

---

## **ACCESS TO COUNCIL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**15 FEBRUARY 2007**

Councillor Brierley  
Councillor Connell  
Councillor Hayes  
Councillor Hussain  
Councillor Mrs. Ronson

**Officers:**

Susan Curran – Deputy Director, Corporate Resources  
James Dearling – Senior Democratic Services Officer,  
Legal and Democratic Services  
Martin Dixon – Principal Fairness Officer, Fairness Team  
Andrew Stephenson – Asset Manager, Corporate Property  
Services

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Hussain in the Chair

### **37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **38 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved – That the minutes of the previous meeting,  
held on 23 November 2006, be approved.

### **39 BOLTON'S RESPONSE TO THE ACCESS TO SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which responded to the executive summary of the document "Access to Services: disability equality in local government", with particular emphasis on the thirty-one recommendations it contained. The report also addressed issues concerning the departure of the council's Disability Officer. The report indicated that the impact of the Disability Officer leaving shortly before the introduction of the Disability Duty was slight. The Panel was informed that a successor had been appointed and in

the meantime the Principal Fairness Officer was covering the disability role.

Following consideration of the report, a number of points were made:

- the Panel was informed that of the thirty-one recommendations in the document “Access to Services: disability equality in local government” only one emerged as not having been addressed by the council: recommendation 30, “Councils should work with English Heritage and CADW to find solutions to improving access to historic and listed buildings.”
- Panel members suggested the merit of disability equality featuring in induction training for new councillors, and of all other councillors, especially key elected members, attending disability equality training; and
- the Panel was informed that the Disability Officer would be taking up post on 1 March 2007.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

#### **40 DISABILITY CONSULTATION AND PARKING ISSUES**

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report which informed the Panel of the council’s disability consultation and provided information on the accessible car park spaces. The report provided details of the Disability Consultation Forum, together with other consultation channels with disabled staff and customers within the council. The report provided information on the Better Bolton/World Café event and clarified the role of councillors in the event. The report indicated that the Valuing Diversity Working Party received regular reports on consultations with customers. The Panel were advised that the council’s website identified accessible car parking spaces and that the production of a guide to the accessibility of council buildings would need to await general agreement about standards of access and access

rating.

A discussion ensued during which a number of points were made:

- Panel members indicated that although outside the remit of the Panel, the accessibility of the council's website merited review since it was a medium of increasing importance in the council's communications;
- the value of mainstreaming disability consultation, with particular attention to area forums, was suggested;
- the Panel was informed that area forum co-ordinators had led the four task groups established during Phase 1 of the council's review and development of its Access Points;
- the Panel was informed that town centre car parking and abuse of the blue badge scheme were concerns raised persistently in the Disability Consultation Forum;
- Panel members were informed that the World Café consultation event had been a success, but had used half the council's annual budget for disability consultation in one morning; and
- Panel members were informed that an October 2006 meeting arranged to supply feedback from the World Café event had dealt with other issues, though the feedback had been referred to the appropriate services.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

## **41 SCOPING THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which provided a list of members' suggested areas for the Panel's recommendations. The purpose of the report was to aid Panel members in their identification and prioritisation of recommendations for their final report.

During the ensuing discussion a number of points were made:

- Panel members indicated the worth of the Panel's final report noting that the Panel's review had concluded many of the systems that should have put in place by the council had been, and that they were being pursued;
- Panel members were informed that a report by Sir David Varney, "Service Transformation: a Better Service for Citizens and Businesses, a Better Deal for Taxpayers," contained information relevant to the Panel's review;
- Panel members acknowledged that there were ongoing revenue costs attached to some potential recommendations;
- Panel members were informed that access audits were in the process of being commissioned for those council buildings in multiple occupation with common areas. Panel members suggested that the question of whether to recover any or all of the consequent costs for complying with the Disability Discrimination Act from tenants was a matter for the Executive Member to consider;
- Panel members observed that the expertise of the telephone operators in the council's call centre reduced the need for face-to-face dealings; and

- the Panel felt that the recommendations they had identified should be accorded equal priority in their final report, and that the Executive Member responsible be requested to provide a response within six months.

Resolved – That the draft final report be prepared for the next meeting of the Panel.

## **42 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered the approach to be taken to the remainder of the scrutiny review in the light of information gathered to date.

Resolved – That the next meeting of the Panel be held, as arranged previously, at 9.00am on Tuesday 13 March 2007.