

Access and Disabilities Working Group - Thursday 24 November 2pm

Minutes

Present:

Cllr Jan Gavin - Chair
Cllr Karen Rowland - Vice Chair - Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and Community Safety - Abbey Ward Councillor
Helen Bryant - Access Officer RBC
Clare Muir - Policy and Funding Manager RBC
Karla Vickers - Senior Operational Transformation Project Manager RBC
Ade Marques - Digital & ICT Delivery Lead RBC
Angela Wilcox - Digital Content Designer RBC

Steve Matthews - Architect, Hampshire County Council
Shona Forsyth - Access Officer HCC
Craig Woodward GLL

Bob Bristow - RAB
Stuart Pearce - Guide Dogs
Trish Wright - Readibus
Jenny Turner - Readibus
Liz Johnson - Readibus
Brian Oatway - Member of the public
Marcos

Apologies

Cllr Anne Thompson - Tilehurst Ward Councillor
Cllr Nusrat Sultan - Thames Ward Councillor
Nigel McAlister - Member of the Public

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Gavin welcomed everyone, and asked people to introduce themselves.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Training was being carried out again for taxi drivers.

The bins item was to be deferred. Cllr Rowland was to update at the next meeting.

Small food waste bins were small and hard to see, and residents needed to put them on their properties, to avoid breakages and the possibility of them being blown away in high winds.

Progress was being made in some areas.

Cllr Rowland asked members of the Working Group to email Helen Bryant, c.c. Councillor Rowland Karen.Rowland@reading.gov.uk to report any problems with bins where they lived.

Bob Bristow had had a letter about the issues, but bins were still being left out in Alpine Street.

Helen Bryant was to let members of the Working Group know about where there were problems with bins.

3. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

4. HEXHAM ROAD DEVELOPMENT

Councillors Rowland and Gavin declared an interest - they were both members of the Planning Committee.

There had been 2 consultation events about the development.

Karla Vickers said that the existing service comprised Strathy Close for people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD), Maples (for older people), Focus House for people with mental health problems and Whitley Wood Community Centre.

Strathy Close was moving to Hexham Road.

There were to be both wheelchair accessible dwellings and those which could be adapted later if necessary.

Bins were emptied via bin chutes.

It had been difficult to find pull-down cabinets that were not hard to use.

Cllr Rowland said that she thought that Juliet balconies with doors opening inwards might limit turning space for wheelchair users. She asked if thought had been given to any other types of doors.

Shona Forsyth said that category 3 flats (Wheelchair user dwellings) had doors that opened outwards, and in category 2 flats (accessible and adaptable dwellings) doors would be adaptable.

Steve Matthews said that the windows would be tilt and turn and would open inwards - ventilation could be had just by tilting them. People would need to be assessed to see if those windows would be suitable, and alternatives would be looked at.

Liz Johnson said that she thought that the presentation had been impressive. She had concerns regarding parking; disembarking Readibus. She asked how people who entered and exited the Readibuses from the rear would get to the main entrance, as the bus would be near to the rear entrance.

Steve Matthews said that no further testing was to be done, but tracking software had been used to show how vehicles would move in the space. A template of a bus would be used to try the route.

Shona Forsyth said that access for buses such as Readibus would be looked at, regarding tail lifts and general access, as space was tight.

Brian Oatway asked if any thought had been given to the trees that were to screen the buildings; fallen leaves could be very slippery when wet, and also tree roots lifted up paving stones.

Steve said that the relevant officers had been consulted; he thanked Brian for raising the question.

Bob Bristow asked what facilities had been put in place for blind people.

Shona said that there was a lot of colour contrast in the décor and surroundings. Wayfinding was good and all doors were highlighted.

Bob also asked about people arriving by bus; how safe was it, and what if someone needed assistance?

Shona said that there was level access, and if you were not familiar with the building you could get assistance.

Bob said that entrances should be clear and obvious, and that street furniture could also be a problem when travelling in an area.

Tactile paving would be installed, and street furniture would be considered from a safety point of view.

That level of detail was not being considered at the time of the meeting. The development would go to Planning.

Councillor Gavin thanked Steve and Shona for their presentation.

5. PALMER PARK

Craig Woodward from GLL updated the Working Group about the new development.

The work had been progressing and the centre was very close to opening. Tours were to take place.

GLL was working with Sport England to ensure that the building was accessible.

There was tactile paving in the car park, and automatic doors at the entrance.

There was a lift, a Changing Places facility and pool pods to get wheelchair users in and out of the swimming pool.

There were ramps in the building.

The paths in Palmer Park were being refinished, there was more tactile paving across the park. The tactile paving would follow right to the front entrance, from the bus stop.

6. COUNCIL WEBSITE

Ade Marques and Angela Wilcox talked about the possibility of a webpage with information for disabled people on the Reading Borough Council website.

Cllr Gavin said that she had found a website from Rochdale Borough Council which had a lot of information for disabled people:

[Homepage - Rochdale Borough Council](#)

One page was needed with tiers to get where you wanted to go on the website.

Public toilets, parking spaces, Blue Badges and assisted collection of bins were all subjects that were important to members of the group. Also information on fun things, too, such as places to play, social information and accessible leisure facilities, including Prospect Park.

The question was asked how the website would progress; market testing was needed, and the Working Group might want to have a session and possibly a link to the page be provided for people to respond individually.

Cllr Gavin asked for the results of customer testing to be shared with members of the Working Group.

It was pointed out that many sites had too many links to go through if you were blind.

Ade Marques said that almost all the links were already in existence, there would be more information regarding parking. More information on taxis was requested.

It was suggested that temporarily disabled people might not know the basics of how to cope with disability, they might wish to see the page.

It was suggested that it would be useful to have a link to the existing Reading Services Guide.

Cllr Gavin thanked Ade and Angela for their presentation.

7. DISABILITY PRIDE DAY

Saturday 8 July had been set for the Disability Pride Day July was Disability Pride Month.

A working Group was to be established, and a first meeting was to be held to scope out what was to happen and what was needed. People who were interested in being part of the Working Group should contact Helen Bryant.

Lucy Daniels from Communications would support the Group.

Volunteers would be needed to set up stalls and other infrastructure.

The event would be in Broad Street with stalls run by community groups in the town, and celebratory activities.

There was already a Constitution, Terms of Reference and an Equality Statement.

AGREED:

A working group be established to start planning the event. People should contact Helen Bryant if they wished to join;

Helen.Bryant@reading.gov.uk 0118 937 2581

8. AOB AND CONCERNS

The problem of overhanging branches on pavements was raised. Pottery Lane opposite Tilehurst Place, near the chemists was highlighted. It was Council land.

Councillor Gavin said that if the problems with branches were reported to the Council, the relevant officers would talk to the landlords, and they would be asked to cut back. If this was not done, the Council would do it and charge the owner of the land or property. Councillors should be contacted in order to get things done.

The Footways outside Savers was reported as very unstable.

It was requested that the accessible WC in the Council Offices (near to the Council Chamber) have a sign - "Not all disabilities are visible", and that signs be put up on all the accessible WCs, and there needed to be small shelves near to the lavatories.

AGREED

Helen Bryant would contact the Facilities Team.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 2 MARCH 2023 - in the Civic Offices and on Teams.