

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of the Disability Advisory Group held on Friday 1st October 2010 at 10.05am in Room 106

- Present: Ms Cathy McGowan (NI Assembly)
Mr Peter Wilson (Cedar Foundation)
Ms Kelsey McQuaid (RNIB)
Ms Sharon Redmond (RNID)
- Apologies: Lady Christine Eames (Cedar Foundation)
Ms Patricia Bray (Disability Action)
Ms Paschal McKeown (MENCAP)
Ms Orla McCann (Disability Action)
Ms Claire Lavery (RNID)
- In Attendance: Mrs Nicola Shephard (Secretary)
Ms Christine Watts
Ms Anne Marie Flemming
Ms Frances Leneghan (Present for item 1)
Mr Dermott MacGreevy (Present for items 1 and 2)

1. Introduction

Ms McGowan welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves.

The minutes of the last meeting on the 23rd June 2010 were agreed.

2. Christmas Speakers event

Ms Leneghan provided a background to previous Christmas events. She explained that the Speaker felt it was appropriate to tie this year's event to the International day for Disabilities, on the 3rd December. Ms Leneghan informed the group that the proposal was to run the Speakers event on Thursday 2nd December 2010. Ms Leneghan asked for volunteers to form a small working group to help provide guidance and advice on the planning of the event. Mr MacGreevy said that they would appreciate specialist advice with regards to the composition of the guest list, meeting the needs of the participants, etc.

Action: Ms Leneghan to provide Mrs Shephard with wording for an email to be sent to all Disability Advisory Group members asking for nominations for the working group.

3. Tour Scripts/Speakers Gifts/Braille/Tactile Maps

Ms McGowan explained that a copy of the tour script had been emailed to all members. She explained that Disability Action had provided comments prior to the meeting, including a number of spelling and grammatical errors, clarification on the meaning of particular words, and the suggestion that a comparator be used when describing the size of Stormont Estate.

Ms McGowan asked for further comments on the tour script. Ms McQuaid explained that her colleague who deals with this area of work was absent from work at present and that they would provide comments as soon as possible.

Ms Redmond suggested that the script be written in Plain English. She said that she was pleased to see that a loop system is used, and that it would be appropriate for the guide to ask if anyone in the group is hard of hearing and to invite them to the front of the group. She also recommended that the guide moves the group away from any background noise. Mr MacGreevy explained that he is liaising with RNID to identify further technology that can be used to facilitate this, as background noise can be an issue during busy times such as on Sitting Days.

Mr MacGreevy explained that the script is used as a training tool for new staff, and that he hopes to develop an 'Easy Speak' version. He asked that any further feedback on the current script be provided before the next meeting.

Mr Wilson informed the group that he had accompanied a group of individuals from the Cedar Foundation recently, and he praised the education programme and in particular the facilitator, Ms Fleming.

Ms Watts also highlighted that the Speakers gifts are now on display in glass cabinets within the Rotundas adjacent to both the Plenary and Senate Chambers. She informed the group that work was progressing on the installation of Braille descriptors adjacent to the cabinets and concluded that work was also continuing on the development of tactile maps for the Great Hall, Chamber and Senate.

Action: Nicola to email all members asking for further feedback on the tour script.

4. Access Audit Results

Ms Watts informed the group that she had received access audit reports from both Disability Action and RNIB and that she was awaiting a response from RNID. Ms Watts agreed that she would then compile the findings into an action table for distribution at the next meeting.

Action: Ms Watts to compile the results of the Access Audits into an action table and distribute to the group.

5. Front Door Access Paper

Ms Watts informed the group that approval has been granted to price a ramp at the front door. Ms Fleming highlighted several difficulties experienced by the Cedar Foundation in relation to gaining access to lifts and thus causing difficulties moving between floors. Ms Watts agreed to highlight the difficulties to relevant staff.

Action: Ms Watts to inform relevant staff of difficulties highlighted in relation to accessing lifts during busy periods.

6. Update on Website

This will be provided at the next meeting.

7. Briefing Guides

Ms McGowan reminded the group that case studies would be welcomed as practical examples within briefing guides for staff on the disability legislation. It was agreed that these case studies would be provided before the next meeting.

Action: Nicola to email members requesting examples of case studies.

8. Annual Progress Report

Ms McGowan informed the group that the annual progress report was considered by the Assembly Commission on their meeting of the 16th September 2010 and that they had requested further time to consider it. She highlighted that it would be raised at the next meeting and an update would be provided to the group.

9. All Party Groups

Ms McGowan explained that Ms Bannon, NI Assembly Equality Manager, has been attending various All Party Groups discussing issues such as Children, Autism, Diabetes and Learning Disability. Ms McGowan highlighted that Ms Bannon would continue to attend further meetings and would provide an update to the next meeting.

10. Education Service Update

Ms Flemming informed the group that the Education Service had now released their DVD, which included subtitling and audio descriptors. She also highlighted that the DVD was accompanied by a CD Rom and guidance notes.

She highlighted that a number of staff had completed communication tactics training and that the remaining staff intend would undertake the training in the near future. Ms Flemming also provided a brief update on educational developments within the

Assembly website and that work continues to progress to explore ways to make it as accessible as possible.

Ms McQuaid asked Ms Fleming about Education Service leaflets, and their availability in alternative formats. Ms Fleming explained that the leaflets currently used by Events staff are being phased out and she would provide the group with an update on the Education Service resources at a future meeting.

11. Placement Scheme

Ms McGowan explained that this scheme has now been approved by the Senior Management Team and an update on the operation of the scheme would be provided at the next meeting.

12. Training for new Doorkeepers

Ms Watts explained that the new doorkeepers have now received training in communications tactics, provided by Mr John Carberry and that further training was scheduled on how they can accommodate people better into the building. Following a brief discussion on how disabled people are searched when accessing the building, Ms Watts explained that usually a visual security search is carried out.

13. Changing Places

Ms Watts explained that the Commission had requested further costings and a timeline for the creation of a 'changing places' facility for consideration at their next meeting and that she would provide an update at the next meeting on progress.

14. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

Ms Watts explained that security staff were currently working to adapt the plan into a more accessible format and agreed to supply a copy to the next meeting. Ms McQuaid provided Ms Watts with some guidelines to assist with the development of the document.

Action: Ms Watts to bring revised plan to the next meeting.

15. Disability Action Plan, Equality Scheme and new dates

Ms McGowan informed the group that the Assembly Commission would receive notification on the Equality Scheme in November 2010, for submission in August 2011. She also highlighted that the Disability Action Plan would be written in the coming months to cover the period of April 2011-2014.

Meeting ended at 11.45am

Cathy McGowan