 55-59</td> <td data-bbox="943 533 1124 585">208</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 585 943 638">Aged 60-64</td> <td data-bbox="943 585 1124 638">182</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 638 943 675">Aged 65 or over</td> <td data-bbox="943 638 1124 675">673</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="412 715 2051 858">The following figures are based on the applicant's self-reporting. They are not accurate, as people may choose not to report and, in some cases, may select more than one option so there may be overlap in the numbers. We also do not verify this information at application stage. However, the following numbers of applicants on the CHR have reported the following needs:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="412 895 1133 1380"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 901 943 954">Disabled</td> <td data-bbox="943 901 1124 954">517</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 954 943 1007">Age-related infirmity</td> <td data-bbox="943 954 1124 1007">160</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1007 943 1059">Elderly disabled</td> <td data-bbox="943 1007 1124 1059">14</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1059 943 1112">Hearing impairment</td> <td data-bbox="943 1059 1124 1112">146</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1112 943 1165">Learning Disability</td> <td data-bbox="943 1112 1124 1165">275</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1165 943 1217">Permanent physical disability</td> <td data-bbox="943 1165 1124 1217">312</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1217 943 1270">Visual Impairment</td> <td data-bbox="943 1217 1124 1270">110</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1270 943 1323">Age-related mental infirmity</td> <td data-bbox="943 1270 1124 1323">26</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1323 943 1375">Alcohol Misuse</td> <td data-bbox="943 1323 1124 1375">73</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="421 1375 943 1380">Drug Misuse</td> <td data-bbox="943 1375 1124 1380">64</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Total on Common Housing Register (CHR)	4089	Aged Under 50	2780	Aged 50-54	245	Aged 55-59	208	Aged 60-64	182	Aged 65 or over	673	Disabled	517	Age-related infirmity	160	Elderly disabled	14	Hearing impairment	146	Learning Disability	275	Permanent physical disability	312	Visual Impairment	110	Age-related mental infirmity	26	Alcohol Misuse	73	Drug Misuse	64
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	<p>Action 4: EW to feed this information back to Valerie Witton.</p> <p>Complete.</p> <p>Action 5: All to encourage the completion of home care user surveys when they are received.</p> <p>Complete.</p> <p>Action 6: Nigel Owen to provide Verity Murrricane with information about possible funding from ODI.</p> <p>Complete.</p> <p>Action 7: NO to send hard copies of the consultation results to Alan Fleming and Keith Hester.</p> <p>Email copies sent to whole Board on 13 February 2012. EW to re send hard copies to AF.</p>
<p>3. Discussion regarding guided walks in the area</p>	<p>Elaine Cox provided an overview of the work undertaken to date regarding guided walks for the visually impaired. She stated that few requests had been received for guided walks and with limited resources, this hadn't been set as a priority for the service. However, along with Countryside Rangers, there was an understanding of the need for guided walks. Elaine had made some enquiries and found the following groups that may be of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The London Blind Ramblers Association who organise walks in the home counties. They team up with local ramblers groups, and organise for each person with a visual impairment to be assisted by a sighted rambler for organised walks. This group has not organised a walk in West Berkshire since 2011. • A ranger at Snelsmore Common had undertaken guided walks for groups of deaf people, although it was noted that the resources required for this were different to organising a guided walk for people with a visual impairment. • A lottery bid ('Living Landscape') had been submitted to improve countryside management, to include for example tactile signage, accessible trails, etc. This bid had been rejected.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="461 180 2040 248">• A 'Walking for Health' scheme was being run which encourages everyone to walk. A mixed group undertake each walk which would allow a sighted person to lead a person with a visual impairment. <p data-bbox="412 292 1962 360">Elaine Cox continued by providing some information on a long term project in Purley whereby a volunteer was working to improve access with the advice of Council officers.</p> <p data-bbox="412 403 2051 512">AF commented that it was not possible to use the access gates in the area. It was suggested that Elaine Cox speak with Purley Parish Council, however this had been done, but not resulted in a response. Consultation with Pangbourne Parish Council had resulted in a similar lack of response.</p> <p data-bbox="412 555 1621 587">Councillor Bale offered to talk to Tim Metcalfe and invite Elaine Cox to 'Vision' in May.</p> <p data-bbox="412 630 1783 662">Action 1: Elaine Cox to provide a summary of work being undertaken in Purley and Pangbourne.</p> <p data-bbox="412 705 1720 737">Action 2: Councillor Bale to speak with Tim Metcalfe and invite Elaine Cox to 'Vision' in May.</p> <p data-bbox="412 780 1966 849">Action 3: Elaine Cox to provide some information to Elaine Walker regarding the London Blind Ramblers, and Walking to Health for circulation to the Board.</p>
<p data-bbox="107 895 376 1003">4. Implications of the 2012 budget (travel).</p>	<p data-bbox="412 895 2056 1114">Catherine Carey provided a summary of the Council's approach to Travel Tokens. She stated that with a national priority to reduce debt, one option for the Council to make savings had been to consider the removal of travel tokens. A consultation had been undertaken in November 2011 which resulted in approximately 330 responses and, as a result, a decision had been taken to remove tokens. Matthew Metcalfe reported that approximately 555 people had so far transferred to bus passes which had been offered as the alternative travel option. The impact has further been mitigated by increasing the grant to the voluntary sector by £7,000 for the 2012-13 financial year.</p> <p data-bbox="412 1157 2047 1299">The negative responses had centred around two issues, those too frail to use public transport and those who do not live near to a bus route. In these instances, individuals are directed to alternative travel options such as volunteer services and the National Health scheme to transport people to hospital, and where necessary individuals are signposted to Adult Social Care.</p> <p data-bbox="412 1342 2040 1409">AF commented that hospital transport does not operate after a certain time of day. However, it was also noted that in these cases it was possible to reclaim taxi fares from the hospital; and more information on this could be found at</p>

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	<p>patient information desks within hospitals.</p> <p>The Board had a number of concerns regarding the reliance on volunteer transport services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The volunteer service is not open at all times, even during the day. • The use of volunteer services requires advance planning. • The voluntary transport service is already at capacity and only able to meet more critical requests • The volunteer services ask for payment for the journey, specifying a price but calling it a donation • Volunteer transport services may not travel outside their own area to collect someone. <p>Councillor Bale commented that now that voluntary services had received an increase in grant, there should be no need for them to request a donation.</p> <p>MH was concerned that not all of the people who had been in receipt of travel tokens had moved to the bus pass. Catherine Carey noted that people were still applying as travel tokens were still being accepted until the end of April, and could still be redeemed by the operators until the end of May 2012. It was also established that many people who had been in receipt of travel tokens would have been over 60 and therefore would be entitled to a bus pass anyway. These passes may be applied for without the Council knowing if the applicant also had a disability.</p> <p>MH was further concerned over the consultation process for this issue and others more generally. He was concerned that although no one who responded had been in favour of the proposal, it was taken forwards anyway. He asked what the Council's consultation process was and how responses were taken into consideration.</p> <p>Councillor Bale reminded the Board that around 1850 people had been given the opportunity to respond to the consultation but only 330 had done so. She noted that a lot of people didn't need the tokens and didn't use them. Councillor Bale also noted that personal budgets included an element for transport costs.</p> <p>Action 4: Jason Teal to be invited to the next meeting to discuss consultation.</p>

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	<p>Matthew Metcalfe explained that he had undertaken an analysis of tokens that had been returned to the Council and where they had been used. He had also incorporated the fact that approximately 40% of tokens had not been used at all and returned to the Council unused.</p> <p>Action 5: Matthew Metcalfe to provide this analysis to Elaine Walker for circulation.</p> <p>SH asked why it was not possible to have a pass that allowed concessionary fares on other bus and coach services. Councillor Bale noted that this would be a national scheme not a local one. KG informed the Board that it was possible to obtain a pass for National Express.</p> <p>Action 6: Catherine Carey to provide information about the National Express scheme to Elaine Walker for circulation.</p> <p>Councillor Bale suggested that although the decision to remove travel tokens had already been taken, it would be useful to conduct a further review of people in remote areas in particular who were known to have more difficulty in adapting to the bus pass alternative.</p> <p>Action 7: Catherine Carey and Matthew Metcalfe to review the impact on people living in remote areas and to consider comments being received regarding the alternative transport options.</p> <p>MH asked whether it would be possible to hold a meeting of the Transport Forum and invite voluntary groups in order to discuss and understand the issues being faced on both sides.</p> <p>Councillor Bale offered to discuss this with Councillor David Betts.</p> <p>Action 8: Councillor Bale to discuss the possibility of a transport forum meeting with voluntary groups with Councillor David Betts.</p>
<p>5. Update on the Equality Duty.</p>	<p>EW provided an update on the Equality Act 2010 and how it impacts on the Council and the Board. It was explained that there were two elements to the new legislation – the protection afforded to disabled people, and the processes that the Council were now obliged to undertake.</p> <p>Action 9: EW to circulate a summary of the differences between the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and the</p>

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	<p>Equality Act (2010) for disabled people.</p> <p>The Council now has a duty to publish equality objectives and annually report on progress; and also to publish anonymised information on employees. A set of equality objectives have been discussed and tentatively agreed, specific and measurable activities to sit under the objectives are expected to be agreed in July.</p> <p>Action 10: EW to circulate proposed objectives and activities to the Board for comment.</p> <p>It was suggested that as there is no longer a need for a Disability Equality Scheme, the Board amends its name to Disability External Scrutiny Board (DES Board). This was agreed.</p>
<p>6. Increasing Membership of the Board.</p>	<p>JR introduced this item by asking the Board for suggestions as to how to attract new members to the Board.</p> <p>MH suggested inviting people to see how the Board operates. This might include individuals or representatives of other groups.</p> <p>The Board discussed the original set up of trying to have as broad a representation of disabilities as possible. It was agreed to refer back to this, as well as approaching people from different areas of the district, particularly the north and west.</p> <p>MH agreed to put together a pitch and circulate this to the Board for comment and amendment.</p> <p>Action 11: MH to prepare a pitch for attracting new members to the Board, and circulate this to the Board.</p>
<p>7. AOB</p>	<p>Transport Forum – MH reported that the last meeting included a presentation from LIFT (Learning Independence for Travel) which provides training to under 19s with disabilities and learning difficulties. It was noted that this training would benefit both the individual and the Council by increasing an individual’s abilities and self confidence.</p> <p>Action 12: MH to provide the minutes of the last transport forum for circulation.</p> <p>MH also noted that money was being spent on improvements to West Berkshire’s travel network due to the proactivity of individuals here.</p> <p>Home Care – AF reported that the group had not met as the Independent Living Network had now taken over with a</p>

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	<p>meeting being held in Thatcham on the 4th May.</p> <p>MH passed on a comment from NW to ask who is monitoring the charges that are being made by care companies. She had been charged mileage for a carer who walked to her house, but the care company say it is there policy and won't remove the charge.</p> <p>Action 13: EW to pass this comment to Jan Evans for the next meeting in July.</p> <p>Access Panel – JC reported that the access panel was active and effective. Concerns that he had previously raised about comments from the panel not being reported have been corrected.</p> <p>JC reported no phone calls to the DES Board telephone line.</p> <p>JC asked what would happen to the Town Centre Partnership Accessibility Group once the Business improvement District (BID) decision is made. Councillors Pamela Bale and Julian Swift-Hook expected that the group would still remain.</p>	
8. Next meeting	All	<p>Meeting closed at 12.30pm.</p> <p>Next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 26th July 2012</p> <p>Main Agenda Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on the welfare benefit changes – Jo England Update on Adult Social Care personal budgets – Jan Evans Consultation process – Jason Teal Brief update on equality objectives – Elaine Walker Brief update on Purley and Pangbourne project – Elaine Cox (written report)
Meeting dates for	Dates agreed for future meetings:	

Item	Notes
2012/13	Thursday 26th July 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Thursday 25th October 2012 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Thursday 31st January 2013 in Committee Room 2 Market St, 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.