

**Minutes of the  
Central Beds Access Group AGM  
16<sup>th</sup> March 2010  
Priory House  
Chicksands**

<b>Present</b>	Roy Storey	Chairman CBAG
	Ian Kelly	CBAG
	Martin Usher	CBAG Access Officer/BCC
	Steve Nash	Aragon Housing / CBAG
	Lorna Walker	CDO CBAG
	Helen Redding	CBC/CBAG
	Sally Aspinall	CBAG
	Mary Walsh	CBAG
	Charlotte Bonser	CBAG
	Jean Bird	CBAG / Guide Dogs for the Blind

**1 Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and invited all present to introduce themselves.

**2 Apologies Received**

- Claire Harding           CBC
- Peter Keates            CBC Building Control
- Mick Dillon            DRC
- Simon Daize            Beds Police / CBAG
- Glenn Melrose Brown   L&LA for All
- Ed Thompson           Adult Social Care CBC
- Cllr N Costin            CBC
- Joy Craven             Community Safety

**3. To receive nominations and elect the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Minute Secretary and Treasurer of The Central Bedfordshire Access Group**

The meeting was handed over to Martin Usher to read out nominations for Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. There being no other names it was agreed by those present that the Officers be:

Roy Storey    Chairman  
Ian Kelly     Deputy Chairman  
Mary Walsh   Minute Secretary and Treasurer

The Chairman thanked Martin Usher and the meeting resumed.

**4. To agree Minutes of the AGM held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

The Minutes of the AGM held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009 were proposed, seconded and accepted as a true and accurate record and agreed by all present.

**a) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

**5. Chairman's Report (previously circulated)**

The Chairman presented his report as attached to these Minutes Appendix A

**(a) Questions**

There were no questions relating to this report.

**6. Statement of Access Group's Finances**

The Chairman explained the Finances were under the heading of MBAG although the Group had since become the Central Beds Access Group (CBAG).

The Group had received £25.00 as a donation and had incurred no expenses. The current account now totalled £1192.37.

Ian Kelly was thanked by the Chairman for input on the Access Audits he had carried out on behalf of the Access Group.

**7. Election of Management Committee**

It was agreed by all present that the Management Committee consist of:

Roy Storey	Chairman CBAG
Ian Kelly	CBAG
Martin Usher	CBAG Access Officer/CBC
Steve Nash	Aragon Housing / CBAG
Lorna Walker	CDO CBAG
Helen Redding	CBC/CBAG
Sally Aspinall	CBAG
Mary Walsh	CBAG
Charlotte Bonser	CBAG
Jean Bird	CBAG / GDFB
Peter Keates	Building Control/ CBC

**7a. To receive an update from Helen Redding**

Helen thanked the Group for their input and the points raised following her presentation to the last meeting of the CBC proposed School Accessibility Strategy, particularly with regard to those issues raised by Sally Aspinall on ensuring schools followed through on their policies for inclusive access.

Jean Bird commented that she had not been getting CBC news as audio and Martin Usher agreed to chase this. Helen Reading said she would email it to Martin who could ensure this was passed on.

Helen Redding confirmed that the Accessibility Strategy in Schools and Early years Settings 2010-2012 had now been agreed and appendices updated. The response from schools had been very good and Officers would be checking that all of this was put into place.

In response to questions from Roy Storey and Jean Bird, Helen assured them that access for disabled parents and assistance for blind or the visually impaired was being addressed. Corridors, doorways, colour contrasts and use of guide dogs being part of this and, since September 2009, guide dogs were being given to 14 year olds. This raised further issues of a dog run, transport requirements and the ability for the dog to be with the pupil all of the time. Helen felt that the Group could help with advice to schools.

In response to concerns raised by Ian Kelly, Helen explained how changes may need to be made for a significantly disabled person, adapting changing and toilet facilities to meet their needs when standard disabled facilities were not appropriate. Helen explained that the individual needs were assessed and flexible options were considered in relation to the available space and resources.

Sally Aspinall felt Helen had covered all aspects but wanted above all that there be access to the curriculum, as that is what she felt that the children and teachers were there for.

There was a recognised need to inform schools of where to look for information and who to ask for advice. Governors of schools had a demanding post but they needed to take the Equality Scheme as a serious responsibility and Helen would be putting pressure on schools to provide their Schemes. Disability, equality and accessibility resources had to be requested based on properly carried out audits and Ofsted now wanted to see the school's scheme as part of their inspection. These policies have to be dated and have to be reviewed on a stated date and Governors must be trained.

Martin Usher offered to provide Helen with links to British Standards to be added to the Appendices of the Strategy document.

Roy asked Helen about disabled access to Licensed premises and why they were licensed if not DDA compliant; Helen agreed this was a big issue as many of them were not accessible. Martin Usher reported that there was some movement regarding Licensing of premises now.

Roy also informed the Group that the issue of access to the Bedford Tribunal Building had been passed to Bedford Borough for attention and an audit was to be carried out on a 'less busy day'. Helen advised that it was possible to make bids for Access to Buildings funding but schools had to contribute themselves.

In response to a question from Roy regarding transport, Helen explained that school transport was provided on assessed need and also opportunities for independent travel were created as a child got older. There was a need to look at the type of vehicle required and supplied.

The Chairman thanked Helen for the in depth update and it was agreed to continue the mutual support.

## **8. To receive a report from Martin Usher MBDC Access Officer**

Martin provided a copy of his written report as follows:

### **Access Officer's Annual Report**

It is now a full year since we became Central Bedfordshire Unitary Council covering the old Districts of Mid and South Beds and incorporating the functions of the old County. As there was no Access Officer in the South I now cover the entire Unitary area in addition to widening my scope into the old County's functions.

As many of you know the role of Access Officer is a part time one and is combined with my work as one of two Senior Engineers for the Council. This year I have been spread thinner not only because of taking on the extra geographical area and new functions but also because of work necessary to prepare for the new Flood & Water Management Bill legislation with the extra burdens it will bring to us Engineers. I will concentrate now however on the highlights of my access work

My day to day Access work continues with responding to consultations from planners on planning applications involving publicly accessible buildings and larger housing applications in an attempt to ensure buildings are planned with disabled access in mind and giving advice to businesses, members of the public and Officers of the Council on disabled access and the Disability Discrimination Act.

Through the year I have been involved in a number of larger and wider consultations, in partnership with the Central Bedfordshire Access Group, on such things as, Wrest Park, with English Heritage, Flitwick Manor with Flitwick Town Council and The Greensand Trust, the development of a new Woodland Centre in Maulden with The Greensand Trust, development of Central Bedfordshire Education's Accessibility Strategy, and the Licensing policy with our Public Protection section.

English Heritage at Wrest Park, in their development of the house and gardens into a flagship visitor attraction in the East of England, are particularly keen to ensure that it is a fully accessible visitor experience and have involved the Access Group and myself in all key meetings with the various design consultants and taken note of our comments and incorporated them in to their designs.

It is particularly pleasing to see that Flitwick Manor Parkland looks set to have an accessible path to a viewing point in the park after the Access Group identified it as an important requirement back in 2005.

I have attended various conferences with the Management of the Access Group including both the Spring and Autumn conferences of National Register of Access Consultants with Ian Kelly and a Town and Country Planning Association Inclusion Seminar with Roy Storey last November.

As a Unitary we now include Education and Social Services and I continue on the steep learning curve to enlightenment on the ins and outs of those two departments! I was particularly pleased to be contacted by Ed Thompson, Assistant Director for Adult Social Care, to be invited to be involved in the Physical Disabilities and Sensory Needs Delivery Partnership and look forward to my first meeting with them.

Finally I would like to thank the Access Group, particularly the Chair & Deputy Chair for their support throughout the year and their never ending supply of work that they generate for me!

The Chairman thanked Martin Usher for his report and for his work with and for the group, which was much appreciated.

**9. To receive a report from Ian Kelly, (Wrest Park)**

Ian Kelly reported that Wrest Park was being seen as a flagship site for English Heritage and they were now three years into the work of development. Buildings had been covered but they were now looking at the gardens together with such issues as transport and seating. The site covered over 90 acres. There was the question of what was 'reasonable'. Golf buggies had already been purchased and tested for site accessibility. Work was ongoing on seats which would be placed every 100mtrs and marked with a number to enable them to be easily located in an emergency.

Cultural Innovations were being employed by English Heritage to cover the Mansion and Visitor Centre, Dairy, Sculpture Room, Orangery which would provide tea and cakes, and an Observatory Pavilion (not to be accessible). Ian Kelly had been asked to look at the proposals from the Company and had passed on his comments.

Car parking was now being looked at and next would be play areas. The Group was not only pointing out problems but offering solutions.

Ian asked the Chairman if a plaque could be produced for the Access Group and that English Heritage be asked if they would put this up on the Wrest Park site. This to be pursued

The Chairman thanked Ian Kelly for his report.

**10. To receive a presentation from Greensand Trust on working with the Access Group and the Woodland Trust Centre**

Lorna Walker presented her report to the Group. She felt that being part of the Access Group had been very useful and was working on large scale projects such as Flitwick Manor Park, the Working Woodland Centre, and Breathing Spaces Project (clearing a path through the woodlands and creating a circular route).

With regards to Manor Park in Flitwick, the totally unsuitable steps and ramp that had originally been put in had been removed and now a flat path route had been identified. Within the Park, as part of Breathing Spaces and using money from Flitwick Town Council, vegetation that was encroaching on the pathway was being cleared and the access path to the view point had been revived with the help of volunteers.

Lorna reported that she had attended a meeting regarding the Park and which included the Access Group and an Archaeological body, and felt they were moving

forward with ideas. Agreement would be sought with the Historical experts. Lorna considered there was a lot more work and that it would be very expensive to carry through. Therefore, Lorna was looking for some high level stewardship in order to get more funding.

Lorna was also working at the Woodland Centre and her work included Dean Man's Hill lay by and Maulden Woods, which was owned by the Forestry Commission. The overall plan was to bring the woodland under management and provide jobs etc and include biodiversity, workspace, workshops and a visitor centre – cafe and retail area sourced from the workshops and local craft. Advice would be needed on the car park disabled spaces; chairs etc and this would all be fed into the final plan. More advice would be sought from the Access Group. Other plans included a wood chip boiler, rain water harvesting etc. The Forestry Commission would be putting in an access path. It was not possible to make the entire region accessible but the majority of it should be. Lorna was also taking forward the idea of seats with number markers for emergency situations.

Lorna reported that over £1,000,000 had been raised from Rural Development Program etc. and legal agreements were being finalised. Central Beds Council owns the site and the Forestry Commission would be working on this. Lorna advised that it would take from June to December to clear the site before building started and that the Centre would be opening in March 2011. A local award winning Architect with Nicholas Tyre would be designing the buildings and had a good record on accessibility and local builders would be used. Central Beds would be covering building control.

The Chairman thanked Lorna Walker for her hard work and support throughout the year.

## **11. Questions**

(a) Charlotte Bonser informed the group that a formal letter had been sent by LINK to the PCT regarding community beds, asking for an action plan and for a response to be given by the end of the month. LINK would be splitting and the Bedford Link would be separate and concentrating on Central Bedfordshire.

(b) Steve Nash reported that he had attended a meeting of BRCC at Biggleswade in January. Following on from this meeting the Access Group would be contacted for advice regarding the Town Plan.

## **12. Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Central Bedfordshire Access Group will be held on Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at Priory House in Chicksands, Shefford. Time 6.30 pm

The Chairman thanked those present for attending and the meeting closed at 8.22 pm.