

ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP - THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2020 2.00 PM

Minutes

Present:

Cllrs Eden, R Williams, G Khan, Manghnani, Rowland, Hoskin

Stuart Pearce - Guide Dogs

Angie Burnish - Peapods

Professor Sophie Bowlby - Chair, Board of Directors, Readibus

Peter Absolon - General Manager, Readibus

Bob Bristow - Reading Association for the Blind

Douglas Dean - Thames Valley Pensioners' Convention

Nigel McAlister - Member of the Public

Barbara McAlister - Member of the Public

Isabel Edgar-Briancon - Assistant Director for Corporate Improvement and Customer Services, RBC

Carolyn Jenkins - Landscape Services Manager RBC

Ben Stanesby - Leisure & Recreation Manager - RBC

Chris Woods Architect, Saunders Boston

Lucy Murray- Robertson: GLL Project Manager

Paul O'Sullivan: GLL Rivermead General Manager

Tracy Allen - Senior Occupational Therapist - BfC

Apologies

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Eden welcomed everyone.

2. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

3. MINUTES

Notes of the meeting held on were agreed as a correct record, with an amendment to Matters Arising 1 to remove the word 'to'.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 7. The Chair was still awaiting a response from Reading Buses.

5. LEISURE FACILITIES

Chris Woods, Architect presented on the proposed new leisure facilities. He reported that the new facility at Rivermead will be constructed on the car park and the current building demolished, to maintain continuity of service. He provided images of what the building would look like including zoned areas and the reception area.

He showed images of the proposed facility at Palmer Park including swimming pool, grandstand and reception.

He said that a transport consultant had been appointed. There would be accessible parking bays and drop off near the front of the centre. They were following Sports England design guidance and referring to dementia- friendly design guidance. There would be easy read signage in Reception and colour zoning to make internal arrangements as clear as possible for navigation.

Assistance dog toilet areas would be incorporated in the design. Changing Places facilities would be provided at both venues and wheelchair accessible lockers and vanity units would be provided.

Self-operated pool pods would be installed in the swimming pools. Two types of wheelchair would be provided - standard and extra support, suitable for children.

The Chair asked for a written confirmation on the provision of wheelchairs and on the emergency procedures provision.

Fitness suites would have social areas with storage for wheelchairs and would have a sports wheelchair zone.

Wheelchair spectator spaces would be mingled with seating.

Palmer Park would have a 25m community pool and spectator seating will be in the community café.

An induction loop would be provided in reception.

GLL will have staff training on serving disabled people in place.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A

Q. How many Blue badge parking bays will be provided?

A. There will be a formal assessment for allocation later down the line.

Q. How can people get involved in the detailed design?

A. Plans will be published for feedback

Q. What will happen to the day centre currently at Rivermead?

A. This will be relocated.

Q. What will happen to the Bowling Hall?

A. The new site will not include the Bowling Hall. RBC is talking to the Bowling Club. However the facility will remain for 2 further seasons.

The group requested:

- Audio described toilets
- An internal grid system for navigation
- That a navigation route be provided for blind people arriving by bus
- 2 spaces to be provided for Readibus.

The Chair said that it would be helpful for disabled users to be able to test and feedback prior to completion of the buildings.

The Chair said she would talk to Reading Association for the Blind about options for the Bowling Club.

Chris was thanked for his presentation

6. ACCESSIBLE PLAY EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Carolyn Jenkins reported that a successful capital funding application had been made for the play area at Palmer Park. The Task and Finish group had selected a scheme which could accommodate about 70 children. The order had been placed with a lead time of 8 weeks. A further meeting of the Task and Finish group was to be held 19/20 March. Cllr Rowland asked for members of the group to notify which of the dates was most suitable. It was confirmed that the disabled parking provision would continue.

The rope swing at Christchurch Meadows was being repaired.

Angie Burnish fed back on the designs. The chosen design enabled disabled children to get up high on the equipment and look down. It also made provision for people to pass easily on the equipment and gave a choice of routes. She reported that the process had been a positive experience and Carolyn and George were thanked for their work.

7. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

Isabel Edger Briancon presented on the Council's Customer Experience Strategy which had been adopted by Policy Committee in January 2020. https://www.reading.gov.uk/media/10504/Customer-Experience-Strategy/pdf/Customer_Experience_Strategy.pdf

She said the Council was looking at having one telephone number. It was introducing innovative technologies and setting up user groups to test and feedback.

Bob Bristow asked that the current screen reader used by the Council be improved.

There was some discussion about whether the use of the term 'Customer' was appropriate for Council services. Isabel responded that the term was considered best practice.

8. WEBSITE 2020

Adam Bevington reported that at the end of March 2020 the Council would move to a different website platform which would incorporate newer technologies that react better on smart phone.

The Council was partnering with the Shaw Trust to ensure accessibility for visually impaired people and the new website would be accessible to screen readers. All the web designers were required to use screen readers to understand how the design worked with them.

The new website would include positive images of disabled people. There would be a designated page for disabled people providing easy access to information such as toilets and parking.

Adam said he was aiming to have a map of parking bay locations.

The Chair asked Adam to extend the invite to test the website to Reading Association for the Blind and the Access and Disabilities WG members.

9. BLUE BADGES

Paul Davis presented on the investigation on Blue Badge Fraud. He said that parking enforcement would send cases to the Anti Fraud Team, who went through a process of checks to establish if there was evidence of fraud. Lawyers would review whether there was intention to defraud. He said that between April 2015 and January 2020 54 referrals of suspected fraud had been made to his service, 4 of which had ended in prosecution.

Nigel McAlister pointed out that Buckinghamshire County Council partnered with a specialist firm and succeeded in making considerably more prosecutions.

Angie Burnish asked if more could be done to educate people on the use of blue badges.

10 AOB

It was raised that lines had been recently been painted of blue badge parking spaces. The Chair agreed to raise this with the lead councillor.

Cllr Rowland reported that she and others had reviewed the Braille signage at the station and would be making suggestions for improvement and possible funding for these.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 1pm