

ACCESS ADVISORY SUB COMMITTEE
21 MAY 1998

Present: Councillor Ward (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Clifford
Councillor Finnie
Councillor Onions
Mrs V L Ashby, Bracknell Carers Group
Miss T Azam, Bracknell and Wokingham Muscular Dystrophy Group
Mr T Mallett, Red Diamonds
Mrs P Sanderson, The Ark
Mr P Thompson, Arthritis Care
Mrs I Tilbury, Arthritis Care

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Mrs Sutcliffe
Mrs Bolitho, British Red Cross
Mr P Fox, Mencap
Mrs Kearon, Bracknell Citizens' Advice Bureau
Mrs H Hart, Bracknell Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre
Mrs I Mattick, Triple 'A'
Mr M Shrimpton, Bracknell Disability Information Network

1. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Clifford be appointed Vice Chairman of the Access Advisory Sub Committee for the 1998/99 municipal year.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Access Committee held on 11 March 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. South Hill Park - Development Proposals

Mr Tim Brinkman, Director of South Hill Park Trust, and Mr David Elford, Chairman of South Hill Park Trust, together with Mr Eddie Taylor, of Allies Morrison, the architects acting on behalf of the Trust, gave an update to the Advisory Sub Committee on the revisions to the development proposals. The Sub Committee was advised that the revised scheme had been down-sized following discussions with the Arts Council. However, the main access improvements detailed in the original proposal remained.

Mr Taylor outlined the main features of the proposed development with particular emphasis on wheelchair access. It was proposed that the entrance would have automatic doors and the existing steps and ramps would be upgraded. The reception desk would be located facing the entrance with an induction loop and a low level section. The existing lift would be upgraded, to provide lift access to all floors of the building, including new lift levels at the Recital Room and the Cellar Bar.

An important feature of the scheme remained the establishment of an atrium in the centre of the building at ground and first floor levels to provide a focal point for activities. The proposals also included step lifts, to be installed at entrances to certain rooms on the first floor which could only be reached by steps and where it would not be possible to install a ramp. In response to a question, Mr Taylor also outlined the evacuation arrangements in the event of an emergency, which included refuge areas at certain levels for those in wheelchairs. A new ramped access from the terrace to the lawn would also be provided, which was welcomed.

Access to the second floor of the existing building would remain difficult for some owing to the narrowness of the corridors. However, the architects stated that every effort would be made to widen doorways and consider ways of improving the current situation wherever possible.

Members of the Sub Committee also asked questions on employment opportunities for wheelchair users; tactile signage for blind and partially sighted people; lift capacities, toilet facilities; and ramp gradients. The architect stated that the employment of disabled people was a key issue, both front of house and backstage. Tactile signs were proposed and wheelchair accessible WC facilities were being proposed on each floor level and backstage. Facilities would be varied on each floor to give a degree of flexibility. The main lift would be a 13 person lift and would comply to current access standards. Existing and new ramps would be as gentle a gradient as possible.

Mr Brinkman briefly outlined the activities that took place at the centre; there were in excess of 4,500 events per annum. The centre was unique in that it provided around 20 strands of arts activity and enabled a wide range of people to get involved in schemes.

Mr Elford advised the Sub Committee that representatives of the Trust were due to visit the Arts Council on the following day to discuss National Lottery funding allocations, and in particular a letter from the Arts Council limiting the level of grant available.

The Sub Committee endorsed the proposed scheme unanimously and thanked representatives of South Hill Park for their presentation.

The meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m.
and concluded at 8.40 p.m.

CHAIRMAN