

# NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## DISABLED PEOPLE'S FORUM

Wednesday, 8 October 2008

### PRESENT:

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Councillor Pam Varnserry (Co-Chair) | NBC   |
| Chris Grethe (Community Co-Chair)   | Individual  |
| Councillor Paul Varnserry           | NBC   |
| Lindsey Ambrose                     | NBC   |
| Ian Redfern                         | NBC Head of Culture & Leisure                           |
| DS P Colholn                        | Northants Police  |
| L. Jepson                           | Northants Police  |
| Julie Buckingham                    | Victim Support  |
| Connie Mulliner                     | Individual  |
| Christine Woodhams                  | Individual  |
| Larry Barber                        | Individual  |
| Barbara Barber                      | Individual  |
| Madeline Boys                       | Pensioners Voice  |
| J. Wright                           | Pensioners Voice  |
| Ewart Smith                         | Individual  |
| John Welsh                          | Self Advocates Network Group                            |
| Eileen Bacon                        | Individual  |
| Sandra Bell                         | Ability Northants                                       |
| Tom Welsh                           | Disability Co-Coordinator,<br>University of Northampton |
| Tina Harvey                         | NTACT   |
| Noor Homayoun                       | Individual  |
| John Wood                           | NAB   |

### 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves.

### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from R. Shah, B. Fisher, S. Campling and D. Jwanczuk.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 JUNE 2008

The minutes of the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> June 2008 were agreed subject to amending the list of attendees to show M. Boys as an individual and Tom Welsh as Disability Coordinator, University of Northampton.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA**

M. Boyes advised that people were unable to attend the meeting, as taxis were not automatically provided. It was agreed that this be looked into and reported back to the Forum.

##### **4.1 PERSONAL CARE BUDGETS UPDATE**

There was no discussion on this item.

##### **4.2 PARKING ISSUES UPDATE**

There was no discussion on this item.

##### **4.3 ACCESSIBILITY AWARDS UPDATE**

There was no discussion on this item.

#### **5. DISABILITY, HATE CRIMES AND DISABLED PEOPLE AS WITNESSES TO CRIME**

##### **Northants West Hate Crime Unit**

DS Paul Colhoun from the Northants West Hate Crime Unit gave a presentation. He confirmed that the Unit had detected and dealt with all reported hate crimes in the Northampton area for the past six years. The last four years had also included disablist crimes. The Unit dealt with victims and offenders to progress the matter to Court. His colleague Luisa Jepson was the Intervention Officer and she also provided support to victims if the matter progressed to Court. She also worked with other agencies. Figures for reported disablist crimes were: -

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2004 | 58   |
| 2005 | 70   |
| 2006 | 36   |
| 2007 | 47   |
| 2008 | 22 (For the first 6 months of the financial year.) |

DS Colhoun confirmed that there had been a significant decrease in the number of reported disablist crimes.

Luisa Jepson confirmed that they met people to raise awareness of hate crimes and that there were other organisations who would provide support. She confirmed that there was a Disability Support Line which people could register for. If people needed to call the Police they would have their details on a database and would be able to speak directly to a call handler. There was also a text service for people with hearing impediments or hard of hearing. She confirmed that they would like to hear from people to improve the service. A registration form and further details could be obtained from Lynn Coppin on 08453 700700 ext 8326 or email

lynn.coppin@northants.police.uk. Lynn could also be contacted for the registration of people with hearing impediments on the texting service.

Paul Crofts confirmed he accepted the role as Chair of Northants West Hate Incidents Forum in a voluntary capacity in September 2007. The Forum was made up of voluntary and statutory sector organisations which looked at hate incidents and how they were dealt with and made recommendations for improvements. He confirmed that most hate incidents were reported to the Police but all agencies would work with disabled people

## **Victim Support**

Julie Buckingham from Victim Support confirmed that their volunteers covered all crimes and gave practical and emotional support to the victims. They also had a witness service for people going to Court and received referrals from individuals and the Police.

T. Welsh commented that problems arose when evidence had to be provided where a person had a certain disability. For example a blind person would not be able to identify their attackers appearance. DS Colhoun confirmed that the Police tried to meet all of the victims' needs and looked at making improvements to their strategy.

In response to a question from L. Barber all incidents were graded and hate crime was considered as a serious grade being 2 or 3 whereas emergencies were dealt with as grade 1. He confirmed that any issues raised would be followed up.

DS Colhoun confirmed that no disablist hate crimes were prosecuted through the Courts last year, but there were other ways of dealing with the issue as directed by the Home Office: if the offender was a young person and had not been previously convicted then they would be given a reprimand or a final warning. If the offender was an adult then they would be issued with a caution. An Anti-Social Behaviour Order could also be issued. If there were any complaints in respect of the Police then they could go to the Professional Standards Department

DS Colhoun confirmed that hate incident was defined by the victim. If they believed it was a hate crime then it would be treated as one and not disputed. Everyone had a responsibility to challenge hate incidents and the best place was at the point of occurrence.

T. Harvey felt that if people had a mental health issue and were victims of hate crime that the Police would treat it, as no crime had been committed. DS Colhoun stated victims with mental health issues were treated appropriately.

B. Barber advised that whatever the crime was, to the victim it was a trauma and should be treated delicately and with respect.

## **6. COMMUNITY CO-CHAIR ELECTIONS - PROPOSAL TO RUN THE ELECTIONS PROCESS BETWEEN NOVEMBER AND JANUARY FORUM MEETINGS**

C. Grethe proposed that between November 2008 and January 2009 Co-Chair Elections were taking place. Any member of the Forum could put their name forward to be a Co-Chair. If there was more than one candidate then elections would be held.

**RESOLVED: L Ambrose to write to people after the November meeting and the postal elections and voting process would be followed as in previous years, with help available for those who needed support to put down their ideas or votes in writing.**

## **7. INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

L. Ambrose confirmed that there was an internet access guide called DisabledGo which empowered disabled people to judge for themselves which venues were suitable for their own individual needs. N. Homayoun said that he felt that there should be an access guide for Northampton.

Councillor Varnserry and L. Ambrose advised that they had been in contact with DisabledGo about the feasibility of adding Northampton to the website.

T. Welsh confirmed that Northampton University was on DisabledGo and would provide an update on progress. It was hoped that NBC and Northampton University could work together on this matter. He also suggested that companies in the area may be interested in participating and confirmed that Diane Walker ran an independent consultancy on disabled access.

B.Barber confirmed that there was a guide book for disabled people called Gowring Book Guide which provided information on facilities on different places around the county. They could be obtained from Julie Ramsey at Smooth Ride Guides, Duck Street Barn, Duck Street, Furneux Pelham, Herts, SG9 0LA or on the website [www.smoothrideguide.com](http://www.smoothrideguide.com). The guides were priced at £14.95.

**RESOLVED: Councillor P Varnserry and L. Ambrose to liaise with T. Welsh about possibly working together on DisabledGo.**

At this juncture Councillor PD Varnsberry who was present at the meeting gave an update on concessionary bus passes. He confirmed that the Council would be distributing questionnaires within the next few weeks to collate views on times, companion passes, options and changes to extended hours and schemes across the county. There was a section for comments and the results would be provided early in the New Year in a report to Cabinet with recommendations.

Councillor PD Varnsberry confirmed that the concessionary bus passes had been raised by R. Shah at a Council meeting and Overview and Scrutiny had set up an investigation in response to R. Shah's concerns. The contact for Overview and Scrutiny was Councillor Simpson (Chair).

E. Smith advised that Kettering Borough Council had already allowed carers on buses free. Councillor PD Varnsberry confirmed that he was aware of this from the Pensioner's Forum and Pensioner's Voice.

Councillor PD Varnsberry confirmed he would forward a copy of the questionnaire to E. Bacon and N. Homayoun.

J. Welsh suggested that the travel pass for the buses could also include the trains.

B. Barber confirmed that there was the Northampton Door to Door Service for people who are unable to use public transport. There was a joining fee of £12.50 per year, NBC Concessionary Travel Permits were accepted and Guide and Helper Dogs were carried free of charge. Their contact number was 01604 583553.

S. Bell confirmed a list of accessible taxis that could hold wheelchairs was available. A full copy of the listing including services in other parts of the county can be obtained from Ability Northants, Suite 58, Burlington House East Wing, 369 Wellingborough Road, Northampton, NN1 4EU 01604 624088 or from [sandra.bell@abilitynorthants.org.uk](mailto:sandra.bell@abilitynorthants.org.uk)

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. Councillor PD Varnsberry to forward questionnaires to Northampton University, Northampton College and Moulton College, E. Bacon and N Homayoun.**
- 2. Councillor PD Varnsberry to bring forward the suggestion of using the concessionary bus passes for the trains to Overview and Scrutiny (1).**

## **7.1 FREE SWIMMING INFORMATION**

Ian Redfern Head of Culture and Leisure gave a presentation regarding the Free Swimming initiative. This was a new Government initiative in relation to the 2012 Games for the under 16s and over 60s to receive free access to swimming. Not all local authorities had decided to take part in the scheme but Northampton Borough Council had. As of 1 April 2009 for two years free access would be given at Danes Camp, Mounts Baths and Lings Forum. Leisure cards will be given free of charge although it would only provide entitlement for free swimming, any other activities to be undertaken in the leisure centre would have to be paid for. Ian confirmed that the usage of the card would be monitored and evaluated over two years.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport were promoting the scheme and Ian confirmed that the cards could be obtained from any Trilogy leisure centre, One Stop Shop and libraries. He advised that the cards could only be used during the public swimming sessions and not when activities or swimming lessons were in session. Their carers could also take part in the scheme even if the carer was not over 60.

Ian Redfern was thanked for his presentation.

## **7.2 BALLOON FESTIVAL UPDATE**

There was no discussion on this item.

## **7.3 NORTHAMPTON GENERAL HOSPITAL UPDATE**

There was no discussion on this item.

## **7.4 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISABLED PEOPLE - POSSIBLE JOINT WORKING**

C. Grethe confirmed that the International Day for Disabled People was the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008. He suggested that a stall could be organised in the Grosvenor Centre. S. Bell suggested an event could be held at the Guildhall to be made more of a celebration and invite the Police.

Further to the meeting it was agreed an event would be held at the Fishmarket on 4<sup>th</sup> December by the Forum working together with Ability Northants, which would include inviting the Police and other agencies to take part.

## **7.5 DISABLED LIVING ALLOWANCE- LOBBY WITH RNIB ON 15 OCT IN LONDON**

C. Grethe and J. Wood informed people about this. It was confirmed that under the mobility component, people with disabilities who can drive can claim the DLA higher 'mobility rate' worth £46.75 per week. People with serious sight loss are only eligible to claim the lower rate of just £17.75 per

week. The RNIB were calling for this to be changed. Two years ago a lobby was made to Parliament and another one would take place on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Peter Rilley from NAB was organising Northampton Contribution to the event and people would be reimbursed their travel costs. It was confirmed that MPs would be there as well including MP Sally Keeble.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Shop Mobility**

S. Bell confirmed that Shop Mobility will be moved to the Mayorhold. It is scheduled to be on the first floor but the ground floor had been requested for easier access. This would be discussed on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008 with Councillor Glynane during a site visit.

### **Local Democracy Week Event**

L. Ambrose confirmed that LDW Older and Younger People's Event was taking place on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October at the Guildhall. It would discuss the festival and people would bring items special to them. The second part would explain what an Equality Impact Assessment is.

L. Ambrose also confirmed on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October there was an event for young people which would give the results of I'm a Councillor Get Me Out of Here! and an interactive Human Rights debate.

## **9. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Sue Campling would be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on Northampton General Hospital.

## **10. DATES OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008 and that future meetings were scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> January 2009, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

The meeting concluded at 19.45