

Equality Forum

Monday, 26 April 2010

Present: Councillor Greg Morgan (Chair) and Councillors Rosie Russell and Iris Smith

Officers: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy), Gary Hall (Director of Transformation), Martin Walls (Head of Streetscene), Sarah James (Performance, Partnership and Equality Manager), Andy Brown (Parks and Open Spaces Officer (Development)), Pam Sutton (Lancashire County Council District Partnersip Officer), Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Officer), Catherine Moxon (BSL Interpreter) and Carol Kyle (BSL Interpreter)

Partner officers: PCSO Ray Chadwick (Lancashire Constabulary), John Miller (NHS Central Lancashire / LGBT Community) and Mike Collinson (Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust)

Also in attendance: Eileen Bee (Disability Forum Co-ordinator), Cindy Bolton (Chorley & South Ribble CVS), Estelle Brown (Chorley Pensioners Association), Judy Daniels (Disability Forum), Gary Finlayson (African-Caribbean Community), Clamantina Finlayson (African-Caribbean Community), Matthew Gregory (Youth Council), Paige Hall (Youth Council), Deanna Hartley-Davis (Runshaw College), Rita Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Albert Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Ginny Jones (Chorley Pensioners Association), Val Lawson (Chorley Youth Council), Joyce Morris (Creative Minds / Eccleston Parish Council), Marilyn Porter (Crossroads), Terence Reynolds (Disability Forum Chair), Geoff Smith (Chorley and South Ribble MIND), Jeannie Stirling (Homestart) and Malika Donna Womack (Umeed)

10.EF.71 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced those on the top table. Attendees were reminded to introduce themselves, state the organisation they represent and to use the microphone when addressing the meeting.

The Chair explained that the meeting was being held at Woodlands for this meeting only as the Lancastrian was being used for election purposes.

10.EF.72 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor David Dickinson, Colin Everett (Lancashire County Council District Partnership Officer), Diane Gradwell (Chorley Citizens Advice Bureau), Councillor Cath Hoyle, Councillor Laura Lennox and Marel Urry (Hoghton Parish Council).

10.EF.73 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

In response to a query Lesley-Ann confirmed that the Private Sector Housing consultation period had been extended to mid-April to enable a full twelve week consultation period.

10.EF.74 TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON TOWN CENTRE ACCESSIBILITY

Sarah James, Judy Daniels and Eileen Bee delivered a presentation outlining the findings of the Task and Finish Group set up by the Equality Forum to consider Town Centre accessibility.

Sarah explained that the membership had included officers from both Lancashire County Council and Chorley Council, and members of the public. Walkabouts of the Town Centre had been undertaken followed by meetings to discuss the issues raised and develop an action plan.

Judy then outlined the process undertaken to train guide dogs, with dogs being taken into different environments by puppy walkers from 6 weeks old. By 12 to 14 months the dogs progress to guide dog training school, learning to walk in a straight line, stopping at kerbs, doors and steps, avoiding obstacles and judging height and width (to find places wide enough for dog and owner). The dogs are then introduced to traffic and at this time the instructor steps back and lets the dog take the lead, often doing blindfolded walks and matching the dog to a person.

Judy explained that when a dog was crossing a road it caused a problem for the dog where there was no difference between the

road and pavement. If a car stopped to allow a person to cross and the dog perceived the car was too close the dog would not cross.

It was clarified that there was a clear separation between work time and free time. Free time was undertaken in a place the dog would not go when they were working.

The Forum then watched a DVD showing a walk through a town centre from the perspective of a guide dog. Members commented on how thought provoking the film was.

Sarah and Eileen took the group through several photographs taken during walkabouts and updated the Forum on the issues found and on the actions to be undertaken to resolve the issues. The photographs and action plan, which outlined the agreed solutions, lead officer and timescale, can be found on the Council's website here:

[http://democracy.chorley.gov.uk/Published/C00000568/M00002189/AI00018355/\\$TownCentreActionPlanFinal.docA.ps.pdf](http://democracy.chorley.gov.uk/Published/C00000568/M00002189/AI00018355/$TownCentreActionPlanFinal.docA.ps.pdf)

Sarah thanked those who had been involved in the Group and advised she personally had gained an appreciation of some of the issues faced. In addition to monitoring the Action Plan a signage audit of the Town Centre would be undertaken by officers. The results of the task and finish group would also be shared with the Town Centre businesses.

Estelle Brown raised uneven red/orange pavement on Chapel Street as a trip hazard. This issue will be added to those being undertaken by Lancashire County Council through the action plan.

Councillor Iris Smith commented that the doors in the Town Hall and into the Lancastrian were very heavy; Gary advised these were fire doors.

Councillor Iris Smith advised by the entrance to the White Hart, in front of the garage, the kerb rose up at a gradient and she had fallen here. This will be investigated and reported back at the next meeting.

Ginny Jones highlighted that refuse bins were sometimes left on the pavement by the bin men which caused an obstruction. Officers would undertake spot checks, but Gary requested that

people report examples to enable the Council to take action with the contractor. The number to call was 01257 515151.

Terry Reynolds advised that dropped kerbs could be difficult to see and that yellow lines would be useful to highlight them. This would be picked up as part of the Action Plan.

John Miller suggested that the DVD be shared with Parish Councils, PACT and other partners, to raise awareness. Judy can be contacted on 01257 267240 or email judith.daniels@actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Sarah James can be contacted on 01257 515348 or email sarah.james@chorley.gov.uk.

Building access audits

Gary Hall gave a brief update on building access audits undertaken by the Council. The aim of the work was to examine the accessibility of services and facilities and identify where physical barriers might compromise access.

Reviews had been undertaken of smaller assets to test the process, with some work was needed to all buildings which had been prioritised; urgent work to improve access and/or health and safety issues and meeting building regulations first. The total investment identified so far was around £80,000.

Gary had undertaken a piece of work with Eileen Bee, Estelle Brown and Judy Daniels to test whether the approach and work on the initial audits was sufficient, a template for future audits and if the representatives of the Equality Forum would like any changes to the approach.

The Group had found that the overall approach was acceptable, however the audits needed to include access to the site and to the adjacent facilities. The Group had recommended that the approach was rolled out to the remaining Council facilities.

Gary suggested that the Task and Finish Group continue in its' present form and report back to the Forum with further findings.

Joyce Morris queried the availability of financial resources to undertake adaptations generally. Gary advised Lancashire County Council made grants available for this occasionally.

Councillor Rosie Russell queried whether audits had been undertaken on disabled toilets. It was confirmed the facility located on Pall Mall was the only one so far. Councillor Russell suggested that information on the location of disabled toilets in the Town Centre be produced. This would be actioned through the signage audit and potentially a leaflet.

Any volunteers to join the Group should contact Gary Hall on 01257 515105 or email gary.hall@chorley.gov.uk

10.EF.75 UMEED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STEERING GROUP

Cindy Bolton, Chief Executive of Chorley and South Ribble Council for Voluntary Service delivered a powerful presentation about “Umeed”.

Umeed was an voluntary group set up to deliver a co-ordinated integrated approach to ensure that women who had no recourse to public funds had access to the help they needed when suffering from domestic violence.

The Home Office had estimated that nationally, over 500 women, girls and their children per year try to escape from abusive partners but cannot access emergency housing provision or other benefits because of their immigration status. One of the problems faced by members of Umeed is that the group is unable to accurately establish the extent of the local need and is reliant on anecdotal evidence from the community, as more accurate information needed to support funding applications is often restricted to protect the safety of the women and children. Anecdotal evidence from the community suggests that there are a growing number of women who are fleeing domestic violence, but have no recourse to public funds in Chorley and South Ribble which have been and are being supported voluntarily by local people in our community.

The Sojourner Project was a pilot scheme funded by the Home Office that worked in partnership with other voluntary agencies to co-ordinate support, accommodation and subsistence for women and their dependents throughout the country. The scheme had been extended until August 2010. It has been reported that nationally, 90 women and 47 children had been helped in the first three months of the pilot project. The Home Office are anticipating that the pilot scheme will help inform them of the next steps in developing a longer term solution.

“Umeed” meaning faith hope and love, had agreed a constitution 2 June 2009 with aims to relieve the distress and suffering of victimisation and domestic abuse, through financial hardship, sickness, physical and mental health and well being. Another aim was to educate the public about the effects of domestic abuse and/or so called honour based violence.

Key members in the local community had offered ‘ad hoc’ accommodation to victims, donations had been made by members of the public and practical help and assistance. In reality, the group did not have a ‘property’ that was available to provide emergency accommodation to people and funds available to relieve financial hardship were limited. Social services could provide assistance to children, but not women.

Going forward Umeed would continue to raise funds, develop a protocol and process of application for individuals to access financial support and raise awareness. A local ‘directory’ of available assistance and support available locally to women with no recourse to public funds would be produced and distributed to public services and key members in the community.

In response to a query from Councillor Rosie Russell Malika Donna Womack advised that this issue was cultural rather than religious.

Any volunteers to join the Group or offers of support should contact Cindy Bolton on cindy.bolton@chorleyandsouthribblecvs.co.uk or call 01257 263254.

10.EF.76 ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING

Martin Walls, (Head of Streetscene Services) gave a short overview of the Allotments and Community Growing agenda.

The key challenges included management of the waiting list for an allotment as people who were offered an allotment; sometimes refused their offer as the allotment was not in their area. This led on to the challenge of identifying new sites and the demand for allotments in the Town Centre. It was key to site new allotments where the demand was.

Martin advised that resources had been made available for the development of Community Food Growing schemes which were more inclusive than allotments. The Council were aiming to develop 3 or 4 sites and would bring plans to a future meeting for consultation. An officer had been appointed to co-ordinate the scheme.

Joyce Morris queried whether the officer could act as liaison between Parish Councils and farmers and this was confirmed.

Gregory Mathews queried whether new allotments would be accessible for all, officers confirmed that new sites would be subject to planning requirements and a Disability Discrimination Act audit. All new schemes would include car parking. Martin advised there would be a focus on community growing as this type of scheme was more inclusive.

The Forum discussed a scheme where people who couldn't cope with their gardens could invite people to use them. Further information was available at <http://www.landshare.net/>

10.EF.77 OPEN FORUM TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES FOR EACH EQUALITY STRAND

(a) Age

No issues were raised.

(b) Disability

Eileen Bee requested a future agenda item on the Equality Act which would be coming into force in the autumn. Officers would ensure this item was considered at a future meeting.

Estelle Brown advised that a dropped kerb has been requested from LCC Highways outside her home and requested the renewal of double yellow lines on the Silvester Road turning circle. These would be requested from Lancashire County Council.

(c) Ethnicity

No issues were raised.

(d) Faith

No issues were raised.

(e) Gender

No issues were raised.

(f) Rurality

No issues were raised.

(g) Sexuality

No issues were raised.

10.EF.78 NOTICES / FEEDBACK / PUBLICITY

Joyce Morris advised that following the successful Time Steps Day of Dance for men and women over the age of 50 a repeat event would be held in the Marsden Room, Worden Arts Centre on Sunday June 13.

Help the Aged, now Age UK, was offering presentations on Distraction Burglary.

On September 8, Active Generation would be promoting the Older Persons' Olympics and were looking for teams of 4 or 5 from clubs and neighbourhoods to enter not-too-strenuous games, including carpet bowls.

For more information on these please contact Joyce Morris on 01257 452059 or email hawk4@talktalk.net

Councillor Rosie Russell advised that Council Council was coordinating a wide range of events to celebrate International Older Peoples Day on October 1, including promotion of various other organisations events. For further information contact Michael Rushe on 01257 515817 or email michael.rushe@chorley.gov.uk

Donna Malika Womack reported that a multicultural festival was being planned to take place on the village green in Clayton Brook on June 19, to celebrate diversity and culture from 12pm until 8pm. For further information contact Donna Malika

Womack 07532193667 or the Clayton Brook community house on 01772 698074.

Lesley-Ann Fenton advised that the Picnic in the Park would be held on July 4, in Astley Park, combined with the Chorley Smile awards. Nomination forms could be downloaded from the Council's website and should be submitted by May 21. For further information contact Louise Finch on 01257 515062 or email louise.finch@chorley.gov.uk

Eileen Bee reported that the REACH event would be held on August 9 / 10 with a 2 half day Conference / Disability Awareness Training at Civic Centre, Leyland. Places were free, but strictly limited - representatives of Voluntary and Community Faith organisations were particularly welcome. Provisionally on August 11 'a Wheels for All' at Tatton Community Centre event followed by a Showcase Event at Leyland Civic Centre (with places strictly limited) on August 12. On A August 13 and 14 information days were planned from 11am until 3pm on Fazackerly St / Market St, Chorley. For further information contact Eileen Bee on 01772 518000 or email csr@disabilityforum.freeserve.co.uk.

John Miller highlighted International day against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 17 – more info has been requested from John. For further information contact John Miller on john.miller@disabilityforum.freeserve.co.uk

10.EF.79 NETWORKING BREAK

At the conclusion of the meeting Forum members were encouraged to take part in the networking session.

Chair