

**BRACKNELL FOREST ACCESS GROUP  
21 FEBRUARY 2018  
7.30 - 9.00 PM**



**Present:**

Councillor Clifton Thompson (Chairman)  
Councillor Jim Finnie (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Jan Angell  
Councillor Michael Brossard

**Also Present:**

Mrs Isabel Mattick, Red Diamonds

**In Attendance:**

Anna McCafferty  
Alison Sanders, Director of Resources  
Emma Shaw, Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities  
Samantha Wood, Bracknell Forest Council Community Engagement and Equalities Officer  
Marcos Basurto-Castillon, Royal Berkshire Polo Club

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Jane Figg  
Mira Haynes  
Andrea McCombie-Parker  
Muriel Rawsthorne  
Mark Sanders  
Councillor Mrs Sandra Ingham

**84. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting on 11 October 2017 were approved as a correct record.

Arising from the last meeting, where it had been reported that dropped kerbs with 'bobbles' created problems for people with mobility issues, it was reported that the bobbles were not a Borough choice and that the feedback would be added by the Transport team to the Department for Transport survey.

**85. Access to BFC Libraries**

Vincent Palizca presented a report on access to libraries in the Bracknell Forest which focused on access issues which had arisen from changes to the library service as part of the transformation review.

The review of the library service had identified a number of genuine efficiencies especially regarding how books were acquired and how they were moved around the borough. Service levels were maintained in libraries by volunteers who support staff to ensure residents got the service they wanted.

Further to this, efficiencies were identified by updating the IT systems with technology assisted opening. It was noted that this would allow residents to self issue books with an 'E+ card'.

Feedback from an extensive consultation revealed that library opening hours were confusing to residents. However the new technology would allow the libraries to be opened for an extended period. This meant no members of staff would be present at certain times. It was noted that the anticipated extended opening hours would be 9.30am – 7.30pm with core serviced hours maintained.

It was noted that accessibility and safe routes of exit in case of fire in a library with no staffing was a concern. Modifications were currently being made so 7 of 9 libraries can be accessed more easily by wheelchair users including a new library in Harmanswater which will be fully accessible when complete.

Bracknell town centre library has caused some problems due to the design of three levels. Top level can only be accessed by lift and therefore can't be accessed with technology assisted opening in case the lift failed. There are concerns about secondary routes of escape from the library. One idea was to train carers to use an evac chair but this was not allowed by insurers. There was a possibility of building a raised platform and forming a new exit route. The future of Bracknell Library is uncertain in its current location but potentially looking to build on the whole site with a brand new library which might start in 2 years time.

Technology for assisted opening will start being installed in all libraries from March. Wheelchair users wouldn't be able to use assisted opening due to fire exit issues only in Bracknell Library but also conscious of longer opening hours in Bracknell Library generally part from closure on Wednesday. However it was noted that there were alternative libraries in Bracknell which can be used.

Following question and discussion the following points were raised:

- Books could no longer be donated directly to libraries as not all books were suitable and each library had a different selection policy. The storage in libraries has also been reduced to save money. Residents were encouraged to take any unwanted books to local charity shops
- The thermostat could be adjusted so the heating would come on in the winter during extended opening hours
- Forest Care would monitor the libraries during unstaffed hours and could visit the libraries if there were any issues.
- Binfield would be the first library to have technology assisted opening in March 2018.
- The Bracknell Town centre library was currently shut on Wednesdays to save around £20k however it was hoped with the impact of savings and technology assisted opening that it may open in future which would have less of an impact on residents.
- Security was not considered an issue with technology assisted opening as residents would only be able to gain access by using an 'E+ Card' which would have all their personal details on including a picture.

It was confirmed that the proposed more limited accessibility options for Bracknell Library were acceptable considering the uncertainty of the library

location in the short term. The group were happy that all options were being explored to improve accessibility.

## 86. Disabled Go Survey

Sam Wood presented to the Access Group on the Disabled Go Surveys which were being completed in a number of shops and locations in the new Town Centre. It was noted that Disabled Go was the country's largest online access guide which provided information about accessibility at various venues and schools. BFC has had a contract for several years and has been completing the surveys in collaboration with the Lexicon. Over 65 venues were surveyed including all the carparks, the railway station, libraries and many shops and restaurants in the Town Centre. Couldn't survey Waitrose/Primark this time but hoping to look at it next year.

It was reported that there would be a training day with students who had learning disabilities who would go and to learn how to complete the surveys and would then complete some additional stores.

It was noted that Boots and M&S weren't part of the allocation because they had their own contracts with Disabled Go so their surveys would be completed separately.

The surveys were currently being checked by quality team, Bracknell Forest Council and the Lexicon and then would be added to the Disabled Go website once approved which was anticipated to be completed by April 2018.

Following the surveys being Live, there would be a social media campaign to let people know they were available. The guides would also be part of the Lexicon App so people with disabilities could plan their visit.

Following discussion the following points were raised.

- It was noted that there were access concerns in Cineworld – (screen 11), where there was only a short area of handrail. The back of the seat also moved when used as support which was an issue.  
**(Action: Sam Wood to check this has been picked up by Disabled Go.)**
- It was questioned whether any usage figures were known as there were concerns about its visibility  
**(Action: Sam Wood to feedback on how often its used and how disabled people find using it)**
- It was noted that there should be a link on the Lexicon website and should be included with the printed information in Shop Mobility
- It was confirmed that the Disabled Go surveys covered leisure and sporting facilities.
- It was questioned whether companies made any adaptations following the surveys and it wasn't known whether any stores would be adapted.  
**(Action: Sam Wood to find out if there's any info on companies updating stores following the survey)**
- It was confirmed that the surveys would be publicised to Lexicon staff members as part of the launch.

## 87. Safe Place Scheme

Phil Jarvis presented to the Access Group on the Safe Space Scheme and how it was being implemented in the new Lexicon town centre. It was noted that the scheme had been available for 4/5 years and was in place to help

vulnerable people who were visiting local places and feel anxious or threatened. The scheme meant they had somewhere to go and a member of staff would look after them and make sure they're ok.

Phil Jarvis reported that he had been visiting shops individually and all have been keen to get involved. The Entertainer and Menkind were especially keen and every shop would be visited over the next few weeks. Currently 30-40 shops in the Lexicon had signed up which was increasing all the time.

The user can go into the shop and present the card to the shopkeeper and then they can sit down and they can stay until they feel better.

A number of suggestions were made regarding how the scheme could be publicised including:

- Making a film or digital media which could be presented via the Comms channels
- The film could feature a cartoon of how to use the scheme or an interview with a current user were also presented as ideas to engage more people in the scheme.
- Partner with self care week and self care year to promote the scheme
- Speaking at retailers forums such as the Chamber of Commerce
- Add an advert to the Lexicon Newsletter or Town and Country

It was also noted that cost of the scheme being free should be emphasised.

## 88. **Feedback on the Lexicon**

The chairman wanted to discuss any additional feedback on the Lexicon following the last meeting and the following points were raised:

- Some areas of the Avenue carpark were dimly lit especially around the payment area which was difficult for people to see and would particularly affect the visually impaired.
- Concerns were raised about whether the carpark contractor had been checking whether cars had blue badges whilst using the disabled bays. It was reported that Indigo had been heavily monitoring the bays but hadn't caught anyone doing anything wrong. Bays in the Avenue Carpark are particularly big and had very little scope for misuse so focused on other areas.
- Skateboarders outside the library were a hazard to library users. Mrs Isabelle Mattick would be contacting the local Community Police Officer and Vincent Palizcka would also take this up with Thames Valley Police to investigate what could be done.
- Concerns were raised about the lift from ground floor of Fenwicks to Fuego. The door would not shut so shoppers were being stranded and children were playing underneath lift which was a serious safety concern.  
**(Action AS to raise with Town centre team.)**
- It was noted that the changing places area didn't have a hoist at the initial opening and it was questioned whether this had now been installed.  
**(Action: Sam Wood to check with Disabled Go if this had been updated and how residents got keys)**

89. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

90. **Items for Future Meetings**

It was confirmed that Campbell Christie would present to the group at the next meeting on the support provided for students with learning disabilities at Bracknell and Wokingham College.

Any suggestions for future items can be sent to Emma Young at:  
[emma.young@bracknellforest.gov.uk](mailto:emma.young@bracknellforest.gov.uk)