

**BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK**

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at 6.00pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn**

**PRESENT:**

**Representing the Borough Council:**

Councillors D Harwood (Chair), G Daniell, M Langwade, J Legg, D Murphy (substitute for Mrs J Murphy), G Sandell, Mrs S Smeaton

**Representing People with Disabilities:**

W Blades, P French, T Gilder, S Lowe, S Pomeroy, S Smith, T Smith.

**Professional Advisors:**

C Churchill, J Girdlestone, A Moulds.

**Apologies for absence were received from:** Councillor Mrs A Clery-Fox, Councillor Mrs J Murphy, E Burnham, R Cotton, J Evans, K Warner.

**1. MINUTES**

The Minutes from the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendment:

Kathy Warner was listed on the minutes as present and as given apologies. It was confirmed that Kathy Warner had given apologies for the meeting.

**2. CO-OPTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Chair reminded the Committee that it currently had one vacancy for a Member who was disabled or a representative of a voluntary organisation concerned with people with disabilities.

The Committee were asked to inform the Chair or the Secretary of any potential Committee Members.

Sue Lowe informed the Committee that she was aware of someone who may be interested and agreed to put them in touch with the Secretary.

3. **MATTERS ARISING AND NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

(i) Toilets at St James Swimming Pool

Trevor and Sue Smith reminded the Committee that they had previously raised an issue regarding the accessible showers and changing rooms at St James Pool at the Advisory Committee meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

The accessible cubicle was used for showering and changing hence the floor was still wet when trying to get changed after showering. This meant that when someone used this cubicle some clothes would get wet.

At the meeting in November when this issue had been raised, Allison Bingham had agreed to pass on these comments to the necessary officers.

The Secretary agreed to follow this up and would report back to the Committee at its next meeting.

4. **KING'S LYNN/WEST LYNN FERRY – DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS**

The Chair introduced Andrew Moulds from Mott MacDonald who gave a presentation on the future operation of the King's Lynn/West Lynn Ferry.

He explained that Mott MacDonald were carrying out an access improvement study on the operation of the Ferry.

The Committee was informed that passenger numbers for the Ferry had constantly been on the increase. Andrew Moulds reported that approximately 43,000 passengers used the ferry in the year 2000 and this had increased to approximately 80,000 passengers in 2008, which proved that the ferry was an increasingly popular method of transport.

Andrew Moulds informed the Committee that the improvement study was being carried out in liaison with the following stakeholders:

- Borough Council
- Norfolk County Council and its partners
- S N Kingston Marine Services (the ferry operators)
- King's Lynn Conservancy Board

In delivering his presentation, Andrew Moulds informed the Committee that the following constraints had an impact on the operation of the ferry:

- Tidal range and flow
- Wave height
- Navigation of the river
- Other vessels
- Operational Port
- Reeds

Andrew Moulds explained that work to improve access to the ferry would be carried out, taking into account the following:

- Health and Safety Implications
- Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act
- Improvements to general access
- Improvements to lighting and waiting facilities.
- Improvements to the existing crafts
- Compliance with the Marine Design Standards

He confirmed that initially the study would look at remedial measures to improve the existing facilities and this would include:

- Lighting
- Surfacing
- Security
- Installation of handrails

Longer term improvement measures would consist of:

- Linkspans
- Installation of lifts
- Self levelling steps/ramps

- Possibility of moving the ferry, which would make it easier to provide access.

Andrew Moulds explained that a passenger survey for ferry users would be conducted, before compiling recommendations and a final report submitted to Norfolk County Council for consideration.

The Chair thanked Andrew Moulds for his presentation. Questions and Comments from the Committee are summarised below:

- In response to a question regarding moving the ferry, Andrew Moulds explained that the course of the ferry would be twice as long, if moved, and this would obviously have an impact on journey times and fuel consumption. He hoped that, as the ferry ran every 20 minutes, the operation would be maintained. He confirmed that in moving the ferry a pontoon could be created on the King's Lynn side as well as the West Lynn side, in its current location, however, this would not be feasible.
- Andrew Moulds confirmed that potential increased fares had not yet been considered, but this would be up to the ferry operators.
- Andrew Moulds clarified the current access arrangements to the ferry. He explained that to get onto the ferry passengers needed to step over the front of the vessel and then step down to the seated area. Sylvia Pomeroy commented that she was aware of some boat operators on the Norfolk Broads who had installed accessible lifts on their vessels for wheelchair access. Andrew Moulds agreed to investigate this.
- The Committee generally agreed that the installation of ramps would be preferred over self-levelling steps. The Committee appreciated that the gradient of the ramp would vary with the tide, but asked that consideration be given to ensuring that the ramp was safe to use and compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. A comment was made regarding the possibility of using hydraulics on the ramps.
- It was suggested that a moving walkway/escalator could be used, but it was felt that the operation and maintenance costs of this would be too high.
- In response to a query, Andrew Moulds confirmed that currently the ferry could accommodate 12 passengers per journey. He explained that if the ferry was accessible, it

would probably accommodate two wheelchair users. He explained that an anchor system would be made available for any wheelchair users.

- It was confirmed that currently the ferry operated from Monday to Saturday from 7am to 6pm all year round and there was a continuous service from 8am to 9am and from 5pm to 6pm for commuters. At all other times the ferry ran every 20 minutes.
- Andrew Moulds explained the ferry operators were currently conducting risk assessments and making improvements to signs displaying safety information.
- Certain members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the viability of the proposed improvements. It was felt that any changes needed to be cost effective.
- Sylvia Pomeroy felt that the changes to the ferry would be cost effective as people with disabilities would use the ferry. She suggested that the proposed survey be sent to disabled groups and organisations so that their opinion could be taken into account. Sylvia Pomeroy also suggested that information could be published in the press and on the radio asking people to forward their comments and suggestions for the proposals. Sue Lowe suggested that Andrew Moulds may like to contact the WNVCA as they may be able to provide a list of contacts.
- Jemma Girdlestone explained to the Committee that the access improvements to the ferry would form part of the King's Lynn Area Transport Study and other issues such as the provision of car parking for the ferry and promotion of the facilities as 'park and sail' would be included as part of the study.
- In response to a query regarding bus services to the ferry, it was explained that currently there was not a bus service running in this area.

The Chair thanked Andrew Moulds and Jemma Girdlestone for the presentation and hoped that they would take on board the Committee's comments.

He explained that the Committee would be happy to be consulted on future proposals as necessary.

## 5. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY – YOUR VIEWS

Claire Churchill from the Local Development Framework Team at the Borough Council informed the Committee that the Borough Council's planning team had prepared a document that would guide future development across the whole of the area up to 2025. The document, referred to as the Core Strategy was currently the subject of a public consultation running from 23<sup>rd</sup> February to 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

The draft Core Strategy shared the Sustainable Community Strategy vision and objectives for the Borough. In particular it would aim to deliver the spatial elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council was working closely with the West Norfolk partnership to preserve, protect and enhance the qualities of West Norfolk.

Claire Churchill explained that it was important that the Core Strategy Document reflected the views of the communities within West Norfolk. She explained that the Council had carried out widespread consultation with exhibitions and workshops for residents. It was now important that other groups, that had so far had little involvement, be targeted to get their views.

Claire Churchill asked if it would be beneficial to arrange a special meeting of this group to specifically discuss the content of the draft Core Strategy.

**AGREED:** That a special meeting of the Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities be held to discuss the content of the Core Strategy.

The Secretary agreed to arrange the meeting and inform the Committee of the date and time.

## 6. FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING UPDATE

Sylvia Pomeroy provided the group with an update on activities at Freebridge Community Housing. She informed the group that Freebridge Community Housing was currently undergoing an Audit and Inspection, which she felt was going well.

## **7. NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The group were informed that there was currently a vacancy on the above Board for a representative of this group. The Neighbourhood Management Board requested that the representative be a member of the Committee with a disability or a representative of an organisation concerned with people with disabilities.

If any members were interested in becoming involved with this Board they were to inform the secretary. For information the future meeting dates would be as follows:

24<sup>th</sup> March  
 26<sup>th</sup> May  
 28<sup>th</sup> July  
 29<sup>th</sup> September  
 24<sup>th</sup> November

All meetings would start at approximately 5.45pm

## **8. ONLINE ACCESS GUIDE**

The Secretary provided the group with an update on the progress of the online access guide.

She explained that progress to date included:

- Input of data onto the website.
- Testing undertaken by Trevor and Sue Smith and the Council Information Centre staff.
- Cleansing and checking of data for accuracy and spelling mistakes corrected.
- Amendments following the testing of the site to be undertaken and updated, including ability to change the font colour and increasing the size of the command buttons.

The Secretary explained that a links page would be made available on the website and asked the Committee for any suggestions of links that could be included. The following links were suggested:

- Tourism For All
- Dial a Ride

- Community Transport
- Accessible Taxi services
- Direct Gov
- Age Concern – national information and advice
- Age Concern – nationally available factsheets and information sheets
- Age Concern West Norfolk District

With regards to publicity and a launch of the site, the Committee agreed that it would be good to hold a 'coffee afternoon' to celebrate the launch of the website. The press and other relevant organisations could be invited to the launch to promote the website.

The Secretary informed the Committee that the site would also have an area for latest news and events to be published, and asked members of the Committee if they had any ideas to contact her. The following items were suggested as news items:

- Hanse festival
- Festival at Park House Hotel, Sandringham

Sue Smith asked if she would have the chance to re-test the site and the secretary agreed to ask Allison Bingham if this would be appropriate.

The Secretary agreed to feedback information to Allison Bingham, who was leading the project.

## **9. SECRETARY'S CORRESPONDENCE**

### **(i) Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) – React System**

The Secretary had been passed correspondence from Allison Bingham regarding a RNIB React System. The system was a versatile talking sign system that helped people who were blind or partially sighted find their way around external environments with increased confidence and greater independence.

The system could be used to deliver location information and additional messages for a variety of purposes such as tourist information.



The concept was to provide a number of strategically placed speaker units around the chosen area, and in this case the facility was being investigated for use along the pilgrimage trail in King's Lynn. Users would carry a 'trigger fob' device, which would send out a constant radio frequency signal. When an active trigger fob was within range of the speaker unit, the unit would automatically deliver a pre-recorded audio message at a suitable volume for the surrounding ambient conditions. The initial audio message would help users to confirm their location and orientate themselves with their surroundings. Further messages could then be used to provide more detailed information.

The Secretary informed the Committee that Allison Bingham was currently leading on this project and would keep the Committee updated on progress.

(ii) Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities – Annual General Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009

The Secretary reminded the Committee that its Annual General Meeting would be held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009. She asked the Committee to give consideration to any potential guest speakers.

Sue Lowe suggested Jonathan Langham from Norfolk County Council who was leading on "assistive technology".

The Secretary agreed to contact Jonathan Langham, and asked the Committee to inform her if they were aware of any other potential guest speakers.

(iii) Opportunity Awards

The Secretary informed the Committee that she was now starting to look at arrangements for the Opportunity Awards. She reminded the Committee that this year would be the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Awards.

She informed the Committee that the awards would most likely take place in October 2009 and asked the Committee for suggestions on locations to hold the awards. Committee Members suggested the following locations which would be investigated:

- Knights Hill

- Corn Exchange
- Professional Development Centre.

The Secretary agreed to keep the Committee updated on progress and asked that if any members had suggestions on ways to promote or improve the awards that they should contact her.

## **10. FUTURE PLANS AND ACTIVITIES**

The Chair reminded the Committee that it had previously discussed visiting attractions as a group to investigate how accessible they were and then pass on suggestions on how they could be improved.

He informed the Committee that the Secretary had contacted Sandringham Estate, who had offered six complimentary tickets to the Committee for the visit.

The Chair explained that the six complimentary tickets would be offered to members of the Committee who had a disability, accompanied by Allison Bingham, and a checklist would be created for completion on the visit.

Members of the Committee who were interested on going on the visit, which would take place on the afternoon of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009, were asked to contact the Secretary to the Committee on 01553 616632. The Secretary agreed to arrange the visit and would confirm arrangements in due course.

The group agreed to hold the next Committee meeting, scheduled for 6pm on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009, at the Park House in Sandringham, so that those members attending the visit could then feedback at the meeting.

Once the visit had taken place and feedback received, the tourist attraction would be added to the online access guide.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(i) Dropped kerbs in Hunstanton**

Councillor Mrs Smeaton informed the Committee that she had been in contact with Norfolk County Council regarding the

necessity to install dropped kerbs in certain areas in Hunstanton. She informed the Committee that Norfolk County Council were now looking into this issue.

(ii) Dropped kerbs at drop off point to rear of Boots, King's Lynn

Tess Gilder informed the Committee that Park House transport bus often used the rear of Boots in King's Lynn as a drop off/pick up point. She explained that it would be beneficial for a dropped kerb to be installed to make it easier to access the bus.

The Chair informed the Committee that he was attending a Stake holders meeting regarding future planned works in King's Lynn and agreed to raise the issue at this meeting and keep the Committee informed of progress.

(iii) Parking Fine

Councillor Mrs Smeaton informed the Committee that she had been approached by a lady with a disability who had not managed to return to her car before her car parking ticket had expired and so was fined.

Councillor Mrs Smeaton queried if the lady who got the ticket could appeal. The Chair confirmed that people who were issued with parking fines could appeal the excess charge, but each case would be determined on its own merits.

(iv) Hoist at St James Swimming Pool

Trevor and Sue Smith informed the Committee that a new hoist had been installed at St James Pool. Sue Smith explained that the new hoist was difficult to use as the seat on the hoist was not as stable as the one used previously.

Trevor and Sue Smith had consequently contacted the company who had provided the hoist and the company had confirmed that different seats were available for the hoist. They requested that consideration be given to using a flat bottomed seat with small holes in it so that water could drain off, rather than the new seat which was the style of a toilet seat.

The Secretary agreed to contact the necessary officers regarding this issue and would keep the Committee informed of progress.

#### (v) Accessible Toilet at the Corn Exchange

Sue Smith informed the Committee that she had recently been involved in a production at the Corn Exchange. She explained that she had used a dressing room on the first floor, but when trying to use the disabled toilets on the first floor they were out of order, meaning she had to go back down in the lift to use the ground floor toilets.

The Secretary agreed to pass on concerns to the relevant officer at the Corn Exchange.

#### (vi) Pavements surrounding St James Pool

Trevor and Sue Smith informed the Committee that the quality of the pavements surrounding St James Pool were poor. They asked if any works were likely to be carried out to improve the pavements.

The Chair informed the Committee that he would raise this issue at the meeting he was attending regarding planned works in the Town.

#### (vii) Seated Sports Facilities in the Walks

Trevor and Sue Smith informed the Committee that they had previously written to the Council regarding the possibility of providing disabled sports facilities in the Walks, but had not had a response.

Sue Lowe informed the Committee that she was currently working with the Borough Council to investigate possible funding routes to provide this.

She agreed to speak to Trevor and Sue Smith outside of the meeting to gain their views and comments on proposals.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities would take place on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at 6.00pm, at Park House Hotel, Sandringham.

**The meeting closed at 7.52pm**