

Start: 6.30 pm
End: 8.30 pm

DISABLED PEOPLES DIVERSITY FORUM 8 JANUARY 2009

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

In Attendance:

Representing groups

Judi Bateman – Derbyshire Autism Services Group
Andy Findlay – Derby Access Group
Pat Fletcher – East Midlands Arthritis Self Help
Sarah Fletcher – East Midlands Arthritis Self Help
Ian Gosling – Derby Deaf Forum
Alison Hicking – Derby Deaf Forum
Roy Jones – CamTAD
Nancy Pountain – Derby Access Group
George Sanders – CamTAD
Edith Storer – East Midlands Arthritis Self Help Group
Janet Warner – Derby Shopmobility

City Council Advisors

Ann Webster – Equality and Diversity Manager
Christine Collingwood – Consultation Support Manager
Mick Watts – Access Officer
Richard Machin – Derby Advice
Judith Tee – Sign Language Interpreter
John Emery – Sign Language Interpreter

41/08 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Richards and Noel Walsh.

42/08 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

The Forum was advised that Andy Findlay had been invited to go to an all party Select Committee at the House of Commons regarding disability issues in health provision. Forum Members were invited to contact Andy with any issues they felt should be raised before 20 January 2009.

43/08 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

44/08 Notes from Previous Meeting

The Notes of the meeting held on 6 November 2008 were reviewed by the Forum and approved subject to the inclusion of Councillor Hird's apologies.

45/08 Updates on matters arising from the previous meeting

37/08 International Day of Disabled People: Disability Hate Crime

Ann Webster provided an update on the International Day of Disabled People: Disability Hate Crime. The event had taken place in the Westfield shopping centre with representatives from the Police, Criminal Justice board, Fire and Rescue, the Crown Prosecution Service and Derby City Council. There had been a good response from the public, but concerns were raised over the support from Forum Members, and whether this was an event that the Forum wished to continue with.

The Forum agreed that this was a worthwhile event, but that daytime commitments made it difficult for them to attend. It was agreed that the event should be continued next year, but that alternative venues and times should be considered to enable Forum Members to become actively engaged with the planning process.

34/08 Fairer Charging Update

Nancy Pountain reported that there had been some good news stories coming from the fairer charging scheme, including an incorrectly completed form indicating full payment would be possible, which after a home visit to the client, had resulted in no payment being charged.

Forum members reported that there were still problems with the information being produced from fairer charging as the differing levels of knowledge in staff undertaking the assessments meant that anomalies were not always spotted.

33/08 Refurbishment of Council Buildings

It was reported that the refurbishment of Council buildings was being reassessed due to the current economic climate. This meant that any planned equality impact assessments were being postponed until May or early summer.

36/08 Standard Working group to provide advice on Derby Cityscape Developments

Mick Watts reported that the new urban design manager for Derby Cityscape had attended the last meeting of the project group, and some useful links had

been made. It was noted that a shared space working group had been started to look at the detail of shared space issues.

Agreed to note the updates.

46/08 Work Programme 2008/09

An updated Work Programme was distributed to the Forum. It was agreed that the Housing Project should be early on the agenda as the item had been deferred from earlier meetings. It was also agreed that International Day of Disabled people should be on the agenda for the March meeting.

Agreed:

- 1. To note the work programme**
- 2. To include the International Day of Disabled People on the agenda for the March meeting**

47/08 Welfare Rights

The Forum received a presentation on welfare rights from Richard Machin, Welfare Rights Manager. A high proportion of people using Derby Advice had a disability, and so the Welfare Rights team aimed to provide free, confidential and impartial advice regarding benefits, debt and home energy. The team had 10 members of staff providing benefits advice, which was available in council buildings, through community based sessions, over the telephone or by individual appointment. It was noted that there was a lack of knowledge regarding benefit eligibility, and the team were aiming to break down the barriers to enable more people to claim the benefits they were entitled to. There were 5 members of staff working in the money advice team, and they undertook casework for Derby Homes tenants, and provided an advice service to non tenants. The home energy team had three members of staff and they aimed to raise awareness of government energy grants, as well as providing practical hints and tips for saving energy. It was noted that there was much advice available in the city but through disparate sources, and this could make it difficult for people to know where to go to get the advice they needed. It was hoped that this would be rectified with the introduction of the Community Legal Advice Centre in April 2008, which aimed to co-ordinate the provision of advice throughout the city.

It was reported that the teams were working hard to raise awareness of benefits, and the real need that some people had for them to make a difference. It was noted that benefits often had a negative connotations, and much work was being done to challenge these preconceptions. The team represented people in benefit tribunals. The Forum reported that tribunals could be very difficult for disabled people as there was often a lack of understanding from people about what problems conditions could cause for individuals. Richard Machin acknowledged that it was very difficult for the team to be experts in every condition, but that they had a good track record in securing benefits.

The Forum expressed interest in the advice centre located in the Rheumatology centre at the Derby Royal Infirmary, but felt that this service needed publicising much more widely. It was noted that the current publicity for the centre included mail-shots by ward, specific targeting of focussed groups and also working in partnership with the benefits section to ensure individuals were receiving the benefits they were entitled to.

Agreed:

- 1. To note the presentation**
- 2. To receive further information regarding the number of cases dealt with and the amount of benefits raised by the team to a future meeting.**

48/08 Forum Finance

Christine Collingwood reported that there had been support from the Director for £1,000 funding for each of the Diversity Forum but that as this needed to be funded from the core budget, it would not be possible at the current time. It was noted that there was enough budget flexibility to be able to fund a small one-off activity, and that other methods of funding were being actively sought by the team. The Forum thanks Christine for her ongoing efforts to secure funding.

Resolved to note the update

49/08 Transport: Rickshaws and Tuk-Tuks

The Forum received an assessment on Rickshaws and Tuk-Tuks from Janet Warner. It was reported that some Forum members had attempted to view a rickshaw, but that it had not been available as promised. From what they could see, it had not been suitable for disabled access.

Ann Webster and Mick Watts reported that they had also seen a rickshaw with the licensing officer, and it had not been possible for a wheelchair user to access the vehicle. This meant that Rickshaws did not meet the requirements for Hackney Carriages, which presented a problem for the Licensing Panel as they would need to either change the conditions on the license to allow them to be used in the city, or agree that rickshaws could not be used within Derby as Hackney Carriages. This potentially caused problems as it could leave the Council in breach of the Disability Discrimination Act, and open up the licensing policy to further challenge.

The Forum raised further concerns regarding rickshaws being able to use pedestrianised areas. It was felt that in addition to the shared space issues, there was also a potential hazard for those with hearing impairments as there would be no advanced warning of approaching vehicles in the pedestrianised areas. It was felt that the trial period of 18 months for the rickshaws would be unacceptable as the potential for accidents in pedestrianised areas would be great.

The Forum agreed that as Derby city centre was based on a linear system, then a bespoke transport system from the Westfield Centre to the other side of the City could solve these problems better than the introduction of Rickshaws. They welcomed the idea of a 'Shopper Hopper' bus to connect the sites, so long as it was correctly licensed and compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Forum felt strongly that their views needed to be heard, and requested the Chair to represent these views to the Cabinet member and the Licensing Panel.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the updates**
- 2. For the Chair to write to the Licensing Panel and to the Cabinet Member to say that:**
 - a. The Forum are completely opposed to the introduction of rickshaws within the city centre**
 - b. The current proposals for rickshaws using shared space need to be reviewed urgently**
 - c. The licensing of rickshaws must be reviewed to ensure that it remains DDA compliant.**

50/08 Deaf Forum

The Forum received an update from Alison Hicking, Derby Deaf Forum, regarding Arriva buses. Alison had met with Roy Godfrey and spoken about the problems deaf people had when using buses. This had been before September, and there had been no further progress since that date. Roy Jones reported that he had also been to see Arriva and had received a very negative response from them. It was agreed that CamTAD and the Derby Deaf Forum should work together on deaf awareness training as they would then be able to cover the requirements of both pre-lingual and acquired deafness. It was agreed that the issue needed resolving urgently, and that the Chair should write to Arriva formally to ask them to address these concerns, if possible in person at a future Forum meeting. It was noted that Trent buses had done some awareness training for their drivers.

The Forum were also made aware that there was a consultation being undertaken in Derbyshire regarding the impact of the introduction of the new Gold Card. Interested Forum members were asked to contact Judi Bateman or Pam Thompson for a consultation forum

Agreed:

- 1. To note the update**
- 2. For the Chair to write to Arriva buses on behalf of the Forum asking for them to address the concerns raised, and to invite them to a future Forum meeting to meet with Forum members**
- 3. For the Derby Deaf Forum and CamTAD to work together to improve deaf awareness for public transport systems**

51/08 DPDF – Project Group Minutes

The Forum received the minutes of the Disabled People's Diversity Forum Project Group from 8 December 2008.

Resolved to note the minutes

52/08 Open Discussion

The Forum discussed the provision of parking with rear vehicle access within the city. It was noted that many of the parking bays were parallel bays and so could cause problems for people who needed rear access to their vehicles as it enabled other drivers to park in a way which restricted this access, even if it was clearly signed on the vehicle that access was required. It was noted that parking needed to be provided as many disabled people were unable to use car parks with barrier systems. The Chair requested that these concerns be passed on to her to be taken forward.

Agreed for the Forum members to contact the Chair with any concerns regarding parking provision in the City.

53/08 Date of next meeting

The Forum agreed that Janet Warner, Roy Jones and Sarah Fletcher would attend the next pre-meeting, on 11 February 2009. The next Forum meeting would take place on 19 March 2009.

To be signed by the Chair of the next Ensuing Meeting