

## **D R A F T Minutes**

### **Joint Meeting of the West Berkshire Disability Alliance & West Berkshire Council Committee Room 2, The Council Offices, Market Street 1030– 1230, Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

WBDA representatives present:

Mick Hutchins (Chairman); George Athorn; Pete Mason; Roy Smith; John Holt; Peter Dolphin; John Head; John Clark; John Carr

WBC representatives present for at least part of the meeting:

Nick Carter; Stuart Clark; Mark Edwards; Gary Lugg; Paul Hendry; Mike Trevallion; Debbie Butland; Jason Teal; Margaret Blaine; Joanna Richardson

Apologies: Ron Renton (WBDA), John Dolton (WBDA), Roger Woad (WBDA)

The Chairman welcomed people to the third meeting of the Joint WBDA - WBC meeting. Notes from the previous meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2004 were circulated without discussion as it was agreed to focus on the agenda items as recorded below.

#### **1. Market Street development**

Nick Carter, Corporate Director for Strategy and Commissioning, explained this development was part of the Newbury Vision 2025 and would cover the area from the Railway Station to the Bus Station. He anticipated it would improve access leading to the town centre and the train station. Most of the development would be largely on WBC owned land, including a new multi-story car park to serve the railway station and WBC Offices. There was a proposal to extend the development over Network Rail land but this would not involve rebuilding the railway station. Nor did it involve any redevelopment in Bartholomew Street or Cheap Street, although it would include the bus station and buildings to the south of it. An alternative site to the bus station is currently being worked up. Consultation on the planning brief commenced two weeks previously. The details of the plan, which would be of importance to the WBDA, would 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 till 2007.

Pete Mason asked whether the WBDA could have a preview of the development plans, and referred to having had sight of a planning application for Parkway. Nick Carter said the Council was anxious to prevent misleading or erroneous information getting into the press and, therefore, the Council would start public consultation once both parties were in full agreement. The

planning consultation was planned for September and Nick Carter raised the point of whether the Council should consult with the WBDA as part of that consultation or earlier. George Athorn said it would be helpful to be consulted as early as possible.

**ACTION:** Nick Carter to provide Mick Hutchins with a copy of the planning brief.

## **2. Voluntary sector expenses for attending WBC meetings**

*(agenda item 15)*

Mick Hutchins explained the reason for the item was the concern about people attending meetings having to pay cash on the day for transport to and from venues and then being left 'out of pocket' for some time before payment was processed. The WBDA ideally would like the option of being paid in cash on the day of the meeting. Nick Carter referred to the policy agreed by the Council following earlier consultation. Hard copies of the policy document and claim forms were distributed. Nick Carter confirmed that, for audit purposes, it was essential forms were completed before payment could be made. However, he said the Council may be able to make payments in cash where absolutely necessary if a claim form had been completed in advance. Margaret Blaine explained that the Exchequer Services required completed forms by 12 noon on a Tuesday for payment to be made by a Friday.

### **ACTION:**

1. Nick Carter to circulate a note to Heads of Service reminding them of the agreed policy and to ensure claim forms are made available at meetings.
2. Joanna Richardson to email claim forms and the agreed policy document to Mick Hutchins.
3. Nick Carter to investigate the possibility of paying expenses in cash.

## **3. Market Place development: mechanism for consultation** *(agenda item 2)*

Mick Hutchins referred to a council meeting in which Cllr Sally Hannon had assured the WBDA that they would be consulted on the development. However, construction was due to begin in June and the views of the WBDA had not yet been requested and there was concern that the plans will be presented to them as a 'fait accompli'. Stuart Clark said the detailed plans had yet to be finalised and a general consultation was currently taking place up till mid May. Concern was raised about the proposed paving suggested in the outline brief. The WBDA indicated this type of paving could cause difficulties for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments. Stuart Clark said it was difficult balance between making something attractive and acceptable to most, as well as ensuring it was ideal for all groups.

Gary Lugg suggested it might be helpful if the WBDA Access Panel had a regular dialogue with Highways in a similar way they currently did with Planning, as this seemed to work well for both parties. It was agreed that Stuart Clark should meet the Access Panel, together with other colleagues from WBDA, to discuss this development as a matter of urgency.

NOTE - the WBDA made the following general point about planning consultation as a whole "WBDA are not satisfied it has early consultation, once consulted it feels its views are not properly considered and where appropriate adopted. WBDA wants to know its views have been properly considered and where they are not, why not. WBDA do not feel entirely satisfied with the outcome of their comments when they have been consulted over planning applications."

**ACTION:** Stuart Clark to contact Mick Hutchins and arrange an urgent meeting before mid May.

#### **4. Bartholomew Street (Outstanding Issues)** *(agenda item 3)*

John Carr outlined the issues. WBDA's concern that the junction of Mansion House Street and Bridge Street required a right-hand control panel for crossing from over the bridge. He explained that this was required by people with guide dogs, as dogs were trained to work on the left hand side and it was therefore far easier and better for visually impaired to use right hand control panels. He also spoke about the angle of bike racks in Bartholomew Street and suggested that if the angle could be rotated by 90° they would reduce the hazard. He also requested that the entrance into the Kennet Car Park be indicated. The crossing at Market Street was on a skew which presented difficulties for those who were visually impaired who were used to crossings which went straight across a road. The type of press buttons on control panels were not user-friendly for disabled people with manual dexterity problems. He also raised the problem that, for visually impaired, there is no indication anywhere that there is no kerb. This is difficult for guide dogs who are trained to go to find the kerb.

Other issues raised were: there was insufficient colour used to indicate where the road way was; the amount of street furniture was causing real hazards to those with visual impairments; and concern about red lines having been repainted yellow. He also raised concern about insufficient signage telling cyclists to dismount in pedestrian zones. There was only one small sign in Northbrook Street near Swift Dry Cleaners, with the main signs by West Street only indicating that motor bikes and cars were banned. The main signs at the start of the pedestrian zone in Bartholomew Street showed that motorbikes and cars were banned but stated that buses and cyclists were exempt.

Mark Edwards informed the meeting that the current guidance from the Department for Transport was that there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrian areas. However he commented that the cyclists were currently not always riding down the right side of the road and Highways Engineers were anxious to ensure this is resolved through the Market Place scheme. Other issues related to design and technology and Mark Edwards would provide a full written response. On the issue of the type of buttons on controlled panels the WBDA said the buttons at Speen, near Waitrose, could be easily used by someone with limited hand/arm movement and Mark Edwards agreed to investigate.

**Action:** Mark Edwards to respond fully in writing to Mick Hutchins regarding the points raised and also to consider extending the use of the type of buttons on the crossing at Speen, near Waitrose.

#### **5. Day Care Provision for the over 65s. (agenda item 12)**

Mick Hutchins explained that this was an issue of concern brought forward at the request of the Ormonde Centre. He spoke about day services for people with learning difficulties having no age limit, whereas for people with physical disabilities, day services were specifically for those below 65. There was concern that service users who enjoyed the benefits of the Ormonde Centre were suddenly at the age of 65 no longer eligible for this service.

Deborah Butland, speaking on behalf of WBC, accepted the situation was in need of review and described the age cut off for PD services at 65 as 'artificial'. She highlighted the fact that 'post 65' was taking into consideration up thirty years, in which time each individual would have varying needs. She explained the Council was committed to the aim of improving the choice of services and ensuring they were tailored to people's needs as far as possible. With this in mind, Jan Evans, Head of Day Services, had held a meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March to commence a review of all day services, and Deborah informed the meeting 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 and was keen to take on board the views of the WBDA and Ormonde Centre service users. George Athorn asked about the time-scales for the work and Deborah indicated it would be conducted over the next 2 – 3 months. John Holt emphasised the importance of dialogue with service users. It was agreed the Council would liaise with Mick Hutchins.

**Action:** Joanna Richardson to send Mick's contact details to Deborah Butland and for her to liaise directly with Mick Hutchins.

#### **6. Travel Tokens (agenda item 9)**

The WBDA requested an update on current policy. Mike Trevallion confirmed that the £20, £40, and £60 values took effect again from 1<sup>st</sup> July for next year. He said they 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<sup>th</sup> 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 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.

Mick Hutchins asked if service users had lost out. Mike Trevallion replied the budget for travel tokens this year was the same as last year, which had been reduced that year. When asked how WBC compared to other LAs 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 budget limitations. 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 as it was unsure what the take up would be and 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 tokens had been in circulation for seven years. From October onwards people would not be able to use blue tokens and 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.

## **7. Proposed Zebra Crossing – Oxford Road**

The WBDA expressed their strong concern that the proposed zebra crossing could prove fatal and repeated their request for a controlled crossing to be installed instead. They referred to their letter of 29<sup>th</sup> March to Jon Winstanley of Highways and Engineering (appendix 1). Mark Edwards accepted that the zebra crossing did not fully meet the needs of everyone but there were problems with installing a pelican crossing at this point due to its close proximity to the roundabout. However, he said a full risk assessment had been conducted and he did not accept WBDA's view that it carried an

unacceptably high risk. Both the factor of its location in relation to the other crossing and also the factor of cost were discussed.

**NOTE:** In the light of the concerns raised by the WBDA, Jon Winstanley HAS agreed to arrange for the recommendation on the report to Sally Hannon to be changed to say that scheme will be implemented, subject to a full vulnerable road users audit, in addition to the normal safety audit.

The Vulnerable Road Users audit will be undertaken by an independent specialist consultant, and will assess the scheme from the perspective of all 'non-motorised' road users. Jon Winstanley will highlight to the consultants the concerns regarding people with impaired vision.

**ACTION:** Jon Winstanley to discuss the results of the Vulnerable Road Users audit with the WBDA.

#### **8. Appointment of a WBC Access Officer**

Gary Lugg gave Dave Foster's apologies as he was on leave and went on to explain that they had advertised for the Access Officer's post and received three applications, but so far they had not found anyone suitable. They were currently reviewing the position and considering 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, and that it was important the position should not be devalued by combining it with another post.

**Action:** Mick Hutchins to 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.

#### **9. Access Guide – support with updating & window stickers (agenda item 8)**

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 eg had any further upgrade to buildings taken place, and also to offer participants window stickers. Mick Hutchins explained the WBDA might be able to provide volunteers to help with this work and that 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.

**Action:** Steve Broughton to liase directly with Mick Hutchins

#### **10. Incorporation of WBDA Transport Plan into the Local Transport Plan (agenda item 5)**

Frances Fernandes, Transport Policy Team Leader, 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 and aimed to incorporate much of it into the Local Transport Plan and would be pleased to maintain an on-going dialogue.

There was a 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, but 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 and stressed the need to ensure there were sufficient disabled car parking spaces available.

**ACTION:** Nicky Linihan Mardon to ensure the Council maintains an on-going dialogue with the WBDA on the development of the Local Transport Plan.

### **11. Upgrading the Kennet and Avon Canal Tow Path, West of Newbury** (agenda item 6)

The WBDA expressed their wish to have the tow path between Monkey Bridge and past the Swing Bridge up to the Enborne Road resurfaced in order to improve access into the town from an area where the residential population was growing. Paul Hendry, the Countryside Rights and Ways Manager, said the Council would be happy to work with the WBDA on this and that there might be capital funding for this work to be done. However, he explained the towpath was also used by the British Waterways Board and that they would need to be consulted. He said that instead of using tarmac they might decide to use another type of material which would result in a more user-friendly surface and look like a gravel track.

**Action:** Mick Hutchins to invite Paul Hendry to discuss this with the WBDA at their next meeting to be held at Greenfield House on 16<sup>th</sup> May at 6.45pm.

**NOTE –** Since the meeting, the WBDA think it would be best to set up a meeting with Paul Hendry at WBC's Market Street offices, with the relevant members of the WBDA, to discuss the above matters.

### **12. RNIB React for Newbury – future development using S106 monies** (agenda item 10)

Margaret Blaine gave an update on the current situation regarding React speakers. She said that there were funds for a number of speakers, and that some local businesses had also agreed to fund and install speakers. A speaker would be installed in the Kennet Centre as part of the Cinema development, and 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, and if the first tranche of speaker units proved to be successful it would give these applications a greater chance of having a positive outcome.

### **13. Future public consultation re disability planned by the WBC**

*(agenda item 14)*

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

**Action:** Jason to forward spreadsheet, outlining further details of proposed consultations, to Mick Hutchins.

**NOTE –** Since the meeting, the WBDA would like to invite Jason along to its next executive meeting at AFC Newbury's Faraday Road Stadium on Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005 at 19.00hrs.

### **14. Update on Proposed West Berkshire Care Trust** *(agenda item 11)*

Joanna Richardson circulated a short paper prepared by Margaret Goldie, which gave an update on the latest position (appendix 2). She confirmed that a formal consultation would be held in due course, but in the meantime Tim Hind had held some preliminary talks with stakeholders and would be keen to maintain a dialogue with the WBDA as the issue evolves.

### **15. Update on WBC equality impact assessments** *(agenda item 13)*

Joanna Richardson gave an update on the number of impact assessments the Council had completed or was currently undertaking. She explained that consultation with those from BME and disability groups was key. Many services which had been conducting EIAs 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:

1. 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?



2. Do disabled people use the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre and the various Commons in the District open to the public?

In response to question 1, the WBDA said they understood it was the role of Parish Councils to identify use of ways suitable for people with disabilities. They particularly drew attention to the need to be informed correctly of the true accessibility of a path - it was important that someone with a disability knew that they could definitely get from one point to another unhindered. Further information and encouraging all Parish Councils to provide this service would be welcomed.

There was little comment in response to question 2, 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 but mentioned that at one point the path became quite steep.

### **Any Other Business**

Roy Smith raised the issue of public toilets in Pembroke Road. This matter was raised at the previous meeting of the Council and WBDA in September 2004 and yet remained unresolved. The matter concerned the doors leading into the toilets being pegged back and therefore people who were visually impaired could read the braille on the doors, which marked whether they "ladies" or "gents".

He also drew attention to the fact that light on the toilet in Victoria Park was permanently showing red.

**Action:** JR to draw these issues to the attention of Nick Carter, who previously requested Officers to deal with these issues.

# WEST BERKSHIRE DISABILITY ALLIANCE

Registered Charity No: 11008112

29<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Your Ref. JW/dp/Projects

Highways and Engineering  
West Berkshire District Council  
Council Offices  
Faraday Road, Newbury  
Berkshire, RG14 2AF

50 Queens Road  
Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 7PA

Dear Mr Winstanley

## **Pedestrian Crossing Improvements A4 Western Avenue / Oxford Road Junction, Newbury**

Mr Hutchins has passed your drawing No. 5028294/410/CY/004 to myself to comment on, on behalf of the West Berkshire Disability Alliance.

Our comments are: -

### **Staggered "Pelican" Crossing.**

1. On the centre refuge we would like to see the red tactile paving continue to meet the railings (as is the case with controlled crossings in town the tactile paving continues to meet the buildings at the crossing). This would guide the visually impaired person to the railings and assist them with their bearings.
2. We appreciate that the push buttons are generally put on the side of the on coming traffic. This works well with roads that have 2-way traffic but when we have a single way traffic situation there is a problem with the push buttons that are on the left, as on the centre refuge.  
The problem arises with guide dogs, these dogs are trained to be worked on the left of the visually impaired person, so when the push button is on the left the user has to try and reach over the dog to push the button. The training supervisors when training the visually impaired person do not recommend this. Therefore we request an additional push button on the right, this also allows the user to feel the cone under push button panel.

### **Zebra Crossing, Oxford Road**

We have considered the proposal and visited the site. We would ask you to reconsider your proposals and change the crossing to one with traffic lights with pedestrian control, with audible signals.

Our thinking behind this is

- a. The position for the crossing has moved away from the roundabout. Which for a person with sight still gives them a view of the roundabout traffic but has virtually taken away the site line onto Western Avenue.
- b. For a person with impaired vision there is no safe way of crossing the road with out traffic lights. They would be able to hear traffic but would not be able to tell what speed it was

travelling at, also whether it was turning into the Oxford Road or going round the roundabout. There is a regular flow of traffic in the Oxford Road due to Waitrose, which also becomes quite heavy during rush hour periods.

- c. The pavement on the side of 26 Oxford Road is quite narrow but the crossing is at the point where the pavement starts widening out. The traffic light pole could be set away from the crossing a bit and be incorporated in a guard rail system.
- d. The pavement on Waitrose side is wide enough for a pedestrian guardrail and the traffic lights could be set on a bracket of the adjacent lamppost.
- e. With traffic lights there would be no requirement for a centre refuge.

Yours sincerely

John Carr  
WBDA Executive Committee Member

Cc [jwinstanley@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:jwinstanley@westberks.gov.uk)  
[mickhutchins@wbda.org](mailto:mickhutchins@wbda.org)

## UPDATE ON JOINT WORK BETWEEN WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL AND NEWBURY AND COMMUNITY AND READING PCTs

Tim Hind attended a previous meeting of the Disability Alliance and spoke about the progress being made towards integrating health and social care services locally.

He made the point that there were a number of options for joining services together more closely, of which one was a Care Trust between the Council and the PCTs.

Since that meeting, the government has published a number of new policy papers, which have more to say about the way in which health and social care services should be delivered and work together. These include:

The '*National Service Framework for Long Term Conditions*' – which sets out the service standards that people can expect, and proposes that people with the most complex and enduring conditions should have their care needs assessed and overseen by a 'Community Matron'.

The '*Life Chances for Disabled People*' White Paper – which stresses the need for all people with disabilities to be helped to live ordinary, active lives which include accessing employment, housing, leisure, education and training etc etc in the same way as those who are not disabled, and proposes that people with disabilities should have personalised budgets with which to purchase care.

*'Independence, Well-Being and Choice'* which focuses on the future of social care and the need for earlier, preventive services which promote 'active independence', backed up by an extension of Direct Payments so that by 2012 50% of service users will be receiving one.

At the same time, further guidance has been issued to the NHS outlining new requirements on patient choice, development of the healthcare market and joint working with local authorities.

Health and social care agencies across the west of Berkshire are now working out how to tie all these new initiatives together, starting with the front line – how to ensure that the service for users, carers and patients is seamless even if the organisations themselves remain separate. We are hoping to consult on actual proposals more widely during the summer.