

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING No. 127

Held at Weymouth Fire Station & Community Safety Centre
Radipole Lane, Weymouth DT4 0QF

Held at 2pm on Monday 13th June 2016

1. Welcome and Introduction

Carole Chinn (Chairman), David Harris (Secretary), Steve Rook (Treasurer), Carolyn Harris, Tanya Dancer, Gill Penwell, Cllr David Harris, Dawn Atkin (DCC Highways), Susan Ward-Rice (WPBC), Ian White, Bob Irwin, Carole Lord, Christine Pearce, Mike Kelly (President), Graham & June Ryan.

Carole opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the new venue.

2. **Apologies:** Margeurite Brown

3. President's Report

Inadequate maintenance and management of access facilities

I have had no response from Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce, Weymouth BID and Weymouth and Portland Tourism Partnership to my letter saying that the Group would like to discuss the problems which can arise even where facilities for disabled people are claimed to exist, and also to explain why this Group is convinced that access improvements can benefit businesses. Once we have our new publicity material I would like to press further on this subject, and if these organisations continue to disregard us I suggest that we should contact the local Press.

Weymouth BID have however forwarded to me a report they commissioned which recommends new signage for parts of the Town Centre. Weymouth BID has sent copies to Dorset County Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council. I have replied to WBID suggesting that Weymouth and Portland Access Group should be consulted and involved in consideration of the subject.

Access Audits

I have read that the National Trust and English Heritage are carrying out Access Audits of all their buildings which are open to the public. Both organisations already have a good record of aiming to make their historic buildings and sites as accessible as possible. I would like to see other owners

carry out such audits and carry out access improvements when and where possible.

Weymouth Library Lift

Weymouth and Portland Access Group expressed concern last year when the lift was out of action for several weeks. It is again out of use and if it is not returned to use quickly I would propose, with the agreement of the Group, to write to Dorset County Council to complain about this situation. I believe that DCC should also provide an accessible W.C. for public use within the building. At present there is no W.C. available other than for staff use.

Pharmacies

There is concern nationally about the likely closure of many pharmacies. Whilst there may be little the Access Group can do prevent this, with the considerable problems likely to be caused to customers I have been approached about a related problem. To purchase drugs at a lower prices the NHS procurement arrangements often change the sourcing of drugs. This can result in the size, shape, and appearance of prescribed drugs changing from time to time, resulting in possible confusion and errors by those for whom they have been prescribed. I assume this is a national problem but I am not aware of it having been raised by RADAR, RNIB or others. Has anybody got any information?

Chalbury Unit, Weymouth Community Hospital

I understand that this Unit will no longer provide advanced dementia care and that patients will be referred to Alderney Hospital, Poole. I believe that, wherever possible, services should be provided as locally as practically possible, and that this is an access consideration. Distance from home can present a serious problem for patients, relatives and friends. The increasing centralisation of facilities and services in larger towns and cities represents a serious problem to western Dorset, amongst many areas with lower populations or away from large towns. There would seem to be nothing that can be done in this case but I think we need to be vigilant where other centralisation measures are proposed. There may be merit in the Access Group having a member whose role it is to attempt to track proposals and consultation exercises, and make representations on behalf of the Group, possibly working through a Sub-Group, so as to be able to respond quickly.

4. Chairman's Report

I attended the Mobility Roadshow at Silverstone with Ian White; the show was very disappointing with little of interest to our members. The one highlight was driving round the Formula 1 track in an ordinary saloon car with hand controls – Amazing!

We have had an invitation from Julie Hursthouse to attend a 'Working with You' community lunch on Saturday 2nd July – details are on the table.

Also on the table are leaflets on 'Healthwatch Dorset' asking what we think of health and social care services and for 'Funky Feet' a footcare specialist who does home visits (from personal experience she is very good).

I am concerned about an application for a 'sitting out area' from Zizzy Pancake shop in St Thomas Street – there is absolutely no room – I'm sure Dawn will have something to say on this! [The meeting agreed that this was a very poor area to allow a sitting out space due to narrow footway, angled kerbs and occasional vehicular use.]

We have also had an invitation, via Susan Ward-Rice, to be involved in research with RICA – again details are on the table.

5. Treasurer's Report

Only three payments made since last meeting for insurance (£189), room hire (£7.40) and Secretaries cost of stamps etc. (£29.16). Current Bank Balance £1753.

6. Access Officer's Report

The WPBC office on Commercial Road has now been open for a couple of months and there were no major problems - one induction loop system was not working. A meeting of the Dorchester Access Group was taking place at 10am on Wednesday 15th at the councils South Walks House in Dorchester. On Saturday 2nd of July DCA were holding a meeting at the fire station.

7. Highways Officer's Report

It has been confirmed that the steps at the side of Greenhill Gardens are a Weymouth and Portland Borough Council responsibility. The work on the footway at the top of Greenhill Gardens has now finished. Recent discussions about the ageing fingerposts throughout the town had now focused on removing them as any sort of renovation was going to be too expensive.

8. Investigation Officer's Report

The displaying of scooters for sale in King Street causes obstructions and had been reduced for a time but the problem was now back again. Ian had printed a small stock of leaflets for the group advertising our presence and activities - they were passed to DH for use as needed.

9. Radipole Nature Reserve

A date of 7th of July was proposed for the visit to the Nature Reserve. It was hoped that enough of us could make the date and give feedback.

10. Any Other Business

a) Christine Pearce reported some skips in Chapelhay which had been protected with a fence around them but now they were simply on the roadside and were football targets for local kids and now somewhat dangerous. DA would check these.

b) Ian White reported that there had been some improvements inside the Weymouth Post Office by internal re-arrangements. Also staff did try to "spot" and help customers who might have difficulty.

c) The disabled toilet at the Angling Centre has now been cleared and is properly usable.

d) Tuesday, 28 June was the next date for the Forums meeting at the Angling Centre.

e) Gill Penwell reminded the meeting that July 1st was the date for the hand-over of the walk-in clinic to a private company - and needed to be monitored to ensure a good service was maintained.

Meeting Closed at 15.37

Future meetings (At Fire & Safety Centre
Monday 8th August 2016
Monday 10th October 2016
Monday 12th December 2016
Monday 13th February 2017