

**ACCESS ADVISORY SUB COMMITTEE
21 OCTOBER 1999**

Present: Councillor Harrison (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Clifford
Councillor Piasecki
Councillor Mrs Pile
Councillor Mrs Sutcliffe
Mrs V Ashby
C Cowap (Bracknell Council for Voluntary Service)
Ms C Dann (Bracknell Users Group)
Mr O'Connell (Bracknell Users Group)
Mrs B Thompson (Arthritis Care)
Mr P Thompson (Arthritis Care)
Mrs M Thompson (Forest Line Community Transport)
Mr F Rule (Keep Mobile County Tours Ltd)
Representative from (Red Diamond Disabled Sports Association)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ms B Aird
Councillor Finnie
Miss H Hart (Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre)
Mr P Fox (MENCAP)

7 Arthur Tarry

It was with sadness that the Chairman of the Sub Committee reported that Mr Arthur Tarry, representative of the National Federation of the Blind, had died. The Sub Committee spent a few moments in silence, remembering Arthur Tarry's contribution to the work of the Sub Committee over the years.

8 Substitute Members

The Sub Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute member under Standing Order 38:

Councillor Mrs Pile for Councillor Finnie

9 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Access Advisory Sub Committee held on 3 June 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10 Disabled Persons Parking Spaces in Residential Streets (Item 1)

The Sub Committee received a report describing a review that the Borough Council was undertaking of the ways in which it could help disabled people with difficulties accessing adequate car parking in residential areas.

The report described the arrangements for the provision of parking bays for orange badge holders. If these bays were to be enforced by the Police, they were required to be included within a Traffic Regulation Order. Under the present arrangements any orange badge holder could apply for a designated parking bay to be included within a Traffic Regulation Order.

The Council had established a Parking Issues Focus Group to look at problems associated with parking. This included looking at ideas to help disabled people with parking problems. There had been a concern that the large number of orange badge holders who could apply for a parking bay, could lead to a general increase in parking problems and to further delays in implementation of requests from the people in greatest need. The Sub Committee was invited to consider how parking concessions could be implemented for people in greatest need.

Members of the Sub Committee commented on their experiences of parking issues and the access difficulties caused by inconsiderate parking on residential streets. This was particularly a problem for community transport operators.

It was noted that the orange badge would shortly be replaced by the European wide blue badge. It was suggested that qualification for an orange badge may not necessarily be an appropriate criteria for the installation of a residential parking bay. It was proposed that a second assessment could be introduced, with each case taken on its own merits, with reference to the particular needs of the applicant and the distance from the carriageway to the applicant's home.

AGREED that these suggestions be reported to the Highways Sub Committee and Parking Issues Focus Group.

11 **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Update (Item 2)**

The Sub Committee considered a report on progress with the National Disability Discrimination Act timetable and the measures that were being taken within the Borough Council to comply with the requirements of the Act. The Disability Discrimination act was being introduced in stages nationally. It provided legal definitions of disability and discrimination.

Under the Act it would be unlawful for a service provider to treat a disabled person "less favourably". The Borough Council, as a service provider, needed to make reasonable changes to anticipate the access requirements of disabled people. There would be a role for the Access Advisory Sub Committee in looking at the Council's services which would need to be under constant review to ensure that they complied with the Act. The local implementation of the Act would include a physical audit of all the Council's buildings (76) and Disability Awareness training for staff.

The Sub Committee would receive regular progress reports on the implementation of the Act.

AGREED that the contents of the report be noted.

12 **Visit to the Mobility Road Show (Item 3)**

The Sub Committee received a report submitted by Carol Dann of the Multiple Sclerosis Society on the visit to the Mobility Road Show. At its previous meeting the Sub Committee had agreed that Carol Dann and Marjory Thompson should attend the Mobility Road Show on behalf of the Sub Committee. The aim of the trip had been to look at the vehicles on display that might be suitable for recommendation for use as taxis in the area. Members of the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee had also attended the Road Show together with officers from the Trading Standards Section.

A large number of vehicles had been on display. Carol Dann particularly favoured the Renault Espace, which had a pneumatic lowering system similar to the system seen on the low floor buses. Controls for the systems were operated from the driver's seat and the driver needed to give little or no assistance. It was noted that the company carrying out the adaptation works was as much a relevant consideration as the actual make and model of the vehicle which had been adapted.

Members of the Sub Committee saw a need for specialised taxis to accommodate large wheelchairs that required secure clamping mechanisms. Although it could not be expected that commercial taxis would be able to meet the entire range of needs, the vehicles on display at the Mobility Road Show would increase the range of choice available to many people with disabilities. Community Transport would remain a more appropriate type of provision for some users.

The Trading Standards Officer reported that regulations were about to be released laying down specific standards for Hackney Carriages. These would provide for all new Hackney Carriages from 2002 to be wheelchair accessible.

AGREED that the report be noted.

13 **Bee Line Visit (Item 4)**

The Sub Committee received a presentation from Mr Taylor of Bee Line buses on the introduction of the new low floor buses on Bracknell service routes. Mr Taylor described the recent developments in accessibility on buses. Up to four years ago low floor buses had been virtually unheard of in the UK. This was largely due to the absence of public funding and the costly technology involved. However, more recently the attitude of large purchasing companies such as London Transport, had led to a change in the market. By specifying low floor buses on some of its contracts the London Transport purchasing policy had made low floor buses affordable for other companies.

Bee Line had been operating two low floor buses in Bracknell and five in Slough. Recently Legal & General had made a contribution towards accessible public transport in Bracknell, as part of their initiative to redevelop the Town centre. Their contribution had been sufficient to justify the replacement of six service buses with low floor replacements. At the moment these buses were concentrated on service routes between the Town Centre and the southern parts of the Town such as Wildridings and Harmans Water. Some regular wheelchair users were making use of the service. They were also far more accessible for parents with children in pushchairs. Although there had been no identifiable growth in patronage to date the image of bus travel in south Bracknell had been significantly upgraded and it was hoped that greater use would be made of the facility.

There was a requirement for adaptation of bus stops to modify the height of kerbs and Bee Line hoped that the Council would be able to make the necessary modifications in the near future in order to increase accessibility. The Council had acted very quickly to rectify problems at certain points on the highway where the low floors had been grounding on the road surface. It was not yet possible to offer full integrity of accessible bussing on particular routes/timetables, although normally after 9.00am set routes could be virtually guaranteed to be running with an accessible low floor bus.

AGREED that the report be noted.

Following the meeting the Members of the Sub Committee were able to inspect a low floor bus that was parked nearby.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 8.50pm

CHAIRMAN