

ACCESS ADVISORY SUB COMMITTEE

3 JUNE 1999

Present: Councillor Harrison
Councillor Mrs Clifford
Councillor Piasecki
Councillor Mrs Sutcliffe,
Phyllis Buckby, Bracknell Council for Voluntary
Service
Ms C Dann, Bracknell Users Group
Mr M Jackley, Berkshire County Blind Society
Mrs M Thompson, Action Group for the
Physically Handicapped
Mrs B Thompson, Arthritis Care
Mr P Thompson, Arthritis Care,
Mrs I Tilbry, Arthritis Care

Apologies for Absence:

Miss T Azam, Bracknell and Wokingham
Muscular Dystrophy Group
Mrs A Dyer, Red Diamond Sports Association
Ms H Hart, Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy
Centre
Mrs P Sanderson, The Ark
Mr M Shrimpton, Berkshire Disability Information
Network
Mr A Tarry, National Federation of the Blind

1. Election of Chairman and Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was reported that Councillor Harrison had been elected Chairman of the Access Advisory Sub Committee for the municipal year 1999/00, at the Annual Council Meeting on 5 May 1999. Councillor Mrs Clifford had been appointed Vice Chairman.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Access Advisory Sub Committee held on 7 April 1999 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. March Training Report (Item 1)

The Sub Committee considered a report highlighting issues that were raised in the two training sessions held for Members on 23 and 24 March.

Papers for the Access Advisory Sub Committee were written a number of weeks ahead of the meeting, as the agenda was dispatched two weeks before the meeting. Members felt it was difficult to raise issues for discussion and also were not aware how to get items onto the agenda. The Sub Committee noted that the meetings of the Access Advisory Sub Committee were public meetings and therefore, the Council was required to make public the items for discussion prior to the meetings.

Concern was expressed by Members regarding the Council Chamber in Easthampstead House, as this was inaccessible to some Members. Members felt that alternative venues should be explored.

Attracting the attention of the Chairman was another issue that was raised. Visually impaired people may have difficulties following the discussion if they were unaware who was speaking. Some Members felt intimidated by the size of the Council Chamber and the microphones.

AGREED that:

- (i) A draft list of topics for discussion at the Access Advisory Sub Committee be circulated to all Members prior to the Chairman's briefing.
- (ii) Members of the Access Advisory Sub Committee were welcome to submit reports subject to the Sub Committee's terms of reference.
- (iii) Administrative support could be made available for Groups who wished to submit a report.
- (iv) Future meetings of the Access Advisory Sub Committee be held in the ground floor meeting rooms at Times Square. An aid to communication would be installed in the near future.
- (v) Individuals would state their name before speaking to assist those with visual impairments.
- (vi) Individuals could inform the Chairman of an item on which they wish to speak prior to the commencement of the meeting.
- (vii) Laminated name cards be created to attract the attention of the Chairman and to assist with the identification of those who wish to speak.
- (viii) The Chairman should not hesitate to conclude a Member's point if he feels sufficient time had been given to an issue.

4. Presentation at Mobility Road Show with the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee (Item 2)

The Sub Committee considered a report requesting nominations for two people from the Access Advisory Sub Committee to attend the Mobility Road Show on 25 June 1999 with Members of the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee. The aim of the visit was to collect information, which may assist with making decisions on accessible taxis in the future.

Representatives from the Access Advisory Sub Committee would be asked to report their findings to the next meeting in October. Members who were not nominated to represent the Sub Committee on 25 June were still encouraged to attend the road show and present their findings at the October meeting.

AGREED that Margery Thompson and Carol Dann represent the Access Advisory Sub Committee at the Mobility Road Show on 25 June 1999.

5. Disability Awareness Programme – Town Centre Retail and Business Units (Item 3)

The Sub Committee considered a report suggesting that the Access Advisory Sub Committee could work with local retail and business outlets to improve disability awareness amongst local traders. There were a number of physical access difficulties in Bracknell Town Centre and many of the problems were major and difficult to resolve. If Bracknell Town Centre were redeveloped it would provide the opportunity to create a more accessible environment. Whilst there was little chance of securing access improvements of any size in the short term, many opportunities were taken through the Planning and Building Control applications to secure improvements to access and facilities for disabled people. It was noted, however, that local managers were making decisions on a regular basis that affects the accessibility of a service. An increased knowledge of the issues that local disabled people faced, could assist managers and staff to be more aware of their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and how their decisions had an impact on the accessibility of the environment.

AGREED that the Access Officer prepare a report on a proposal to raise awareness of disability issues amongst local traders following further discussions with the Town Centre Development Manager.

6. New Low Floor Bus Provision for Bracknell (Item 4)

The Sub Committee considered a report on the introduction of new low floor buses on the most popular routes of Bracknell's bus services. It was reported that the new buses were the result of an agreement between First Beeline and Legal and General. Six new low floor buses had been introduced onto the bus routes serving housing areas south of Bracknell Town. The buses were gradually introduced following their launch on 4 May and were all fully operational from 11 May. Each bus had a specific area for one wheelchair user with a restraint facility to prevent excessive movement in the event of an emergency stop and there was also an area in the front of the bus with tip up seats which may be used for further wheelchairs or baby carriages. Each bus had lowering suspension to allow the bus to "kneel" to allow a more level access for passengers to get on or off and, in addition, a retractable bridge/ramp that could be used to deal with gaps that might be left between the bus floor and the kerb at the bus stop. The routes covered by the new buses were:

- 151/152 Wildridings, Great Hollands and Easthampstead
- 155 Harmans Water, Forest Park and Crown Wood
- 156/157 Hanworth and Birch Hill
- 158/159 Crown Wood and Birch Hill

These routes were circular routes linking the housing areas to the Town Centre on a half-hour frequency. Any services which would have to run without low floor buses would be clearly marked in a replacement timetable guide.

The meeting commenced at
7.30pm and concluded at 8.55pm.

CHAIRMAN