

**DISABILITY ADVISORY & ACCESS FORUM  
2 MARCH 2022  
5.00 - 6.00 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Mattick (Chair), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Mrs L Gibson and Mrs Ingham  
Philip Bell, Involve  
Diane Feeney, Berkshire Vision

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Jane Figg, Macular Support Group

**Also Present:**

Samantha Wood, Bracknell Forest Council  
Harjit Hunjan, Bracknell Forest Council

**6. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

**7. COVID: Impact on services for the disabled**

The Forum discussed areas in which COVID had impacted services for disabled people in the borough.

It was noted that the Voluntary and Community Sector had been affected quite severely by the COVID pandemic, both financially and operationally. Some charities for disabled people had managed the transition to virtual operation during the pandemic better than others. Involve continued to work closely with charities which supported those with additional needs. Phil Bell noted that the COVID recovery grant had been well received by the voluntary and community sector, and there had been 36 grant applications since the programme was launched in November 2021.

Lots of disabled people had been feeling very isolated throughout the pandemic, particularly those with learning disabilities who liked routine.

Forum members discussed dentist provision in the borough and queried whether AccessAble collated information on which dentists were accessible in the borough.

**8. Equality Objectives (focusing on accessibility)**

Harjit Hunjan presented the Equality Objectives under the Council's 'All of Us' Equality scheme. The objectives were developed in partnership with key stakeholders and had been approved by the Council's Executive in December 2021.

The equality objectives were:

- Inclusive in all we do
- Accessible by all
- Accountable and fair
- Diverse and inclusive workforce
- Recovering from COVID

An officer group had been established to monitor the objectives and their action plan, and to feed back any reflections into the Council's Corporate Management Team.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Harjit agreed to circulate a copy of the equality scheme once it was finalised, as amendments were still being made. **(Action: Harjit Hunjan)**
- Council services would be held accountable against the equality scheme and its objectives by way of annual equalities reports. Previous years' equalities reports were available on the Council's website. The Equalities officer group also produced quarterly reports against the action plan.
- Forum members requested an update on progress against the Equalities action plan as an annual standing item on their agenda.
- It was noted that this document and others were not available in large print as standard, however residents were able to request copies where required. It had become clear that the scheme needed to be better promoted to residents and partner agencies, as some had not been aware of it before the workshops with stakeholders.
- It was noted that the Safe Place scheme had been run in the past in conjunction with Community Safety, however this was not something which could be easily revisited.
- The AccessAble contract had been renewed for a further 6 years, and their surveyors would continue to gather information on the accessibility of key public locations in the borough.
- The Government's 'Disability Confident' incentive was being investigated by HR on behalf of the Council, however it was not clear how the scheme could be introduced across the Lexicon as retailers were private businesses.

## 9. Reasonable adjustments action plan

Harjit Hunjan reported on the Council's reasonable adjustment work.

The Council was reviewing its commitment to ensuring all services could be accessed by residents with disabilities or additional needs, to comply with the Equality Act duty to make reasonable adjustments. The work included raising awareness across the organisation of the anticipatory duty for reasonable adjustments before they were requested by someone with a disability or additional needs.

An action plan was in development for services across the Council, including ideas such as accessibility statements, improving staff confidence in supporting people with disabilities, and data sharing amendments within the organisation.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- While schools would have their own reasonable adjustment duty, this work focussed on the Council and its own services as well as commissioned services. It was recognised that there would be value in supporting schools to conduct their own reasonable adjustment work in future.

## 10. Any Other Business

Cllr Mrs Mattick raised concerns about cycling in the town centre, and queried what could be done to address the problem. Harjit and Sam agreed to speak to Chris Mansfield to find out who the best contact might be for this matter. **(Action: Harjit Hunjan / Sam Wood)**

Cllr Mrs Gibson advised the Forum of the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training in Learning Disabilities and Autism and queried whether the Council was doing anything to implement this training.

11. **Items for Future Meetings**

The following were proposed as items for future meetings:

- Blue badge update
- Disabled toilets discussion
- Review the SEND Overview and Scrutiny report
- Invite Kate Darrall from the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare

**CHAIRMAN**