

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK

WEST NORFOLK DISABILITY FORUM MEETING

Notes of a Meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum held on Tuesday 18 January 2011 at 2.30pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.

PRESENT:

Representing the Borough Council:

Councillor D Harwood (Chair), Mrs A Clery-Fox, M Langwade, J Legg,
Mrs J Murphy, G Sandell and Mrs S Smeaton.
A Bingham

Representing Disabled People:

C Anderson, W Blades, J Calvert, R Carroll, J Darling, P French, A Reddington, T Reddington, S Smith, T Smith, K Warner and M Wright

By Invitation:

P Clifford – Vancouver Quarter
G Jackson-Hopps – Borough Council
M Mitchell – Lynnsport
J Russell – Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

M Allen, T Gilder, M Smith, E West-Burnham

		ACTION
1.	<u>MINUTES</u> The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2010 were agreed as a correct record.	
2.	<u>MATTERS ARISING</u> There was none.	
3.	<u>SAFE SHOPPING IN THE VANCOUVER QUARTER</u> The Chair introduced Paul Clifford, Vancouver Quarter Manager to the meeting who was attending to discuss safe shopping for disabled people in the Vancouver Quarter. Trevor Smith explained that he had asked for the Vancouver	

Quarter Manager to attend the meeting as he was concerned about the amount of obstructions in the Vancouver Quarter, including 'A' Boards, Tables and Chairs, fair ground rides and market stalls. He felt that it would be difficult for people with visual impairments to navigate through the area when the scenery was constantly changing. He asked the Vancouver Quarter Manager if there was a policy in place for limiting the amount of stalls on the street and obstructions placed outside shops by traders.

The Vancouver Quarter Manager explained that there was not a policy in place as such, but all of the streets were controlled by Norfolk County Council Highways, so shops who wanted tables and chairs permanently situated outside their shop would have to obtain planning permission.

He understood the concerns raised, but highlighted the importance of making King's Lynn viable and the need to encourage shoppers into the town centre during difficult economic conditions.

The Vancouver Quarter Manager acknowledged the possible difficulties disabled people might have when navigating through the town centre and suggested that the group should set out all their concerns and suggestions for improvements in writing.

He explained that he did a walk around of the Vancouver Quarter on a daily basis to check that items placed outside shops by retailers and any other stalls etc on the street were positioned safely. He also explained that the local Fire Officer checked the position of the street traders to ensure there was sufficient room for emergency vehicles to pass through.

In response to a query regarding the position of street traders in the Vancouver Quarter, the Vancouver Quarter Manager explained that fairground rides and stalls etc were positioned in the middle of the street to slow shoppers down so that they were more likely to go into a shop. He reiterated the importance of maintaining King's Lynn as a viable and competitive town centre.

The Vancouver Quarter Manager informed the group that King's Lynn was a successful town centre, with ever increasing footfall and had one of the lowest vacant unit rates in the area.

Allison Bingham informed the Vancouver Quarter Manager that she had received correspondence from a trader in Tower Street

<p>regarding an incident when an ambulance could not get through the area due to obstructions on Baxter's Plain. The Vancouver Quarter Manager explained that he was unaware of this incident and asked Allison Bingham to forward him the details of the incident so that he could investigate.</p> <p>Pat French explained that she used the seating in the Vancouver Quarter, however, when it rained she couldn't sit down as the seats got wet because they weren't covered. She felt that if the seating areas were designed similar to the seats on the Quay, which were covered, more people would be able to use them when it was raining.</p> <p>The Vancouver Quarter Manager agreed to have a look at the seating at the Quay, but reminded the group during the current economic climate it would be difficult to spend money which would be repaid by the retailers by increasing their rates.</p> <p>The Chair explained that less places now provided seating inside the shop, unless they were a café or coffee shop. The Vancouver Quarter Manager explained that this could be because businesses were charged rates by the square footage, meaning that they needed a revenue stream from every square foot of their premises.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Murphy referred to the Vancouver Quarter Manager's suggestion of conducting a walk around of the Vancouver Quarter and then putting down the group's concerns and suggestions in writing for consideration by the Vancouver Quarter Manager. Councillor Mrs Murphy agreed to raise this issue at a NNAB meeting she was due to attend so that they could be involved as well.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Vancouver Quarter Manager for attending the meeting and answering questions from the group. He explained that the group would organise a walk around of the Vancouver Quarter and put their concerns and suggestions in writing for his consideration.</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) That the Secretary arrange for a 'walk around' of the Vancouver Quarter and for a subsequent report of concerns and suggestions to be submitted to the Vancouver Quarter Manager. (ii) Councillor Mrs Murphy liaise with representatives from the 	<p>AB</p> <p>RP</p> <p>JM</p>
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	<p>NNAB to ask if they would like to be involved in the walk around.</p>	
4.	<p><u>PRESENTATION ON FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE AT LYNNSPORT</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Mark Mitchell, Fitness Manager from the Borough Council, to the meeting who had come to provide information on the facilities available at Lynnsport for disabled people.</p> <p>The Fitness Manager explained that the Council ran four leisure centres within the Borough; Lynnsport, St James, Hunstanton Oasis and Downham Market Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Lynnsport offered a GP referral scheme, which meant that if someone had a condition which their GP felt could be improved through exercise they may be referred to Bodyworks for a specialist fitness programme.</p> <p>The Fitness Manager informed the group that the Bodyworks fitness studio was an Inclusive Fitness Accredited Gym. This had been achieved by making a range of improvements to access, staff training, equipment and marketing of the studio.</p> <p>All of the members, disabled and non-disabled, worked out alongside each other using their personal exercise plans.</p> <p>The Inclusive Fitness Accreditation had been backed by Sport England, following Lynnsport passing an accessibility audit.</p> <p>The Fitness Manager informed the group that Lynnsport set target figures for a turnout of 5% of visitors with impairments. The current turnout figure was 14%.</p> <p>The Fitness Manager explained that the reason he had attended the meeting today was to introduce himself and provide an overview of the facilities available for disabled people. He wanted to encourage people who felt that attending the gym may be daunting, to not be afraid to come along to Bodyworks. He commented that all the staff were very helpful and welcoming and would be able to advise on ways to increase people's activity levels.</p>	

Councillor Mrs Murphy congratulated the Fitness Manager and his team on their work and commented that the staff and facilities were fantastic. She explained that the Bodyworks studio was completely inclusive, everyone could work out together and the atmosphere was always pleasant.

She encouraged people to spread the word about the facilities available and explained that people should not be afraid to attend.

The Fitness Manager encouraged members of the group who may be interested in increasing their activity level to contact him.

In response to a question regarding the 2012 Olympics and Para-Olympics, the Fitness Manager explained that Lynnsport had been designated as a Pre-Training Camp for the 2012 games and would be holding various events to promote this.

Sue Smith informed the group that she was involved in a Disabled Swimming Club at St James Pool and was disappointed that details of the disabled swimming club had not been included in recent publicity material for the facility. The Fitness Manager explained that he was not involved in the marketing for St James Pool, but agreed to pass these comments on as he agreed that it was important for inclusive activities to be promoted.

In response to queries from the group, the Fitness Manager explained that Lynnsport was easy to access and encouraged people who were thinking of getting back into exercise to come and have a look around the available facilities. He explained that there was no upper age limit on use of the facilities – one member who attended the gym had recently celebrated their 89th Birthday.

The Fitness Manager responded to queries about the facilities available at St James Pool and the Hunstanton Oasis, specifically in relation to the steps in to the pool. He encouraged visitors to the facilities to fill in a comments card so that their concerns were recorded and could be taken into account.

Councillor Sandell asked if there had been a noticeable decline in attendance at the Borough's swimming pools following the withdrawal of the free swimming initiative. The Fitness Manager explained that some of the people who joined under the free swimming initiative had used this as a stepping stone back into activity and had continued to use the facilities under the

	<p>concessionary scheme.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Fitness Manager for the information provided.</p> <p>The Fitness Manager requested that his details be passed on to members of the group, should they have any queries, or would like more information on the facilities available at Lynnsport:</p> <p>Mark Mitchell Fitness Manager Email: mark.mitchell@west-norfolk.gov.uk Tel: 015553 818004</p> <p>Councillor Murphy suggested that the information provided by the Fitness Manager be included in the Members Bulletin to make all Councillors aware of the facilities available.</p>	RP
5.	<p><u>PRESENTATION FROM CARE AND REPAIR</u></p> <p>The Chair introduced Jo Russell, Operations and Projects Manager and Gordon Jackson-Hopps, Project Officer from Housing Standards to the meeting.</p> <p>The Project Officer explained that part of his role was to provide members of the public with information regarding the assistance available to them and signpost them to other organisations as required.</p> <p>He informed the group that they may be aware of the Government's Warm-Front initiative which assisted vulnerable people with their heating requirements. The scheme provided vulnerable people, who met certain criteria, with grants to improve their heating systems, provide insulation or carry out emergency repairs.</p> <p>The group was informed that this initiative had recently been called in for review by the Coalition Government and new applications were currently not being accepted under the scheme. The Project Officer explained that he felt the scheme would change dramatically following the review and only assist the most vulnerable people.</p> <p>The Project Officer explained that Housing Standards could</p>	

provide discretionary grants to the most vulnerable people.

The Project Officer outlined other available programmes such as the Carbon Energy Reduction Scheme which put an obligation on energy suppliers to put funds aside for carbon reduction measures in the UK, such as primary insulation and more effective heating systems. This scheme would continue until December 2012 and would provide households with a grant to implement carbon reduction measures. The Project Officer explained that if people wanted to know what was available to them, they needed to contact their energy supplier.

He informed the group of a scheme that was soon to be introduced called Green Deal, which again would be funded by energy suppliers. Under this scheme home owners would be entitled to borrow money from the energy supplier to make their homes for energy efficient. The loan would then be repaid from the reduction in the household's energy bill.

Councillor Smeaton explained that she had recently required the assistance from the Housing Standards section on behalf of her constituents and thanked the team for assisting her.

In response to a query, the Project Officer explained that the Energy Savings Trust website contained lots of information on the assistance available and contained a database of schemes available in each area.

He informed the group that there was a local scheme running jointly with Fenland District Council to provide funding for external wall insulation. The scheme would be publicised in the future and would run until March 2012. Funding for the scheme had been secured by the East of England Development Agency.

The Chair thanked the Project Officer for the information.

The Operations and Project Manager explained that she would be willing to attend a future meeting of the group to provide more information on the services provided by Care and Repair.

AGREED:

That the Secretary arrange for a presentation to be given on Care and Repair at a future meeting of the Advisory Committee.

RP

6.	<p><u>WINTER WEATHER</u></p> <p>The Chair reminded the group that they had previously discussed ways to encourage people to consider vulnerable people in periods of bad weather.</p> <p>At the last meeting the Secretary had agreed to contact various organisations to see what services they provided. Information had been received as follows:</p> <p><u>(i) Age UK</u></p> <p>Age UK provided a Christmas information sheet. They also provided certain home services for people who found it hard to get out and about. Services that offered home visits included: Opticians, Hearing Support, Dentists, foot care, shopping and handy person service.</p> <p><u>(ii) West Norfolk Befrienders</u></p> <p>West Norfolk Befrienders supported vulnerable people, who were referred to them by Social Services. There was currently a waiting list. Volunteers had extra contact with clients during periods of bad weather, but were unable to respond to a client not known to them.</p> <p>West Norfolk Befrienders had offered to attend a future meeting of the group to provide more information on the services they provided.</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <p>(i) That the Secretary arrange for a representative from West Norfolk Befrienders to attend a future meeting of the group.</p>	RP
7.	<p><u>ONLINE ACCESS GUIDE</u></p> <p>Allison Bingham provided the group with an update on the online access guide. She explained that she would still like contributions from the group on articles and features to appear on the front page of the guide. She asked for details of future events or other information which could be provided.</p> <p>She explained that invoices for the 2011-2012 year would soon be sent out to businesses. Before this was carried out she needed to ensure that her database was up to date. Allison Bingham sought</p>	ALL

	<p>assistance from the group in helping her check her database by walking down the streets and making notes of any businesses that had closed or changed.</p> <p>Any members of the group who were able to assist were to contact Allison Bingham.</p>	ALL
8.	<p><u>SECRETARY'S CORRESPONDENCE</u></p> <p><u>(i) Car Parking issues</u></p> <p>At the previous meeting concern had been raised regarding difficulty in gaining access to the ticket machine on the Tuesday Market Place on Market Day as traders positioned their stalls so close to the machine.</p> <p>The Secretary had contacted the Car Parks section who explained that the Tuesday Market only ever blocked two of the four machines situated on the Tuesday Market Place.</p>	
9.	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <p><u>(i) Blue Badges</u></p> <p>Ruth Carroll explained that the blue badges for the vehicles at Park House Hotel had expired after a two year period, even though they should have been valid for three years. She had contacted Norfolk County Council on this issue who had acknowledged the mistake and should have sent her new badges to cover the missing year. Ruth Carroll explained that, despite chasing Norfolk County Council she had still not received the updated badges.</p> <p>The Chair explained that he would raise the issue with Norfolk County Council in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services.</p> <p>Pat French explained that she was aware that Norwich City Council car parks now allowed blue badge holders twice the amount of time from that purchased on their car park ticket.</p> <p>The Chair explained that he was aware of this case which was going through court. If it was ruled that disabled people should be allowed more time than purchased on the ticket, as it often took them longer to carry out their business, this would set a precedent.</p>	Chair

	<p><u>(ii) The Walks</u></p> <p>Trevor Smith informed the group that the ramp in the Walks was now being gritted during icy periods. He also explained that signs had also been put up to warn people to be careful when it was icy.</p> <p><u>(iii) West Norfolk Partnership</u></p> <p>The Chair informed the group that a review of the West Norfolk Partnership structure had recently been carried out and it had been decided to disband the thematic partnerships, which included the Healthier Communities and Older Persons Partnership, which was the body that this group reported to.</p> <p>The Chair requested that the Secretary seek clarification on how this group would feed into the Partnership in the future.</p>	RP
10.	<p><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></p> <p>The next meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum would be held on Monday 21 March 2011 at 3.00pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.</p>	

The meeting closed at 4.35pm