

**BRACKNELL FOREST ACCESS GROUP
29 JANUARY 2014
7.30 - 8.35 PM**



Present:

Councillors Thompson (Chairman) and Finnie (Vice-Chairman)
Alan Dale, Be Heard in Bracknell
Geraldine Edmond
Sarah Gaitely, Konnections
Fiona Goodhand, Older People and Long Term Conditions
Geoff Hallett, BADHOGS
Mrs Isabel Mattick, Triple A
Andrea McCombie-Parker, The Ark
Muriel Rawsthorne, Bracknell Forest Homes Tenants and Leaseholders Panel
Mark Sanders, Healthwatch, Bracknell Forest

In Attendance:

Darren Burgess, Principal Building Surveyor
Phil Ellis-Martin, Development Manager
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services
Diane Shaklady, Operational Support Manager
Abby Thomas, Head of Community Engagement & Equalities

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Ms Brenda Wilson
David Ariss
Jane Figg, Macular Support Group
Mary Waight, Community Learning Disability Services, BFC

15. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- Radar keys were available to purchase from the Town Council

16. Parking for the Disabled in Bracknell Town Centre

Diane Shaklady, Operational Support Manager, presented a report providing an update on disabled parking arrangements during the regeneration of Bracknell town centre.

Access would be difficult during the regeneration and on-street parking areas would be lost as changes were made to the road layouts however to help mitigate this situation additional disabled parking bays had been made available in the High Street Car Park and consideration was being given to the possibility of converting general

on-street car parking into disabled parking bays. It was acknowledged that some disabled drivers found multi-storey car parks difficult to negotiate and informal arrangements had been put in place for a handful of residents. Requests for special arrangements were dealt with on a case by case basis and should be made to the Operational Support Manager in the first instance.

The Panel thanked Diane Shaklady for her update.

17. **Access Improvement Programme Annual Report**

Darren Burgess, Principal Building Surveyor at the Borough Council, presented a report providing an update on the Borough Council's Access Improvement Programme. The report provided an overview of the work that the Council had carried out during the financial year 2012/13 to improve the accessibility of its public buildings and a summary of the work that would be carried out during the current financial year.

It was reported that work to improve the accessibility of Bracknell Library had been completed in December 2012. All floors were now accessible by lift and a range of improvements have been made to signage and entrance doors. Resourcing issues meant that less progress had been made on improvements to other buildings than would have been liked however this had now been resolved and it was expected that work on the Youth Offending Service's building at 76 Binfield Road, Sandhurst Library, Larchwood and Wick Hill Cottage Family Centre would be completed by the end of the 2013/14 financial year.

The main focus of the coming year would be improvements to Bracknell Leisure Centre. The specification for the works required was currently out to tender and it was expected that work would commence in March and take approximately three months to complete. Following completion of the access improvements at Coral Reef there had been a noticeable increase in the number of people making use of the facility and it was hoped that this experience would be replicated with the Leisure Centre following completion of the works.

Changes to the Council's property portfolio had prompted a review of the list of buildings considered to be publicly accessible. Following the review 4 new buildings including Charles Square and High Street Car Parks had been added to the list. Following an incident in the High Street Car Park which had resulted in a wheelchair user having to be escorted down the vehicle ramps to reach his car, signage had been put up advising users of the car park that the lifts were routinely shut off after 6.30pm and that if they required level access to Princess Square and the Town Centre they should park on level 4. The disabled parking bays had also been moved to level 4. The car park at Waitrose was privately owned and therefore did not fall within the remit of the improvement programme however Disabled Go would be surveying Waitrose as part of their ongoing work in the Borough.

The accessibility of buildings was measured against the 1992 building regulations however where possible improvements were made to current regulations.

The provision of induction loops in reception areas was assessed as part of the survey work prior to deciding any improvements and they were installed when necessary.

It was acknowledged that Easthampstead Park Mansion would never be fully accessible due to the listed status of the building however there were a number of conference rooms available on the ground floor and the Conference Centre was

willing to relocate events if they are made aware of potential access problems in advance.

It was requested that if people had any concerns about a particular council building they should pass them to the Chairman in the first instance so that the matter could be followed up.

The Panel thanked Darren Burgess for his update.

18. **Bracknell Forest Retailers' Guide**

Phil Ellis-Martin, Development Manager, presented a report providing an update on the development of a Retailers Guide for Bracknell Forest. It was intended that the guide would be used by retailers as a reference source as to how they might improve customer service for disabled customers. Initial discussions with retailers about the potential of a guide had been positive with retailers indicating that they were keen to receive guidance and advice in this area. Arising from the subsequent discussion the following points were noted:

- Whilst larger retailers had comprehensive training programmes in place smaller retailers sometimes struggled to find appropriate resources and links to key organisations would be helpful for example the Blind Association were able to provide advice on improving signs to make them more readable
- Signposting sources of online help would help keep the guide focused for example the Disabled Go website had a comprehensive database detailing the physical accessibility of building across the Borough
- A number of disabled groups had expressed an interest in participating in staff training sessions
- Many shops often made use of A-frames to advertise their goods and services and these were not always easy to see. It was agreed that this would be referenced in the Guide
- Whilst much of the information in the Guide could be construed as common sense it did need reiterating
- Bracknell Regeneration Partnership had indicated that they would be willing to make a contribution to the cost of producing the Guide
- The Ark had funding that was to be used to improve disability awareness and the possibility of using this to support retailers would be followed up **(Action: Abby Thomas/Mark Sanders)**
- A DVD and website pages would be a useful additional resource to supplement the guide
- It was intended that the guide would be used across Bracknell Forest

It was agreed that the draft guide would be reviewed and the updated draft would be brought back to the Group's next meeting for approval. **(Action: Phil Ellis-Martin/Abby Thomas)**

19. **Any Other Business**

- The Red Diamond Sports for the Disabled Group had purchased a second hoist for Bracknell Leisure Centre a move that meant that hoists were available for public use at both of the Centre's main pools
- Healthwatch Bracknell Forest was working to gather feedback on the experience of patients using the Borough's health services. Elections for Healthwatch Board positions would be held during the 2nd week of April

- Parking enforcement were monitoring double yellow lines and enforcement notices where being issued when necessary. It was stressed that the Council's Customer Services Team would be informed of any infringements in the first instance
- Disabled Go would be holding a meeting on 11 February 2014 at 10.30am at Easthampstead Baptist Church to discuss the annual review of the Disabled Go Guide to Bracknell Forest. All were welcome to attend.

20. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Bracknell Forest Access Group would take place on 23 April 2014 at 7.30pm in Easthampstead Baptist Church.