

**BURGESS HILL – INCLUSIVE TOWN PROGRAMME
'A TOWN THAT IS ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL'**

**NOTES OF INCLUSIVE TOWN WORKING GROUP MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 2022**

Attendees:

Cllr Robert Eggleston (BHTC - Chair of Inclusive Town Working Group), Cllr Kathy Willis (BHTC), Cllr Robert Duggan (BHTC, substituting for Cllr Matthew Cornish), Calley Bryson (resident), Jackie Page (resident), Emily Day (Kangaroos) and Daniel Pieniazczak (Signposts).

Apologies:

Maria Cook (Autism Support Crawley), Dawn Fairbrother (Alzheimer's Society), Lauren Humphreys (resident), Tony Aston (resident), Gill Barton (Deputy Head, Woodlands Mead College), Andy (resident), Cllr Joe Foster and Cllr Matthew Cornish.

Welcomes & Introductions

Robert welcomed everyone to the meeting. Calley advised she was also representing Autism Support Crawley.

Background

Robert gave a brief background to the Town Council's wish to make Burgess Hill a 'town that is accessible for all'. Accessibility was a matter for the whole of the town, there was a particular need to ensure the town centre was accessible for all as the retail and service hub of the town.

Calley asked if this was a tick-box exercise by the Town Council and would it be a one-off meeting. She mentioned Crawley Borough Council had set up a Disability Forum of interested parties who met quarterly and was a great platform to discuss issues and provided support. Robert confirmed this meeting was not a tick-box exercise and that additional meetings would need to be held to identify and build a Town Accessibility Plan (TAP), the process would take time and the TAP would continually develop and grow. The Town Council had limited resources and was aware some changes would involve other stakeholders, e.g., dropped kerbs. A staged approach was needed, i.e., undertake Accessible Surveys with residents and businesses to identify issues, draft an Accessible Audit and Town Accessibility Plan.

Inclusive Town Working Group

Suggested aim and purpose of the Inclusive Town Working Group is:

To make Burgess Hill 'a town that is accessible for all and to give people living with a disability a voice, engage with them and feel a valuable member of the town'.

Robert invited those present to give their views and the following points were highlighted:

- What financial contribution was available from West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council for this initiative? Identify what we need and then approach relevant authority for actioning/funding.
- It was an impossible task to include every type of physical/hidden disability as there is such a broad spectrum of disabilities and the needs will vary from person to person.
- How do we get a better attendance at the meetings? Review time of meetings, comfortable/welcoming venue, option to hold virtual meetings, visit support groups/organisations.
- Set up a dedicated Facebook page?
- Review information on the Town Council's website as currently very limited. Include information on autism support as the town has a higher rate of people with autism due to Woodlands Mead who have 250 students? Add a list of inclusive clubs, groups, sport facilities, attractions, shops and businesses etc.
- Research demographics of the town's population in relation to disability.
- Undertake training to understand how it feels to be disabled and how to be accessible/inclusive.
- Multi-channel communication to engage with as wide an audience as possible.
- Reach out to all disabled support groups/organisations.
- If the Town Council wants to be strategic then it needs to do its homework/research/training first.
- Contact the Carers Support Sussex group.
- Young People Register (West Sussex County Council).
- Is there a Youth Council?
- Use the support groups to liaise with their clients as they know what their needs are and how to engage with them.
- Identify list of groups working/supporting people in Burgess Hill and visit them to discuss initiative and how they can be involved.
- Sunflower Lanyard Scheme – limited number of shops/businesses involved in the scheme, need to get more onboard.
- Is the Town Council building accessible for all?
- There is no wheelchair group in Burgess Hill and no information available to support them.
- How about creating a 'Disabled Friendly Award'. There used to be a Thumbs Up Award.
- Quality Checker Scheme – West Sussex County Council undertook a quality checker with Signposts reviewing a specific aspect of the group. It's a bit like a mystery shopper. More targeted approach would work better.
- Link in with GP surgeries as they know their patients and their needs.
- Signposts can assist with identifying what's wrong with the town as need to have a focus.
- Need to develop framework of support, where to start, reach more people, working group is fluid, meet in different environments.
- Accessible Surveys – need to be accessible and in different formats to reach the targeted audience. What works? What doesn't work? If doing a generic

survey, need to make it clear a more detailed accessible version will be undertaken as well to cater for all demographics

- Distribution of Accessible Surveys – online, face to face, use support groups to liaise with their clients, advertise through newsletters etc.
- Calley and Jackie offered to do a walk around the town and town centre to highlight the challenges they face. Robert said he would like to take them up on their offer.
- Best practice – what can we learn from other towns, e.g. Belper Town Council has set up 'Accessible Belper', a local community group to champion the needs of people with disabling conditions.
- Premier Inn is a good example – wheelchair accessible rooms with option to have a carers room linked next door.
- Hair Essentials offer 'quiet appointments'.
- Next steps and resourcing.

Way Forward/Actions:

- Notes of the meeting to be circulated to group.
- Review list of support groups and invite to next group meeting.
- Notes of the meeting to be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council on 17 May 2022.
- Arrange inclusive training and research best practice.
- Arrange walk around the town and town centre with Calley and Jackie.
- Arrange next meeting for June, between 10am – 2pm.