

Start: 6.55pm
End: 8.30pm

DISABLED PEOPLES DIVERSITY FORUM 24 JANUARY 2008

Present: Councillor Chera (Chair)
Councillors Turner, Webb, Winter, Dhamrait and
Grimadell

Representing groups

Trevor Ford – Derwent Sheltered Group
Julie Hart – Speak Out and Learning Disability Partnership
Ken Steele – Speak Out
Roy Jones – CAMTAD
George Sanders - CAMTAD
Amarjit Raju – Disability Direct
Nancy Pountain – Derby Access Group
Rachell Bastiker – Derby Deaf Forum
Alison Hicking – Derby Deaf Forum
Pat Fletcher - DCIL
Edith Storer – EMASH
Sarah Fletcher - DCIL
Judi Bateman – Derbyshire Autism Services Group
Janet Warner – Derby Shopmobility

City Council Advisors

Sheila Downey – Senior Assistant Director, Adult Social
Services
Lesley Kopec – Head of Operations – Disability and Sensory
Services
Kully Raju – Transportation Engineer – Policy
Chris Hegarty – Senior Public Transport Co-ordinator
Mick Watts – Access Officer
Ann Webster – Equality and Diversity Manager
Andrew Auld – Head of Communications and Consultation
Pam Thompson – Consultation Support Officer
Chris Gregson - Constitutional Services Officer

Also Present

Emma Walker – BSL Interpreter
John Emery - BSL Interpreter
Claire Churchill - Observer

49/07 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carr, Andy Findlay from Derby Access Group, Steve Rigby from Disability Direct, Jon Eccarius from DCIL and Noel Walsh from Derbyshire Association for the Blind.

50/07 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

No late items were introduced by the Chair.

51/07 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were declared.

52/07 Notes from Previous Meeting

The Notes of the meeting held on 15 November 2007 were reviewed by the Forum and approved with alterations to the list of those present to change Pat Fletcher's group to DCIL and to add Barbara Paling.

53/07 Direct Payments and Home Care Assessments

Sheila Downey - Senior Assistant Director, Adult Social Services - addressed the Forum regarding the provision of Direct Payments and Home Care Assessments. This was a continuation of a discussion from the previous meeting on 15 November 2007. Lesley Kopec Head of Operations – Disability and Sensory Services - attended to assist in answering questions from Forum Members.

Sheila reported that a change in the national funding formula had led to additional funds being made available to Derby. She confirmed that care would still be available to those with needs assessed to be in the Moderate band or above, and that some funds would be available to invest in supporting people with dementia. Sheila reported that there was an overspend nationally in Adult Social Services, and that there were challenging savings targets to meet. Sheila thanked staff from the Children and Young People's Department for all their hard work in the past year.

Pat Fletcher – EMASH - asked if an Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out before the removal of residential care facility for post-16s in 2010/11 was included in budget proposals. Ann Webster – Equality and Diversity Manager - agreed to discuss this with the relevant Director.

Sarah Fletcher – DCIL - raised concerns over the impact on individuals of losing support from the Independent Living Fund (ILF). Sheila shared Sarah's concerns, and advised that the ILF could change funding criteria without much notice if there was a shortfall. Lesley Kopec passed on advice from the ILF that funding would not be reduced providing the number of hours support provided did not reduce.

Sarah Fletcher asked if progress had been made to prevent people losing help. Sheila advised that Social Care met the first £200 of eligible needs with the ILF providing the rest. Lesley advised that Social Care would signpost alternatives to individuals who no longer met the eligibility criteria.

54/07 Work Programme

An updated Work programme schedule was distributed at the meeting and noted. Pam Thompson – Consultation Support Officer - advised Members to contact her if there were any topics they wished the Community Safety Partnership to focus on.

55/07 Updates on matters arising from previous meeting

The Forum noted updates on actions from the previous meeting.

Equality Impact Assessments: Ann Webster advised that Equality Impact Assessments were published on the Derby City Council website. Two Assessments were scrutinised per month. Ann asked Members to contact her if there were any Assessments they would like to see scrutinised.

56/07 2008/09 Highways and Transport Work Programme

The Forum received a presentation by Kully Raju – Transportation Engineer – Policy, Regeneration and Community - on the draft Highways and Transport Work Programme. Kully reported that there was approximately £5.5 million Local Transport Plan funding to allocate to transport schemes and initiatives. Part of the process was to assess over 100 issues and priorities raised through neighbourhood consultations from September to December 2007.

Kully advised that formulating the Highways and Transport Work Programme was a complex and evolving process throughout the year. Officers endeavoured to maximise consultation and participation on the process, as shown by the work already completed with the local Neighbourhood Forums. Further details of proposed locations for dropped crossings, footway resurfacing and other transport schemes would be provided when more definite information was available, in time to be reviewed by the Forum before the next meeting. Kully advised the Forum that the programme was developing on a constant basis on the run up to cabinet approval and that the Forum would be presented with the most up to date version at the time.

The Forum discussed the Dropped Kerb Programme. The programme was seen to be underfunded, with a 2 year backlog reported by Mick Watts – Access Officer. There were also serious concerns raised about the quality of drop kerbs, as the road was often dropped along with the kerb. This led to

puddles forming and made it difficult to use the dropped kerb as the pavement and road were at different levels.

The Forum pointed out that pavements were not mentioned in the draft plan. Kully replied that the footway programme was still being assessed, and that a further draft would be presented at the next meeting. Ann Webster reported that a three-year Highway Asset Management Plan was in its early stages, and would include pavements and street lights in its remit. Ann asked for anyone interested in volunteering to take part in the Equality Impact Assessment to contact her. Janet Warner, Nancy Pountain and Judi Bateman volunteered to take part.

The Forum agreed to invite Kully to the next Forum meeting. Members were asked to contact Kully Raju or Pam Thompson if there were any topics they would like discussion to focus upon. Pam Thompson would distribute copies of the documentation in a larger format to Members if required. Kully agreed to take comments from the next Forum meeting to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation. The comments would form a late submission as the formal deadline for the final report was 6 March.

57/07 Concessionary Travel Pass

The Forum received a presentation from Chris Hegarty – Senior Public Transport Co-ordinator. Chris introduced the English National Concessionary Bus Fare Scheme, which would replace the Gold Card on 1 April 2008.

Two types of card would be issued, one for over-60s and one for disabled people who meet the eligibility criteria set by the Department of Transport. Both cards would give the bearer free local bus travel throughout England after 9.30am from Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends. The cards would not be valid on National Express, Community Transport, Dial-a-Bus, local trains, the London Underground, trams or in Scotland Wales or Northern Ireland. Cardholders would continue to receive 'Derbyshire Gold' benefits.

Chris reported that three groups of impairments that entitled people to a Gold Card were not included in the eligible categories for the new card. These were people with enduring mental illness, people with a disabled parking badge and people in receipt of middle or higher rate Disability Living Allowance. He also reported that everyone in these categories had been written to, asking them to reapply if they qualified through other categories. Chris advised that applications should be received by mid-February to guarantee receipt of the new card by 1 April. The Gold Card would continue to be valid until the end of May.

Chris reported that the true cost of the scheme to councils could not be calculated until the claim for £4 million against the Gold Card scheme by Trent Barton and Stagecoach was resolved.

Several serious concerns with the scheme were reported by Forum Members:

- The terminology used in the entitlement criteria was generally seen as very offensive, particularly the definition for learning difficulties
- The long-standing benefit of free travel for people with mental health issues would be lost.
- The loss of the benefit of peak-time bus travel would lead to increased costs for many. Examples given included employees, voluntary workers, particularly people with learning difficulties on work experience placements, disability group representatives attending morning meetings and those with hospital appointments.
- Deaf people experienced great difficulties communicating with bus drivers. There were no hearing loops on buses, and lip reading or writing down destinations often did not work.
- The eligibility criteria for hearing impairment did not state whether the average DPSL score of both ears is used, or if each ear is tested individually.
- Some Council Departments were reported as unable to provide information on the scheme when requested.
- A high proportion of group members had received no information from the Council about the new scheme.
- Incidents were reported of doctors charging to provide proof of disability or some even refusing to sign these forms at all.

Ann Webster reported that UMBRELLA had received complaints from parents upset about the terminology used for people with learning difficulties and the refusal of some doctors to sign forms. UMBRELLA would be writing to the Government themselves, but asked that if the forum would be writing as well that their comments go in the letter too.. Bob Laxton MP had written to the Secretary of State for Transport regarding the loss of free travel for people with mental health issues.

Chris Hegarty advised anyone who has not received a letter about the new scheme to contact him or Ann Webster. The Chair asked this message to be passed to all groups, with a reminder that applications needed to be received by mid-February.

Councillor Webb suggested that the Forum issued a press release to local media highlighting the issues raised in the discussion, particularly targeting people who have not yet applied. Mick Watts suggested writing to the Secretary of State for Transport to put forward the concerns of the Forum. It was agreed that Mick and Ann would draft a letter and with the approval of the Chair send it off to the Secretary of State for Transport.

Alison requested that Chris Hegarty make a presentation to Derby Deaf Forum. Chris agreed.

Alison Hicking – Derby Deaf Forum - reported that a meeting to discuss the Concessionary Travel Pass had been very well attended.

59/07 DPDF Project Group Minutes

The Forum received the Project Group minutes of 8 October 2007 and 10 December 2007.

60/07 Public realm developments / materials

Mick Watts addressed the Forum. He reported that the uneven surface on East Street made the street uncomfortable for disabled and able-bodied people alike. One formal complaint had been submitted and a reply had been received. The reply stated that the Council regretted that disabled groups were not consulted on the project, and gave the commitment of the Chief Executive to consult in the future.

Mick reported that the paving materials used on East Street were not from the agreed palette of public realm materials. This was due to time pressures caused by the need to complete the project in time for the opening of the Westfield Centre. The issue would be further discussed at a future Project Group meeting.

Andrew Auld - Head of Communications and Consultation - asked if the Forum had been included in deliberations on the work at Cathedral Green. Mick replied that Forum members had been involved in the Equality Impact Assessment, and that officers were now better informed in the use of suitable materials in the public realm.

61/07 Council House Lift

Mick Watts addressed the Forum. He reported that meetings had started relating to major modernisation work in the Council House. He advised that early designs include two new lifts. The plans showed that the existing lifts would be retained but would not remain in use. The plans showed that all public rooms would move to the front of the building.

Mick advised that he would keep Forum members informed on developments, and would seek advice when plans had reached a more advanced stage.

62/07 International Day of Disabled People (IDDP)

Ann Webster addressed the Forum. Ann reported that the International Day of Disabled People was celebrated by the considerate parking scheme. Reminder tickets had been produced to issue to drivers who parked inconsiderately, including Blue Badge holders who parked in bus lanes, taxi bays and across dropped kerbs.. She reported that 367 tickets had been issued to date and that apologies had been received from some drivers who

had received a reminder ticket. Ann advised that the ticketing project would continue to ensure that new customers to Derby were reminded of their responsibilities.

Ann reminded the Forum that the top floor of the QUAD has been offered as a venue for free on 5 December 2008 for next year's European Day of Disabled People. Ann asked for volunteers for the Working Group for the next International Day of Disabled People. Roy Jones - CAMTAD, Nancy Pountain – Derby Access Group, Edith Storer – EMASH, Janet Warner – Derby Shopmobility Scheme, Councillor Robin Turner volunteered to join the Working Group. It was also suggested that Andy Finldlay from Derby Access Group join the group. Alison Hicking suggested that Nikki Johnson – the Council's Deaf Arts Officer should join the working group too.

63/07 Open Discussion

No open discussion was held at this meeting.

64/07 Date of next pre-meeting – 7 February 2008 at 6pm

The Forum agreed representatives to attend the next pre-meeting. The representatives were Nancy Pountain – Derby Access Group – and Roy Jones- CAMTAD.

NOTES END