

Sedgemoor Disability Forum

Notes from the meeting held on 19th May 2009

'The Canalside', Huntworth, Bridgwater

Facilitated by Compass Disability Services – SAIN Project

Welcome and Introductions

Chris Avanti and Richard Pitman from SAIN, welcomed everyone in attendance and gave an overview of the agenda for the day.

Alex Sebbinger from Sedgemoor District Council Planning Service

Alex provided a presentation concerning the planning system and access for disabled people (a copy is enclosed for information). This included the legislation which exists and how to make accessibility work. Various issues were discussed with particular questions:

Questions

1. Who has responsibility for dropped kerbs?

Answer: Somerset County Council, Highways Department are the contact for new dropped kerbs Tel: 0845 345 9155. The same number should be used if there are problems with a particular dropped kerb. It was suggested that it would be useful for SAIN to receive feedback from members when they have contacted Highways to monitor how successful they have been.

2. When people can influence and comment on planning applications.

Answer: If anyone wishes to comment on planning applications they are able to do so, full details of the list of current applications are available from Sedgemoor District Council, and on-line. Planning Services will endeavour to take comments into account when determining planning applications.

3. The issue of access and The Cornhill in Bridgwater was raised. Angela Farmer agreed to provide an update, details as follows;

- When the refurbishment of the Cornhill was at the design stage the issue over disabled access was examined in depth but the nature of the Grade I Listing meant that a ramp to the front of the building could not be achieved therefore provision was made for internal disabled access via the market.
- It was proposed to manage the disabled access via a bell call system whereby a member of Prezzo staff could be called and then escort the disabled person via the market, certainly out of market hours. During market opening time I believe there is a bell that can be rung adjacent

to the Prezzo fire door. The problem is that the external bell that was provided has been vandalised on a number of occasions.

- Yes there were complaints from disabled advocates and the last time we received one Prezzo did install a new bell but it lasted less than a week. As far as SDC are concerned we have given Prezzo access to the market out of hours and instructed them in setting and resetting the burglar alarm, I am aware that from time to time they do use this provision.

It was agreed to discuss this further at the next Forum.

Ed Norton, Taunton Deane Borough Council, 'Role of Building Regulations in ensuring access and facilities for disabled people in new and altered buildings'

Ed explained the role of building regulations and access issues in Sedgemoor. Key issues discussed included:

- The distinction between 'new build' and 'conversion and the implications for enforcing building regulations
- Musgrove Hospital - Parking spaces for blue badge holders. Richard agreed to follow this point up. Richard has tried to contact the person concerned at Musgrove to discuss this, but they are currently on holiday. An answer has been requested upon their return and will be followed up in time for the next Forum.
- A concern was raised about accessibility of a doctors surgery in Woolavington. Angela Farmer has responded to advise that whilst the council does own the building, the Doctors have the responsibility for ensuring the building is accessible.

We have contacted the Equality and Diversity Lead at NHS Somerset who has logged this with PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) and sent this enquiry to the Associate Director of Primary Care Development for a response. We will update the Forum on the feedback we receive.

Following on from the successful presentation by Ed Norton, and the questions raised about Sedgemoor having a similar position, it has been agreed with the Building Control Manager that a proposal will be put to the next forum meeting which would see members of the forum being used as a small consultative group who would come in and look through planning applications every few weeks and raise access difficulties or opportunities and they would then be investigated more thoroughly.

Gail Lannigan, Accessible Transport Team Leader, Somerset County Council & Tom Dougall, Transport Officer, Sedgemoor District Council.

Gail and Tom explained the transport services available in Sedgemoor. Key issues discussed included

- Bus passes eligibility criteria for disability
- Inability to use bus passes on park and ride services
- Concessionary Travel criteria is for essential shopping and not recreational shopping such as visits to garden centres
- Misuse of disabled parking bays
- Limitation of access to smaller buses in rural areas
- Bridgwater to Minehead bus services

A number of people had complaints about community transport. If you would like Gail to follow up a complaint please write to her by e-mail or post with the details of the complaint and she will follow this up for you. Please include your contact details including a telephone number.

Contact Details:

Gail Lanigan
 C3 Transporting Somerset
 Somerset County Council
 County Hall
 Taunton
 TA1 4DY

gmlanigan@somerset.gov.uk

01823 662618

Other useful contact details

North Sedgemoor SLINKY Booking line 01749 331234

Quantocks and West Sedgemoor SLINKY Booking line 01643 70 70 90

Travel Line (Public transport information) 0871 200 22 33

Somerset Direct (Transport - Somerset County Council) 0845 3459155

Isle of Wedmore community bus information is available in the bus timetable the service numbers are: 751, 753, 754 & 755 If you do not have a bus timetable you can request one from Somerset Direct or phone Travel line for the timetable details.

Taxi bus services operate in several areas of Sedgemoor, please contact Somerset Direct who can provide this information to you.

Sedgemoor Community Transport Bookings: 01278 434881

Woolavington Car Scheme Bookings: 01278 683938

Shippam Car Scheme Bookings: 01934 742665

NHS Transport referral centre Public Number: 01278 727444

(There is an eligibility criteria for free hospital transport and it is based on the treatment being offered during the appointment not any existing issues or disabilities. If you are stuck and need access to such an appointment give them a call).

Taxis Consultation

Tim Keen Licensing Officer from Sedgemoor District Council

A document was issued prior to the meeting explaining the details of the consultation.

Tim Keane explained “ whether or not to amend the current policy so as to allow the replacement of the existing non-adapted vehicles on a ‘like for like’ basis and so maintain the existing mixed fleet” The forum were asked to consider this by Sedgemoor District Council Licensing & General Purposes Committee

Key issues raised include:

- An accessible taxi does not necessarily mean one where a disabled person can occupy their chair whilst the taxi is in transit.
- Codes of dress and conduct of taxi drivers
- Taxi charges for waiting times
- The limited number of vehicles suitable for electric wheelchairs
- Some taxi vehicles don’t have suitable clamping for wheelchairs

The group voted in favour of the Councils request. The proposals were presented to a full council meeting on Weds 3rd June where the proposal was agreed.

Tim’s contact details are Tel: 01278 435346 or e mail:
tim.keen@sedgemoor.gov.uk.

Sue Came - Age Concern

Sue explained the services available from Age Concern, these include help with;

- Money matters
- Housing rights
- Health and social care
- Leisure and social activities
- Family and personal matters
- Your rights to local services
- And most other things that affect your quality of life.

Services provided include;

Advocacy Services - to assist you with any problems you may have.

Befriending Services – Volunteers visit people perhaps for an hour each week in their own home to chat, reminisce etc.

Falls Prevention Service – This includes a Toe Nail Cutting Service and Safe and Secure Service, where someone can visit your home to fit grab rails etc. They will also visit to change light bulbs free of charge.

A list of fact sheets that are available from Age Concern is enclosed with the notes from the meeting. All factsheets can be obtained from www.ageconcernsomerset.org.uk or by telephoning 0800 00 99 66 (free call), 8 am - 7 pm.

Contacts details are as follows;

Age Concern Somerset
The Market House,
Fore Street,
Taunton
TA1 1JD

Tel: 0845 643 4621

Other Issues

The group discussed the day with the following observations/suggestions:

- Contact details of speakers including details for those unable to access a computer.
- Future Forums should have less speakers and more time for each slot.
- SAIN should ensure there is follow up from speakers to points raised. We normally aim to get the minutes out within 4 weeks, this may mean that we do not always have all the responses we have requested. We will now extend this to 8 weeks to try and answer as many points as possible.
- SAIN have contacted Highways to ask if there is any follow up to issues raised at the previous Forum regarding Highways. At the time of writing we have not received a response and will continue to progress this. One specific area in Berrow was mentioned, details below from the previous meeting;

Maintenance of a particular path adjacent to Church

- A member raised an issue that the pathway at St Marys in Berrow is very shingly and not accessible for wheelchair users. This path is not adopted by the Highways Authority and would be a local responsibility, likely in this case to be the Church. The individual would need to contact the church directly.

