

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 28th November 2019

Present:

Cllr Eden - Chair
Cllr Rose Williams - Vice Chair
Cllr Manghnani
Cllr Khan

Neil Scott - Reading Buses
Professor Sophie Bowlby - Chair, Board of Directors, Readibus
Helen Dolphin MBE - Independent Mobility Consultant
Libbie Bilyard - PA to Helen Dolphin
Nigel McAlister - Member of the Public
Trish Wright - MS Therapy Centre
Laxshmi Kachwaha - Readibus
Douglas Dean, Thames Valley Pensioners' Convention
Stuart Pearce - Guide Dogs
Nina Crispin - Information & Engagement Officer, RBC

Apologies:

Angie Burnish
Alice Carter
Bob Bristow
Liz Cheyney
Cllr Josh Williams

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone and introduced herself. She invited everyone to introduce themselves.

2. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4.	MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
	1. WH Smith Post Office. It was confirmed that Cllr Rowland had to followed up with the Post Office.

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	<p>5. Accessible Play Equipment would be an item at the next meeting.</p> <p>9. The Chair reported that she had asked Adult Social Care to take forward the issue about the 'Can't Wait' card.</p> <p>Blue badge Fraud would be an item on the agenda for the next meeting.</p> <p>Christmas shopping evening - no details received. The Chair to chase and if further details are provided HB would notify Reading Buses.</p>
5.	HELEN DOLPHIN MBE - QUANTUM WHEELCHAIR SECURE SYSTEM BY Q'STRAIT
	<p>Helen gave a presentation on a restraint system for buses. She said that in 2017 buses were required to be PSVAR - Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations - compliant. This requires vehicles subject to it, to incorporate a wheelchair space and boarding facilities suitable for the standard 'reference wheelchair', as well as priority seating, colour-contrasting hand-holds and a range of other features, to enable disabled passengers to board, alight and travel in comfort. However there is nothing to hold a wheelchair securely in position on a bus.</p> <p>She said that she had undertaken a survey of 200 wheelchair users and 9% had reported that they had experienced their wheelchair falling over on the bus. Therefore she was trying to get more bus companies to install the Quantum wheelchair secure system by Q'strait as a safe and easy to use restraint system for wheelchairs. She said that the bus companies in Edinburgh and Hull had installed them. Her presentation included photographs demonstrating how the system worked.</p> <p>Helen then answered questions from the group.</p> <p>Q. How much does the system cost? A. Helen clarified that she wasn't a salesperson for Q'strait but she understood the cost to be £9-£10k.</p> <p>Q. Is there a weight restriction? A. No - the wheelchair just needed to be able to fit on the bus.</p> <p>Q. What does it clamp on to? A. A clamp and arm squeezed together.</p> <p>Q. Could it be used on Trains? A. No because it was only a rear facing restraint.</p> <p>Q. Would it stop the wheelchair from falling forward? A. Yes - suggested a visit to Edinburgh to see how it worked.</p> <p>Helen was thanked for her presentation.</p>
6.	ELECTORAL REGISTRATION/ACCESS
	<p>HB reported that unfortunately an officer from electoral registration had been unable to attend the meeting due to the workload of the imminent election. She had provided a 2019 Local Election - reporting form which could be used to report any polling station feedback.</p>

7.	<p>FEEDBACK FOR READING BUSES</p> <p>Neil Scott attended representing Reading Buses. He said he would feed back any queries. The following points were raised:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SP raised that only 36% of the audio description on buses worked. On routes 33, 15, 26 and 21 it was not working. On reporting this he had been told to log it with the driver. 2. He also raised that not enough time was given for him to sit down - that is - time to find a seat and check that no one was sitting in it. He offered to Reading Buses that he could come and talk to drivers to improve their understanding of needs. 3. NM reported that he used the 17 bus route a lot. It had 2 accessible spaces and from a mobility point of view the buses and drivers are very good. 4. HB asked about higher Kassel kerbs at bus stops - these were not always present. This was something that the Council needed to deal with. 5. HB asked if there could be more wheelchair spaces on the buses that went to the Royal Berkshire Hospital, as potentially a lot of wheelchair users would use these routes. 6. It was asked if the step at the middle door on the 17 buses lowered, and if not could it. NM said that London Buses had this, but it meant reversing into the wheelchair space and this manoeuvre was difficult on a crowded bus. 7. Blind people found all the different designs of buses, especially double deckers difficult to navigate. There was no consistency. <p>The Chair thanked Neil Scott for attending and said that she appreciated the responsiveness of the bus service. She asked for Reading Buses to provide a written response to the feedback so that it could be circulated with the draft minutes.</p>
8.	<p>WEBSITE FEEDBACK</p> <p>Sophie Molyneux was due to attend the meeting but was unavailable.</p> <p>The Chair asked for feedback on the Council's website. The following points were made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the website present positive images of disabled people. 2. Home page should have a designated page for disabled people. 3. The pages need to be constructed to be easy to access key information like parking and toilets. <p>The Chair suggested that a user group be set up to work with the Web team to improve the website for use by disabled people.</p>
9.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chair reported that she had received a contrite apology from Brighter Futures for Children for the last meeting being moved from the Council Chamber. The CEO of Brighter Futures for Children had rung the Chair and asked if Brighter Futures for Children staff could attend a meeting. 2. It was raised that it was difficult to cross at Blagrove Street/Friar Street. The Chair would ask if a proper crossing could be installed there.

Date of next meeting 5th March 2020