

# **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 20 November 2013 at 2.30pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn**

### **PRESENT:**

**Representing the Borough Council:** Councillors Mrs Smeaton (Chairman), T Bubb, M Chenery of Horsbrugh and M Langwade

**Officers:** A Bingham and R Parker

**Representing Disabled People:** J Davies, P French, G Henshaw, G Liczbinski and H Sismore

**By Invitation:** A Kenny and K O'Hara

**Apologies for absence were received from:** T Gilder, S Pomeroy and K Warner. Councillors Allen, Lawrence and Sandell

		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b><u>MINUTES</u></b>  The minutes of the meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum meeting held on 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2013 were agreed as a correct record.	
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></b>  <b><u>(i) Baby Changing Facilities at King's Court</u></b>  Allison Bingham reminded those present that the Forum had previously been consulted on proposals for the possible installation of Baby Changing Facilities in the Accessible Toilet at King's Court. The Forum was informed that their comments had been taken on board and proposals were now being drawn up. Allison Bingham agreed to keep the Forum updated on progress.	AB
<b>3.</b>	<b><u>PRESENTATION ON THE BLUE BADGE ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS</u></b>  Karen O'Hara, Business Support Manager from Norfolk County Council was present at the meeting and provided information on	

the Blue Badge Disabled Parking Scheme. She reminded those present that she had previously attended a meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum to inform them that Norfolk County Council were conducting a review of the application process for Blue Badges. She had attended the meeting today to provide information on the outcome of the review. A copy of her presentation is attached at Appendix 1.

In response to questions and comments from Members of the Forum, Karen O'Hara acknowledged that during the review there had been an increase in the time it had taken to process applications and apologised for any inconvenience this may have caused. She explained that the backlog had now been cleared and applications were usually processed within a reasonable timescale. In response to a further question, Karen O'Hara confirmed that the offices she worked from did have disabled access, but clarified that the offices were not open to the public.

Karen O'Hara informed those present that if they did have any complaints relating to particular cases or processes they should send them to her office or get in touch with their relevant County Councillor. The Chairman passed Karen O'Hara a copy of a complaint she had received from a Borough Councillor.

The Forum was informed that applications for blue badges could now be made in a number of ways including, online, by telephone or completing a hard copy application form. The Forum asked at what rate the telephone calls were charged and felt that the rate should be publicised on all information which included the telephone number. Karen O'Hara informed those present that the call would be charged at a local rate and agreed to take into consideration the comments made.

Karen O'Hara indicated that in the last two months over 40% of applications for blue badges had been made online. By completing the application online applicants would get an immediate outcome. If they also supplied their email address they would receive updates on the status of their application.

With regards to more complex applications, Karen O'Hara explained that a desk based assessment would be carried out following the assessment criteria which was provided by the Department for Transport. If necessary a face to face visit would be carried out by an Occupational Therapist by invitation to a clinic. These clinics were held in the Professional Development Centre in King's Lynn. The Occupational Therapist would then

	<p>report back as required.</p> <p>The Forum was informed that Civil Parking Enforcement Officers had the right to seize blue badges if there was clear proof that they were being misused, for example if the badge did not belong to the driver of the vehicle, although they had not yet utilised this right, but could in the future. There was also a national database of blue badge holders, so that if badges which had been issued from another Authority were being misused in the area this could be reported.</p> <p>Councillor Bubb asked what could be done to make parking bays wider and referred to the increase in the width of vehicles over the past few years. Allison Bingham explained that there was universal guidance on the sizes of car parking spaces, but no legal requirement for having spaces of a larger size. Councillor Bubb felt that consideration needed to be given to the proportion of blue badge holders to the proportion of disabled car parking spaces available.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b><u>FEEDBACK FROM THE WINTER WARMER SESSION</u></b></p> <p>Allison Bingham reminded those present that the Winter Warmer event had been held in Downham Market in September 2013. She considered the event to be a success and had received positive feedback from those who attended and the organisations which had participated in the event.</p> <p>Refreshments were served at the event and attendees were able to make a voluntary donation for the refreshments. £100 had been collected and had been donated to King’s Lynn Food Bank.</p> <p>Follow up publicity of the event was included in editions of the Lynn News and Your Local Paper.</p> <p>Allison Bingham reported that she had been in contact with Trading Standards who held electric blanket check events on an annual basis and they had indicated that in future they would be interested in holding their event alongside Celebrate-Ability.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked those Members of the Forum who attended the event and assisted with serving refreshments.</p>	

## 5. WEST NORFOLK DEAF ASSOCIATION

Amanda Kenny from West Norfolk Deaf Association (WNDA) provided those present with an overview of the Organisation and relevant statistics:

- 10 million people in the UK had a hearing loss, which equated to one in six of the population.
- 45,000 children in the UK had permanent hearing loss.
- 840 babies were born each year with a loss of hearing. Babies were screened at birth so problems could be dealt with immediately.
- Age related damage to the Cochlear was the main reason for hearing loss.
- 7 million people in the UK suffered with tinnitus or high sensitivity to sound.

Amanda Kenny informed the Forum that the WNDA offices were located at Railway Road in King's Lynn and had been since 1997. The current building had been purchased by the WNDA with the assistance of Lottery Funding. The organisation supported people with NHS Hearing Aids by cleaning, maintaining, re-tubing and issuing batteries and this was funded by NHS Norfolk. The WNDA also provided assistive equipment such as infrared and digital loop systems, telephones and personal listeners.

Amanda Kenny explained that in some parts of the Country Audiology had been taken out of hospitals and had been contracted out to private companies such as opticians. The Opticians would then provide the same service which had been provided in Hospitals. This had not happened in King's Lynn and the service was still being provided through the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The WNDA also carried out social activities and hosted clubs for Sign Language users and those who were hard of hearing. Additional clubs were soon to be launched in Downham Market. The WNDA also held a holiday club for Deaf Children and their siblings.

The WNDA had a room available for hire and this was regularly used by the West Norfolk Autistic Society, Break and the Deaf Children's Society.

The WNDA provided an advocacy service which was funded by

	<p>NCC and provided support to users in their own language. They also held training courses.</p> <p>Amanda Kenny informed those present that the Fire Service were able to provide assistive equipment. They could provide a flashing alert or a device to make a pillow vibrate, which were connected to the fire alarm.</p> <p>A service was now available to call 999 by SMS text message on mobile phones. Users needed to pre-register their mobile number with the system first.</p> <p>The Chairman invited questions and comments from those present, some of which are summarised below.</p> <p>Helen Sismore, Community Engagement Officer East Anglia, from Guide Dogs for the blind thanked Amanda Kenny for her informative presentation and indicated that she was working with the National Blind Children’s Association looking at ways to work with children and felt that this would be a good opportunity to work jointly with the WNDA. Amanda Kenny and Helen Sismore agreed to liaise on this issue.</p> <p>The Forum discussed the contracting out of Audiology services, which had happened in other parts of the Country and problems which could be encountered. Amanda Kenny was advised to ask for the relevant equality policies from opticians who already provided this sort of service to ensure that they had a duty of care to their customers. The Forum discussed interpretation services and how these would be provided if Audiology was contracted out in West Norfolk.</p> <p>Amanda Kenny informed those present that the WNDA had a full adult changing bed and hoist at their offices which was available for use by others upon request.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Amanda Kenny for attending the meeting and her informative presentation.</p>	<p>AK/HS</p> <p>AK</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b><u>SECRETARY’S CORRESPONDENCE</u></b></p> <p><u>(i) Hunstanton – Shingle pathway</u></p> <p>The Chairman had received a letter from a resident in Hunstanton raising concern regarding the shingle path linking Seagate Road and Southend Road in Hunstanton explaining that the surface</p>	

	<p>made it difficult for wheelchair users, people pushing buggies etc. to cross.</p> <p>Allison Bingham agreed to investigate the problem and feedback to the Forum.</p> <p><u>(ii) Sheltered Housing requirements</u></p> <p>The Secretary informed those present that she had investigated a query received from Councillor Bubb regarding the entry requirements for sheltered housing with Freebridge.</p> <p>The Secretary explained that the information was available on the Elderly Accommodation Council website – <a href="http://www.eac.org.uk">www.eac.org.uk</a>. The website provided details of the sheltered scheme. In terms of entry requirements this would lie with Homechoice and further information on this could be obtained by contacting Freebridge Community Housing.</p> <p>The Forum requested that the Secretary contact Freebridge Community Housing and the relevant officer at the Borough Council to ask them to add a link to the EAC website onto the relevant webpages if it had not already been done.</p>	<p>AB</p> <p>RP</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b><u>WORK PROGRAMME</u></b></p> <p>The Forum considered the Work Programme as attached to the agenda.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p><b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b></p> <p><u>(i) 'A' Boards</u></p> <p>Councillor Langwade asked for the Forum's views on the proposals to licence 'A' Boards.</p> <p>Allison Bingham explained that she had been asked to report the Forum's views to the Licensing Committee and had provided the Licensing Committee with comments made by Forum members at previous meetings.</p> <p>The Forum reiterated that they strongly opposed the use of 'A' Boards on the highway because they presented a risk, especially to people with visual impairments and wheelchair users.</p>	

(ii) Car Parking Machines

The Chairman of the Forum expressed concern that the West Norfolk Disability Forum had not been consulted prior to the installation of the new car parking machines, which required customers to input their car registration details using a key pad.

Allison Bingham informed those present that the key pads had now been switched off and customers were no longer required to input their details.

(iii) Tuesday Market Place

The Forum discussed the location of the disabled parking spaces on the Tuesday Market Place and the line markings.

Councillor Chenery of Horsbrugh explained that he had received concerns from his constituents regarding the location of the disabled parking spaces saying that they were not ideal for access to some areas of the town centre.

Allison Bingham reminded those present that the Forum had previously been consulted on the proposals for the redevelopment of the Tuesday Market Place and that the scheme was not yet finished.

Councillor Bubb highlighted that the 20 minute free car parking spaces would be marked out with red lines. Blue badge holders would be entitled to a grace period if they were unable to return to their vehicle within the 20 minute period before receiving a parking ticket.

(iv) West Norfolk Disability Forum Events

Allison Bingham informed those present that if they wished to hold a Celebrate Ability, Winter Warmer or Opportunity Awards event in 2014, arrangements would need to be put in place soon.

She explained that she had provisionally booked Downham Market Town Hall on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014 for a joint Celebrate Ability and Winter Warmer Event and she was investigating booking the King's Lynn Town Hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 for the Opportunity Awards.

The Forum agreed that future events should be held and Allison Bingham agreed to keep the Forum updated on progress.

AB

	<p><u>(v) Car Parking</u></p> <p>Councillor Bubb and Pat French explained that they were aware that Civil Enforcement Officers were issuing tickets to West Norfolk Community Transport vehicles when they were dropping off or picking up customers. The Chairman asked the Secretary to pass on the Forum's concerns to the relevant officers.</p>	RP
9.	<p><b><u>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</u></b></p> <p>The next meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum would be held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 2.30pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.</p>	

**The meeting closed at 4.33pm**