



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Disabled People's Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Disabled People's Forum held at Northampton's Guildhall and over Teams on Thursday 6 October 2022 at 2.30 pm.

Present Martin De Rosario (Co-Chair), Cllr Alan Chantler (Co-Chair), Graeme Wilson, Gary Spratt, Peter Hackett, Mark James, Doug Peacock, Kit Nicolls, Cllr Jonathan Harris, Adrian Iyayi, Ryan Griffiths, Cllr Janice Duffy, Kian Saville, Carl Weininger, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl.

1. Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions made around the room and the screen. Apologies were received from Rashmi Shah, Cllr David Smith, Emma Parry and Beverley Mennell.

2. Code of Conduct

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. Play equipment for disabled children in our parks

Peter Hackett, the Environment, Countryside and Parks Manager, was responsible for play equipment in the parks. He stated that currently the play equipment available for children with disabilities was very limited and they had recently visited Wicksteed to discuss this subject as they were very keen to ensure that more accessible equipment was installed. Wicksteed saw the need and were currently working on a project which would be announced in a few months but were not ready to give an details. Whenever new equipment was put in or replaced they tried to make sure there was some accessible equipment. Items available included a Swirl which was a level accessible roundabout that could take a wheelchair and also basket swings or bucket seat swings.

Accessible equipment was generally more expensive as it had to reach higher safety standards. The rubberised matting surface underneath was also very expensive. Pete had recently looked at a piece of equipment which could be accessed by wheelchair with interactive stations on the way around but it cost £57k. Pete's budget was only £250 a year for the whole of the area for everything from new equipment, maintenance and replacement of old/damaged equipment. This meant a lot of juggling about with the budget but if a particular piece of equipment was wanted in a certain area it would go onto a wish list. Then, if funding became available, it

might be possible to deliver. Currently they were doing some of the work that had been put on the list 3 years ago.

Doug asked how many parks he looked after and did he apply for grants. Pete responded that there were about 170 open spaces in West Northants of those about 77 had play equipment. He was constantly applying for Capital and Section 106 funding.

Cllr Chantler stated that the Parish Councils received 25% of CIL for developments in their area. Could they contact Pete if they wanted to spend it on play equipment.

Pete responded he was more than happy to help and/or give advice.

Kit asked whether accessible equipment was a necessity or a bonus when designing a new play area and what about existing areas? Pete stated that accessible equipment would be installed where possible but the range was very limited. Also when equipment needed replacing it would not just be done like for like but would be assessed for how accessible the remaining equipment was and making a decision from there.

Vandalism of play equipment was discussed but due to the fact it was a publicly accessible resource and they were sometimes in more remote areas security was virtually impossible.

Carl asked if it was possible for Councils to get together and get the price of accessible equipment down. Pete responded they were already part of a Framework for play equipment through which they received a discount. Purchasing cheaper, inferior equipment was not a saving and that DDA compliant equipment was by nature larger and therefore more expensive. Carl added that it was fine for people to adapt equipment for themselves, such as seen with the wheelchair users at the skatepark, but if you provide it for someone else then it was quite different.

Graeme added he had done some research for sensory type equipment and would it be possible to have a sandpit or water play to encourage parents with disabled children to come into the park. Pete added that they were reluctant to as they became a target for vandalism. However, Brixworth had some sensory equipment including sandpits and they were looking to install some at Daventry Country park. However, these 2 parks had a Ranger on site most of the time so they could to more to ensure the equipment's safety.

Doug enquired about the adult exercise equipment in Abington Park and Pete responded that the red and blue equipment had been installed about 4/5 years ago. It was still under warranty and inspected weekly by Idverde. They were originally installed to move older people away from children's play area.

Cllr Duffy asked if the budget juggling meant that deprived areas missed out as it was often the only play opportunity some of these children had. Pete responded that the more deprived areas did not miss out and there was actually play equipment being installed at this moment in an open space in St David's, Kingsthorpe that had not had equipment for many years and had become very run down.

Pete was asked if there was a list of which parks accessible equipment. Pete stated that he would advise parents of children with disabilities to go to the larger parks such as Brixworth as there were also toilets and changing areas which many of the smaller parks lacked.

5. Communications with Disability Groups

Carl stated that it was not difficult to find disability groups, but it was hard to keep them engaged with the forum and to get young people involved. He had also been trying to advocate for disability registration and card to prove disability which would not be much different to a driving licence. He had wanted to go and see the Queen Lying in State but the disability queue had to be shut due to the amount of misuse. Graeme stated that he had been attending the forum meetings for a number of years and had seen groups come and go. A lot of voluntary organisations were very stretched at the moment and may not have the capacity but it was a great opportunity to have a voice.

Kian added that when he first found he had a disability he was not confident and wouldn't have engaged. However, his parents had taught him that he was no different from anyone else and his confidence had grown. Not everyone has that encouragement and confidence but we could still try and influence and encourage people.

Kit stated that some people may not be able to attend meetings as they were at work and perhaps to trial having alternate meetings in the evenings. This was working well for the Diverse Communities Forum. There was a lot of stigma in society and many people faced abuse and this needed to be addressed.

6. Community Information Exchange

Gary raised awareness of the Saints Wheelchair Rugby sessions – all welcome to attend, wheelchair and gloves provided. Gary was not able to play anymore himself but he was still involved through coaching and refereeing and was off to Poland soon as a referee.

Alan said that November was International Men's Mental Health day and WNC were pulling together some information and activities. He was involved with the farming community and many farmers suffered isolation through their way of life and consequently mental health issues and he was going to get them involved. To nominate your inspirational man for 2022 Male Role Model - <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/nominations-open-west-northants-male-role-model-awards-2022> Nominations are open until 4 November.

Doug told the group of a ladies exercise class for those aged 55+ in Duston who were looking for new members. He also encouraged men to get a prostate cancer test - [Prostate Cancer PSA Testing Event - The County Ground \(countygroundnorthampton.co.uk\)](http://Prostate Cancer PSA Testing Event - The County Ground (countygroundnorthampton.co.uk))

Carl added that the Polio Group had been on a boat trip in Loughborough which was fully accessible and there was also a Nene Cruise trip from Becketts Park and a trip from Gayton. They were reasonably priced. Denton and Yelvertoft had cheap village meeting hall rental for groups. The hydro therapy pool at Moulton was now restricted to 4 in the pool with 3 attendants which made it much more expensive. SPACE also held a lot of activities that members might be interested in – www.space2talk.co.uk Cllr Harris said that the main issue was scooter users and it would be better to have an extra reporting mechanism to make it easier. Post meeting note – you can report misplaced scooters/scooter incidents directly with Voi - Voi Scooters - Report a Voi

Cllr Chantler stated that a Highways engineer had walked around his village and reported all the pavements were ok. Alan had told him he obviously hadn't come in a wheelchair and the response was that he would come back – Alan was still waiting. Kian told the group that the planning for IDPWD virtual event had started and was going well. Like a lot of the local para swimmers, Kian would be competing in the upcoming Midlands Para Champs and the British Championships in Glasgow at the end of November.

7. Items for Future Meetings

Equality – how many disabled people feel equal

Parking on pavements so wheelchairs/buggies cannot get past.

Scooters / bikes in pedestrian area in town centre – Debbie stated this was already being looked at.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be the virtual event for IDPWD 1 December starting at 11am live streamed over You Tube or book into one of our social spaces.

Northampton - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-day-of-people-with-disabilities-northampton-tickets-403363409817>

Daventry - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/copy-of-international-day-of-people-with-disabilities-daventry-tickets-403365195157>

Towcester - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/international-day-of-people-with-disabilities-towcester-tickets-403369688597>