

# Minutes of Forum Meeting 9 February 2009

**21 people present**

**5 apologies**

## **1. Welcome/Introductions**

Catherine welcomed everyone, everyone introduced themselves.

## **2. Ben Kennedy- Area Accessibility Scheme consultation**

Ben Kennedy (Transport Planner) and Polycorp Tengwana (Traffic Engineer) from Hackney's Streetscene department attended the Disability Backup Forum meeting and gave a short presentation on Local Area Accessibility schemes.

Summary of responses and comments are as follows:

- The area around Well Street Common needs work, disabled people have accessibility problems due to lack of dropped kerbs and adequate crossings. Members would like to meet Streetscene officers on site to undertake an audit of footways in the area.
- **Action:** *Streetscene officers and Disability Backup will work together to facilitate a site audit with local residents and stakeholders towards the end of February-early March.*
- The following roads lack dropped kerbs and adequate crossing facilities: area encompassing Northwold Road, Brooke Road, Rectory Road and Stoke Newington High Street.
- **Action:** *Streetscene officers will audit the area and progress necessary works subject to TfL funding.*
- Graham Road - a forum member had concerns about lack of dropped kerbs, lack of adequate street lighting (following installation of new columns), lack of lighting at pelican crossings, and poor drainage on footways and at crossings. **Action:** *Disability Backup to forward onto Streetscene officers the exact location of the issues on Graham Road which will then be investigated and followed up.*
- General comments about drainage problems resulting from the installation of speed tables and poor design of them. All new scheme designs are subject to a quality audit so this issue will no longer occur.
- Shared surface cycle lanes and cycle lanes on footpaths were raised as a safety issue by group members. For blind or partially sighted people who cannot differentiate between black footway surfacing and the green surfacing of cycle lanes they can be dangerous. Members have particular concerns about the routes in London Fields and Goldsmiths Row (Dove Row).

- **Action:** Streetscene are planning to undertake improvement works to the London Fields cycle route in the next financial year and following agreement with the Parks Department and the Park Users Group we will examine possibility of installing of additional cycle logos on the London Fields cycle lane. Streetscene recently submitted an unsuccessful bid for funding from TfL to improve the Goldsmiths Row cycle lane however we are planning to submit another bid in the next financial year.
- The pedestrian crossing in Green Lanes just south of the junction with Gloucester Drive was reported to provide insufficient time for pedestrians to cross safely.
- **Action:** Streetscene have reported this defect to TfL's signal fault team (tel: 020 7126 2345), the fault reference number is ANL1007573.
- Members highlighted the problem of steep cambers on footways - this can result in problems for wheelchair users and those with walking difficulties.
- **Action:** A slight camber is necessary on all footways to allow drainage and surface water runoff into the carriageway. The Council is undertaking a rolling programme of footway reconstruction throughout the borough (Mare Street is currently being reconstructed) which will resolve this problem in all completed roads.
- Members stated that tactile paving at crossing points is uncomfortable and painful for wheelchair users and those with walking difficulties. The borough is subject to national guidance from the Department for Transport however this issue has been raised across the country.
- **Action:** Streetscene will examine sources for funding to look at new and innovative ways of replacing tactile paving with other materials that cater for blind or visually impaired people but do not cause discomfort to wheelchair users and others.

### **3. Tracey Sinclair- Service manager from the mobility team**

Tracey attended the forum meeting to address the action points raised at the previous focus group.

#### **Is there discrimination around providing someone with a Blue Badge? Why are some people turned down for Blue Badge but given a freedom pass instead?**

Answer: There are different criteria for the freedom pass and the Blue Badge. There are seven categories of eligibility for the Freedom Pass and four for the Blue Badge. That is why some people receive a freedom pass but not a blue badge.

#### **Renewal process for Blue Badge requires the applicant to provide photographs again. Why can this process not be done with the photo on file, or use a webcam to have a photo on computer system?**

Answer: We do not have the technology to have a webcam but we will start to scan a picture on the one to keep on the electronic file.

**Why does the application for Blue Badge and Freedom pass require a GP/consultant reference? Those applying may have higher rate DLA, can proof of that not be enough?**

Answer: We only need to GP/Consultant details if the applicant does not meet one of the eligible categories. If you are in receipt of higher rate DLA then that proof is enough.

**Renewal process for Blue Badge, Freedom pass and Companion Badge are lengthy, 6 weeks for BB renewal. Why does it take so long?**

Answer: It can take up to six weeks when we have to write for further information from GP/Consultants. Where applicants meet the eligibility criteria, the application should be much quicker.

**At Morning Lane there is only 1 officer working on Blue Badge yet there is a large demand and waiting list.**

Answer: There are 5 people in the Mobility Team at Morning Lane; last year we received over 11000 applications to process! There is one officer who issues the badges. All the others are based in the Mobility Team office.

**Is the Companion Badge still a pilot scheme or is it now permanent? We would like some more information about this in general, what is the future of this badge? What happens if your car breaks down?**

Answer: The Scheme is now permanent, if your car breaks down and you are parked in a time restricted area, you should make arrangements as normal to have it removed as soon as possible.

**Why is the Companion Badges limited to Hackney? Cannot park at the end of some roads as it changes borough. This doesn't make Companion Badge a good replacement to Blue Badge.**

Answer: Hackney Council developed the Companion Badge to help stop theft for residents when parked in the Borough. Some other boroughs have their own schemes. It is recommended that DBU contact Parking Services regarding this.  
*Action: DBU to contact Parking Services to ask them to attend a forum meeting.*

**Freedom Pass, Companion Badge and Blue Badge all require similar application, eligibility criteria is the same and some require GP where as others don't. Why not combine the 3 application forms to save time and make process easier?**

Answer: We have devised an application form which combines both the BB and the CB. We are unable to include the Freedom Pass as the eligibility is so different. This will mean that the Companion Badge will now come through the post. We will implement the new application form in a few months.

**Why are the blue badge 3 years and the Companion Badge 1 year? Why they are not timed to expire at the same time?**

Answer: With the new application form coming out in later this year, the Blue Badge and Companion Badge will expire at the same time.

**The renewal process is every 3 years, even if you are permanently disabled. Can there be an automatic renewal process?**

Answer: All badge holders have to re-apply. We will review our systems to see if we can stop repeatedly asking for evidence where the holder is permanently disabled.

**There are many issues regarding Blue Badge Fraud, what can be done about this?**

Answer: The Parking team are starting a Blue Badge Fraud team who will patrol the borough. It is hoped that the borough can start prosecuting against Blue Badge offenders. Anyone who suspects that someone may be misusing the Blue Badge will be able to call a hotline number.

*Action: Disability Backup to invite the Parking team to discuss this further and find out the hotline number.*

**4. Sebastian Eisenberg- Discussing Disability Backup's Service User Involvement work**

Sebastian told the forum members that he is looking for volunteers who are willing to share their views and experiences of health and social care services in Hackney.

The views will be taken to the managers of services for disabled people in Hackney. It will be used for shaping and developing services. The information individuals give to us will be kept confidential. Participating members will receive a £10 voucher. The names of all participants until May 2009 will also enter a prize draw on vouchers worth £100. To take part you need to be between 18 and 64 years of age with either sensory impairment, mobility issues / physical impairment, acquired brain injury (e.g. stroke) or a long-term neurological condition. You need to live in Hackney or have a Hackney GP. Please contact Sebastian if you are interested in taking part.

**5. Any other Business**

Information Packs were given out at this meeting with copies of minutes, maps, application forms and other useful materials. If you were unable to attend the meeting but would like a pack, please contact Catherine.

**Catherine thanked everyone for attending.**

**Meeting closed.**