

MINUTES OF ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY TASK GROUP

24 JANUARY 2019

PRESENT:

Members of the Task Group:

Councillors Mrs A'Barrow (Chair), Bearne (substituting for Councillor Keeling), Mrs Bragg, Mrs Garcia, Lewis (substituting for Councillor Douglas) and Mrs O'Rourke

Officers:

Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

In Attendance:

Councillor Neil Sandison (Chair of Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

External Consultees:

Nicola Boyd (Partnership Manager, GLL), Sue Hillman (Chair of Rugby Disability Forum), Derek Hillman (Rugby Disability Forum), Mary Webb (Secretary and Treasurer, Rugby Disability Forum) and Bernard Purdy (Rugby Sport for the Disabled Association)

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lewis declared a general non-pecuniary interest by virtue of:

- being a ward member for Rokeby and Overslade where Brooke School (external consultee) is located;
- being a member of the Rugby Sports for Disabled Association; and
- attending meetings of the Rugby Disability Forum.

8. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Douglas, Leigh Hunt and Keeling.

Members were informed that Councillor Keeling has resigned from the task group and has been replaced by Councillor Bearne.

9. DISCUSSION WITH EXTERNAL WITNESSES AND CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK AND EVIDENCE RECEIVED

At its last meeting, the task group decided that this meeting will focus on gathering evidence from external partners.

A questionnaire was produced and circulated to external consultees asking for their top three issues or concerns and comments relating to good or bad feedback or experiences.

The following three questions formed a part of the questionnaire:

- Question 1 – Have you experienced any problems trying to access council-owned facilities or services?
- Question 2 – Could you describe your experiences of council run facilities, parks or open spaces and whether there have been good or bad?
- Question 3 – Please list your top three comments relating to good or bad feedback or experience.

An invitation to attend the meeting and present their responses was extended to the following organisations:

- Brooke School
- GLL
- Individual Support Solutions
- Rugby Autism Network
- Rugby Disability Forum (RDF)
- Rugby Sport for the Disabled Association (RSDA)

No written responses were received.

No responses were received from Brooke School, Individual Support Solutions and Rugby Autism Network. Following the meeting, the groups will be invited to submit written feedback to the questions originally circulated prior to the next meeting of the task group.

A lengthy discussion took place during which the following points were made:

- Access to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Centre (QDJC) via the Whitehall Recreation Ground has improved with the new gates installed.
- The QDJC is fully accessible for people with a disability which includes provision of accessible parking spaces and toilet facilities, touchpads and sensors throughout the facility.

Concerns raised by external consultees

- Lack of wireless microphones available at council-owned venues (the Council Chamber and the Benn Hall) for speakers to use
- Lack of signage at the Town Hall informing the public of a hearing loop system in place and lack of public understanding of the purpose of a hearing loop system

- Crumbling tarmac on dropped kerbs
- Gas Street Car Park – lack of accessible parking spaces for people with a disability due to the poor state of the car park and lack of markings
- Position of the speed bump by the entrance to the car park at the front of the Town Hall/opposite the entrance gate to the Caldecott Park
- Lack of consultation with RDF with regards to new housing developments in the Borough – members were made aware that RDF was consulted in the past. Following the departure of a council officer, the group's inclusion ceased. The group has been involved directly by the housing developer at Houlton.
- Alterations to existing shopfronts that limit access for people with a disability and therefore do not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) – advice will be sought from the relevant council officer as this may be a planning policy issue.
- Independent living properties where tenants have to step over a raised door sill to enter/leave their home (Stretton Court, Brownsover was highlighted)
- Access for people with a disability to The Memorial Gates, Hillmorton Road

Concerns raised by members

- Parking adjacent to the council's independent living housing and the need for a full review to establish whether the current provision is fit for purpose or changes are to be made to accommodate needs such as wider bays for vehicles used by tenants with a disability (*may form a recommendation of the task group*)
- Access for people with a disability to Great Central Walk between Abbey Street and St Peter's Road

The swimming facility at the QDJC, operated by GLL on behalf of the council, were discussed in detail at the meeting and the following points were raised:

Concerns raised by external consultees and possible solutions provided:

- Hoist used for lifting and lowering individuals into the pool – the hoist currently in use at the QDJC is a manual hoist of a good quality. Many of the other options available are very costly. *Potential solution: funding.*

The task group was informed that GLL has recently recruited a Community Sports and Development Officer (starting on 2 February). Part of the officer's role will be identifying funding opportunities for the leisure centre to improve the facility and services provided.

- Width between the pool handrails of the pool stairs – *potential solution: installation of a foldable handrail*
- Use of the pool for members of the RDF to swim width rather than length – *potential solution: use of the studio pool*

All concerns raised have been noted by the Partnership Manager who advised the task group that solutions will be explored.

The Partnership Manager highlighted that GLL is very supportive of social prescribing. Over 200 of GLL's members were referred to the leisure centre by general practitioners.

The Chair of Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee has informed the task group and external consultees that an inspection of the QDJC and Whitehall Recreation Ground will take place on Thursday 31 January at 2pm. The site visit is a part of a review undertaken by the Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee on parking at the QDJC. Some accessibility issues and practical problems have already been highlighted.

An invitation to take part in the site visit was extended to members of the task group and external consultees present at the meeting.

With regards to parking at QDJC, the following comments were made:

- From GLL's point of view, the disabled parking spaces available on site are never fully occupied. In principle, it was agreed with the previous Head of Growth and Investment that some of these spaces would be redesignated.
- The two main issues faced by GLL are the lack of enforcement in the car park and the lack of double yellow lines to prevent hazardous parking.
- The Rugby Thornfield Indoor Bowls Club car park is not part of GLL's lease. The Partnerships Manager informed the task group that GLL would welcome the use of the car park for overflow as it would provide approximately 20 extra standard size spaces.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The task group agreed that the next meeting would be held at 6pm on Wednesday 20 February where officers will present the following:

- feedback gathered on 24 January and any further feedback received;
- the capital programme of work planned for council-owned/run buildings, open spaces and parks; and
- any recent surveys carried out of council-owned/run buildings, open spaces and parks.

CHAIR