

MINUTES OF**EQUALITY FORUM****MEETING DATE****Thursday, 28 July 2016****MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Councillor Hasina Khan (Chair) and Councillor Jean Cronshaw

OFFICERS:

Chris Sinnott (Director (Policy and Governance)), Victoria Willett (Performance and Partnerships Manager) and Cathryn Filbin (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

ALSO PRESENT:

David Brown (Chorley Pensioners), Samir Khan (Dosti Men's Forum), Zohaib Sajid (Dosti Men's Forum), Daniyal Saleem (Dosti Men's Forum), Rohail Sajid (Dosti Men's Forum), Kiran Banati, (Lancashire County Council), Neil Rushton, Alice Jones (DENW), Suzie Jones (DENW), Michelle Hunter, Akikur Rahman (Taxi Trade),

16.EF.8 Minutes of meeting Monday, 22 February 2016 of Equality Forum**AGREED -That the minutes of the last meeting of the Equality Forum held on 22 February 2016 be noted.****16.EF.9 Improving services at Chorley station**

The Chair introduced Johnathan Cooke, Network Rail and Craig Harrop, Northern Rail, to the meeting. They gave a presentation on the significant improvement works taking place for train services across the north of England.

Craig Horrocks provided details of what passengers could expect from the new category 3 electric training, that were being rolled out as part of the improvements, which included –

- Power points

- Wifi
- Improved wheelchair access

It was further clarified that wheelchair users would also have access to power points and would be able to communicate with the conductor via a call button.

Johnathan Cooke provided an overview of electrification of railway lines across the north of England, and those works specific to Chorley.

Works relating to Chorley railway station included –

- A temporary platform had been installed for passengers travelling north towards Preston while platform 1 was reconstructed
- Platform 2, which served trains towards Bolton and Manchester was being rebuilt in sections and would remain open to passengers throughout the project
- The installation of a new retaining wall beneath Lyons Lane and Brooke Street Bridges to support the railway embankment, to allow for the track to be lowered.

While the work was being carried out, the railway line between Preston and Bolton would be closed every weekend from mid-June until the beginning of October. This meant that there would be changes to weekend and some mid-week evening train services in the Chorley area.

In addition to improvement works taking place on the railway tracks themselves, work had also commenced at Chorley railway station to accommodate the new trains. The works would result in the station subways being temporarily closed while the roofs, which sat beneath the railway tracks, were replaced. However, to minimise disruption, one subway would be kept open at all times. During the disruption, additional staff would be on hand to assist passengers.

Members of the Forum were advised that when the Steeley Lane section of subway was closed, passengers would be available to use the 'stepped' subway as an alternative route. For those passengers unable to use the steps, a free taxi service would be available for persons with reduced mobility.

To ensure passengers were kept informed about the works taking place, information would be displayed at relevant stations, along with supporting posters and hoardings. An online hub was also being established, which would provide passengers with useful, up-to-date travel advice and information.

During debate, members of the Forum raised a number of issues as detailed below with the response –

1. Would part of the improvements works to Chorley Railway Station include better disabled access?

Works scheduled within this scheme would only address issues that related to the electrification of the railway, and the new electric trains. No further work had been planned to improve disabled access during this programme of improvements.

2. A member of the Forum highlighted that not all taxis could accommodate wheelchairs and that there needed to be taxis on standby that were fully accessible for wheelchair users.

This statement was noted.

3. The lack of shelter/canopies available to passengers waiting for trains in unpleasant and often wet conditions. This issues had already been raised a number of weeks prior to the meeting with staff at Chorley railway but nothing had been done.

Johnathan Cooke advised that prior to the Forum, he had visited Chorley railway station and had noticed the lack of shelter available, which he advised would be addressed as soon as possible.

Update from Johnathan since the meeting – a shelter to be installed on the temporary platform by 19 August.

4. There was a lack of information on the temporary platform.

Update from Johnathan since the meeting – Network Rail agreed to install information posters as supplied by Northern Rail.

5. Although it was clear there would be information posters at affected stations, and on the web site. However, consideration was needed to those who were visually impaired or did not have access to a computer.

Johnathan Cooke acknowledged that more needed to be done, to ensure information on the improvement works was accessible to all, and that Network Rail was looking at ways to improve this service.

The Chair thanked both Johnathan Cooke and Craig Horrocks for their presentation.

For travel advice and information use the following website - www.networkrail.co.uk/chorley

At this point the Chair announced a short adjournment in the meeting.

16.EF.10 South Lancashire Physical Disability Partnership

Following the meeting being reconvened, the Chair introduced Puala Jones, Board Chair, Lancashire Physical Disability Partnership, who gave a presentation on the Partnership's work and its members.

The Partnership Board which met quarterly; consisted of a minimum 51% majority of disabled people, including the Chair. The other 49% were representatives from PCT, LCC, borough councils, Lancashire Constabulary and the 3rd sector of which 75% of those were disabled.

In addition to the Partnership Board, there was also a Reference Group which consisted of 90% disabled people which meet quarterly. This group would decide on which thematic groups would be looked at in the forthcoming year. Meetings were held in Preston, for which travel expenses were paid, but members were encouraged to share transport if possible. The meetings were about sharing information, about other meetings or events that had been attended by members and a guest speaker would also be invited to speak on a topical subject.

Membership of the thematic groups would include county and borough representatives, the PCT, police and other key representatives to consult with and offer advice on a number of issues relating to the specific topic. In 2017/18 the South Reference thematic group would be focusing on –

- Employment and Learning
- Social Care
- Transport

To find out more information or to become a member visit the Partnership website at www.lpdp.or.uk or tel 07794 718006.

The Chair thanked Puala Jones for her presentation.

16.EF.11 Visually Impairment Peoples forum for Lancashire area

The Chair welcomed David Hinchcliffe and Denise Wilkinson to the Forum to speak about the work of the Visually Impairment Peoples Forum for the Lancashire Area.

The Forum has membership from across Lancashire and met bi-monthly. Voting rights are limited to those who were visually impaired or blind.

Sighted people were welcome to attend, and were essential for running the meetings.

Prior to the formal element of the meetings, there was a 30 minute socialising and 'catching up' session. This was an important part of the meeting, as in some cases this meeting would be the only contact a member would have with other visually impaired or blind people.

Being visually impaired or blind could leave a person feeling socially isolated. The Forum helped to bring people together, to share experiences and exchange information.

David added that from a personal perspective, he had gained a great deal from being a member of the Forum, before which he had felt isolated. The Forum had given him more confidence and that he had learned so much from other members.

The Forum had also been advising on external work which included the Shared Space Scheme in Preston and the review of Lancashire County Council's library service.

Denise then gave a moving, yet light hearted account of her struggle to come to terms with macular degeneration, and the help and support she received from the Macular Society Support Group and the Visually Impairments Peoples Forum.

For more information on the Macular Society Chorley Support Group tel 0300 3030111.

16.EF.12 Dates of Future Meetings

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please note, since the last meeting, the date of the next Equality Forum has been moved from 13 October to **Thursday, 29 September 2016 at 5.15pm**, to coincide with the 'Working Together for Wellbeing' event being held on the same day in The Lancastrian, Town Hall, Chorley see the following minute for more information.

16.EF.13 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair

The Working Together for Wellbeing event will take place from on Thursday, 29 September from 10am to 4pm. To book your place on the Working Together for Wellbeing event please contact Kiran Banati on 07789 618121 or email kiran.banti@lancashire.gov.uk.

Information and advice would be available for those attending the event, which will also explore the contemporary issues regarding disabled, deaf, blind, deafblind and elderly people living in Lancashire.

Chair

Date