

Disability Liaison Group

Monday, 25 July 2005

Present:

Chorley Borough Councillors:

Councillor C Hoyle (Chair) and Councillors D Dickinson, D Gee, Miss J Molyneaux and R Snape

Chorley Borough Council Officers:

Roger Handscombe (Head of Property Services), Keith Allen (Head of Public Space Services), Neil Houlihan (Maintenance Surveyor), Cindy Lowthian (District Liaison Officer) and Tony Uren (Democratic Services)

Disability Forum Representatives:

E Bee (Disability Forum Co-Ordinator), Harold Rimmer (Disability Forum (Chair)), Terence Reynolds (Disability Forum Vice-Chairman), Mrs I Carrol, Bill Coxhead (Disability Forum), Judy Daniels (Disability Forum), Mrs Alison Hansford, Albert Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Rita Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Maureen Kay (Deaf and Disability Forum) and Clive Yates (Disability Research)

Sign Language Interpreter:

Val Hall (Interpreter)

SBS Architects representatives:

Andy Leaver (SBS Architects)

1. WELCOME

Councillor Hoyle welcomed everyone present to the Disability Liaison Group meeting and introduced Councillor June Molyneaux, Ivy Carroll and Alison Hansford, who were attending their first meeting of the Liaison Group.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs P Case, Councillor Mrs S Walsh, Nancy Banks, Maurice Waterhouse, Devi Nicholson, E Tattersall, Robert Winder and Alan Capstick (Engineering Services Manager).

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the last meeting of the Disability Liaison Group held on 18 April 2005 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Clive M Yates' apology for absence.

4. ACCESS TO CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL SERVICES BY DISABLED PEOPLE

Mr Handscombe reminded the Liaison Group that, while the Disability Discrimination Act had stipulated new criteria to facilitate all persons access to buildings, the Act had not addressed the actual delivery of services. Subsequently, as a result of discussions between the Council's senior Officers, it had been decided to seek the views of the Liaison Group on how they thought the Borough Council's services might be improved to better meet the needs of disabled people. A discussion item would, therefore, be included on subsequent meetings' agendas.

In response, Mrs Carroll intimated that the emergency contact telephone number for the Borough Council was not always available. Mr Handscombe undertook to ensure that the emergency number was reinstated.

In addition, a member reported that a manhole cover on Railway Road, Brinscall was missing and the danger spot was unprotected. Reference was also made to the difficulties being experienced by some disabled people in moving their recycling receptacles to the appropriate collection points.

Mr Handscombe reminded the Group of the recent introduction of the Council's One Stop Shop within the Union Street offices, the primary purpose of which was to provide assistance and information on a range of Council services at one point of contact. It was envisaged that over 90% of enquiries would be able to be dealt with at the One Stop Shop by trained, skilled staff. Mr Handscombe also confirmed that the One Stop Shop would incorporate a mini-com system and text phone facilities.

Eileen Bee drew the Group's attention to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act which were due to become effective in 2006, which could have a major impact on the delivery of the Council's services.

A number of members were also concerned at the fact that a number of town centre shops and businesses did not appear to have complied with the access provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.

It was **AGREED:**

(1) That Asim Khan (Assistant Head of Customer Services) be requested to attend the next meeting of the Disability Liaison Group to advise the Group on the facilities available within the One Stop Shop and to answer members' queries.

(2) That the Officers be requested to ensure that details of the facilities available for disabled persons in the One Stop Shop, together with relevant contact numbers, are included in the next edition of the Council's Borough Newspaper.

(3) That an item be included on the agenda for the next Liaison Group meeting to consider the implications of the 2005 proposals of the Disability Discrimination Act on the planning and delivery of the Council's services.

(4) That the Liaison Group's concern at the non-compliance of many town centre shops and businesses with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act be raised at the next meeting of the Town Centre Forum, whose members be requested to consider means by which the businesses might be persuaded to comply; and that the outcome of the Forum's deliberations be reported back to this Liaison Group.

5. UPDATE ON TOWN HALL/LANCASTRIAN ALTERATIONS

The Chair welcomed Andy Leaver from SBS Architects who had been invited to attend the meeting to update the Group on the adaptation works to the Town Hall and the Lancastrian Room.

Mr Leaver intimated that the work was progressing satisfactorily, with 50% of the project work having already been completed. The following elements of the work had been undertaken:

- The entrance through to the reception area had been provided.
- The main foundations for the internal structure were in place.
- The atrium and floors had been constructed.
- The steelwork for the lift shafts and staircases had been put into place.
- The internal timber floor had been laid and the timber roof constructed.
- The steel and atrium roof light had been constructed and the roof light glazing completed.
- Internal corridors were either being widened or re-constructed.

Whilst referring to the glazed doors to be fitted to the front entrance, Mr Leaver sought the Liaison Group's preference for either an automatic opening device or a push-button opening device for the doors. In response, the Group's unanimous view was that the

doors should open automatically to allow entrance and exit. The Group also considered that brightly coloured lettering on the glass doors would assist visually impaired people.

Mr Leaver confirmed that a continuous rail from the lift to the stairs would be provided. The Group suggested that only white edgings to the stairs (as opposed to yellow edgings) be utilised, as the yellow edging would not be sufficiently distinctive on light oak stairs. It was agreed that Judith Daniels would be invited to test the effectiveness of the stair markings before the scheme was finalised. Similarly, a brighter range of coloured tiles would be used in the WC areas to create a greater contrast.

Mr Leaver also confirmed that the furnishings in the new reception area would accord with the Council's corporate style and that a hardwood floor was to be laid. Eileen Bee asked that consideration be afforded to the acoustics in the reception area. The Group agreed that it would be beneficial for the Disability Forum members to be allowed an opportunity to inspect the reception area in advance of its official opening to ensure that the needs of disabled persons had been fully taken into account.

The Liaison Group was also informed that the scheme included provision for the Lancastrian Room to be re-carpeted, re-decorated and partly re-furnished. The Architects and Officers were asked to examine the texture of the new carpet to ensure that it was compatible for wheelchair usage.

At the conclusion of his presentation, the Chair thanked Mr Leaver for his attendance, stating that the Liaison Group was happy to be assured that the scheme was progressing satisfactorily.

6. ONGOING ISSUES

Mr Allen advised the Group that Alan Capstick (Engineering Services Manager) had been unable to attend the meeting but assured the Group that the outstanding queries on the schedule of on-going issues would be answered at the next meeting. In the interim, an updated schedule would be issued by Mr Handscombe to the Group members in advance of the next meeting.

7. COMMUNICATION

Mr Handscombe stated that the Officers were endeavouring to compile a database of the Liaison Group members' e-mail addresses, which would enable future agenda papers to be delivered electronically to those members willing to receive them by that method. Paper copies of the agenda would, of course, still be issued to the remaining members. The Liaison Group members were, therefore, requested to insert their e-mail address, where appropriate, on the attendance list circulated at the meeting.

Eileen Bee indicated that no objection would be raised to the Council despatching agenda papers or other correspondence direct to the Disability Forum members.

8. DISABILITY AWARENESS DAY

The Chair thanked everyone who had attended the Disability Awareness Day event on the Flat Iron car park on 3 July 2005 for their support. The event, sponsored by the County Council, Borough Council and the Primary Care Trust, had proved to be a success and the sponsors would shortly be considering arrangements and proposals for the 2006 event. The Council's Officers were also thanked by Eileen Bee for their assistance.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was hoped to combine the next meeting of the Liaison Group with a tour around the completed works at the Town Hall and Lancastrian Room in late October/early November, 2005.

The Chair confirmed that the date of the next meeting would be notified to members with the despatch of the minutes of this meeting.

Chair