

**DISABILITY ADVISORY & ACCESS FORUM**  
**15 JUNE 2022**  
**5.00 - 6.00 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Mrs Mattick (Chair), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Mrs L Gibson and Mrs Ingham  
Philip Bell, Involve  
Andrea McCombie-Parker, The Ark

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Ray Edwards MBE, Limbcare

**12. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

**13. Cycling in Bracknell Town Centre**

The Forum discussed how cycling in Bracknell town centre was impacting residents. It was suggested that many people were taking no heed of the restrictions which applied to cycling in the town centre. In addition, the police had limited resources and did not have sufficient resources to treat this as a priority.

The Forum was reminded that the Council and the Lexicon had responsibility for overseeing the town centre. The potential for civil enforcement had been raised. A lot had been done to address cycling since the centre had opened. It was noted that the majority of those who had been stopped claimed to be unaware of the restrictions. This suggested that some education campaigns may be required. It was noted that the cycling in Bracknell Town Centre worsened during school lunch times and when the school day ended. An issue of not noticing or hearing bicycle users was noted by forum members as they discussed their concerns for disabled wheelchair users and other less mobile people visiting the town centre.

It was suggested that Overview & Scrutiny should be asked to look at the issues including whether cyclists could be directed to more suitable routes.

It was established that part of the issue was also e-scooters as Councillor Mrs Mattick (Chair) stated she witnessed a female with a young child at the front riding her scooter on the road.

Forum members discussed creating a campaign, potentially with the police, to target local schools and colleges by attending their assemblies to improve communication along with liaising with the police to discuss civil enforcement and the law regarding bicycles. There may also be a need to do more to raise awareness amongst older people who were also cycling through the town centre.

Councillor Mrs Mattick indicated that she would speak to Councillor Bob Angell about the issue. Councillor Mrs Ingham added that she believed the Climate Change Advisory Panel would also be looking at cycling later in the year.

#### 14. **Blue Badge Update**

Councillor Michael Gibson provided an update on the Overview & Scrutiny review of blue badges. He indicated that some recommendations would not be implemented until November.

Local and national media suggested high disparity between approval rates for visible and non-visible disabilities. Councillor Gibson explained that the reason for the review was complaints from residents stating the Blue Badge application scheme was unfair. The recommendations to the executive were:

- 1) Refusal letters should be made easier to understand and to demonstrate to all applicants their evidence was being considered. This should have been implemented in December. The main reason for delay for scheduling for blue badges was due to the ICT upgrade to allow the changes to the forms to be made.
- 2) Local guidelines to explain the approach to be made more available which had been actioned.

The number of referrals for 2021/22 was 1,811 for physical disabilities with an approval rate of 92.4%. Those with hidden disabilities, 144 referrals with a 55% approval rate. This was a significant difference, although the reason cited was a waiting list for children with disabilities.

It was suggested that applications were taking 12 weeks to be determined but no-one could confirm whether this was the case or in line with the national average.

In response to a question, it was noted that there was no cap currently on the number of blue badges issued. However, there was a limited supply of spaces to park so there was a conscious need to ensure the correct individuals were provided with a blue badge. There may be a need to recommend to the Executive that more disabled parking spaces were provided.

There was surprise that ICT was being used as an excuse for delay as it ought not to be difficult to provide an interim template if it really was not possible to update the system. Six months seemed an unacceptable length of delay.

It was agreed that this Forum should be part of the consultation once the ICT changes had been completed enabling the changes to the application form to be implemented.

It was also agreed that the minutes should be forwarded to Overview & Scrutiny by way of a letter to the relevant Chair to ensure that they were aware of the concerns of the Forum. Councillor Gibson was keen to understand the impact of their recommendations rather than repeating the review.

It was also agreed that the Parent Carers Forum should be invited to talk to the Forum about their concerns to ensure the Council was meeting its responsibilities under equalities legislation.

#### 15. **Disabled Toilets**

The forum discussed disabled toilets and noted that they were often used as a storage room for other items which had been put forward as a complaint.

It was reported that the Birch Hill public toilets were to be converted into a "Changing Places" toilet which would be a significant benefit to have out in the community.

Councillor Mrs Gibson had raised concerns about the need to ensure red chords were hanging to the ground and other items such as bins were not being left in the transfer space. She suggested that when raised the issues were taken on board.

Discussion on whether there was a register listing all the disabled toilets or an app for the public to find the nearest disabled toilet. It was also questioned whether there were any criteria for the provision of disabled toilets and who was responsible for them.

There was an app produced by Disabled Go (now Access Able). However, the council only had a contract with them for approximately 10 new venues a year. Changing Places also had a website which listed all the venues where they had placed disabled toilets. Karen White from the Dementia Team had a group of people with dementia who reviewed venues and provided feedback on potential improvements for dementia sufferers as they were sometimes forgotten. It was also reported that the paperwork for providing "Changing Places" toilets was onerous.

Public buildings were now required to have an accessible toilet as part of building regulations and were not to be used it as a store room.

Access Able also had a web site with information regarding accessible toilets. Anyone with potential venues were asked to contact Samantha Wood who indicated that there was some scope remaining to add new accessible venues to the Access Able information this year.

Councillor Mrs Mattick drew attention to the Bracknell Forest Retailers Guide which needed updating. Although she had been advised that it was being updated, Samantha Wood was unaware of this and indicated that it would be a significant cross-council task.

## 16. **Items for Future Meetings**

The following were proposed as items for future meetings:

- Young people with hidden disabilities opportunities.
- Support for Afghan or Ukrainian children with disabilities – a comprehensive assessment had been completed on Ukrainian guests regarding their needs and support, particularly their health needs.
- Representatives from the Parents/Carers Forum and a presentation undertaken since the Joint SEND Inspection.
- Kate Darrall from the Jeallotts Hill Community Landshare.

It was suggested that efforts should be made to find out how accessible the Forum was. Had online meetings made it more accessible?

The next meeting was to be held at 5pm on 5 October 2022.

## 17. **Jeallotts Hill Community Landshare**

Kate Darrall from Jeallotts Hill Community Landshare would attend the next meeting of the forum, due to a misunderstanding over notifying her of the meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**