

WEST BERKSHIRE DISABILITY ALLIANCE

Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting Held at AFC Newbury, Faraday Road, Newbury, Monday 11 April 2005

Present:

Mick Hutchins, Peter Dolphin, Janet Parker, Ron Renton, John Clarke, George Athorn, John Carr, and John Head.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman welcomed members of the Executive to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Peter Mason and John Holt.

2. TREASURERS REPORT

Peter Dolphin informed the meeting that a Charity, such as the WBDA, that has funds less than ten thousand pounds is the least regulated by the Charity Commission. For this level of funds, the Commissioners use a receipts and payments system of audit.

The Treasurer presented the current balance sheet to the meeting and gave a brief explanation. The members present thanked him for his presentation, accepting the current position as well as making some suggestions with regard to layout and content.

Peter took on board the comments made. He will use the basis of this style of balance sheet to produce the necessary documentation for the purposes of the WBDA Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday 18 July 2005. In due course he will

pass a copy to the Secretary, to enable circulation to the membership prior to the AGM.

3. FUNDING FOR 2006 AND BEYOND

The Chairman confirmed that WBDA funding had been satisfactory for the year 2004/05. Using current data, the expected grant from Berkshire Community Foundation would be sufficient to take the WBDA through 2005/06.

The WBDA now needs to commence funding ideas and procedures for the future year 2006/07. It was agreed that it would endeavour to obtain funding for more than one year if possible. The Chairman said he would contact the Community Action West Berkshire (CAWB) Funding Officer, to establish the timescales and deadlines for funding applications. Mick would also obtain a current list of possible funding sources from WBC. In due course a shortlist of about six suitable organisations, that could be approached, would be drawn up.

4. EXTRA FUNDING FOR TRANSPORT PROVISION

The Chairman gave a brief outline of problems WBDA members encounter when having to travel to WBDA meetings. He particularly emphasised that the location of meeting venues precluded many from attending. Even by trying to hold meetings at various venues around the district, the same problems are then passed onto another set of people.

To allow members to attend the provision of transport is essential. Unfortunately, this comes at a cost. Funding will need to be found to allow transport to be provided.

Separate funding needs to be found for transport provision, perhaps in the form of a charitable grant to allow disabled people to attend their own Alliance's meetings. The Chairman has some ideas on this matter and will report back at a future meeting.

5. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM EXECUTIVE MEETING MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2005

Item 2 (3) (6) – Newsletter

Correction to Ron Renton's wbda.org mailbox address this should read ron.renton@wbda.org.

Item 12 f – Any Other Business

Bullet point three approve should be altered to read prove.

Item 7 – Agenda for Disability Forum Monday 4 April 2005

Correction to spelling should read Frank Hutchings.

With the above amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the West Berkshire Disability Alliance Executive held on Monday 11 April 2005 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

Item 2 (3) (6) – Newsletter

The font size for the WBDA Newsletter was agreed as having to increase to 14 style Arial.

It was noted at this point, that all WBDA minutes are produced using Arial font 14 and printed on single sided sheets. It was agreed this should continue even though this format increases printing and postage costs.

Janet Parker is to provide a copy of the set of accepted standards used for printing and publishing for the disabled. This the WBDA will find useful in producing newsletters, minutes, agendas, publicity etc.

Item 12 d – Dental Surgeries

The access position with regard to dental surgeries is ongoing.

6. FEEDBACK FROM MEETING WITH WEST BERKSHIRE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE EXECUTIVE WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL 2005

The Chairman and WBDA members, who attended the meeting on 6 April, agreed it had been very worthwhile, informative and productive session. The Chairman believed both the WBDA and the officers of the Council positively felt the worth of these meetings held twice per year.

The Executive agreed the format of the meeting had been an improvement, now the WBDA chair the meeting and the Agenda is produced in both draft and final format beforehand.

An account of the meeting is given in Appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

The Executive discussed the outcomes of the meeting with WBC and the following are additional points as a subsequence of that discussion:

Market Street Development – Pursue the provision of a lift at Newbury railway station.

Proposed Zebra Crossing Oxford Road, Newbury – Speak with Speenhamland School, Keeble Unit and West Berkshire Road Safety Officer (note this post is not part of WBC Highways team).

Access Officer – The Chairman has written to Gary Lugg (WBC) in support of making this post full time. If the delay in appointing for this post continues, WBDA will raise the matter at a West Berkshire Council meeting.

Access Guide – Liaise with Dave Foster WBC Access Advisor.

Care Trust – This matter warrants a question at a West Berkshire Council meeting.

REACT – Project on track. SEC has looked at the first phase and a competitive estimate is awaited.

Kennet and Avon Canal Towpath – Contact to be made with Paul Hendry of WBC.

Future Public Consultation – Need to know how this is going to work effectively for the WBDA and what potential commitment is involved. Invite Jason Teal from WBC to next executive meeting. Possible future WBDA Newsletter item.

Voluntary Sector Expenses For Attending WBC Meetings – The WBDA will claim for attending meetings.

NOTE – The WBDA will consult with other groups before next meeting in September/October to establish their input and questions.

7. FEEDBACK FROM DISABILITY FORUM MONDAY 4 APRIL 2005

The meeting agreed the Forum held at the Frank Hutchings Hall on Monday 4 April had been very successful. There were 31 attendees and 9 apologies received. However, concern was expressed that the agenda was ambitious and due to time limits some speakers were cut short. The Forum needs to start and finish on time.

One outcome that was felt to be particularly important is to maintain contact with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Following the Forum it was believed the WBDA require a good set of display boards and suitable visual material.

It was acknowledged that a least two people with hearing difficulties attending the Forum were disadvantaged. It was emphasised, that a hearing loop must be provided at venues used for WBDA meetings. The management of venues need to be reminded of their responsibility, in providing a full range of facilities to allow access for the disabled. A short discussion took place on using portable hearing systems and whether the WBDA provide should their own. If it does, it needs to do it properly. Needing to understand what is required to be achieved and identifying the equipment that will fulfil that need.

In the future the WBDA will consider alternative and suitable venues for the West Berkshire Disability Forum.

8. QUESTIONS FOR WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL TUESDAY 10 MAY 2005

It was agreed that questions based on the following topics will be worked up to be forwarded as written questions for the Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 10 May 2005:

- Tow path (Mick Hutchins)
- Access Officer (George Athorn)
- Care Trust (John Holt)
- Oxford Road (John Clarke and John Carr)
- Impact on WBC of the Disability Bill becoming legislation (Peter Dolphin and Janet Parker)

The Chairman to confirm with WBC the deadline for written questions. His estimate was the 26 April.

9. AGENDA FOR OPEN MEETING MONDAY 16 MAY 2005

After some discussion it was suggested that the following items be worked up into an agenda for the Open Meeting to be held on Monday 16 May 2005, which is the meeting to be held at Greenfield House, Calcot.

- Contacts in the east of the area
- Problems in the east of the area
- Transport and access in the east of the area
- The Ormonde Resource Centre
- Sport for the disabled

The Chairman undertook to ensure this meeting is promoted, bearing in mind this is the first occasion that the WBDA has held a meeting outside Newbury.

10. MEMBERSHIP

This item was held over until the next meeting.

11. STAND FOR NEUROLOGICAL ALLIANCE CONFERENCE THURSDAY 21 APRIL 2005 AND CARES OPEN DAY MONDAY 13 JUNE 2005

The WBDA display stand will be set up the evening before (Wednesday 20 April 2005) the Neurological Alliance Conference.

Members were requested to inform the Chairman if they could assist with this task as well as staffing the stand on Thursday 21 April itself.

George Athorn presented to the meeting visual material and artwork he had produced and compiled for the stand.

The Chairman said that the material would also be used for a stand in the West Berkshire Council offices on Monday 13 June 2005. This would be as part of an event at the start of 'Carers Week'. He said that help was needed for setting up and staffing at this venue, those who could contribute should contact him.

12. REVIEW OF WBDA TRANSPORT POLICY

This item was held over until the next Executive meeting.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a. The Chairman talked about the 'Active Therapist Partnership', on behalf of John Holt, who had enquired whether the WBDA wanted to be involved. It was decided to hold this item over to the next meeting.
- b. A brief discussion took place with regard to suggested revised headings and footers of WBDA notepaper. John Carr had sent these around. Comments were made and the Chairman and John Carr agreed to consider these and establish a final version.
- c. The Secretary informed the meeting that preparations needed to be put in hand for the WBDA Annual General Meeting, which is to be held on Monday 18 July 2005.

He reminded those present that section I(3) of the WBDA Constitution had to be dealt with prior to this meeting.

“At the Annual General Meeting one third of the Executive Committee or, if their number is not a multiple of three, then the number nearest one third, shall retire from office. The Executive Committee members to retire shall be those who have been longest in office since their last election but as between persons who were elected at the same time, those to retire shall be determined by lot. A retiring Executive Committee member shall be eligible for re-election”.

Taking into account this section of the Constitution three Executive Committee members need to retire. All current members of the Executive Committee have served for the same period of time so it maybe necessary to determine the outcome by lot.

John Carr said that at least one of the three retiring Executive members should be an officer ie. Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer the other two being two ordinary Executive members.

The Chairman said that this matter needed to be resolved at the next Executive Committee meeting, to be held on Monday 13 June 2005. He went onto say he was already aware that at least two Executive members were considering retiring.

In addition there is still the vacancy created by the late Monnica Stewart.

The Secretary indicated that he would stand down at the time of the AGM and not seek to be re-elected to that officer position.

- d. Concern was raised regarding the lack of digital display boards at West Berkshire Community Hospital. The Chairman will be contacting the local PCT on this issue.

14. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Will be held on Monday 13 June 2005, between 1900 and 2100 hours at Newbury, AFC Faraday Road, Newbury.

APPENDIX 1

WBDA EXEC. MEETING 11.4.2005

SUMMARY OF JOINT WEST BERKSHIRE DISABILITY ALLIANCE AND WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, MARKET STREET, NEWBURY ON WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL 2005

a. Market Street development

It was explained that this development was part of the Newbury Vision 2025. It would cover the area from Newbury railway station to the bus station. The development is anticipated to improve access leading to the town centre and the train station. Most of the development would be largely on WBC owned land. There was a proposal to extend the development over Network Rail land, this would **not** involve rebuilding the railway station. Nor did it involve any redevelopment in Bartholomew Street or Cheap Street. However the bus station would have to be relocated but no site had yet been identified. Consultation on the planning brief had commenced two weeks prior to the meeting. The details of the plan, which would be of importance to the WBDA, will be covered in the subsequent development brief. Final plans were expected to go before the Council's Executive in July 2005, with construction not expected to commence until 2007.

The WBDA asked whether it could have a preview of the development plans. It was explained that the Council was anxious to prevent misleading or erroneous information getting into the press. The Council would start public consultation once both parties were in full agreement. The planning consultation was scheduled for September. The point was raised as to whether the Council should consult with the WBDA, as part of that consultation or earlier. The WBDA agreed it would be helpful to be consulted as early as possible.

A copy of the planning brief will be sent to the WBDA in due course.

b. Voluntary sector expenses for attending WBC meeting

The reason for this item was the concern about people attending WBC meetings; they have to pay cash on the day for transport to and from venues, then being left 'out of pocket' for some time before payments are processed. The WBDA ideally, would like the option of being paid in cash on the day of the meeting.

Reference was made to the current policy agreed by the Council, following earlier consultation. It was confirmed that for audit purposes, it was essential claim forms were completed before payment could be made. However, the Council may be able to make payments in cash where absolutely necessary, if a claim form had been completed in advance. It was explained that the Exchequer Services required completed forms by noon on a Tuesday, for payment to be made by a Friday.

c. Market Place development - mechanism for consultation

At a recent WB Council meeting Cllr Sally Hannon had assured the WBDA that they would be consulted on this development. However, construction was due to begin in June and the views of the WBDA had not yet been requested. There was concern that the plans will be presented as a 'fait accompli'. It was explained that detailed plans had yet to be finalised. A general consultation was currently taking place up till mid May. The WBDA expressed concern about the proposed paving suggested in the outline brief, indicating it could cause difficulties for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments. It was explained the Council had a difficult balance to make, between something being attractive and acceptable to most. As well as ensuring it was ideal for all groups.

Gary Lugg (WBC) suggested it might be helpful if the WBDA Access Panel had a regular dialogue with the Highways department, in a similar way they currently had with his Planning Department. It was agreed that Highways would meet the Access Panel, together with other colleagues from the WBDA, to discuss this development as a matter of urgency.

c. Bartholomew Street (Outstanding Issues)

The WBDA expressed concern that the junction of Mansion House Street and Bridge Street required a right-hand control panel for the crossing over the bridge. It explained that this was required for people with guide dogs, as dogs were trained to work on the left hand side. Therefore it is far easier for those people with visual impairment to use right hand control panels.

It was also explained that the issue regarding the angle of bike racks, was still outstanding. It was suggested that rotation by 90° would reduce the hazard.

A request was made to have the entrance to the Kennet Car Park indicated. It was explained that the crossing at Market Street was on a skew, presenting difficulties for those with visual impairment, as they were used to crossings going straight across a road. The type of press buttons on control panels provided are not user-friendly for disabled people with manual dexterity problems. Also raised was the problem for visually impaired people without any indication, no kerbs but slopes. Guide dogs were trained to look for kerbs.

Other issues raised were:

- insufficient colour used to indicate the road way
- the amount of street furniture causing real hazards to those with visual impairments
- red lines having been re-painted yellow.
- insufficient signage telling cyclists to dismount in pedestrian zones.

Mark Edwards (WBC) informed the meeting that the latest Government guidance was that cyclists should not be banned. However, he accepted that the cyclists were currently not always riding down the right side of the road. Highway engineers were anxious to ensure this is resolved at the time of the Market Place scheme.

Mark Edwards agreed to provide a full written response to the issues the WBDA had raised, relating to design and technology.

On the issue of the type of buttons on crossing control panels, the WBDA suggested that the buttons near Waitrose at Speen, can be used easily by people with limited hand/arm movement. Mark Edwards agreed to investigate.

e. Day Care Provision for the over 65's

The WBDA explained this was an issue, brought forward at the request of the Ormonde Centre. Day services for people with learning difficulties have no age limit, whereas for people with physical disabilities (PD), services were specifically for those under 65.

There is concern that service users, who enjoy the benefits of the Ormonde Centre, were suddenly at the age of 65, no longer eligible for this service.

Deborah Butland (WBC) accepted the situation was in need of review, describing the age cut off for PD services at 65 as being 'artificial'. She explained that the Council was committed to the aim of improving the choice of services, ensuring they were tailored to people's needs as individuals, as far as possible.

With this in mind, Jan Evans, Head of Day Services, had held a meeting on 3 March to commence a review of all day services. Deborah referred to a paper, which had resulted from this meeting. The meeting was informed that she had been asked to lead work on reconfiguring current PD services, to meet varying needs. She confirmed she would be working closely with David Tait (Ormonde Centre). Her review would take on board the views of the WBDA and Ormonde Centre service users. It was indicated that the review would be conducted over the next 2– 3 months. It was agreed the Council would liaise with the WBDA through Mick Hutchins.

f. Travel Tokens

Mike Trevallion (WBC) confirmed that the £20, £40, and £60 values take effect again from 1 July, for next year. He said the Council had received a 38% response to their public consultation but that views remained very mixed. He referred to the Chancellor's Budget announcement, on 16 March, of plans to extend the free bus service to those over 65 and to those registered disabled. Mike recognised that, due to very limited bus services in this area, free bus passes would not resolve matters for many people. However, he said the Government had committed an additional £350 million from April 2006, for the new policy and as yet it was unclear how this funding would be distributed.

Mike confirmed that the WBC budget for travel tokens this year was the same as last year. However, last year had been a reduction on the previous. When asked how WBC compared to other local Authorities, he said that WBC compared favourably when looking at the New Unitary Benchmarking (NUB) group. As only 10% of those claiming travel tokens took up bus passes, Mick Hutchins asked whether it would be possible for people who were eligible for a free bus pass, to receive the equivalent value in the form of travel tokens. Mike Trevallion said this would not be possible because of budget limitation. Mick Hutchins suggested it would be better to extend travel tokens for those in real need, than spend it on introducing free bus passes for all people over 65. Mike Trevallion said it was difficult to know how the new Government policy might impact on the travel token policy. He was unsure what the take up would be, also how much additional funding West Berkshire might receive.

The WBDA asked why the colour of the tokens was changing. Mike Trevallion said this was happening this year as the current tokens had been in circulation for seven years. From October onwards people would not be able to use blue tokens, a notification would be issued in June. Mike accepted the need to review the banding to ensure people received the right value, in the right bands. In response to concern about the limited bus service in the area, he said that 75% of the services currently operating were contracted services, which the Council subsidised.

g. Proposed Zebra Crossing – Oxford Road

The WBDA expressed their very strong concern that the proposed zebra crossing was potentially very dangerous, even presenting a fatal hazard for people with disabilities. They repeated their request for a controlled crossing to be installed instead. Reference was made to the WBDA letter of 29 March to Jon Winstanley of WBC Highways and Engineering department. Mark Edwards, speaking on behalf of the Council, accepted that the zebra crossing did not fully meet the needs of everyone.

However, he said a full risk assessment had been conducted. He did not accept the WBDA's view that it carried an unacceptably high risk. Both the factor of its location in relation to the other crossing and the factor of cost were discussed.

In the light of the concerns raised by the WBDA, Jon Winstanley agreed to arrange for the recommendation on the report to Sally Hannon (WBC councillor) to be changed. It will now say that scheme will be implemented, subject to a full vulnerable road users audit, in addition to the normal safety audit.

An independent specialist consultant, will assess the scheme from the perspective of all 'non-motorised' road users, will undertake the Vulnerable Road Users audit. Jon Winstanley will highlight to the consultants the concerns particularly with regard to those people with visual impairment.

Jon Winstanley will discuss the results of the Vulnerable Road Users audit with the WBDA.

h. Appointment of a WBC Access Officer

Gary Lugg (WBC) gave Dave Foster's (Access Officer WBC) apologies as he was on leave. He went on to explain that WBC had advertised the vacant Access Officer's post. Three applications had been received, but so far they had not found anyone suitable. The position was currently being reviewed; consideration was being given to whether it could be made full-time or whether it could be combined with another post. The WBDA made it clear they believed the post should be full-time, similar to posts held in other authorities. They emphasised that it

was important the position should not be devalued, by combining it with another post.

The WBDA will write to Gary Lugg, who will include the WBDA's written representations into his business case for making the Access Officer a full-time post.

i. Access Guide – support with updating & window stickers

The WBDA explained they wanted a letter to be sent to those participating in the Access Guide, to ensure the most up to date information was available. It was necessary to establish whether any further upgrade to buildings or alterations had taken place. It was suggested that participants be given a window sticker. Mick Hutchins explained the WBDA might be able to provide volunteers to help with this work. He had already discussed this with Dave Foster. Gary Lugg agreed that an audit would be required shortly and explained that Steve Broughton would have the details.

Steve Broughton will liaise directly with the WBDA on this matter.

J. Incorporation of the WBDA Transport Plan into the Local Transport Plan

Nicky Linihan-Mardon, WBC's Planning and Transport Manager, explained that the Local Transport Plan included a vision, strategy, and a five-year plan of action. The focus would be on relieving congestion, improving access, improving road safety and air quality. She indicated that accessibility was the main challenge. The Council were consulting with the Transport Action Group and would go out to public consultation in September or October this year. Nicky confirmed that they were looking at WBDA's Transport Plan in detail. It was the intention to incorporate much of it into the Local Transport Plan. She will ensure the Council maintains an on going dialogue with the WBDA regarding the development of the Local Transport Plan.

There was discussion about how best to reduce congestion. Nicky said that Government guidance seemed to have been written from

an urban perspective, in which greater use of buses seemed to be key. It was accepted that in West Berkshire this alone was not sufficient, other solutions needed to be sought such as cycling and improved travel planning.

WBDA expressed concern about the apparent anti car-parking policies of the Council, stressing the need to ensure there were sufficient disabled car parking spaces available.

Nicky Linihan Mardon to ensure the Council maintains an on going dialogue with the WBDA with regard to the development of the local transport plan.

k. Upgrading the Kennet and Avon Canal Tow Path, West of Newbury

The WBDA expressed their wish to have the towpath between Monkey Bridge and past the Swing Bridge up to the Enborne Road resurfaced. This will improve access into the town from an area where the residential population was growing. Paul Hendry, the WBC Countryside Rights and Ways Manager, said the Council would be happy to work with the WBDA on this matter. He indicated that there might be capital funding for this work to be done.

However, he explained that the British Waterways Board also used the towpath; therefore they would need to be consulted. He said that instead of using tarmac, it might be decided to use another type of material. This alternative surface would be user-friendlier and look like a gravel track.

Paul Hendry will meet with the WBDA in due course to discuss this matter.

I. RNIB REACT for Newbury – future development using S106 monies

Margaret Blaine gave an update on the current situation regarding REACT units. She said that there were funds available for a number of units. She also said that some local businesses had also agreed to fund and install units. A unit would be installed in the Kennet Centre, as part of the Cinema development. It had

been agreed that they would be installed in the Park Way development.

Applications to have units installed in new developments using S106 monies could be made. If the first tranche of units proved to be successful, it would give these applications a greater chance of having a positive outcome.

m. Future public consultation re disability planned by the WBC

Jason Teal, the newly appointed WBC Consultation officer, introduced himself and distributed a copy of expected forthcoming public consultations. He explained that further information would be going on the website, however there had been a delay due to software problems.

Jason will forward a spreadsheet outlining further details of proposed consultations, to the WBDA.

The WBDA will in due course invite Jason along to a future executive meeting.

n. Update on Proposed West Berkshire Care Trust

Joanna Richardson (WBC) circulated a short paper prepared by Margaret Goldie. This paper gave an update on the latest position. She confirmed that a formal consultation would be held in due course. In the meantime Tim Hind (WBC) had held some preliminary talks with stakeholders and would be keen to maintain a dialogue with the WBDA as the issue evolves.

o. Update on WBC equality impact assessments

Joanna Richardson gave an update on the number of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), the Council had completed or was currently undertaking. She explained that consultation with those from BME and disability groups was key. Many services that had been conducting EIA's, had not submitted any formal questions because they had an on-going dialogue with the WBDA and/or service users.

However, Stewart Souden, on behalf of Countryside Rights and Ways, had put forward the following questions:

- i. WBC has carried out a disabled access audit of the public rights of way network (c700 miles). Accessible Rights of Way are to be publicised and improvements are to be programmed in. What level of expectation do disabled users have as a whole for the network?
- ii. Do disabled people use the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre and the various Commons in the District open to the public?

In response to question i. the WBDA said they understood it was the role of Parish Councils to identify use of ways suitable for people with disabilities. Attention was particularly drawn to the need for good accurate information, as to the true accessibility of a footpath. It is important that someone with a disability knows that they could definitely get from one point to another, easily and unhindered. Further information and encouragement of all Parish Councils to provide this service would be welcomed.

There was little comment in response to question ii, except one member of the WBDA had been to the Nature Discovery Centre and had pushed a wheelchair around the Centre. Generally he said that it was very good, mentioning that at one point the path became quite steep.

p. Any Other Business

The WBDA raised the issue of public toilets in Pembroke Road. This matter was raised at the previous meeting between the Council and WBDA, in September 2004 and yet has remained unresolved. The matter concerned the doors leading into the toilets being pegged back. This meant that people with a visual impairment could not read the Braille notices on the door, which indicate 'women' or 'men'.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that the light, on the toilet in Victoria Park was permanently showing red.