

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2016

Present:

Councillors Rose Williams (Chair), Eden, Grashoff and Khan.

Also in attendance:

Alan Fleming	Enrych Berkshire
Diane Goodlock	MS Society Reading
Trish Wright	MS Therapy Centre & Readibus
Laxmi Kachwaha	Readibus
Lisa Bamsey	Readibus & Service User
Jenny Turner	Readibus & Service User
Bob Bristow	Reading Association for the Blind
Helen Bryant	RBC - Access Officer
Ashley Burton	RBC - Service Improvement Officer
Janette Searle	RBC - Preventative Services Development Manager
Mary Thorne	RBC - Project Manager - Assistive Equipment and Technology
Amy Bryan	RBC - Committee Services

Apologies:

Sian Hooley	Berkshire Phab
Keith Hester	Berkshire County Blind Society
Joel Young	Guide Dogs
Liz Cheyney	Member of the Public
Carol and Mike Pearson	Members of the Public

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Alan Fleming reported that the shower unit in the Broad Street Mall had not been working for 14 weeks so there was nowhere to change and it was now just a disabled toilet. Alan said that it had been agreed that there would be a changing places at Reading Station. He added that disabled people did not feel welcome in Reading anymore.

Further to Minute 6 of the previous meeting, Helen Bryant reported that no progress had been made with Disability Pride Day but she would be asking the Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality if they could help with the project.

3. LIBRARY SERVICE REVIEW

Ashley Burton, Service Improvement Officer, talked to the Group about the Your Library Services, Your Say consultation that was running from 22 February to 16 May 2016.

Library services were currently delivered from seven branches in Reading. Under the proposals, local services would continue to be delivered in all seven areas, but

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opening hours would be reduced in line with use to make savings. In some cases, library services would be delivered differently or from other buildings.

Under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act the Council had to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for everyone who lived, worked or studied within the Borough. No decisions as to the future of the library services had been taken yet. However, the Council considered that if the proposals were implemented, then local provision would continue to exceed the requirement of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service.

Taken together, it was believed that the proposals made the best use of community buildings, reflected patterns of use and local needs and responded to what communities in Reading had told the Council so far by:

- Reducing opening hours but maintaining reasonable access for people with different lifestyles and availability
- Libraries and other services co-locating to make the best use of space and increasing access to spaces for community groups
- Exploring opportunities for creative partnerships in the future
- Retaining the recently upgraded public access IT at a local level with new provision of Wi-Fi for 2016/17
- Making the best use of resources by using new technology and introducing self service across all service points

Ashley asked the group to respond to the consultation and was particularly keen to hear if anyone thought the changes would have a disproportionate effect on anyone. All the consultation documents, including any proposed changes for each library, were available on the Council's website:

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/libraryreview>.

AGREED: That Ashley be thanked for her presentation.

4. TRANSPORT UPDATE

Neil Scott, Support Services Manager, Reading Buses, updated the Group on upcoming service improvements to Reading Buses routes and vehicles. Neil reported that there would be changes made to the Numbers 13 and 14 to Woodley and the Jet Black route. There were also plans to run routes to the new Ikea Store when it opened in July 2016. Neil also reported that Reading Buses was looking to improve the number of wheelchair spaces on buses that would be delivered to them in 2017.

Neil was asked if there was a plan to increase the number of talking bus stops and Neil said he would report back on this at the next meeting.

In answer to a question Neil confirmed that the Number 9 bus route was to be rerouted sometime during 2016.

Alan Fleming reported that skips were still being sited in disabled parking bays. Simon Beasley suggested that inappropriately placed skips could be reported via the Love Clean Reading app.

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Alan Fleming requested that some marked diagonal disabled parking bays be made available in the Town Centre. He said that for people who exited the rear of a vehicle it was not possible to use parking bays that were parallel to the pavement.

It was reported that West Berkshire Council would be removing the discretionary elements of the national bus pass scheme.

Diane Goodlock reported that the tactile paving was sticking up at the crossing outside the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Peter Absolom reported that the Readibus positive images campaign would be launching in April or May 2016 with five buses carrying the campaign images.

Peter Absolom also reported that there would be potential funding changes to Readibus in Reading in the second half of 2016. In answer to a question Peter confirmed that there was a consultation regarding charging for West Berkshire residents.

It was suggested that an inspection of the town centre be organised, perhaps on the same day as the next meeting of the Group.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That a town centre inspection be organised.

5. ADULT WELLBEING POSITION STATEMENT 2016-17

Janette Searle, Preventative Services Development Manager, talked to the Group about the Adult Wellbeing Position Statement 2016-17, which was currently being consulted on.

Janette explained that the Care Act gave the Council new responsibilities towards those who might need care or support, and the Adult Wellbeing Position Statement described how the Council would fulfil these new responsibilities. Individual wellbeing was affected by a range of factors, and this statement recognised the impact of the places where people lived, worked and played as well as health and social care provision.

The Council was now presenting Reading's first Adult Wellbeing Position Statement, a framework for developing services to meet the Care Act obligations and so prevent, reduce and delay care and support needs across the local population.

The position statement and an online consultation form was available on the Council's website: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/adultwellbeing>. The closing date for responding to the consultation was 18 March 2016.

AGREED: That Janette be thanked for her presentation.

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6. TELECARE

Mary Thorne, Project Manager, Assistive Equipment and Technology, gave a presentation to the Group on developing a Telecare Strategy for Reading.

Mary explained that telecare was part of a wider group of devices called Assistive Technology. Telecare usually referred to some equipment that linked to a call centre or family, whereas assistive technology included devices that were stand alone. Mary talked about the variety of telecare products that were available.

Mary explained that the Council was reviewing and improving their use of telecare with the aim to maximise benefits offered by telecare and improve wellbeing. Mary explained some of the benefits of telecare and what the Council hoped to achieve.

Mary handed out a questionnaire which she asked members of the Group to complete.

AGREED: That Mary be thanked for her presentation.

7. FIRE SAFETY JOINT INITIATIVE

It was reported that a new joint-initiative was now in action with Reading Council working closely with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and the local NHS to keep vulnerable adults safe. The initiative came after several recent potentially avoidable fire deaths, a predicted increase in adult care demand, combined with a significant rise in those suffering with dementia.

In response, the Council's Adult Safeguarding Team had been co-ordinating the multi-agency work to share best practice, resources and training, with the aim of promoting safety and minimising fire risk. There had been a big drive on awareness training, information and resources for staff involved in care of adults in the community.

The aim of new training was to help workers identify who was more at risk; to know what protection measures and fire prevention equipment was available, and to provide guidance on when and how to make a referral to the Fire Service. RBFRS would be providing training to care workers, enabling them to carry out a fire risk assessment of the resident's home.

There was a range of assistive technologies available, designed to support an individual identified as potentially more vulnerable from fire, allowing them to remain independent in their own homes. The equipment available ranged from flame retardant nightwear and bedding, to safety ashtrays and cooker guards. In some locations sprinklers could be installed.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Register to Vote

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The Reading Borough Council local elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections would be held on Thursday 5 May 2016. Residents needed to ensure they were registered to have a vote on Polling Day. Residents could check whether they were registered to vote by calling the Council's Electoral Registration Team on 0118 937 3717.

New Carers Support Contract

Reading and West Berkshire Councils, together with the local NHS, had awarded a new contract for carer support. Reading and West Berkshire Carers Hub won the contract to provide information, advice and support to local carers from 1 April 2016. This service would be the first point of contact for many people who provided vital unpaid care to friends, family and neighbours. It would support carers to get the most out of key support services, including carer's assessments, personal budgets and health-checks. The organisation behind the new service, Carers Trust East Midlands, was a member of the Carers Trust national network of carer support agencies, and was already supporting Reading carers through a range of clubs, breaks and sitting services - known as the Reading Crossroads service.

Benefits and Discounts for Disabled People

A document that provided information on the benefits and discounts available to disabled people had been circulated to the Group.

Attendance Allowance

Helen Bryant reported that plans were being drawn up to end Attendance Allowance.

Information from Bracknell Forest Council

Bracknell Forest Council had released information to warn people about scammers who were charging people for help applying for a Blue Badge.

Bracknell Forest Council's telecare service was introducing a new product to its line of services. Forestcare would be rolling out a GPS mobile lifeline service, the Pocket Pal, to increase confidence and independence for vulnerable people. A Forestcare lifeline was a personal alarm system that provided a link through to a dedicated call centre, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Access & Disabilities Working Group was still to be confirmed.

(The meeting opened at 2.00pm and closed at 3.58pm)