

# Access and Disabilities Working Group - Thursday 2 March 2pm

## Minutes

### Present:

Clr Jan Gavin - Chair  
Clr Karen Rowland - Vice Chair - Lead Councillor for Environmental Services and  
Community Safety - Abbey Ward Councillor  
Clr Anne Thompson - Tilehurst Ward Councillor  
Clr Nusrat Sultan - Thames Ward Councillor

Helen Bryant - Access Officer RBC  
Clare Muir - Policy and Funding Manager RBC  
Oliver Burt - Manager R3 Waste Contract RBC  
Isabelle Redfern - Rehab Officer RBC

Bob Bristow - Chair - RAB  
Stuart Pearce - Guide Dogs  
Nigel McAlister - Member of the Public  
Barbara McAlister - Member of the Public  
Carol Froude  
Jenny Turner - Readibus  
Mary Pierino - Readibus  
Georgios Sergakis  
Jenny Keep - Fab4All

### Apologies

Brian Oatway  
Fiona Price - Age UK Berkshire  
Nina Crispin - Information & Engagement Officer Public Health and Wellbeing Team  
RBC

#### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

#### 2. MATTERS ARISING

##### Website

The Chair reported that there was now a dedicated page for disabled people on the website accessed through a link on the front page. The Web Team was thanked for their work on this.

The members of the Working Group were asked to let the Council know if they had any further thoughts on what should be included. Information should be sent to Helen Bryant.

Suggestions from those present were:

- information on accessible taxis
- information about Readibus
- accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities
- map of parking bays in town for disabled people
- who to contact to request changes to the website.

The Chair reminded the group that where providing this information would involve a new work it would need to be built into work programmes so would take longer to implement.

It was raised that certain taxis were charging more for wheelchair users. The Chair said that she would follow up on this.

It was requested that a hidden link be put on the page, for users of screenreaders, to take them to that part of the page.

**Bins**

Councillor Rowland reported that the bin crews were working to make sure that the food caddies, which were easily tripped over, were put back on the properties. In narrow roads such as Foxhill Road there was a vehicle especially for small spaces. However she pointed out that there were cost implications if all the bins were put back by the bin crews as it took 5-8 seconds to deal with each bin and the Council would need another person in each crew to do this.

Cllr Rowland also reminded that there was an assisted collections list. Residents could contact the Council if they needed to be on the list.

### **3. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None

### **4. RE3 - ENVIRONMENT ACT**

Oliver Burt explained that there the possibility of a new scheme, to be set up by the Government, for people to be able to collect deposits on return of their recyclable cans, bottles etc.

Any clear, plastic bottle, of any size, or any can, aluminium or steel, was included in the deposit scheme, and people would get 20p back if they were returned. A likely impact would be that customers would pay more for the products in the first instance.

He said that there had been a lot of enthusiasm for such a scheme, but the implementation may be problematic and it was not clear whether the needs of disabled and older people had been considered an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken.

It was noted that a launch was expected in 2025/6 but Scotland had been intending to start the scheme in August this year and had decided to pause. It was agreed that there might need to be a future item on this subject at another meeting and that the Working Group would keep a watching brief, and learn from Scotland's example.

## 5. PALMER PARK

It was reported that there had been several tours by various groups to the new facilities at Palmer Park and everybody had been very friendly, and willing to answer questions. Some members of the group had been swimming there too.

Of particular note were:

- tactile paving in the car park
- automatic doors at the entrance
- tactile paving following right to the front entrance, from the bus stop.
- a lift and ramps in the building
- a Changing Places facility
- pool pods to get wheelchair users in and out of the swimming pool.
- a lot of natural light
- lots of equipment in the gym that people could either use from their wheelchairs, or transfer onto.
- doors to the gym opened both ways, making it much easier for wheelchair users to go through them.
- changing room had a toilet and a sink, and a hairdryer. The lockers very spacious.
- good discounts and membership schemes

Some points to pick up on were:

- doors to the pool area should be automated
- A link to Palmer Park and Rivermead would be a useful addition to the disability web page as information about the facility is not easy to find
- The water temperature at 28.5 degrees was cold for people who did not move around much. It would be better to raise the temperature to around 30 degrees. The question was raised, how long would it take to raise the temperature, and how much would it cost?
- a pool noodle, or a sling for a hoist was not available at present

Cllr Rowland said that GLL, the contractors who were running Palmer Park, were very interested in being as inclusive as possible. She would take back the comments

## 6. VOTING IN ELECTIONS - VOTER PHOTOGRAPHIC ID

Councillor Gavin asked the members of the Working Group if they were aware that as of the next elections in May, (unless there was a General Election before that), they would need to show photo ID before they could vote.

She said that she was concerned that this would potentially disenfranchise many people as the most vulnerable people were less likely to have photo ID, however, if voters had postal votes this would not be needed.

If no suitable ID was available, people could apply to their local council:

[Apply for photo ID to vote \(called a 'Voter Authority Certificate'\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-to-vote)

However, people had to apply online, and get a digital photograph, which might exclude many people.

[FactCheck Q&A: what is the voter ID row all about? - Channel 4 News](#)

It was noted that the following were not accepted ID:

[Official UK Photo ID Card - Proof of Age for 18+ - My ID Card](#)

Oyster Card unless it was the over 60s Oyster Card

However expired passports and other such forms of ID were still acceptable, as long as the picture still looked like the holder.

Councillor Gavin urged the members of the Group to let everyone they knew about the changes.

## 7. DISABILITY PRIDE DAY

A meeting had been held on 22 February at The Biscuit Factory. Notes of the meeting were distributed to the members of the Working Group.

The Biscuit Factory had been very noisy, and future meetings would be held at the Mapp Centre, courtesy of Fab4All, which would be much easier and quieter.

The Council had agreed to contribute some money for the day. It was hoped that most organisations would fund themselves.

Councillor Rowland said that there were lots of exciting things being planned. Mary Pienero had been in the Rank and File Theatre Company production of “Where Do We Go From Here?” and the company would perform on the day as would a service user at Fab4All

People were still being contacted about music and other performance ideas.

If members of the Working Group knew of anybody who would like to perform, they could ask them.

It was proposed that the area with the raised platform outside Marks and Spencer and other parts of Broad Street would be used.

Staging was being investigated.

It was suggested that the day be advertised on Reading buses.

Buskers often performed in Broad Street, and the point was raised that they must not drown out the performances during Disability Pride Day.

The question was asked about a contingency plan in case of bad weather - this would need to be considered, as well as a plan for extreme hot weather.

There could be gazebos to display arts and crafts, and people could get under them if they needed to.

## **8. AOB AND CONCERNS**

**It was requested that an item on Blue Badge fraud be on a future agenda**

It was raised that Henley Road Crematorium had a lot of access problems and whether an access audit had been done. Councillor Rowland said that she would follow up with Corporate Services.

There was a discussion about where accessible toilets were in town. Helen Bryant would contact READA to find out information regarding accessible facilities in the town.

### **AGREED**

**Councillor Rowland to report the accessibility problems at Henley Road Crematorium to Corporate Services**

**Helen Bryant to ask READA about accessible WCs in the town.**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2023 - in the Civic Offices and on Teams.**