
ACCESS TO COUNCIL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

21 AUGUST 2006

Councillor Mrs Byrne (substitute for Connell)

Councillor Hayes

Councillor Hussain

Councillor Peel

Councillor Mrs Ronson

Steve Arnfield – Director, Corporate Resources

James Dearling – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of
Councillors P. Brierley and Connell.

Councillor Hussain in the Chair

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Resolved – That Councillor Hussain be appointed Chair.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 SCOPING THE REVIEW

The Panel considered a scoping document to identify the purpose of the review, its timetable, and information and witnesses required. During the discussion a number of points were made:

- the review would address access to council buildings for members of the public, and not be concerned with access to council buildings as a place of work;

- the results of a survey of the council's buildings were currently being collated and could be provided at the Panel's next meeting;
- the value of including the offices and community buildings of Bolton at Home in the Panel's review was expressed by Panel members;
- alternative arrangements requiring the use of Information Technology could prove problematic to those members of the public not computer literate and such arrangements perhaps warranted investigation by the Panel;
- it was felt that language constraints might affect the accessibility of council services to members of the public;
- whilst expressing a desire to adhere to the definition of disability given in the Disability Discrimination Act, the Panel members recognised that to include all forms of disability in the review was impractical; and
- a listing of all access arrangements that the council's Contact Centre and One Stop Shop have in place could be provided to the Panel's next meeting.

With further regard to the background information required by the Panel, Panel members expressed a need for the information specified in the Scoping Document (i.e., knowledge of the Council's current position regarding meeting the access to building requirements of the DDA, together with the arrangements to improve the Council's compliance with the Act. In particular, knowledge of how

priorities are set in undertaking DDA works, the cost, and the timetables to make Council buildings compliant with the Act. Also, information on the current legislative framework and the guidance on how to implement disability equality within local authority service provision, the Council's policies/strategies relating to accessibility and customer access, and any relevant Performance Indicators.)

Regarding the witnesses required for the review, Panel members indicated the value of inviting representatives from disability groups, the Disability Officer from Bolton at Home, and members of the Disability Steering Group.

With regard to the timescale of the review, the Panel agreed the next meeting would be in mid-September.

Resolved –

(i) That the Panel note the Scoping Document;

(ii) That for the next meeting of the Panel a background information report be prepared which included the requirements of the DDA, the survey of the council's buildings, cost implications, and Access Bolton arrangements; and

(iii) That the next meeting of the Panel be arranged for 10.30am on 19 September 2006.