

**MINUTE OF BI-ANNUAL MEETING BETWEEN EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL AND
THE FORUMS ON DISABILITY**

MONDAY 30TH MARCH. 1998

PRESENT: Councillor Eric Jackson - Chair
Fiona Lees -Depute Chief Executive
Gwen Barker -Social Work Department
Mary Fegan -Depute Director Social Work Department
John Hillis -Director of Housing
Keith Orton -Principal Engineer, Traffic
George Fraser -Chief Executive East Ayrshire Employment Initiative
Graham Haugh -Depute Director Personnel Services
Robert McLeary -Head of Property Services
Donald McVicar- Strategy Officer, Support Services
Peter Neely -Chair of East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability
Jim Richmond -Vice Chair East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability
Jean Smith -East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability .
Jean Dunlop -Chair of Kilmarnock Forum on Disability
Janice Cameron -Secretary Kilmarnock Forum on Disability
Nancy Mair -Treasurer Kilmarnock Forum on Disability

APOLOGIES: Councillor Sneller -Leader of Council
David Montgomery -Chief Executive

1. Welcome and Introduction

Councillor Jackson welcomed everyone to the meeting and suggested that future meetings be held in April and October of each year. All present at the meeting were in agreement with this suggestion.

2. Previous Minutes

Previous minutes of 18th November 1997 had been distributed prior to the meeting and all present felt that this was an accurate account of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

Leisure Strategy: Fiona Lees reported to the meeting that the Leisure Strategy was approved at committee in late November 1997 and thanked both Forums for their comments.

Leisure Cards: Peter Neely reported that the East Ayrshire (South) Forum had recently written to the other Forums throughout Ayrshire to ask them for their thoughts on the need for a concessionary Leisure Card. On receipt of this information Peter would contact Dennis Craig, Community Services for further action and consideration.

Action: East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability)

Local Plan: Cllr. Jackson reported that draft copies of the Local Plan had been recently distributed to members of Local Committees and comments would be welcomed from Forum members on the content of the document. Comments to be forwarded to John Lilley, Senior Planning Officer, Development Services.

Car Parking: Keith Orton, Principal Engineer confirmed that he and Peter Neely had visited the car parks in Cumnock which had been identified as requiring attention at the last meeting. As a result of this site visit it was proposed to relocate two parking spaces for the disabled within the Townhead car park and seek to provide a third space. Appropriate marking would also be put down. Within the TOWNYARD car park the Council will relocate 1 space and provide new markings on the existing bay. A similar exercise will be carried out at the Ayr Road car park.

Keith Orton confirmed that between April 1997 and February 1998 19 tickets had been issued within the Kilmarnock car parks for people who were parking in designated disabled parking bays with no orange badge on display. Janice Cameron was dismayed with this report as it was her opinion that people persisted in parking illegally. It was acknowledged that this was a particular issue at certain times of day for example lunchtime and from 4pm. It was agreed that the Council would monitor the car parks at these times.

Keith reported that his Department had agreed to commence with a review of on street parking, within the Kilmarnock area. It was agreed that the Forums would be consulted in the course of the review. Keith to report back to the next meeting progress made.

Action: Keith Orton, Principal Engineer

4. Equal Opportunities Forums Report

Fiona Lees informed members that the Equal Opportunities Forums report was presented to and agreed at Council on 26 March 1998. The report set out the Council's intentions for future Elected Member involvement in the various Equal Opportunities Forums currently in existence and the Council's proposals for the establishment of a Women's Forum, Ethnic Minorities Forum and East Ayrshire wide Equal Opportunities Forum. Fiona reported that six elected members had been nominated to participate in the range of consultation meetings, these being: Councillors Jackson, O'Neill, Reeves, Darnbrough, Hall and Reid.

5. East Ayrshire Council Corporate Plan

Fiona Lees noted that David Montgomery , Chief Executive, spoke to this item in detail at the last meeting in November. Fiona emphasised that the Corporate Plan was a working document and that it would be reviewed regularly by the Council. The plan sets out the Council's main aims and objectives and a series of actions and timescales for each Department. It is the intention of the Council to formally review the Plan again in October.

East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability welcomed the content of the document although expressed concern that not all Departments were totally committed to the Council's commitment to partnership and consultation. Cllr. Jackson indicated his concern at this matter and arranged for members of the Forum to raise these issues with individual Departments at the close of the meeting.

6. New Deal

George Fraser, Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Employment Initiative, stated that he had recently taken up this new post. The New Deal is the Government's main policy for moving people from welfare to work. The East Ayrshire Employment Initiative is a recently established organisation set up to implement the New Deal locally. Representatives from the Council, Employment Service, East Ayrshire Business Partnership, Careers Partnership, the 2 Colleges, C.V.O., Forums on Disability and Lone Parents will come together on a regular basis to develop policy on the delivery of services to unemployed people within East Ayrshire. This is the only initiative of its kind within Scotland.

The client group targeted initially will be people aged between 18 and 24, however 25+ will be considered after June/July 1998. People with Disabilities, in this age range, can be involved in the New Deal through the Gateway process and Disability Employment Advisors of the Employment Service.

George Fraser stated that he is conscious that the two offices for the New Deal are upstairs and he is looking into that issue at present. Accommodation has been looked at within the Kilmarnock area and alternative ways of providing services may have to be looked at if accommodation cannot be found on ground level.

jean Dunlop, Kilmarnock Forum on Disability reported that both Forums had many questions in relation to the New Deal, however recognised that it was still at the very early stages. It was agreed that George be asked to report back to the next meeting on progress made.

Action: George Fraser, Chief Executive, East Ayrshire Employment Initiative

7. Social Work Premises -Accessibility

Balmoral Road Project: Mary Fegan, Depute Director Social Work Department reported that the new build at Balmoral Road was well underway with the foundations now down. The Forums on Disability have a number of representatives on the design team for Balmoral Road and service users from the Glebe Centre are involved in designing the court yard, a time capsule to be buried under the court yard and the cafeteria. Discussions are also underway to find a name for the centre. It is hoped that the project will be finished by the end of the financial year.

The Forums on Disability indicated that they were happy with the consultation regarding this project, although they expressed concerns that the building is located outwith the town centre and is therefore not easily accessible for people with a

disability. Janice Cameron used the example of people with a disability having difficulty renewing their Orange Badge, as it had to be done in person. Mary reported that the Department was currently in discussions about making Orange Badge applications available from Local Offices and that the Department offered a home visiting service for anyone unable to visit a Social Work Office.

It was agreed that the Social Work Department report back on progress made in relation to making Orange Badge applications available at the next meeting and that the Department should consider advertising their home visiting service.

Mary reported that the Department also has a range of services available to support people with a disability via the Sensory Impairment Team, based at Dalsalloch.

Galston Office: Mary Fegan reported that the Department had commissioned a technical report, which had identified the possibility of ramping the front of the building. This is currently being considered and the Department will consult with representatives of the Forums on Disability about its feasibility. Mary reported that it was the Department's intention to look at a new development within the Irvine Valley area and representatives from the Forums would be encouraged to participate in the planning of this development. The Forums confirmed that they would be happy to participate in any plans regarding access to buildings.

Action: Mary Fegan, Social Work Department

8. Housing for People with Disabilities

John Hillis, Director of Housing informed members that the Housing Department was currently working in partnership with Scottish Homes, Gap Housing Association, Horizon and Kirkcare to provide a range of housing for people with a disability.

John also reported that his Department was looking at converting existing sheltered housing to very sheltered housing in conjunction with colleagues in the Social Work Department.

The Department's aids and adaptations budget has been increased this year and work is 8 under way to improve waiting lists and timescales in the provision of aids and adaptations.

Funding has been slightly increased for garden maintenance and it is anticipated that as a result of this there will be an increase in the number of clients who receive this service.

The Housing Department is currently liaising with Support Services to provide a local area housing office within the Doon Valley area. It is hoped that this service will be available next year.

John reported that the Council has now agreed in principle that if a person with a disability can make use of a converted house or if a house can be converted for a person, then this will be progressed rather than the person having to wait until a suitable house becomes available. It is hoped that this revised process will be up and

running by September this year. The Forums indicated their support for the new procedures.

John informed members that in conjunction with Scottish Homes, a housing needs survey was being produced. Although the Housing Department is aware of housing requirements for people with a disability, it is hope that the survey will provide further detail.

John also confirmed that all future housing will be designed and built to barrier free standards and that the Council will encourage private companies to adopt this policy.

Representatives of the Kilmarnock Forum on Disability reported that they were concerned that some of the accommodation within the St Andrews Street Hostel was not adapted appropriately for people with a disability. It was agreed that Forum members be invited to view the premises and identify any necessary alterations.

Action: John Hillis, Department of Housing

9. Structural Management of Roads and Footways

Jean Dunlop of the Kilmarnock Forum on Disability reported their disappointment that after raising the issue of the quality of roads and pavements in Crosshouse on a number of occasions, still no action had been taken by the Council.

Fiona Lees apologised for this situation and agreed to personally progress this matter by convening a site meeting with all interested parties. Date to be arranged at the close of the meeting.

***Action: Fiona Lees, Depute Chief Executive /
Keith Orton, Principal Engineer***

10. Double Tick Scheme - Equal Opportunities Policy

Graham Haugh, Depute Director of Personnel Services reported that currently the Department monitored the Equal Opportunities Policy manually however it was hoped to have the systems computerised by autumn.

In 1997, 15 people with a disability applied for posts and all applicants with a disability are guaranteed an interview if they meet the required post criteria. From the 15 applicants, 8 were offered a post. There are currently 34 employees (0.55%) of the total workforce within East Ayrshire Council who have a disability. The Personnel Department has been in contact with external agencies to try and encourage people back to employment after accidents etc. and are considering supported placements for the future.

It was felt by the Forums that if many of the Council buildings were more accessible then more people would apply for jobs.

Graham Haugh proposed to meet with representatives from the Forums before the next meeting to further discuss employment issues.

Action: Graham Haugh, Depute Director of Personnel

11. Sensory Impairment Services

Following concerns raised by the East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability regarding the loop system in Dalsalloch, a meeting has been arranged between representatives of the Forum, Mary Fegan and Jim Hazlett from the Social Work Department to try and resolve this issue.

Bob McLeary, Head of Property Services, informed the meeting that loop systems are being reviewed in all Council buildings. All new buildings will have a loop system installed and older buildings will be assessed to identify what systems are appropriate for usage within them. Forum members expressed their willingness to be involved in the audit of buildings. Bob McLeary agreed to liaise with the Forums to progress this matter.

Action: Bob McLeary, Head of Property Services

12. Arrangements for Future Meetings

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 21st October, 1997 at 2.00p.m. The Forums will be contacted prior to the meeting regarding agenda items.

Action: Gwen Barker, Service Officer, Social Work Department

GB/JK
2nd April, 1998

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