

Minutes of General meeting

Date	11 April 2017
Time	10.00-12.00
Venue	Glover Room (formerly Committee Room A) Stoke Town Hall

Agenda topic	Action				
<p>Attendees:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Stephanie Wood • John Burgess • Jennifer Pardue • Horace Hodson • Rob Lamonby </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mick Jones • Jo Coulson Disability Solutions • Angie Bunn Disability Solutions • Philip Woodward • A Bradbury • Michaela Burton (Revival) • Lesley Smith (Stoke City Council) </td> </tr> </table> <p>Apologies received from:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winston Green • Stewart Barker </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helen Harrison • Alan Rowe </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Stephanie Wood • John Burgess • Jennifer Pardue • Horace Hodson • Rob Lamonby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mick Jones • Jo Coulson Disability Solutions • Angie Bunn Disability Solutions • Philip Woodward • A Bradbury • Michaela Burton (Revival) • Lesley Smith (Stoke City Council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winston Green • Stewart Barker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helen Harrison • Alan Rowe 	
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<p>1. Attendees and Apologies</p> <p>John Beech welcomed members to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies received and noted.</p>					
<p>2. Guest speaker: Michaela Burton (Revival)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revival is a Home improvement Agency and is part of the Staffordshire Housing 					

Association

- Their role is to help older (55+), people with disabilities and vulnerable people to remain independent, safe and warm in their own home.
- They primarily support owner-occupiers but their Handyman Service is for anyone.
- They are a not-for-profit organisation and have funding from local councils, NHS and other sources to keep going.
- They offer:
 - Handyman Service which has staff directly employed by Revival who can carry out free Home Fire Risk assessment and fit smoke alarms, Falls Assessment to reduce the risk of accidents and falls. They will also do small jobs (no electrical work) such as fitting grab rails for £10 per hour.
 - Hospital Discharge Service. This free service helps people get home from hospital. A support worker will carry out a bedside visit to find out what needs to be done to get the person home and with everything in place at home to prevent readmission and to meet the person's needs. For example the Handyman Service will visit the patient's home and take care of some of the physical aspects such as moving furniture, fitting grab rails etc. There is often gap before a full OT assessment can be carried out on the patient's home and this service fills the gap to try to prevent accidents/ falls and readmission. The support worker will provide support for 30 days and will help to sort out things such as benefit checks, sorting out medication, shopping for food and household essentials and cleaning to ensure that the person settles back home safely and as easily as possible. Revival has just lost funding from Staffs Moorlands and Newcastle is up in the air but the service is still available for Stoke Residents

Horace mentioned a family member who couldn't go home because they couldn't organise a suitable home care package. Michaela said support workers work with social workers but there is a shortage of care workers in the community and this is causing delays.

- Project Management Service. Caseworkers work with individuals to help them get major works carried out to their homes. For example is someone needs a new roof or rewiring. They use only Trust Marked contractors which are not necessarily the cheapest but work to a guaranteed quality. Revival charges a fee for this service but will organise everything from start to finish including having plans drawn by technical officers and all worked checked and signed off by technical officers. This service takes out the stress and the homeowner has no need to deal directly with contractors.

Phil said that disability comes in many guises and some people would find asking for help in this way, especially if they have been very independent before, degrading. Michaela said that they work with all sorts of people and always see people as individuals. They know that it's hard to reach out, but people do come to Revival and ask for help. Jo said that there is nothing to be ashamed of about being disabled and asking for help. John Beech agreed but said that there was often a reluctance to ask when a person is used to doing everything themselves – it's losing independence. Michaela said she understood how hard it is for people to come to Revival and say "I don't know what to do.", when they have been used to making their own decisions and

doing things for themselves. Horace said a person shouldn't be too proud to ask but first of all they need to know where to go for help. Geoff agreed and said that when you're working you always know someone who knows someone who can help and it's a shock when you finish work and you lose those connections and don't know who to trust. Pam asked Michaela if there could be a link from STANDs website to Revival. As Secretary she gets many queries from people who would find the link useful. Michaela agreed that this was possible.

- Funding. Revival search out and apply for pots of funding to help people keep warm in their own homes. This funding pays for gas fire/ boiler servicing, making sure grids are clear etc. Revival has had good success in getting this type of funding and vulnerable people in the community have benefited.

Michaela outlined a couple of case studies which demonstrated the range of services that Revival could call on to help people sort out major home issues, such as applying to trusts and charities for funding (Perennial was mentioned which supports gardeners or retired gardeners in need), helping manage debt etc. Support in some cases, may be needed for many years.

Mick said that John Beech had supported him when he became less mobile and he didn't want the help but needed it and he thanked John for his help. Mick had experience of Revival and remarked that the contractors were courteous and the quality of work was very good.

Angie said that Disability Solutions refer people to Revival – all advisors know about the services offered and Disability Solutions will support people to arrange support from Revival. She agreed that letting go of full independence and asking for help is difficult and asked if support staff had disability awareness skills. Michaela said that staff have lots of training and if they feel that they need training in a particular area, staff can ask for it. All staff come from different backgrounds – hers is health and social care, so staff are good at picking up on issues. When people phone the Advice Line, there is always someone friendly on the end of the phone and Revival are quite happy to visit people in their own home or people can come to them in West End Village, London Road, Stoke.

Members thanked Michaela for speaking to the group about her service.

3. Minutes of meeting of 14 February 2017

Accuracy

Proposed John Burgess

Seconded Phil Woodward

Minutes approved for accuracy.

Matters arising

Changes to the law - taxis

Pam advised that she had sent the minutes to the Sentinel about the changes in law re taxis and they have picked up on and publicised this issue. She was pleased about this but noted that parts of the Sentinel article were factually incorrect.

John Beech confirmed that the law applied to hackney carriages only and doesn't affect private hire. Members agreed that the law had not gone far enough to protect disabled people from being overcharged for taxis.

Carmountside Crematorium

Following the last meeting, John Beech had emailed Councillor Jack Brereton as agreed and had discovered that the actual portfolio holder was Councillor Terry Follows. He had also received a call from the Leader's Secretary during which he had to absolutely insist on speaking to Cllr Follows. Terry Follows had been very helpful and had dug out the Health and Safety reports. He confirmed that there was nothing that could be done about free vehicle access following those reports. If the council allowed free vehicle access and there was an accident, the councillors would be legally culpable. They can't take that risk and so the policy cannot be overturned. Brian Turnock's main issue is access Bank Holidays and weekends, when there are no council staff on hand to support his access. John felt that STAND had taken the issue as far as they could take it – the council cannot change the policy. Brian had left a note for members last meeting which stated that he did not think that STAND was taking the matter seriously. Mick confirmed that he had spoken to Brian after the meeting and this was how Brian felt. Pam and John disagreed. STAND had made at least 4 visits to Carmountside, had had meetings with council officers and the council had undertaken work that STAND had requested to improve access for disabled people. STAND has done all it can do. The site will always be problematic because of the gradients involved even though there are plans to build a new access road round the back of the site.

JB/ PB

Agreed

Members agreed that this matter cannot be taken any further.

John and Pam will write to Brian Turnock to advise him.

4. Middleport Pottery

Pam gave an update on this issue following a visit on 21st March. She had been very impressed with the work which had been done. The big issue for disabled people was the cobbles which had been laid incorrectly. The contractor had agreed to come back and relay them and then had gone bankrupt. Middleport Pottery cannot afford the work and they are unable to get funding to do the work because they've already had funds for it.

However, they had taken access on board in all aspects of their new development. They have also purchased a row of terraced houses and have asked for STAND's support with this development. They have also built a new car park for disabled people. STAND's visits have sparked off new ideas.

John thanked Pam for taking the lead with this and for all her hard work.

5. Funding bids update

John reminded members about the Blue Iris project for which STAND had bid for funding. This project aims to begin to tackle loneliness in Stoke-on-Trent. We have been awarded a grant of just over £8500 which is fabulous news. This is an exciting project for our community and

<p>STAND</p> <p>Lesley handed out a briefing note on the project and invited members to the launch event on 6th June, Windsor Room Stoke Town Hall 11 am to 1pm. She also advised that Public Health (Stoke Council) were contributing a further £550 to Blue Iris towards refreshments at the launch event and print costs for loneliness awareness raising leaflets.</p> <p>Jennifer raised the issue of health and safety. Lesley explained that risk assessments had been carried out. We will not allow anyone under 18 to sign the Blue Iris pledge and we will make it very clear at pledge signings and in our literature that interactions are to be kept to a public place. We do not want people to put themselves at risk by going home with strangers or inviting strangers into their home.</p> <p>Lesley said that the promotional materials are currently with a professional designer to ensure that our promotion is clear and professional. She also asked that members support the project by supporting signing events and distributing leaflets. Jo offered to support development of social media as this is one of her areas of expertise – she’s just won an award! Rob Lamonby also offered to help in this area. Rob and Jo to attend the Exec meeting on 16th May to discuss project progress and developing social media.</p>	RL/ JC
<p>6. Maintenance on equipment</p>	
<p>John Beech confirmed that Stoke on Trent City Council were continuing to maintain equipment such as hoists and lifts which had been fitted in peoples’ homes.</p> <p>However equipment provided by Staffordshire County Council e.g. for residents living in Newcastle or Staffordshire Moorlands would no longer be maintained by the County Council.</p> <p>He had heard that the County Council was reconsidering this decision because of the number of complaints they had received but this does not necessarily mean the decision will be overturned. STAND to monitor this issue.</p>	
<p>7. Letter from Rob Ffello MP re benefit assessments</p>	
<p>Phil has raised the issue of the benefit assessment process for disabled people with his MP Rob Ffello and has received a response. Rob Ffello said he was not aware of the existence of a list of conditions but he agrees with STAND that reassessments for people who have conditions or illnesses that won’t and can’t get better is a waste of public money and time, is unnecessarily stressful for people with disabilities, denies genuine people the benefits they need and costs loads of money for tribunals.</p> <p>Phil said that he strongly believes that an OT assessment is an unfair assessment. He thinks that their level of knowledge is not sufficient to properly consider all relevant issues. For example a person with a prosthetic limb is still disabled – the prosthetic should be classed as “assistance to walk” as the person cannot walk without it. A person with a heart condition should be assessed by a cardiologist who knows the exact impact of the condition on a person’s abilities.</p> <p>Horace has just been through the PIP process on behalf of his son who has an acquired brain injury. He and the family found the forms very distressing. He had a home assessment with Capita and the assessor was very polite, quite knowledgeable and allowed him to intervene at any time, it is a very distressing system. Somebody has to stand up and say that in obvious</p>	

<p>cases it needs to be automatic entitlement for life.</p> <p>Jo advised that there is a full-time team at Disability Solutions which can support the whole process from filling in forms to appeals tribunals. But there is an issue with the qualifications of some of the assessors. Angie said that she had seen adverts for assessors to work for Capita and a nurse who has only been qualified for 1 year can become an assessor at £30k pa.</p> <p>Phil thought that there is a liability issue if someone is assessed as fit for work and then has an accident, is taken ill or dies working.</p> <p>John Beech said there was also an issue over the reasoning behind points awarded. In both his own case and his daughters, high points had been awarded for things they could do and low points for things they couldn't. ESA assessment is different from PIP – different criteria – but they used his daughter's PIP assessment to decide her ESA.</p> <p>Jennifer said that the local MS Society had paid CAB to help people with their forms. Angie said that Disability Solutions also offer this service. But the overall advice is "Don't do it on your own" – get help. Stephanie agreed that the system is designed to trip you up. For example the maximum walking distance in ESA is 50m, in PIP it is 20m. John said over 90% cases that Disability Solutions take to appeal are overturned by the tribunal and the benefits awarded.</p> <p>Phil will continue to feed STAND members views and experiences of the assessment process to Rob Ffello MP.</p>	PW
<p>8. Parliamentary Training</p>	
<p>Pam asked that members, who were interested in taking part in these interactive workshops to learn how to get your voice heard in Parliament, put their names down on her list.</p>	
<p>9. Unity Walk Realis</p>	
<p>Exec members from STAND met with the Managing Director and Chief Executive of Realis on 31st March. Pam reported that this had been a really successful meeting. Realis came up with a solution to members' concerns about disruption to parking for disabled people during the Unity Walk development. There are some buildings on the corner of Parliament Row which they are due to demolish as part of the overall scheme. They plan to provide a temporary car park to accommodate blue badge holder until the main car park of the new development is ready for use. The provision of this car park is dependent on the city council approving planning permission.</p> <p>Members discussed the potential need for passes to ensure parking spaces for disabled people working in the area. Blackburn House is a key employer of disabled people in the area but members had heard that the Inland Revenue will be vacating the building in the near future and moving staff to Birmingham or Manchester.</p> <p>Pam advised that the fine details had yet to be discussed and that there will be on-going consultation with Realis.</p>	
<p>AOB</p> <p>Angie reported that the Well Pharmacy she had previously talked to members about, had now fitted a bell for assistance and were waiting for planning permission approval so they could build a full access ramp. Members congratulated Angie on her success.</p>	

<p>John Beech mentioned that the Hanley Walk-in Centre was under threat of closure. There is an on-going consultation through Healthwatch if members would like to express their views.</p>	PB
<p>Dates of next meetings:</p> <p>General</p> <p>13 June; 22 August; AGM 17 October; 5 December</p> <p>Exec meetings:</p> <p>16May; 11 July; 19 September; 14 November</p>	