

Minutes of General Meeting

Date	21 May 2019
Time	10.00-12.00
Venue	Stoke Town Hall

Agenda topic	Action				
<p>Attendees:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="225 786 1350 1429"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech (Chair) • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Rob Lamonby • Cassie Vasiliu • Stephanie Wood • Phil Woodward </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mick Jones • John Burgess • Glen Watson • Jo Coulson • Jo Beddows • Francesca Wheeler • Teri Elder • Lesley Smith (Access Officer Stoke City Council) </td> </tr> </table> <p>Apologies received from:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="225 1563 1350 1671"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmy Akhtar • Rita Dale • Fred Rushton </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eileen Bloomfield • Pauline Betteridge </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech (Chair) • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Rob Lamonby • Cassie Vasiliu • Stephanie Wood • Phil Woodward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mick Jones • John Burgess • Glen Watson • Jo Coulson • Jo Beddows • Francesca Wheeler • Teri Elder • Lesley Smith (Access Officer Stoke City Council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmy Akhtar • Rita Dale • Fred Rushton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eileen Bloomfield • Pauline Betteridge 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech (Chair) • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Rob Lamonby • Cassie Vasiliu • Stephanie Wood • Phil Woodward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mick Jones • John Burgess • Glen Watson • Jo Coulson • Jo Beddows • Francesca Wheeler • Teri Elder • Lesley Smith (Access Officer Stoke City Council) 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmy Akhtar • Rita Dale • Fred Rushton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eileen Bloomfield • Pauline Betteridge 				
<p>1. Poverty and Hardship Research Project</p>					
<p>Ros Beddows (Staffs University) introduced a research project being undertaken to gather information on how it feels to live in that kind of situation. Poverty and Hardship Commission – Stoke on Trent is the 11th worst off area in the UK. Living in poverty is not just about people who are destitute and living on the streets but covers people whose income does not allow a reasonable standard of living – those whose income is below the minimum standard and who are struggling to cope with providing themselves and their families with basic necessities such as housing.</p>					

John said that after his accident he was visited in hospital by the company he was working for and given his P45. He had no support from the hospital or elsewhere. His wife had to finish work to look after him and financial issues grew. At one point he thought he was going to lose his house – his benefit was £11 per week and his mortgage was £18 per week. But he was fortunate to come across DIAL (now Disability Solutions) who helped him apply for the disability-related benefits he needed to maintain an adequate standard of living. Many people who become disabled fall into this trap and advice is still not obviously available or made known to people.

Pam said people often find out about welfare benefits by chance. When it first happens, people have no idea where to go for help and advice. Mick says that benefits can take ages to sort out. This happened to him and he fell into depression. People have to keep on fighting for their benefits but are often too ill to do so. Mick was fortunate to meet John Beech who helped him sort out his benefits.

Phil said the problem is massive. Difficulty getting access to benefits and financial advice and the resultant poverty can change a person's personality. Everything that you can see about poverty in the community is the surface of the problem. The entire financial support/ welfare benefit system is at fault.

Phil said that many people who become disabled lose their partner as a result and that reduces peoples' ability to cope and sort out finances. He considers himself lucky that he has family and friends to help. The STAND group means a lot to us because we provide that support to each other and we help a lot of other people with disabilities.

Phil believes that poverty comes in different forms and everyone's experience is different.

John said when he had his accident and made contact with the then DHSS, they visited him in his own home and tried their best to help him. Now it's exactly the opposite – the DWP try to put disabled people off applying and if that doesn't work, tell blatant lies about a person's ability and health when they undertake the Capability Assessment in order to allow them to refuse benefits.

Ros then asked members to write down words that described what it feels like when a person is living in poverty and what could help make things better.

Pam thanked Ros, Francesca and Teri for including STAND members in this important research.

2. Attendees and Apologies

John Beech welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies received and noted.

3. Accuracy of minutes of 26 March 2019

Minutes were accepted as true record of meeting of

Proposed Steph Wood. Seconded Geoff Bryan.

4. Matters arising from meeting of 26 March 2019

- Lesley advised that under current Building Regulations, and where there is no prescriptive planning policy, developers of new housing can choose to build "visitable",

<p>“adaptable” or “wheelchair accessible “ homes. Most developers are choosing the least accessible standard of “visitable” which is not helping the current adaptable and accessible homes shortage. The council is looking into the issues around lack of parking on new housing developments and lack of adaptable and accessible housing. It will be researching possible changes in planning policy and trying to gain robust evidence of need for possible inclusion in the City Plan. John said Erlangen Germany brought in planning policy many years ago which said that all new houses and shops etc. have to be fully wheelchair accessible. Extra costs for this type of build were not as significant as first feared as there were savings in other areas.</p> <p>Action: Lesley will keep STAND advised on progress and ensure that they are a part of any consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action: LS to re-contact Ian Tamburello and David Stubbs re possibility of increased numbers of accessible parking bays in light of Blue Badge eligibility changes. • Funding was not approved for Longton Railway Station which is very disappointing. However, John Beech said that the Government has just announced a new funding scheme for making railway stations accessible and hopefully Kidsgrove and Longton Stations will be on the agenda. 	<p>LS</p> <p>LS</p>
<p>5. Maple West Packmoor and parking for residential developments.</p>	
<p>Pam reported that she had managed to get agreement to almost everything that residents had requested. Another meeting is planned for June because Pam does not want to let this go until it is resolved.</p> <p>Pam passed on thanks to Carla Gater and Cllr Ann James Stoke City Council who had been very helpful and supportive.</p> <p>One of the issues that cannot be resolved is the lack of parking at the facility. This is leading to confrontations between residents and other Maple West users and is proof of the need for planning policy to be more prescriptive about parking for residential facilities.</p> <p>Parking is a serious issue for people with disabilities – lack of adequate parking creates problems for residents, antisocial behaviour and creates knock-on problems as a result of people parking in neighbouring areas and streets such as safety issues and obstruction.</p> <p>Properties need adequate off-street parking.</p> <p>Geoff said it’s almost back to horse and cart days – narrow streets, no frontage to houses and as many housing units as possible squeezed into as small a plot as possible.</p>	
<p>6. Meir Health Centre</p>	
<p>Pam reported that this issue has now been resolved.</p>	
<p>7. Blue Iris Update</p> <p>Lesley reported still good rate of take up of badges across the city. Partnership bid for funding is still in development but is progressing</p>	

<p>8. Accessible Hackney Carriages update</p> <p>On-going but we are expecting Rachel from Licensing to attend July meeting to give an update to members,</p>	
<p>9. Hanley Museum Parking</p> <p>Action: Lesley to investigate if drop off area to the front of the Museum in Bethesda Street is being considered by the city council as suggested by Pam.</p>	LS
<p>10. Hospital Parking</p> <p>Pam said that STAND had spent a lot of time getting a parking system at the Royal Stoke that worked for the majority of people with disabilities the majority of the time.</p> <p>However, she had got wind of some changes to the barrier system on the hospital car parks and so she emailed Mike Brown from Royal Stoke and offered STAND's help to come up with a system that was fair and worked for Blue Badge holders. She had a reply saying that consideration was being made to a barrier system but there was no date for implementation.</p> <p>The next thing that Pam heard was the barrier had been implemented and that there was chaos and confusion for people using hospital car parks. No-one had been advised that it was being implemented including patients and staff.</p> <p>There are only 4 pay stations across the whole of the site – only 2 currently working and there are huge queues to pay. Disabled people are entitled to an additional hour free but now have to pay for their full stay and get their money back. So they have to leave the car park, drive to the multi-storey and get their £1.90 back from the kiosk. Pam says this is not a reasonable adjustment for people with disabilities.</p> <p>John Beech said that he had also taken a member complaint to the hospital about this new system and had advised them that he would be contacting the Equalities Commission as in his mind also this is not making appropriate reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>John Burgess also advised members that the person whose job it is to give people with disabilities their money back finished work at 4pm. The hospital and car park is open 24/7 so the booth should be open 24/7.</p> <p>Phil said if the hospital want to play dirty disabled people should block the barriers and cause chaos. Pam said there is already chaos!</p> <p>John Beech said he was angry because STAND were assured that we would be consulted on any changes and the Hospital Trust has reneged on the deal. Pam said that she cross too. She has asked repeatedly for the Equality Impact Assessment that should have been carried out. This document considers who may be disadvantaged by changes of policy or practice and what the organisation is doing to mitigate or remove the disadvantage in order to comply with their Public Sector Equality Duty. Pam has still to receive a copy of this document.</p> <p>Pam emailed Mike Brown yesterday advising that she will be putting a motion to members that STAND officially contacts the Equality and Human Rights Commission to take this matter further.</p> <p>Agreed: Motion to take complaint about Royal Stoke parking system to Equality and</p>	PB

Human Rights Commission was unanimously agreed by STAND members.

Jo Coulson said that she had the contact details for the Equality and Diversity lead at the hospital and it is advisable to contact her first.

Agreed: Jo to send contact details and Pam to contact Charlotte Lees of the hospital equality and diversity team.

Pam further advised members that she has contacted all 4 local MPs and included them in correspondence she has had with the Trust.

Glen Watson from Ruth Smeeth MP's office said that local MPs meet once a month and Jack will raise at the next meeting. Pam said she hopes that MPs will take it up as several issues have not been considered by the Hospital Trust:

- Access issues for people with disabilities have not been considered
- People with disabilities are inconvenienced more than non-disabled people because of the system for claiming back their fee for the extra hour – which is their entitlement as a reasonable adjustment.
- 4 pay stations for a site this large is inadequate

Pam says she has been advised that this system is an “on-going trial” and as such she hopes the Trust will see sense. She thinks that the chaos has been deliberate to force people to avoid the car park and obscure the fact that the car park is not adequate for the hospital. But people with disabilities often have no choice other than to drive. Steph agreed and said that public transport is inadequate. The service 25 which serves the hospital is a double decker bus with no wheelchair access.

John Burgess said that the only positive is that taxis are no longer taking up Blue Badge bays as the drivers would have to pay to go through the barrier, so it is easier to get a space.

Geoff Bryan warned members to be aware that parking on double yellow lines on the hospital grounds may not follow the same rules as on the highway and you may get a ticket. John Beech said if the double yellow lines are not accompanied by kerb stripes and notices and the blue badge holder is not causing an obstruction, then you can appeal a ticket.

This issue is on-going and will be an agenda item at the next meeting to give an update.

JC/PB

11. STAND Special Award

John Beech advised that Mick Jones had kindly donated an award to be given each year to a person who has shown exceptional service to STAND and support for people with disabilities.

Winner of the STAND Special Award 2019-2020 is Pam Bryan for her dedication and passion and the great work she has undertaken for people with disabilities.

Members thanked Pam for the great work she does.

12. Any other business	
Mick drew members' attention to the Food Shop in Meaford Drive Blurton but advised members get there early to get fresh food. The Shed are looking for donations of furniture that they can refurbish and rehome.	
Exec – 18 June at Disability Solutions, Hartshill General – 23 July 2019 10.00am at Civic Centre Stoke	