

**BRACKNELL FOREST ACCESS GROUP
6 MARCH 2013
6.30 - 8.30 PM**



Present:

Councillors Thompson (Chairman), Finnie (Vice-Chairman) and Ms Wilson
Sheila Beaveridge, Triple A
Colin Beckley, Shopmobility
Alan Dale, Be Heard in Bracknell
Marion Drew, Be Heard in Bracknell
Jane Figg, Bracknell Macular Support Group
Fiona Goodhand, Older People and Long Term Conditions
Geoff Hallett, BADHOGS
Mrs Isabel Mattick, Triple A
and Red Diamond Sports Association
Muriel Rawsthorne, Bracknell Forest Homes Tenants and Leaseholders Panel
Mary Waight, Community Learning Disability Services, BFC

In Attendance:

Mira Haynes, Chief Officer: Older people and Long Term Conditions
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services
Abby Thomas, Head of Community Engagement & Equalities
Neil Crawford, Legal and General
Sean Dooley, Building Design Partnership
Neil Mathew, Gillespie Landscape Architects
Stuart Robinson, David Bonnet Associates
Karl Seyfang, Gardiner Theobald

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ray Edwards MBE, Limbcare
Mike Jackley, Berkshire County Blind Society
Barry Perrin, Limbcare
Jacqui Ryder, Bracknell Shopmobility

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The notes of the Access Advisory Panel meeting held on 19 December 2012 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- The Council's Adult Social Care Section would be supportive of the development of an Access Guide for local businesses similar to that produced by the Wokingham Area Access Group

2. **Bracknell Town Centre Regeneration: Northern Retail Quarter**

The Group was given a presentation on the regeneration of the Northern Retail Quarter, which would be first phase of the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre and cover the area of the town centre north of the High Street.

The Group was informed that at the current stage of the regeneration work was focussed on the legal framework surrounding the redevelopment and the development of the detailed planning application that would be required. As part of this process the Regeneration Team were keen to talk to key stakeholder groups to gather views and opinions on a range of issues that would be used to inform the planning application.

It was noted that, rather than simply build a new shopping centre, the main objective of the regeneration was to give Bracknell Forest a revitalised town centre that encouraged people to move around the town; a place where the flow of streets was intuitive and coherent. An aspiration that would be achieved through the development of new streets and open squares that flowed into each other, the removal of the constraining factor of the Inner Ring Road, reducing the impact that the significant gradient differences across the town centre had on the overall site and improving and maintaining connections to areas outside the regeneration site through improved footpaths and cycle ways.

As well as refurbishing existing car parks to improve accessibility, regeneration plans included the development of a new car park in the northern part of the town which would include disabled parking that was at the same level as the rest of the redevelopment and disabled toilets and family rooms. Provision would also be made for Shopmobility to be located in one of the car parks.

Arising from the Group's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Two new bus stops would be installed in the Northern Retail Quarter, one adjacent to the Red Lion Public House and one adjacent to the Council's Easthampstead House offices
- The Bus Station would remain in its current location for the time being
- Each street and square would be given its own identity with streets being given canopies to provide visitors with a degree of protection from the weather
- The current 12 foot gradient difference between the Waitrose site and the Broadway would be overcome by the installation of a single bank of large lifts and a new ramp at the end of the Broadway nearest to Waitrose
- Provision would be made for local independent stores and social enterprises within the regenerated town centre. However during the regeneration space would be limited due to demolition and building work taking place

The Group stressed that when designing facilities for people with disabilities consideration needed to be given to doing more than was required in the building regulations. For example whilst many disabled toilets were compliant with building regulations they were not always large enough to accommodate both a care giver and a disabled person. The Changing Places Toilet at the Look Out was cited as an example of good practice that the Panel would like to see become more prevalent through out the Borough and replicated in the town centre. It was agreed that plans would be forwarded to the Regeneration Team. **(Action: Alison Sanders)**

The Group acknowledged the work underway to improve the physical accessibility of Bracknell town centre and questioned what consideration had been given to ensuring

that the regenerated town centre was accessible to those with sensory and other non-physical disabilities. The Group was informed that whilst many of these matters would be dealt with as a holistic part of the detailed design work that would occur at a later stage the regenerated town centre would include a range of detailing to take the needs of these groups into account including tactile paving, audible lifts and improved signage. It was agreed that the input of the Access Group would be sought during the development of the street furniture elements of the design work. It was agreed that the Regeneration Team would be invited to the July event and the Group's October meeting.

Whilst the Group reacted positively towards plans to design the physical environment so that it was safe for example through the utilisation of different type of seating, the organisation of street furniture into clearly demarcated areas it was stressed that consideration would need to be given to making the town centre a welcoming place for example through the development of customer service skills and staff training in a similar vein to that produced the Wokingham Area Access Group.

It was agreed that the proposed July Access Group Event would provide an ideal opportunity for further input to be given into the design process.

The Regeneration Team were thanked for their informative presentation and for the opportunity to have an input in the design of the regenerated town centre as plans were developed.

3. Personal Independence Payments

Mira Haynes, Chief Officer: Older People and Long Term Conditions, gave a briefing in respect of the Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

The PIP would replace Disability Living Allowance from the 8 April 2013. Its introduction would be phased in on a geographical basis between April 2013 and October 2015. The change had been introduced by the Coalition Government as part of the ongoing reforms to the welfare system and would apply to all new claims and existing Disability Living Allowance Claimants aged 16 to 64 on or after the 8 April 2013. The PIP would be a non means tested and non taxable benefit that would be payable to a claimant whether they were in or out of work. The PIP had been designed to help towards meeting some of the extra costs arising from ill health or disability and the amount received would depend on how the claimant's condition affected them rather than what the condition was. Assessment of claimants would be carried out by health professionals contracted to the Department of Work and Pensions.

It was stressed that payment of the PIP could impact on a claimant's other benefits and services and as a consequence the Council were looking at the development of training for Council Staff to help them ensure that appropriate advice was given to residents completing applications and under going assessments.

The Group thanked Mira Haynes for the update.

4. Disabled Facilities Grants

The Group noted the briefing note on Disabled Facilities Grants.

5. **Bracknell Access Group Conference**

The Group discussed a report outlining proposals for an Annual Bracknell Forest Access Group half day conference which was supported by the Council's Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Department. Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

Logistical Arrangements

- It was agreed that the event would take place on a Friday morning in July with a start time of 9.45am
- Friday 19 July 2013 was the preferred date but it was acknowledged that this might change depending on venue availability
- It was stressed that the amount of available parking at the venue would be important

Objectives and Content

- The Group approved the proposed event format detailed in the Director of Corporate services' report
- Session 1 would focus on practical aspects of the regeneration of Bracknell town centre
- Session 2 would focus on the development of a DVD and booklet to improve customer service skills and make all shopping areas in Bracknell Forest a welcoming safe place for people with disabilities
- It was suggested that local businesses and Parish Councils be invited to participate in Session 2
- It was agreed that the Welcome address should include a statement setting out the purpose of the Access Group
- Organisations, including Disabled Go, would be invited to have a stand at the back of the event

It was agreed that a small committee would be formed to assist with the organisation of the event. Geoff Hallett, Jim Finnie, Alan Dale and Isabel Mattick volunteered to participate in the Committee.

6. **Any Other Business**

Stop Hate Crime Now Campaign

It was reported that the Police and Council had recently launched the One community: stop hate crime now' campaign which aimed to raise general awareness of hate crime, to encourage reporting of it and to promote help and support available to victims. More details could be found at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/hatecrime and organisations were asked to publicise the campaign to their members.

7. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Group noted that future meetings would be held on the following dates:

- Wednesday 2 October 2013 at 7.30pm
- Wednesday 29 January 2013 at 7.30pm
- Wednesday 23 April 2014 at 7.30pm

The meeting scheduled for July 2013 would be replaced with the Event.

