

**Minutes of the  
Central Beds Access Group Meeting  
27<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
Priory House  
Chicksands**

<b>Present:</b>	Roy Storey	MBAG
	Ian Kelly	MBAG
	Jean Bird	B.G.D.A / MBAG
	Brian Bird	MBAG
	Martin Usher	MBDC Access Officer / MBAG
	Steve Nash	Aragon Housing / MBAG
	Alan White	Leighton & Linslade Access 4 ALL
	Diana Blackmun	CBC
	Carol Rooker	CBC
	Marian Courtney	Bedfordshire LINK

1	<b>Welcome, Introductions and Housekeeping</b>	
	The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Diana Blackmun, Service User Engagement Officer, Adult Social Care, Health & Housing Partnership Team Central Bedfordshire Council	
2	<b>Apologies Received</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claire Harding      CBC</li> <li>• Charlotte Bonser    Bedfordshire LINK</li> <li>• Jon Balaam            Greensand Trust</li> <li>• Simon Daize          Beds Police / MBAG</li> <li>• Neil Carter            Beds Police</li> <li>• Peter Keats            CBC Building Control</li> </ul>	
3	<b>Agree Minutes of Meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009</b>	
	Proposed and Seconded as a true and accurate record and agreed by all present.	
4	<b>To receive an update from Diana Blackmun, Service User Engagement Officer, Adult Social Care, Central Bedfordshire Council</b>	
	<p>The two main subjects were, <b>Choice based lettings</b> and <b>Personalisation, regarding care need</b>, Diana explained what these actually entailed.</p> <p><b><u>Choice based letting:-</u></b> In the past, the Council / Housing Associations decided when and where people would be offered a home, based on their needs and preferences. However, with Choice Based Lettings, people registered for housing can express their interest in being</p>	

offered any advertised homes they are eligible for by making a “bid” for them.

There is still a severe shortage of social housing to rent and the aim to ensure that the homes available are let to those in the greatest need who would like to be offered them. To do this, all applications are placed in one of four priority bands, with the most urgent applications in Band A.

Waiting time on the register is also taken into account when determining priority, as it is recognised that people’s housing need generally increases while they are waiting to be housed.

There will be a guide to explain how to go about bidding for homes and it is hoped the process will be easy and straightforward

**Equality and diversity**

The aim is to ensure that no-one is treated unfairly. All people will receive equal treatment when considered for housing. To ensure equal access to services for all customers, support and assistance is available. Specific services can be accessed by customers, carers or voluntary organisations on behalf of those who might otherwise be excluded.

The end result should be a list of everybody who has registered an expression of interest for each property advertised.

Successful bidders will be contacted. If there is any reason why we cannot offer the property to the highest bidder, we will advise them of the reason and offer the property to the next highest bidder.

All applications are assessed and placed in one of four priority bands:

- Band A Emergency/Top Priority
- Band B Urgent Need to Move
- Band C Identified Housing Need
- Band D All other applicants

**Mobility**

All customers with mobility difficulties should have had their needs assessed.

**Transforming Social Care:-**

**Personalisation regarding care needs**

The intended outcome is to enable more appropriate packages of care according to need – some may be more imaginative than others, but all should be safe. A contrast can be made with more traditional care planning models, which have been criticised, impersonal, and more likely to allocate inappropriate services in an untimely way.

A question regarding “Respite Care” was asked and centred on “means testing” The answer was anyone seeking respite care will have to meet the criteria set down.

Diana was thanked by the Chairman for her in-depth contribution to the meeting.

5	<p><b>To receive an update to date report from Martin Usher, Access Officer, Central Bedfordshire Council</b></p>	
	<p>The Access Group were pleased to receive a report from Martin which confirmed his appointment as Access Officer for Central Bedfordshire.</p> <p>Martin also listed the many issues and meetings he is involved with. These included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer of County Properties Now in possession of access audits for the majority of county properties albeit basic.</li> <li>• Meeting with Mark Bassett Acting Head of Property MB pleased to hear that I am able to advise on access Issues. Number of issues discussed.</li> <li>• Arlesey Community Centre Identified poor management practice creating inaccessible entrance at times.</li> <li>• The Mount Flitwick Met with Albion Archaeology (part of Development Management Assistant Directorate) who are working with Flitwick Town Council to develop this historic site. Gave advice on access to and around the site including information boards. AA may ask Access Group assistance with access audits.</li> <li>• NRAC conference Attended with Ian Kelly. Very interesting presentation on the changes to BS8300</li> <li>• NAIDEX Exhibition Attended exhibition at the NEC to keep up to date with the aids and services available for &amp; to disabled people.</li> <li>• LGA / ODI Conference Attended launch of Toolkit for producing better information for Disabled People at the LGA Westminster. Also in attendance Jonathan Shaw MP Minister for Disabled People.</li> <li>• Consultation with planners continues Agreement that the old South Beds team will consult on Access Issues.</li> </ul> <p>The issue of a taxi driver charging for transporting a guide dog was discussed. It was agreed that the details are forwarded to the appropriate department at Central Bedfordshire Council for the correct action to be taken.</p>	

	<p>Mrs Bird asked Martin for his thoughts on “Shared Surfaces” a process which entails the removal of kerbs. Shared surfaces are where roads and pavements are constructed at the same level. The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association state that "The development of new 'shared surface' areas in towns and cities across the country is putting the lives and safety of blind and partially sighted people at risk”, Martin commented that there is a shared feeling that this issue needs to be investigated further.</p> <p>Martin was thanked for his work and commitment in ensuring access issues remain current and also for adding to his knowledge library by attending conferences and exhibitions which will benefit the residents of Central Bedfordshire.</p>	
6	<p><b>To receive an update on outstanding issues</b></p>	
	<p>The Chairman reported that he had attended a “Consistory Court Directions Meeting” presided over by the Registrar of the St Albans Diocese on the Direction of the Chancellor. This was a formal part of the Church of England legal proceedings and came about as a result of an objection to a Faculty, ‘Planning application’ to which the Access Group had raised an objection to. The outcome was favourable to the objection.</p>	
7	<p>Date and time of next Meeting</p> <p><b>Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009</b>  <b>Room 13</b>  <b>Priory House, Chicksands</b>  <b>6.30 pm.</b></p> <p><b>The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.</b></p> <p><b>The meeting closed at 20.25 pm</b></p>	