

DPDF – Project Group Minutes 11 June 2007

Present

Janet Warner
Peter Maidens
Judi Bateman
Nancy Pountain
Jon & Mrs Eccarius
Christine Yates
Marta Hancock
Angela Neal
Councillor Robin Turner
Amanda Gibson
Andy Finley
Ray Brown – DCC
Ann Webster – DCC
Mick Watts – DCC

Apologies

Trevor Ford
Marion Edge

Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed

Matters arising

A question was raised about the number of Shopmobility members. Janet confirmed that the organisation was approaching its 4000 member, but that when time and resources allowed an audit of active members would be undertaken.

Mick confirmed that a start had been made on implementing the A-boards policy. The policy would be rolled out throughout the City Centre with the whole of the area covered in about six months. Mick would give members further information on exact locations and timescales at the next meeting.

Ann confirmed that the reasonable adjustments promised by Lime to make the store more accessible to disabled people had been completed, and were a big success. Ann was working with the Next the owners of Lime and a press release. Members were

impressed by the company's commitment to its disabled customers, and how they had embraced the principle of reasonable adjustments.

Mick informed members that he was no longer pursuing beacon status for improved accessibility.

Judi confirmed that she had been contacted by highway colleagues regarding her comments about the Alvaston District Centre. Ann commented that an Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposal was still to be undertaken. Judi confirmed that she was still prepared to assist with the assessment.

Rights of Way Improvement Programme

Previously circulated had been a copy of the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Ray commented that disabled people were one of the key groups that should have improved use of rights of way from successful plan implementation. The identified need in the plan read:

“Improve the accessibility of paths by upgrading surfaces and removing barriers”

The proposed actions to achieve this were:

Create a prioritised list of paths, with the assistance of disabled people's organisations, which would benefit from the upgrade of surfaces and furniture, and the removal of barriers.

Design a costed programme of works for those identified paths.

Carry out works that will improve the accessibility of at least one identified path each year.

Members fully supported the aim and objectives of the draft plan, but Ray asked members to feedback to him during the consultation period any suggested amendments to the plan, or indeed and suggestions for path improvements themselves.

East Street update

Mick informed members that the re-paving and de-cluttering work was proceeding on East Street. Issues had arisen however regarding the carriageway material and its suitability for use by

disabled people, particularly wheelchair users. Concerns had also been raised about ramp gradients into premises. Following comment about the carriageway material a number of access strips were being laid across the carriageway to improve the ride quality for wheelchair users. There wasn't however a reasonable solution to shop gradient issues. Mick commented that there had been an acceptance at the highest level within the Council that mistakes had been made, and pre-project consultation with disabled people inadequate. It was accepted that this must change with any future projects. Mick and Ann suggested that it might be helpful if a schedule of acceptable public realm materials and disabled people was produced. Members agreed and Mick would produce a draft document for consultation.

Public realm design parameters

This issue was linked to the East Street works but had wider implications for public realm work throughout the City. Clearly, it was essential that all public realm work was accessible and usable by all and a schedule of public realm materials detailed above would be a useful reference point.

Mick commented that as part of the Cityscape proposals for Castleward the principle of shared space was being considered. Shared space was streets where certain vehicles and pedestrians shared the same space. Such a proposal if implemented would create challenges in design terms for how disabled people could safely use the space. When further detail was available on the proposal, which was at an early stage he would involve members in the detail and principle of this new approach to street design and use.

Accommodation strategy

Mick informed members that following a major review of the Council's accommodation it had been agreed that the Council House would be retained and refurbished. The first phase of the refurb would be building stabilisation work and window and roof work. Following the upgrading of the building envelope internal work to rationalise the public and staff areas of the building would be undertaken. This work would include an audit and review of disabled people's facilities within the building and vertical and horizontal circulation issues. Mick undertook to involve members in the public area upgrade proposals.

Non-disabled people's use of disabled people's toilets

Ann and Janet raised concerns about parents with children using disabled people's toilets within mainly City Centre retail premises. The toilets had been designed for disabled customer use but parents with children were using the facility without any apparent sanction from the service provider. Members reiterated how important it was that the facility should be available when required and that service providers had a duty to ensure this happened.

It was felt that businesses should be encouraged to fit RADAR locks to assist with the control of the facility. If this was not acceptable to the service provider then perhaps a notice fixed saying that disabled people have priority use of the facility may be an acceptable compromise. If these suggestions did not work then perhaps the advice of the DRC should be sought about taking action under DDA legislation.

Any other business

None

Date, time and place of next meeting

1 October 2007, 2:00pm, Meeting Room 2, Council House