

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

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

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 1999 AT 1000 HOURS IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, LONDON ROAD, KILMARNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors Eric Jackson (Chair) and James O'Neill.

ATTENDING: David Montgomery, Chief Executive; Barbara Haughan, Director of Corporate Services; Mary Fegan, Depute Director of Social Work; John F Crawford, Head of Protective Services; John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services; Carol Devoy, Senior Employees Relations Officer, Personnel Services; Donald McVicar, Strategy Officer, Corporate Services Department; J McCombe, Community Worker, Social Work Department; Dot Grieve, Community Education Service; Nancy Mair, Kilmarnock Forum on Disability; Jean Dunlop, Kilmarnock Forum on Disability; Janice Cameron, Kilmarnock Forum on Disability; Iain Brown, East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability; Jean Smith, East Ayrshire (South) Forum on Disability; and Jim Kane, Chief Engineer, Roads Division.

APOLOGIES: Councillor David Sneller.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the bi-annual meeting between the Council and the two Forums on Disability and advised that he had been remitted to act as Chair for the meeting.

The Chair indicated that 25 agenda items had been submitted for the meeting, and in an attempt to try and accommodate as many items raised as possible, some had been merged under general headings while others included were, items which had previously been discussed at a liaison meeting and where an update on action was required.

Where matters had not previously raised with individual service departments and where an existing liaison arrangement between the Forums on Disability and service departments existed, these departments had been asked to respond to Forums individually to provide information on the items raised.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1. The Minutes of the previous meeting were submitted and noted.

MATTERS ARISING

2. The following matters arose from the Minutes.

2.1 CAR PARKING - CUMNOCK AREA

It was reported that the location of the bays had been agreed and they would be installed as soon as possible.

Thereafter, concerns were raised regarding the remote footpath connecting Townhead Street car park to Glaisnock Shopping Centre where the footpath was found to be uneven in places due to the effects of tree roots and the spalling of the concrete paviers at the entrance to the Shopping Centre.

It was agreed that the Head of Roads and Transportation write to the Director of Homes and Technical Services requesting that as the path is used by disabled people, the site should be examined and the repair effected as soon as possible.

2.2 SOCIAL WORK PREMISES - ACCESSIBILITY - ORANGE BADGES

It was reported that the Social Work Department had monitored the response times for the re-issuing of badges and found that they met the performance indicators set.

The Disability Forums then raised concerns regarding the apparent inability to provide applicants with information regarding where their application was in the process.

The meeting was advised that application forms could be obtained from Council premises such as Libraries and Local Offices and that the Department is working with staff to establish a coding system to reduce the amount of information asked for at the time of re-issue.

In addition, the meeting heard that European legislation had determined that the colour of the orange badges would change to blue from January 2000. This legislation would also apply to road signs, but a maintenance period of ten years would be allowed for these changes to be applied.

2.3 STRUCTURAL MANAGEMENT OF ROADS AND FOOTWAYS, CROSSHOUSE

It was reported that this matter had been resolved, but that any future problems should be reported to the Head of Roads and Transportation.

NEW COUNCIL STRUCTURES

- 3.** The Forums wanted to know how the new Council structures would affect the Adaptations service.

The Depute Director of Social Work Advised that separate from the Councils re-structuring a full review of the Adaptations service had taken place in November 1998. The Council recognised that the waiting times for the completion of adaptations was unacceptable, also taking into account of the concerns of service users.

The Adaptations Service was consolidated within the Social Work Department and adaptations were put out to open tender.

Service specifications have been developed for all contracted elements. These fall into broad contracted areas namely;

- (i) supply and installation of stairlifts;
- (ii) stairlift maintenance contract;
- (iii) supply and installation of showers;
- (iv) supply and installation of ramps; and
- (v) supply and installation of handrails.

The revised arrangements include the transfer of two technicians to undertake tasks associated with the Adaptations service.

They have been able to respond urgently to people requiring minor adaptations to facilitate discharge from hospital or to help maintain people safely in the community.

It was noted that within the Social Work Departments recent restructuring a new post of Manager, Independent Living Services had been agreed. This would improve the monitoring and development of the service.

The future service involves the Council having committed £1m for the adaptations service for 1999/2000 and setting aside £270,000 of grant aid for essential adaptations to owner/occupier property.

Councillor O'Neill advised the meeting that of the companies who dealt with the installation and maintenance of chair-lifts, one had gone into receivership.

It was agreed that the Director of Social Work investigates any problems which may, therefore, arise.

SHOPMOBILITY - UPDATE

4. The meeting heard that discussions had taken place between representatives from Shopmobility and Council Officers, and the Kilmarnock town centre management to consider an outline proposal, based on the scheme presently in operation in Ayr.

The meeting heard that although the scheme in Ayr had been successful, a similar scheme in Irvine and Glasgow had not.

Based on their previous experience, Ayr Shopmobility had indicated that initial costs would be in the region of £130,000, assuming a cost of £100,000 for construction and fitting out costs and £25,000 for mobility equipment. Operating costs are envisaged to be approximately £55,000 per annum based on an initial staffing of one full-time co-ordinator and two part-time co-ordinators.

Although a number of potential locations within Kilmarnock town centre have been identified, no detailed investigation has yet been carried out on any specific location.

The funding for the project included an element of core funding which would be required from the Council, both for capital and continuing revenue costs. In addition, funding could also be secured from the National Lottery Charities Board, together with local retailers, Enterprise Ayrshire, the Health Board and European Union Grants.

At present there is no current provision for a Shopmobility project in either the capital plan or revenue budget. It is, however, proposed at this stage to undertake an initial feasibility study to provide more detailed estimates of initial costs and an assessment of potential of funding support from other organisations.

Reference was then made to the Development Services Committee and its meeting on 20 April 1999, when it had recommended that an additional feasibility study on the establishment of a Shopmobility scheme in Kilmarnock town centre be undertaken in conjunction with Ayr Shopmobility Ltd, and when it had been agreed that a further report be submitted to the Committee after the summer recess, on location options and financial implications in consultation with local retailers and disability groups.

It was agreed that this remain a standing item on the Agenda.

TRANSPORT - PARKING ISSUES

5.1 IS THE COUNCIL PLANNING TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES?

The meeting heard that £4.5m had been awarded to the Rural Scotland Initiative, of which £46,000 had been allocated to East Ayrshire Council.

It was agreed that the Director of Development Services write to the Disability Forums and advise them to which extent public transport is already being supported.

The meeting acknowledged there were concerns regarding the Dial-a-Bus Service and in addition highlighted the need to establish quality partnerships with other agencies and the need to encourage bus companies to upgrade vehicles and improve the waiting facilities within bus stations to meet the needs of those with a disability.

5.2 WHAT STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO ENSURE ALL COUNCIL TRANSPORT IS ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY, AND IN SOUND WORKING CONDITION?

The meeting heard that transport should always be in good condition, and that the newly introduced service level agreements would ensure that the necessary aids and adaptations are available and in working order.

Concerns were expressed regarding vehicles not being maintained in working order with lights and tail gates often inoperable, and being presented for use without petrol.

In this regard, an indication of the criteria applied to the hand over of vehicles was sought.

The meeting heard that a letter had been forwarded to the Social Work Department in January seeking clarification as to the criteria and advising of the problems being experienced.

It was agreed that:-

- (i) the Development Services Department investigate the issues raised; and
- (ii) the Chief Executive raise this matter with the relevant Officers.

5.3 DISABLED PARKING BAYS

This item was dealt with earlier in the Agenda.

5.4 PARKING ON PAVEMENTS AND USAGE OF DISABLED BAYS BY EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL VANS

The meeting heard that this was a commonly recurrent problem which had been identified by the Spotlight Initiative with Council vans being the worst perpetrators.

The meeting were advised that the Police have no jurisdiction where an official order is not applied to the parking bay.

Posters are now being circulated asking that the able-bodied do not park in disabled bays.

It was agreed that:-

- (i) the Chief Executive forward a memo to all Directors regarding this issue;
- (ii) Disability Forums receive a response by 30 April 1999; and
- (iii) the Social Work Department co-ordinate (ii) above.

5.5 DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING FOR TAXI DRIVERS

There was submitted and noted a report dated 25 January 1999 (circulated) by the Director of Community Services advising the meeting of the conclusion of proposals to introduce disabled awareness training for taxi drivers.

Reference was made to the Licensing Sub-Committee of 13 January 1999 when there had been submitted a report outlining the strategy which ensures that as applications for new drivers' licences or renewals of existing licences are received, licensing staff will indicate the need for the applicant to undergo training and arrange for such training to be provided by an approved trainer.

The arrangement approved by the Licensing Sub-Committee means that as licences are issued for a three year period, every driver of a taxi or private hire vehicle in East Ayrshire will have undergone training by early Spring 2002.

5.6 SPECIFICATION FOR VEHICLES USED AS TAXIS IN EAST AYRSHIRE

There was submitted and noted a report dated 2 March 1999 (circulated) by the Director of Community Services advising the meeting of a decision taken by the Licensing Sub-Committee to ensure that all vehicles used as taxis in East Ayrshire would meet an updated specification by 2004.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

6.1 EMPLOYEE AWARENESS OF DISABILITY OF DISCRIMINATION ACT

The Forum asked how the Council was ensuring that employees were aware of the Disability of Discrimination Act and its implications and if the Council was running any disability awareness training for frontline staff.

The meeting heard that the Council currently offered two in-house training courses in disability awareness and the opportunity existed to include the Disability Discrimination Act, both in customer care courses and general induction training.

It was agreed that the Disability Forums be consulted, by Training and Development, prior to the implementation of any training on the Disability Discrimination Act, being carried out.

SOCIAL INCLUSION UPDATE

7. The meeting heard a presentation by the Depute Director of Social Work who advised that the Social Inclusion Partnership application had been successful and £2.7m had been allocated to East Ayrshire Council over a three year period. The core partners including the Local Committees, Private Sector, Voluntary and Public Sectors.

In this regard, an East Ayrshire Social Inclusion Strategy Partnership Group had been established to consist of the three combined Kilmarnock Local Committees, a combined Northern/Irvine Valley Local Committee and the Coalfield areas.

It was noted that although the Partnership bid was targeted at the Coalfield areas, the Councils Social Inclusion Strategy was Authority wide.

It was agreed to note the content of the presentation.

LOCAL COMMITTEES

8. The Disability Forums had asked the Council if the venues where Local Committee meetings are held are now all accessible with loop systems having been installed and paperwork produced in the appropriate format.

The Departmental Strategy Officer, Corporate Services advised the meeting that loop systems were now available in all venues where Local Committees take place, but in addition if any venues used by the Forums on Disability required loop systems to be installed, this should be notified to the Corporate Services Department for action.

Discussion then ensued regarding the difficulties being experienced by people with disabilities in accessing the upper floors of the Civic Centre due to the numbers of doors, steps and size of the lift, which only reaches the second floor, thus denying access to the top of the building for all staff and visitors.

Reference was also made to the Civic Centre north block which has two lifts available, although the meeting heard that one was not in alignment. It was felt, however, that the other lift was not accessible for wheelchair users.

In addition, Councillor O'Neill asked that the access to the District Court also be investigated.

It was agreed that the Corporate Services Department:-

- (i) ensure that the loop system is working at each venue before a meeting; and
- (ii) that the lift in the north block be aligned to enable easy access.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY - UPDATE

9. The Senior Employees Relations Officer, Personnel Services advised the meeting that several steps had been taken to meet the requirements laid down within the employment legislation which included the introduction of a guaranteed job interview scheme, circulation of the Vacancy List across the Forums on Disability and the suggestion that to enable easier access, audio/visual aids could be used in addition to the internet and dedicated web sites where application forms could be accessed where applications could be downloaded, thus enabling access by everyone regardless of their disability.

In conclusion, the meeting was advised that consultation was soon to take place with the Disabled Employees Forum to raise issues and matters of concern.

LEISURE STRATEGY

10.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY - UPDATE

The Head of Leisure Services advised the meeting that the strategy had been in place for 18 months, and an update report would be submitted to the Community Services Committee at the end of two years.

Since the strategy was implemented, the Social Inclusion Partnership Award had been made which will now influence the leisure strategy for the future in East Ayrshire.

The meeting requested information regarding what plans are included in the Policy to enable people with disabilities to take a full part in leisure and recreation within East Ayrshire.

The meeting heard that improvements to the Fenwick and Bonnyton Community Centres had been carried out.

- 10.2** The Forums on Disability indicated that improved access arrangements for people who use wheelchairs or cannot negotiate steps, but wish to access the Grand Hall in Kilmarnock, were required.

The meeting was also asked what was in place to encourage sport for the disabled. Community Services advised that no specific projects were included within the leisure budget although various projects for people with a disability were taking place throughout East Ayrshire run by Education and Social Work Departments.

Discussion then ensued regarding the raising of funding to support sport, arts and cultural activities for the disabled. The Departmental Strategy Officer advised the meeting that community grants applications were welcomed, and outlined the criteria and process for approval.

It was agreed that the Director of Community Services:-

- (i) be asked to submit a report indicating the sports, arts and cultural opportunities that exist within East Ayrshire for disabled members of the community; and
- (ii) liaise with the Directors of Education and Social Work in this regard.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.** The next meeting will take place in October 1999 at a date and time to be agreed.

The meeting terminated at 1200 hours.

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