

# BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK

## WEST NORFOLK DISABILITY FORUM

**Notes of a Meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2012 at 2.30 pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.**

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Representing the Borough Council:**

Councillors Stephanie Smeaton (Chairman), Mrs L Allen, A Bubb, M Langwade and Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh (Substitute for Councillor Sandell)

#### **Officers:**

Allison Bingham and Brenda Moore

#### **Representing Disabled People:**

Wendy Blades, Jill Darling, Pat French (Vice-Chairman), Genevieve Henshaw, Sylvia Pomeroy and Kathy Warner

#### **By Invitation (for item 1):**

Jo Stanton – Revenues & Benefits Manager  
Laura Leicester – Benefits Manager

#### **Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors David Johnson and Garry Sandell

		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b><u>COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME</u></b>  A presentation was given by the Revenues and Benefits Manager on changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme. It was explained that the current scheme was fully funded by Central Government. However, under changes proposed in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Local Government Finance Bill, funding from Central Government would be fixed at the start of the year and would be reduced by 10%, leaving an estimated shortfall of £1.13M in 2013/14.  It was explained that the Council was free to design its own Council Tax Support Scheme which had to be in place by 31 January 2013. After considering various options, Members resolved to design a scheme which would fall within the new budget. It was noted that a draft scheme was currently out for	

consultation until 18 October and was available on the Council's website. Members of the Forum were invited to comment on the proposals.

The draft scheme was outlined and the changes explained. The maximum amount of support would be 75% of entitlement. It was emphasised that certain vulnerable groups would be protected under the proposed scheme, as follows:

- Pension Age people (as prescribed by Central Government)
- Household with at least one child under 5
- Households entitled to a disability premium in their applicable amount (disability living allowance)

These groups would see no reduction in their support under the new scheme. War pensions would also continue to be fully disregarded.

It was highlighted that work incentives would be introduced and the amount someone could keep before their benefit was affected would be increased by £10 per week.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that extensive consultation was taking place with as many affected groups as possible, as well as writing to individuals in receipt of benefits. A drop in session was held in King's Lynn on 11 September and further sessions were due to take place in Downham Market on 8 October and Hunstanton on 10 October.

It was explained that the scheme could be amended each year and it was anticipated that a more fundamental review would take place after year 2, benefiting from the experience gained.

In response to questions and comments from Members of the Forum, the Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that other benefits in kind, such as free bus passes, would not affect the amount of support provided under this scheme. A Hardship Fund would be established for those vulnerable people who may not be included within the protected categories. Members of the Forum were advised that the Council had tried to work with the other district councils in Norfolk to see if a single scheme could be developed, but differences in the demographics of each district had made this approach problematic. It was noted that only way to



	<p>improving publicity.</p> <p>The Chairman requested that a letter of thanks be sent to those businesses and organisations in the borough which had displayed posters publicising the event. Allison Bingham advised that posters had been sent to a large number of contacts and organisations and it was not possible to identify all those which may have displayed them. Sylvia Pomeroy suggested that an open letter be sent to the Lynn News thanking everyone who had helped to publicise the event.</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>AB</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b><u>WEBSITE UPDATE</u></b></p> <p>Allison Bingham reported that the West Norfolk Disability Forum page on the Council's website need to be updated and read out suggested wording, as follows:</p> <p><i>The forum comprises of Borough Councillors, representatives of people with disabilities or are involved with groups or individuals who are concerned about disability issues within West Norfolk.</i></p> <p>Allison also suggested that links could be included to the show the contact details each of the voluntary organisations involved with a link to their own websites. She advised that she had spoken to the web team who had advised that this would be possible.</p> <p><b>AGREED:</b> That the West Norfolk Disability Forum website be updated as described.</p>	<p>AB</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b><u>BUDGET</u></b></p> <p>Allison Bingham reported that just under £2,000 had been spent in the current financial year, which included expenditure for the Opportunity Awards, leaving some £19,000 in the budget. It was highlighted that any monies not spent at the end of the year may be lost and the future budget may be reduced.</p> <p><u>AGM 2013 and Opportunity Awards</u></p> <p>Allison Bingham advised that when planning events at the Corn Exchange, she liaised closely with the venue to establish when there was flat floor availability, which reduced the hiring fee considerably. With regard to the AGM for 2013, it was suggested</p>	

	<p>that this be brought forward to Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July, when the Corn Exchange was available. The AGM to be held at King's Court in the afternoon and the Opportunity Awards to be held at the Corn Exchange in the evening.</p> <p><b>AGREED:</b> That the AGM 2013 and Opportunity Awards be held on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013.</p>	Action
7.	<p><b><u>SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE WINTER</u></b></p> <p>Councillor Harwood had previously raised the issue of holding an event to support the elderly in the winter. Allison Bingham advised that the Corn Exchange would be available on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and suggested that a 'Winter Check-up' event might be held, bringing together all the information and organisations.</p> <p>Sylvia Pomeroy suggested that a hot meal eg soup and a roll, could be provided. She commented that this type of environment would be more relaxed and friendly, which may encourage more elderly people to attend.</p> <p>Jill Darling commented that it was important to provide free transport to the event.</p> <p>Members of the Forum discussed ideas and potential participants for such an event. It was considered that events should be held at Downham Market and Hunstanton, in addition to King's Lynn. Allison Bingham to contact the venues to ascertain the possibility of holding such an event.</p> <p>Members of the Forum were invited to bring any further ideas and contact details for organisations to the next meeting in November.</p> <p>Councillor Langwade requested that the Terms of Reference for the Forum be brought to the next meeting. This would enable Members of the Forum to consider whether these proposals were in line with Terms of Reference and ensure that available funds were being channelled in the right direction.</p>	<p>AB</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>AB</p>





<b>10.</b>	<b><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></b>	
	The next meeting will be held on Thursday 29 November 2012 at 2.30 pm in Meeting Rooms 1, 2 and 3, King's Court.	

**The meeting closed at 4.18 pm.**