

Councillors Rachel Eden (Chair),
Grashoff, Khan and R Williams

To all Members of the Access &
Disabilities Working Group

Our Ref: ADWG
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 2581
e-mail:
helen.bryant@reading.gov.uk

7 September 2018

Your contact is: **Helen Bryant - Access Officer**

NOTICE OF MEETING - ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP -

A meeting of the Access and Disabilities Working Group will be held on **Friday 14 September**, from **2.00pm until 4.00pm**, in the **Mayor's Parlour**, Bridge Street, Reading.

The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
- 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 30 NOVEMBER 2017**

CIVIC OFFICES EMERGENCY EVACUATION: If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble on the corner of Bridge Street and Fobney Street. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**
5. **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH MATT RODDA MP**
6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
7. **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**
Thursday 29 November 2018 at 2.00pm

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

Present:

Councillors Eden (Chair), Williams (Vice-Chair), Khan.

Also in attendance:

Bob Bristow	Reading Association for the Blind
Diane Goodlock	Reading MS Society
Nigel McAlister	Member of the Public
Helen Bryant	RBC - Access Officer
Nina Crispin	RBC - Information and Engagement Officer
Amy Bryan	RBC - Committee Services
Liz Cheyney	Member of the Public
Trish Wright	MS Therapy Centre
Liz Johnson	Readibus
Laxmi Kachwaha	Readibus
George Baptiste	RBC - Playgrounds Officer
Alice Carter	Trustee, Peapods Charity, Member of Reading Families' Forum, Parent of a disabled child

Apologies

Cllr Grashoff	
Clive Wood	Guide Dogs
Alan Fleming	Enrych Berkshire

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2017 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following changes:

Item 3. CHILDREN'S PLAY EQUIPMENT

Where the equipment is suitable for use by children with more limited abilities, it is not distinguishable from any other.

Carolyn Jenkins said that the Council was in the process of replacing loose fill safety surfacing with firm surfaces, and introducing kit where adults could play with their children.

The last sizeable amount of funding for play was received between 2008 and 2010 through the then Government's Playbuilder scheme. This was used in 19 sites over 3 years.

Section 106 money was the main source of funding for play.

Some sites were not suitable for disabled children; such as Robert Hewitt Park, where the lay of the land makes easy access impossible.

Using Playbuilder funding, Christchurch Meadows was refurbished as a day out destination for children with more limited abilities and their parents/guardians.

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

There was easy parking at Hills Meadow.

Relatively recently, six sites had been evaluated by parents with disabled children. Carolyn said that there were evaluation sheets that the Working Group could look at.

Gates could be a problem for disabled children. However, it was noted that gates needed to be able to be latched in order to stop children from running off. There were usually two gates per site, so that children could find a way of escape easily if they needed to.

In spite of the work done, there were some playgrounds that were still not accessible; some were dated and some had surfaces that were not suitable.

Equipment was being refreshed with Section 106 money, where this was available.

It was reported that rubber crumb surfaces needed to be prioritised; e.g. at Prospect Park. Other equipment at Prospect Park also required refreshing.

Carolyn told the meeting that the average cost of one item of equipment was £30,000.

Helen Bryant said that, as it was difficult to join in the meeting AND write notes, she was trying a system whereby the meetings were captured via the webcam, as if they were to be broadcast. This would not be for the public, only for her use, so that she could type up the minutes with more ease. She would be sent a link from Committee Services. Members of the Working Group were encouraged to use the microphones where possible. Notes were to be taken as well. Cllr Eden said that this was a clever and “hi-tech” solution to the problem.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Diane Goodlock brought up the subject of funding for play equipment. Cllr Eden said that developers did pay some money, but funds had dwindled.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

3. CHILDREN'S PLAY EQUIPMENT

Carolyn Jenkins and George Baptiste returned, to talk about the accessibility of children's play equipment in Reading. Some residents had raised the issue of young people who have disabilities and how much of the equipment in Reading was available to them.

Historically there had been some play equipment which was accessible; this was mostly in ERAPA - East Reading Adventure Playground - at Palmer Park.

There was not much diversity in what was there; it was just for wheelchair users.

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

More recently, a more inclusive approach had been taken. Not every bit of kit could be used by everyone, but the equipment was not distinguishable from any other.

Carolyn said that there were firm surfaces. Adults could play with their children; there were double slides and so on.

The last sizeable amount of funding had been received between 2008 and 2010.

Section 106 money had been used to fund some equipment. This had been used in 19 sites over 3 years.

Some sites were not suitable for disabled children; such as Robert Hewitt Park. However, most had good transport links, such as Christchurch Meadow, Palmer Park and John Rabsons.

Christchurch Meadow was a day out destination for children and their parents/guardians.

There were gondola swings, adult and child slides, textured play, sand and boulders to scramble over; the area had a seaside feel. Some isolated play equipment was available for some children who found crowds challenging and threatening. Picnic tables were available so that parents could watch their children playing. There was easy parking.

At Palmer Park there was parking available outside the stadium. Some equipment was in a wildflower meadow and there were lots of apparatus for children of mixed abilities.

At John Rabsons there was a seaside theme, with a ship and other such items.

Resources were now scarce.

Six sites had been evaluated by parents with disabled children. Items such as variety of play equipment and maintenance scored highly.

It was noted that gates needed to be able to be latched in order to stop children from running off, but children also needed to be able to escape easily if they needed to.

Carolyn said that there were evaluation sheets that the Working Group could look at.

There were some playgrounds that were not accessible; some were dated and the surfaces were not suitable.

Equipment was being refreshed with Section 106 money. Choices needed to be made; if no money is made available then equipment could not be replaced.

Every year one or two playgrounds which had softfill had this replaced with a more suitable surface; rubber crumb.

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

It was reported that Tesco had said that they were willing to give money to put towards local play equipment. An appeal could be set up using their token voting system.

<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/tescocommunityscheme>

A short discussion was had about various possible sources of funding, such as supermarkets, restaurants, fast food restaurants and so on. If the group decided what was wanted, it would be easier to ask for funding.

Alice Carter asked about The Outpost, a piece of land behind Rivermead, by the swimming pool, which used to be a golf driving range. It was part of Reading Early Years. Some events had been held there. Alice had asked about the possibility of getting some fixed children's play equipment on the site. Cllr Eden said that she had not had a firm answer but she said that she would chase this up. It would soon be the headquarters of Reading Play. Cllr Eden went to visit in the summer and there had been various events for children.

Helen Bryant said that, very sadly, Lisa Bamsey had died recently. Members shared memories of Lisa, and there was a period of silence for reflection. Cllr Eden said that Lisa had been a constant presence at the meetings and an advocate for access and disability. She would be much missed.

Helen reported that Marian Marsh was leaving the Council, which was a pity, as the Working Group had had a good relationship with her. Marian had said that she would pass on her successor's details to Helen Bryant so that the momentum on the SIMON Project and others would be kept up.

4. CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EVENING

The Special Shopping Evening for disabled and older people was to be held on 4 December. Members of the Working Group had been invited to a reception at the Oracle Management Suite.

Cllr Eden said that there were many things happening in the town on that night. She thought that not many other towns did this. As with the Pink Pound, it was thought that the Disabled (Purple) Pound had the capacity to change attitudes.

Diane Goodlock said that she had not seen much publicity for it.

AGREED:

- (1) That the positions be noted

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

It had been hoped that Simon Beasley would have been able to attend the Working Group but he had not. It was agreed that Helen Bryant should send him a copy of the Minutes, and ask if he could attend the meeting in March. Diane Goodlock said that access was very difficult in the town centre at the moment, because of roadworks. She hoped it would be better before Christmas shopping began in earnest.

Diane also said that some of the greenery in Cemetery Junction had been taken down because of poor visibility, but more trees had been put in and visibility was still very bad. It was suggested that someone should go in a car and see how bad it was.

Clive Wood, from Guide Dogs, had said that there were problems in the town;

Pavement Parking

Guide Dogs were hearing from visually impaired people in Reading that pavement parking was an issue that was causing barriers to those with sight loss. Pavement parking has an impact on the wider community; wheelchair/scooter users, older people, people with pushchairs etc Clive asked if it was possible that an Officer within the council feed back on what action is taken by the council to reduce pavement parking.

Reading Buses

The bus company had recently been reviewing routes in the Woodley and Caversham area. Guide Dogs had concerns that the planned new routes/timetables would see a reduction in much needed services for vulnerable people in these communities. Clive asked if it would be possible for Reading Buses to feed back what the rationale was for these proposals and how they would mitigate for the impact these changes will have on vulnerable residents who relied on the routes involved.

AGREED:

- (1) That the positions be noted
- (2) That Simon Beasley be sent a copy of the Minutes of the meeting, and invited to the next available meeting, and appraised of the problems.
- (3) That Reading Buses be informed of the problems and invited to a future meeting

7. DISABILITY PRIDE DAY

The Group would support a Disability Pride Day. A group needed to get together to work on it. The Communications Team could possibly help with contacts. PDSN would work in

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

conjunction with us. The University was interested. Helen Bryant would talk to the organiser of a successful Disability Pride event in Brighton.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Nigel McAlister wanted someone from the Blue Badge team to talk to the Working Group to talk about the changes in policy in terms of issuing badges and also the location of bays, and also the restrictions - Westminster City Council made bays available for disabled drivers/passengers 24 hours a day, seven days a week and this was clearly stated on the signage. However, disabled drivers/passengers themselves were limited to 4 hours' maximum parking between the hours of 8.30 am and 6.30pm. Mr McAlister wanted to know why some of the bays were so restricted in the times when you could park, in Reading.

Diane Goodlock said that the restrictions here were very bad for the town and it put people off, so they went to other towns nearby.

Nigel McAlister said that abuse was rife in the whole country - there was an issue of people using other peoples' badges, and some people probably had badges when they shouldn't have. He said that it discredited the scheme and lost the Council revenue.

It was reported that the photograph on the Blue Badge of the disabled driver faced inward, not outward, but there were devices that scanned Blue Badges and the photograph appears on the device.

Councillor Eden said that enforcement action was taking place, and that caution was advised with accusing people who did not look disabled, or did not look as if they required a Blue Badge, but they definitely did. But nobody wanted the scheme to be abused.

Nigel McAlister said that he used to live in Buckinghamshire, and that they had also had problems.

The "acid test" would be that if they did not automatically get a Blue Badge, they should be assessed independently, by an Occupational or Physio Therapist.

Councillor Eden said that the Group should wait until an officer was available to talk about the issues, and then any concerns could be addressed.

Diane Goodlock said that in the news, a disabled driver was trying to park in a Blue Badge bay, and a taxi driver was very abusive to him. It was unclear as to where the taxi was

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

from. Councillor Eden said that if a licensed taxi driver was ever abusive, it was very important to take details, such as a badge or plate number.

Alice Carter said that collection of Blue Badges should have an overlap period, so that there wasn't a problem with the handing over of the old Badge, and you wouldn't have to miss out on having one, if you could not get a new Badge the very same day.

She had no objection to handing the Blue Badge back, but if for some reason people were not able to get to the Council on that particular day it was difficult.

Last time the Badge was renewed, they had been told to come to the Civic Offices and queue, but if you didn't have a Blue Badge because you were handing the old one in, this could not be done.

It would have been helpful if they said that they could be issued from Whitley Social Services in Northumberland Avenue. It should also have said in the letter that if people asked in advance that they could park at the Civic Offices. Small changes would have made a big difference.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted
- (2) That officers be invited to a future meeting to discuss the issue of Blue Badges, and possibly Simon Beasley, to address other concerns.

A-Boards - Bob Bristow said that these were a big problem. Councillor Eden said that Reading had now licenced A Boards so someone from Licensing could attend to update the Working Group.

Wheelie Bins - Alpine Street is very bad. Bob Bristow said that he was finding it difficult to walk down the pavement because of bins and wing mirrors because people had parked badly. Narrow terraced streets were particularly bad. Councillor Eden said that it might be a case of educating the public as to why pavements needed to be kept clear, or if it's the refuse collectors themselves who were causing the problem. Diane Goodlock said that it had already been sorted out but had reverted.

Diane said to pass on her thanks to Highways for filling in the tree pits; it looked so much better. It was safer too. Members of the Group had seen that there had been a problem. It was inexpensive to do.

Nina Crispin said that there was to be a session on Monday 4 December regarding benefits before the imminent roll-out of Universal Credit in Reading.

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018

AGREED:

(1) That the position be noted.

(The meeting opened at 2.00pm and closed at 3.07pm)

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES -14 September 2018
