



Minutes of the meeting of the HOUSING IMPROVEMENT TEAM - DISABLED ADAPTATIONS held on MONDAY 6 MARCH 2000 at 6.30 p.m. in Room 2, Saxon Court

Present: Councillors Bartlett and Tilley

Officers: D Jones (Strategic Director Neighbourhood Services), T Chapman (Policy and Development Officer), R Cooper (Senior Environmental Health Officer - Private Sector Housing Team), D Ewing (Team Manager - Physical Disabilities), M Vine (Housing Needs Manager) and J Shaw (Senior Committee Manager)

RSL

Representatives: J Abra (Midsummer Housing Association)

Other

Representatives: D Fielding (Milton Keynes Community NHS Trust)
D Nicholson (Milton Keynes Community NHS Trust)
J Taylor (Milton Keynes Carers Project)
Mark Simm (Fullers Slade Residents Association)

Apologies: H Taylor (Greenleys Residents' Association)
B Moore (Hanslope Residents' Association)
K Veen (John Grooms Housing Association)
M Weeks (Citizens Advice Bureau – User of Adaptations)
T Huff (Neighbourhood Services Finance Manager)
M Kidd (Service User)

1.0 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Improvement Team – Disabled Adaptations held on 25 January 2000 were approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Mark Simm in the list of apologies.

2.0

MATTERS ARISING

7.0 Progress on Written Criteria on Adaptation Work

It was noted that the draft document had been well received by a range of groups. Councillor Tilley had a number of comments on the document that she would submit to officers.

David Jones stated that needs were still increasing and as such, despite the additional £83,000 for disabled adaptations agreed by the Neighbourhood Services Committee, there were still difficult decisions to make.

Debbie Nicholson reported that she was trying to establish a small group to take the document forward involving this group and others. Jackie Taylor and Councillor Tilley volunteered to serve in this group. David Jones assured Jackie Taylor that the expenses would be in line with the allowances for tenants representatives.

John Abra informed the Group that there would be some differences in the document as harmonisation approached. Midsummer Housing would use a different criteria for considering applications for disabled adaptations than the Council currently.

Mark Simm stated the tenants representatives had a resource centre that could constructively be used to provide advice and information to those wanting to apply for disabled adaptations. David Jones added that this raised an interesting issue about how accessible information is to the public generally.

8.0 Supply of Property

The Group noted that this project would start with 2 Members of staff from 1 April 2000.

9.0 Availability of Equipment (Who Provides What)

Dave Ewing reported that a paper had been submitted to the Adaptations Group that attempted to link this issue with the Draft criteria. The document would clearly set out which organisations were responsible for services.

3.0

UPDATE ON WAITING LISTS

Malcom Vine updated the Team on the Council Housing adaptation waiting list situation. The total number of cases on the waiting list had risen, from 510 at the time of the last meeting to 525 currently. The number of Priority 1 cases had decreased and there would hopefully be more progress by the next meeting of the Team. It was noted that officers would not be prioritising cases beyond Priority 1 in future, due to budgetary pressure.

Debbie Nicholson reported that the high figures in Priority 2 and 3 were due to the fact that officers were only processing Priority 1s. The Disabled Facilities Grants system which the Council had started to use recently appeared to be more objective in the way priorities were allocated.

Councillor Bartlett expressed concern about Priority 2s and 3s not being done and the effect this was having on people's quality of life. He also sought clarification as to the criteria for Priority 2 cases.

David Jones reported that more funds would be available in next year's budget to help to reduce the waiting lists. Officers would look into the possibility of using different systems during next year.

Jackie Taylor stated that officers should send letters to those on the waiting list informing them of the current situation with regard to their application.

Councillor Bartlett stated that an adaptation can prevent the need to re-house someone if their circumstances had changed. Delia Fielding explained that re-housing could be a preferable option as adaptations can cost up to £4,500. Councillor Bartlett suggested that the Team should undertake a site visit to a person who is awaiting an adaptation and someone who has had the adaptation completed. David Jones stated that he would look into this possibility.

Jackie Taylor explained some of the problems experienced by carers in getting suitable facilities and assistance.

Councillor Bartlett also suggested that officers should look into the possible use of planning gain for disabled adaptations. David Jones explained that officers were working closely with housing developers to design property suitable for people who's needs might change over time, but assured Councillor Bartlett that he would look into this matter.

4.0 FEEDBACK ON QUESTIONNAIRE TO OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Roger Cooper circulated copies of the 12 questions asked to the 8 comparator authorities on their arrangements for allocating disabled adaptations works and Disabled Facilities Grants.

The Team noted that much of the information was not yet available and that a detailed presentation would be made to a future meeting.

David Jones stated that the Team needed to be clear about what it was going to do with the information once it was received. The Team should be challenging about the results and the impact on the service.

5.0 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Dave Ewing requested some dates for meetings on Performance Indicators. It was noted that he would be developing a work programme for these meetings.

6.0

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Team noted that the next meeting would be held in Saxon Court on Thursday 25 May 2000 at 6.30pm in Room 2.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 7.40 PM