

┌ Councillors Ruhemann (Chair), Khan,
Orton, Rye, Stanford-Beale and
Vickers

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└ To All Members of the Access &
Disabilities Working Group ┘

12 March 2013

Your contact is: Amy Bryan - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP - THURSDAY
21 MARCH 2013**

A meeting of the Access and Disabilities Working Group will be held on **THURSDAY 21 MARCH 2013 at 2.00pm in the Kennet Room**, Civic Offices, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA

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1. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS Councillors to declare any personal and prejudicial interests they may have in relation to the items on the agenda.	-
3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2012	1-5
4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES	
• Royal Berkshire Hospital	-

CIVIC CENTRE EMERGENCY EVACUATION: Please familiarise yourself with the emergency evacuation procedures, which are displayed inside the Council's meeting rooms. If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble at the Hexagon sign, at the start of Queen's Walk. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

5.	NEW CIVIC OFFICES - PLAZA WEST - Paul Williams and Andrew Pritchard, Hampshire County Council, and Andrew Starkie and Neil Hadley, Mace Ltd	Verbal
6.	CHANGING PLACES - Jenny Miller, Commissioning Officer	Verbal
7.	READING BUSES - Mick Hughes, Reading Transport Ltd	Verbal
8.	READING STATION - Neil Craig, First Great Western, and Anthony Bolton, Head of Highways and Transport	Verbal
9.	ILLEGAL SKIP DUMPING - Anthony Bolton, Head of Highways and Transport	Verbal
10.	WELFARE REFORM - Sarah Tapliss, Strategy Officer	Verbal
11.	LOCAL ACCESS FORUM	6
12.	INFORMATION ITEMS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQUALITY ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE (EASS) • GET LOUD FOR LCD AT PARTY CONFERENCE • TALKING HEALTH FOCUS GROUP • DIGNITY CHARTER 	<p>7</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>-</p>
13.	ISSUES LIST - a look at the progress with the ongoing 'Issues List' (please see form printed at the back of the agenda papers)	12
14.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	-
15.	DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING	-

Dates for 2013/2014 municipal year will be confirmed soon.

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 6 DECEMBER 2012

Present:

Councillors Ruhemann (Chair), Stanford-Beale and Vickers.

Also in attendance:

Liz Cheney	Member of Public
Dorothy Nalder	Readibus
Trish Wright	Readibus
Lisa Bamsey	Readibus
Carol Marenghi	Chain Reaction
Sian Hooley	Berkshire PHAB
Alan Fleming	Enrych
Diane Goodlock	MS Society
Helen Bryant	Access Officer, RBC
Bob Bristow	RAB
Jim Hoggart	HR Manager, RBC
Gary Deards	Level Playing Field
Andrew Jackman	Business Improvement Officer, RBC
Sam Hamey	Reading Welfare Rights Unit
Gareth Taylor	First Great Western

Apologies:

Carol Froud	
Derek Woad	
Cllr Rye	RBC
Dorothy Townsend	
Cllr Orton	RBC
Keith Hester	

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

a) New Civic Offices

Further to Minute 3 of the last meeting it was reported that there would be a planned update on the new Civic Offices at Plaza West at the next meeting.

b) Medical Test Centre

Further to the last meeting, Councillor Ruhemann reported that he had received a reply regarding his Freedom of Information request but most of the information had been 'redacted'. He asked that any person who had difficulties with access to the centre get in touch with him directly and there may be some collective action that could be taken against the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

c) Royal Berkshire Hospital

Councillor Ruhemann reported that he had had a meeting with Royal Berkshire Hospital in September 2012 regarding the issue of Disabled Parking Bays, but no

action had seemingly been taken following the meeting. Councillor Ruhemann had now arranged a meeting with the Director of Estates and invited Diane Goodlock and Helen Bryant along to the meeting if they wished to attend.

AGREED:

That the positions be noted.

3. READING WELFARE RIGHTS UNIT

Sam Hamey, Deputy Manager, Reading Welfare Rights Unit attended the meeting and spoke about the support the organisation offered advice about benefits, employment and support allowances. They also provided legal advice and guidance for appeals to do with medical tests for limited work capacity which was scored by ATOS. It was reported that these tests were being altered which would make it harder to score enough points to be considered physically unable to find employment. Successful appeals were running at around 90%.

It was noted however that the appeal process could take up to a year and during the period the benefits received were cut to the basic living allowance of around £71 per week. Assessments were carried out once a year. From April 2013 Disability Living Allowance would become Personal Independence Payment (PIP). These changes would only affect those of working age, pensioners would be protected. A deluge of appeals would be expected following this change. As the funding to the organisation was being reduced there would be only two legal advisers available. Therefore the workload was likely to be stretched.

Sam also spoke about work placements and the fact that they needed to be 'appropriate' especially if the person had mental health problems.

Anybody who had problems with their benefits being cut due to work placements or other benefits being taken into account were asked to write to Cllr Ruhemann and/or the Council's Managing Director where it could be investigated as the Council administered some of the benefits.

AGREED:

- (1) That Sam Hamey from Reading Welfare Rights Unit be thanked for attending the meeting;
- (2) That any person who felt that they had been incorrectly categorised by work place assessments as being capable for work be urged to contact Reading Welfare Rights Unit for information on how to appeal the decision;
- (3) That any person who felt that any benefit administered by Reading Borough Council had been incorrectly calculated be asked to contact Cllr Ruhemann or the Managing Director directly.

4. READING STATION

Gareth Taylor, Design and Build Consultant at Reading Station attended the meeting and spoke about the next phase of works which were due to be completed before May Bank Holiday 2013.

Gareth explained that this phase of the station works would involve closing the old bridge on 28 February 2013, and for four weeks the only route from the north side of the station to the south side would be via the subway which had been refurbished and extended. Reading Borough Council would take over the responsibility for the subway's maintenance. The new bridge would then be put in place and opened over the Easter weekend, and the old bridge would be removed. The station would re-open after May Bank Holiday weekend. Some of the platforms would be renumbered and users were urged to check screens and signs on their arrival at the station. The platforms would be refurbished in turn.

On the north side of the station would be a new ticket office, sales windows and excess fare facility. Wireless help points would be made available. There would be two lifts for every platform, 14 lifts in total. 12-15 new toilets had also been provided.

AGREED:

That Gareth Taylor be thanked for attending the meeting and the position with the ongoing works at Reading Station be noted.

5. DISABILITY REVIEW

Jim Hoggart, HR Manager, attended the meeting to explain that the Council was currently consulting on its recruitment policy of disabled people. Around 1.9% of employees currently declared themselves as having a disability. Around 5% of applicants for advertised vacancies declared as having a disability with recruitment at around 4%.

The terms of reference had been circulated with the agenda papers for comment, and it was planned to present practical proposals for change to the Council's Personnel Committee on 7 March 2013.

AGREED:

That any comments or suggestion on the review of the Council's current recruitment policy for disabled people be passed to Jim Hoggart directly prior to the item's consideration by Personnel Committee on 7 March 2013.

6. RBC WEBSITE

Andrew Jackson, Business Improvement Officer, Reading Borough Council, attended the meeting and spoke about the accessibility issues with the Council's website. He stated that there were between 2,000 and 4,500 hits per day on the website, and on average 4 pages were visited by each visitor.

It was noted however that the format of the website meant that there were a few accessibility issues, such as formatting of documents and the text-based nature of the information. It was noted that improvements were constantly being made to the site.

It was reported that a website called Direct Enquiries existed for access enquiries such as disabled parking bays. <http://www.directenquiries.com/>

AGREED: That Andrew Jackson be thanked for attending the meeting and the position be noted.

7. BLUE BADGE SCHEME

A report that had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 November 2012 which set out details of the national changes to the Blue Badge (Disabled Parking) Scheme and the local implementation of these arrangements had been attached to the agenda papers. Cabinet had agreed that officers use discretion when issuing blue badges to people who had cognitive, intellectual and mental health impairments which would be refused under the new national guidance. The Access and Disability Working Group had been thanked in the report for highlighting these particular issues.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Special Christmas Shopping Evening

The Special Christmas Shopping Evening had been held on Monday 3 December 2012 and had attracted visitors from as far away as Wiltshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire. Additionally 23 care homes had participated.

New Bikes

It was reported that the Council had issued a press release that stated that disabled residents would now be able to benefit from the use of new wheelchair bikes which would be used for sessions at Palmer Park. The bikes would be used each week on a Wednesday between 10am and 2pm for the Everybody Active Cycling Sessions. The bikes had been funded through the Council's successful Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) bid.

UK Disabled History Month

Helen Bryant reported that UK Disabled History Month ran from 22 November 2012 to 22 December 2012 and lots of information was available through the organisation's website www.ukdhm.org.

New Civic Offices

The new Access and Disabilities Sub-Group which looked at Transport and Town Centre issues would meet on 16 January 2013 to discuss the latest situation with the Council's move to a new building in 2013-14.

Blue Badges at the Crown Court

A member of the Forum who had been asked to attend jury service had been told there were no all-day blue badge parking bays available near the Crown Court in Forbury. The bays at the front of the Court had now been restored.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

9. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

AGREED:

That the Access & Disabilities Working Group be held at 2.00pm on the following dates in 2012/13:

Thursday 21 March 2013

(The meeting opened at 2.00pm and closed at 4.51pm)

Do you enjoy outdoor recreation?

Would you like to influence future access to it?

**OPENINGS ON THE MID & WEST BERKSHIRE
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

The search is on for people to join this influential forum which provides advice to Reading Borough, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils, and other agencies, on improving access to the countryside and outdoor recreation. This voluntary role includes advising on the management of the 'open access' land and changes to the public rights of way network. The Forum is made up of representatives from a cross-section of interests, from walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and other users, to rural business owners, farmers and landowners.

Improving opportunities for people to enjoy the central and west Berkshire parks and countryside is one of our key aims. The forum plays a vital role in ensuring that, in doing so, we are taking into account the views of all those that live, visit and work in the parks and countryside.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 31 March 2013.

For an application pack please contact:

Linda Fothergill, Reading Borough Council

- by email to linda.fothergill@reading.gov.uk or
- at Reading Museum & Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1QH or-
- on 0118 937 3400

Dated: 21 February 2013



EASS

Equality Advisory Support Service

Advice and Support on Equality and Human Rights Issues

WE CAN HELP.

Contact Us on

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Postal Address:

Freepost

Equality Advisory Support Service

FPN4431

Website:

www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Email:

Via our website

Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday 9:00am – 8:00pm

Saturday 10:00am – 2:00pm

Closed Sundays and Bank Holidays

Contact the Equality Advisory Support Service and:

- Tell us what happened
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- Where did it happen? For example at work, at school, in a shop.
- What have you done so far?

We are pleased to offer free calls from landlines and most mobiles: 3, EE, O2, Orange, T-Mobile, Virgin and Vodafone

We cannot guarantee that they are free from other mobile networks so please check with your provider.

Our service partners are Disability Rights UK, Law Centres Network, British Institute of Human Rights, VoiceAbility, and the Royal Association for Deaf People.

The 'Protected Characteristics 'are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as:

Age – Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 years old) or range of ages (e.g. 18-30 years olds)

Disability – A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Gender Reassignment – The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and Civil Partnership – Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a women'. Same-sex couples can have their relationship legally recognised as 'civil partnership'.

Pregnancy and Maternity – Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth before returning to work.

Race – Refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour and nationality, and ethnic or national origins.

Religion or Belief – Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs, including the lack of belief.

Sex – A man or woman.

Sexual Orientation – Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, to opposite sex or to both sexes.

Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)

The Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) has been in operation since the **1st October 2012**.

The EASS provides advice services to individuals who think they may have experienced discrimination or their human rights have been breached. The vision for the service is that it aims to support individuals referred from local organisations, advisory groups, faith based organisations and other groups working within the community that support people experiencing discrimination. An individual can also contact the service directly for advice.

The EASS works collaboratively with advice agencies and other local organisations that are often the first points of contact to which people turn when they have discrimination problems, receiving referrals and feeding back on the outcome for individual clients.

What we can and cannot do

What We Cannot Do For You:

- Provide advice to solicitors and other professional advisers
- Provide legal advice
- Represent you in any legal proceedings
- Advise you on the strength of your case or whether you should bring a claim
- Advise you on court/tribunal proceedings once a claim has been issued
- Deal with complaints from disabled air passengers and those with reduced mobility; this is dealt with by the Civil Aviation Authority whose details are available on the contacts page of our website.

What We Can Do For You:

Provide information advice and support on discrimination and human rights issues to individuals in England, Scotland and Wales, recognising the constitutional, legal, social and policy differences specifically:-

- Advise what the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 says and how this applies to you
- Advise you of options on how you may be able to resolve your issue
- Advise you of options for informal resolution and guide you through this process
- Assist you further, if you are unable to resolve your issue informally
- Help you work out if you are eligible for civil legal aid
- Provide support if you are considering making a claim yourself
- Assist you in finding local sources of support

Access All Areas - Get loud for LCD at party conferences!

Every year the UK's largest political parties each hold an annual conference. Members of Parliament, peers and party supporters all go to their party's conference and it is a good chance to meet people and express your views.

We think it is important politicians hear directly from disabled people about what needs to change.

We are therefore providing the opportunity for one disabled campaigner to attend each party conference to pass on their views and support LCD campaigning.

Our Access All Areas scheme will pay for a conference pass, accommodation and travel costs for one disabled campaigner for the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative Party conferences.

We can also arrange for a pass, accommodation and travel for a carer, and if you need extra care support to attend we may be able to help with this as well.

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people who have experiences of social care that they are willing to share with politicians.

Please contact Helen Bryant for a copy of the application form.

DO YOU HAVE A CHRONIC OR LONG DO YOU HAVE A CHRONIC OR LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION?

We need your views

Help your local NHS design a new service to support people with long-term conditions to feel confident about managing their symptoms and stresses, staying healthy, and making the most of their lives.

How to help:

Fill out a questionnaire - go to
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LongTermConditionsBerksWest>

We do not need your name or address, and information you give will be completely anonymous.

Come and tell us what you think.

We will be holding a "focus groups" at the following venue:-

Reading Walk-in-Centre

1st Floor
103-105 Broad Street Mall
Reading RG1 7QA

Sat 16th March,

10.30am - 11.30am

Please contact Carol Siddle (07885) 512725 or carol.siddle@btinternet.com for more information or if you would like to attend the group.

PLEASE USE THIS FORM TO RECORD ANY ACCESS OR
DISABILITIES ISSUES THAT YOU WISH THE COUNCIL
TO INVESTIGATE

FILL IN AND HAND IN AT THE ACCESS AND
DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MEETING

Name:

Contact Details (if you wish the Council to let you know the
progress with your enquiry - a telephone number or email address
would be useful):

Issues: