

Equality Forum

Monday, 11 April 2011

Present: Councillor Greg Morgan (Chair), Councillor David Dickinson (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Alison Hansford and Rosie Russell

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Head of Policy and Communications), Sarah James (Partnerships Manager), Cathryn Barrett (Democratic and Member Services Officer), Val Hall (BSL Interpreter) and Carol Kyle (BSL Interpreter)

Partner officers: Mike Collinson (Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) and Tony Moreton (Head of Passenger Transport - Lancashire County Council)

Also in attendance: Barry Moss, Eileen Bee (Disability Forum Co-ordinator), David Brown (Chorley Pensioners Association), Victoria Hansford (Chorley Youth Council), Rita Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Albert Jeffrey (Deaf Forum), Ginny Jones (Chorley Pensioners Association), Maureen Kay (Deaf Forum), Ronnie Kay (Deaf Forum), Joyce Morris (Creative Minds / Eccleston Parish Council), Marilyn Porter (Crossroads), Terence Reynolds, Geoff Smith (Lancashire MIND), Marel Urry (Hoghton Parish Council), Geraldine Moore (Age UK Lancashire), Matthew Hansford (Youth Council) and Douglas Bailey (Chorley Pensioners)

11.EF.10 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, if applicable, and to use the microphone when addressing the meeting.

11.EF.11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Anthony Gee, Councillor Beverley Murray, Cindy Bolton (Chorley and South Ribble CVS), Estelle Brown (Chorley Pensioners Association), Yvonne and Brian Curewen (Walking for Health), Claire Dillon (Helpdirect Lancashire), Diane Gradwell (Chorley, South Ribble & Districts Citizens Advice Bureaux), Deanna Hartley-Davies (Runshaw College), John Miller (LGBT),

David Naden (Linkability), Stephanie Nicholson, Sarah Palmer (District Partnership Officer, Lancashire County Council), Jeannie Stirling (Homestart) and Members of the Youth Council.

11.EF.12 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record, apart from a question omitted from the minutes, by Marel Urry relating transport difficulties in Hoghton and Brindle. Sarah James responded to the question at the close of the meeting.

11.EF.13 CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

Tony Moreton gave an overview on Concessionary Travel, reporting that for the vast majority of residents there would be no change in their travel requirements. This included the NOW cards which allows residents, who are eligible to received one, free travel on local bus services between 9.30am and 11.00pm, with a small charge for those travelling before 9.30am.

Members of the Forum were advised that Lancashire County Council and District Council's had pooled money together to fund community transport schemes such as Dial-a-Ride and the Community Car Hire Scheme for a further three months. Funding for these schemes had previously been withdrawn due the shortfall in Government budget allowance.

During the three month period a consultation exercise would take place, while officers would consider all options available to them to find alternative ways of keeping the services running.

Members of the Forum were encouraged to make their views known by taking part in the consultation exercise.

Members of the Forum thanked Lancashire County Council for their continued effort in supporting the community transport scheme for a further three months, but expressed their concern of how the cancellation of the schemes would impact on the residents who used them.

Tony Moreton explained that unlike other bus services which are statutory, community transport schemes had always been discretionary.

Members of the Forum asked for a number of issues to be considered within the consultation including:

- consider those areas not covered by a bus service at the moment
- older people visiting hospitals as patients or hospital visitors
- the feelings of isolation that would be felt by those people who were reliant on these services if they were cancelled

At the conclusion of the presentation the Chair asked for questions from the Forum.

There was a discussion on the benefit of the new microchip NOW Smart Cards and the possible development opportunity's that the technology could bring.

In response to a question raised, the Forum was advised that special needs school transport could be provided following an assessment. However, this would not apply for those students studying at college.

The Chair thanked Tony Moreton for attending the meeting and reminded Members of the Forum to take part in the consultation on Community Transport by contacting Lancashire County Council with their concerns.

Tony Moreton can be contacted on email :
tony.moreton@lancashire.gov.uk

11.EF.14 CHORLEY COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO EQUALITY - THE NEW EQUALITY SCHEME

Sarah James gave an overview of the review of the Council's Equality Scheme.

Members of the Forum were informed that the existing scheme had been updated to take account of new legislation in the Equality Act 2010, and as a result there had been changes to the Council's general duties and specific duties with regards to equality.

Taking in to account the new legislation, the Council has identified nine equality strands:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Rurality
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

It was recognised that these groups may need additional consideration in service delivery or policy development.

All of the strands identified, except rurality, are protected by law through the Equality Act as people who have protected characteristics. In addition Chorley Council had chosen to recognise rurality as an equality strand because of the issues that people living in rural areas can face when accessing services.

The new scheme was approved at the Executive Cabinet on 31 March 2011.

Members of the Forum were advised of the processes that were in place which embedded equality and diversity in every aspect of the Council's roles and responsibilities including its responsibility as an employer.

At the next meeting of the Forum the equality strands will be changed to take in to account the nine new equality stands.

11.EF.15 TOWN CENTRE ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

6a Sarah James updated the Forum on the progress of work identified in the Town Centre Accessibility Action Plan.

- Smaller works identified in the Action Plan had either been completed or had been scheduled to be completed in the near future.

- There was still work outstanding on the Flat Iron car park. This work however, is subject to a much larger development and the works identified would be incorporated within the development.
- Officers of the Council were still communicating with market traders and shopkeepers of their responsibilities in relation to street furniture and 'A' boards through Town Centre Workshop meetings and individually.

Negotiations were still on going with Lancashire County Council on the devolution of their enforcement powers to Chorley. However, no date for the transfer of responsibility had been proposed.

- A process has been implemented to ensure that the gates which are situated at strategic points of the town centre, to turn the town centre in to a pedestrianised zone, are closed at the correct time.

In response to members of the Forum's concerns that there was still a potential danger from cyclists riding their bikes while the Town Centre was pedestrianised, Chris Sinnott advised that any other form of barrier had to out weigh the cost and potential success.

- 6b Eileen Bee gave an update on the Buckshaw Village Surgery which was currently progressing through the planning process. It was anticipated the timescale for the handover would be April 2012.

11.EF.16 OPEN FORUM TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES FOR EACH EQUALITY STRAND

(a) Age

- Joyce Morris expressed her concern that Lancashire County Council had decided to withdraw funding to the Chorley and South Ribble CVS.
- Councillor Rosemary Russell alerted members of the Forum about malicious telephone calls being directed at elderly residents in which they were being told that Chorley Council would evict them from their home because of their age. If

anyone becomes aware of any incidents please contact Chorley Council as soon as possible.

- Matthew Hansford thanked those involved in the development of the new Brinscall play park which had been opened recently.

(b) Disability

- Eileen Bee advised that she shared Joyce Morris' concern that Lancashire County Council had decided to withdraw funding to Chorley and South Ribble CVS (Minute 11.EF.16a).

Chris Sinnott confirmed that, at their annual review, Lancashire County Council had decided not to fund a number of CVS districts in the first round of funding allocations. However, it was still possible for the CVS to reapply for funding under the second funding round.

Members of the Forum asked that comments raised at this meeting be fed back to Lancashire County Council.

(c) Ethnicity

No issues were raised.

(d) Faith

No issues were raised.

(e) Gender

No issues were raised.

(f) Rurality

Marel Urry reiterated her concerns relating to community transport in the Withnell, Withnell Fold, Brinscall and Hoghton areas expressed earlier in the meeting (Minute 11.EF.13).

(g) Sexuality

No issues were raised.

11.EF.17 NOTICES / FEEDBACK / PUBLICITY

- Following a question from Councillor Rosemary Russell it was confirmed that the type in bold on the play areas table (pages 11-17) indicated play equipment suitable for wheelchairs.
- Geraldine Moore advised that the Stronger More Involved Communities Local Strategic Partnership Sub-Group was changing its name to the Voluntary Communities and Faith Sector Forum and encouraged members of the Equality Forum to attend future meeting.

Geraldine Moore can be contacted on email gmoore@ageconcernlancs.org.uk

The Chair invited Ms Moore to give a presentation on the role of Forum at a future Equality Forum.

- The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Equality Forum had been arranged for Tuesday, 5 July 2011 at 6.30pm in the Lancastrian Suite, Town Hall, Chorley.

11.EF.18 NETWORKING BREAK

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

Chair