

**Minutes of the
Central Beds Access Group Meeting
8th December 2009
Priory House
Chicksands**

Present	Roy Storey	CBAG
	Ian Kelly	CBAG
	Mary Walsh	CBAG
	Martin Usher	CBAG Access Officer/ CBAG
	Steve Nash	Aragon Housing / CBAG
	Rex Skinner	CBAG
	Lorna Walker	CDO Greensand Trust
	Simon Daize	Beds Police / CBAG
	Carl Davies	Disability Resource Centre
	Helen Redding	CBC
	Marion Courtney	Bedfordshire LINK
	Sally Aspinall	CBAG

1 Welcome Introductions and Housekeeping

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Helen Redding from Beds Central and Mary Walsh as a new member of CBAG.

2 Apologies Received

- Clare Harding CBC
- Peter Keates CBC Building Control
- Mick Dillon DRC
- Charlotte Bonser Bedfordshire LINK

3. Agree Minutes of Meeting held on 6th October 2009

Accepted as a true and accurate record and agreed by all present.

a) Matters Arising

Carl Davies advised that he was in the process of negotiating with the Hers Action on Disability regarding Drug Assessments.

4 To Receive a Report from Helen Reading CBC, SENDA and Access to School Buildings

Helen Reading gave a detailed and informative report on her work in this area. A first draft on Access to Schools had been prepared and Helen was looking for feedback on this document from the group before it was finalised. Helen explained that it had been a duty to provide disabled access since 2002 and most plans were drawn from external Audits which included access to and within buildings. However this should also include access to the curriculum and Helen was pushing schools to add this to initial plans. Reminders had been sent out that it is a statutory duty to provide such access to the curriculum.

Helen had the task of assessing plans submitted to her for compliance with this duty. In 2007 there was introduced a Statutory Disability Equality Scheme for Secondary Schools, which also included Middle Schools. In 2008 this was extended to include Primary Schools. A data base was kept by CBC and good progress was being made: schools were self governing and responsible for establishing this. Accessibility Grants were available to Authority maintained schools and were linked to the actual school who would be taking on the child concerned. Helen was pushing the recognition of disability as not just being physical or sensory needs but including such conditions as Autism and ADHD as well as medical conditions such as Leukaemia.

Helen felt the Access Group could help with advising schools struggling with this and circulated the CBC Accessibility Strategy for the comments of CBAG. It was intended to include Audit tools within the document and Helen felt the group could help with this in particular. It was intended that this document would be available on the CBC website and links provided to other areas. OFSTED now wanted to see school schemes and Governing bodies had been advised of the importance of schools addressing this.

Helen discussed some of the difficulties in identifying problems with children and dealing with the needs of both the child and the parents, when working to integrate children with special educational needs within mainstream schools. CBC researched the issues and provided recommendations on best practice and equipment found to be most successful. Reasonable adjustments had to be made for existing children and there was an anticipatory duty to support staff to identify problems and deal with them.

Helen intended to have the first draft available in January and the Chairman thanked Helen and invited her to attend the next meeting of CBAG to expand on this. Helen was looking to provide one Audit Tool for all schools to use and to make this as simple as possible and would welcome the group's assistance with the strategy. This would apply to Special Schools also. The Chairman agreed that CBAG would be willing to help support schools by providing advice on access issues.

Helen thanked the group for their support and left the meeting.

5. To receive an update regarding linking Access Statements to all License Applications

Following a meeting with those responsible for the granting of Licences, it was established that the current Licensing Act does not allow a refusal on access grounds. However, the granting of such a License might lead to a future problem with the DDA regarding access.

6. To receive an update regarding Wrest Park

The Chairman advised that he was waiting for confirmation of a meeting to be held with English Heritage on 14th December 2009. This would be the third meeting this year. He also advised of a request from the Lottery Funding Body asking if volunteers from the Group would look into the history of Wrest Park.

Updates on other areas

- a) The Chairman also gave an update on St Andrew's Church regarding the design of the Garden of Remembrance. The Chancellor of the Consistory Court upheld the Access Group's objection and the Garden will now go ahead with the changes as agreed.
- b) The Chairman informed the Group that changes were planned for the building in Ampthill Park. Ampthill Town Council have put in new plans for the visitor centre. Lorna Walker is working on a Management Plan for the Park and Ian Kelly had spoken to them regarding accessibility of the Park. Ampthill were looking for a Park Development Manager with a wide spectrum of experience in this field.
- c) Rex Skinner raised the issue of the provision of toilet facilities and was informed that in 2006 Biggleswade (MBDC) had taken over full responsibility for toilets including cleaning them. Rex advised that the Bus Station toilets were not accessible for wheelchair users. Martin Usher agreed to look into this and report back to the Group.
- d) Carl Davies advised that Alan White had resigned as Chairman of LBC and Mick Dillon had taken his place.
- e) The Group were advised that taxis up to 7 years old had to be replaced with accessible vehicles and leeway had been given for Taxi companies to provide lower access vehicles. It was felt that CBC had not covered the fact that following the establishment of a Unitary Authority, there were still different policies operating around the area. The Access Group felt it could not support this policy.
- f) Carl Davies advised that the Disability Resource Centre had been successful in its bid for a Centre in Northamptonshire. The Chairman congratulated the DRC on this achievement on behalf of the Access Group.

7. Date and venue of next meeting
The AGM of the Access Group will take place on:-
Tuesday, 16th March 2010
Room 13
Priory House
Chicksands
Shefford

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20.25 pm