

Minutes for GDA Meeting

Wednesday 25th February 2009

1. Roll Call and Apologies.

Apologies. Debbie Clark, Andrew Mills, Richard Malagodi, Peter Keeling, Jenny Hooper, Nikkie Kerr, Jackie Tebbutt, Jenny Browning, Wendy Beaven.

2. Chairman's Welcome.

Rob opened the meeting and explained that Wendy Beaven was unable to attend due to a family bereavement. The committee wished to record their condolences and pass on their best wishes to Wendy.

3. Minutes of previous meeting. Signed as a correct record

4. Matters Arising from Minutes.

- **Le Murier School, separate name issue.** Beryl Vaudin asked why questions had been asked about the separate name for Le Murier. Beryl felt that to have one name would cause confusion.

Rob Platts answered that the question had been posed by the Disability Forum. Some members of the Forum believe that this does not set an example of inclusive education and just serves to segregate disabled students. Rob said that a representative from the Education Department was to be invited to a Forum meeting to explain the thoughts behind the naming.

5. Priority area – Access

Dave Purdy has written to Clair Le Pelley regarding the changes to make the Priaulx library more accessible. In his letter he thanked Ms Le Pelley for her response to his previous letter, in which he offered the GDA's assistance with accessible design. The GDA's assistance had been declined and in his latest letter, Dave noted our concern at the steepness of the proposed ramp.

Priority area – PR

Shelaine Green explained in detail the situation with regard the wheelchair service.

On the day of the last GDA meeting Rob Platts had learnt that at a recent HSSD board meeting it had been decided not support the establishment of a full on-island wheelchair service and that a proposal for a "watered down" service, estimated cost £97,000

p.a., would be considered at a HSSD funding priority debate in late March.

Following this, Deputy Hadley publicly criticized this decision in the States, on Radio Guernsey and in the Press. HSSD issued an official response denying that the service had been “kicked into the long grass” and that improvements to the service were to be considered in their meeting in March. HSSD also produced a highly edited version of the wheelchair report for distribution to Deputies who requested it.

Shelaine called three members of the HSSD Board to find out about the reasons for the delay. She was not reassured that the outcome from the prioritisation debate in March would be positive..

Shelaine discussed a possible GDA response with other members of the executive and it was agreed that we should publically comment on the issue. As well as GDA members asking question on the Sunday Phone-In, we arranged for the Press to meet Mick Lihou, whose story clearly illustrates all the issues with the current system for wheelchair provision/maintenance.

Rob Platts commented that this situation posed a deeper question about the prioritisation process. He felt that HSSD were making decisions about known issues but that they had made little effort to identify and quantify other needs. This can be demonstrated, for example, by the fact that, prior to the wheelchair report, HSSD appeared to be unaware that there could be anywhere near 1,000 wheelchair users on the Island and, that prior to the MS Society’s highlighting the plight of people with MS, that they had no idea that there could be 120 people on the island with the disease. Service gaps remain unrecognised. Services such as carer support and respite services remain un-tackled, partly because there has been no quantitative analysis or research carried out.

Shelaine tackled Deputies Domaille and Kuttelwascher on the Sunday morning phone in and both were remarkably blunt in their backing of HSSD’s decision saying “We have a £40 million black hole, tough decisions have to be made”

Shelaine reported that Deputy Hadley had now decided to photo copy the full wheelchair report and distribute it to all Deputies as they attended the States debate this morning. Dep. Hadley is considering submitting a requete to force a debate on the service.

Shelaine asked the committee three questions;

- 1) Was the committee happy with the action that has been taken so far and should we continue to press our case?
- 2) If a request did happen, would member reps agree to speak, either at Saturday surgeries or on the phone, to their deputies about the service.
- 3) Recognising the power of individual case studies, Shelaine asked the committee, as a matter of urgency, to identify other wheelchair users she might speak to for research purposes. Shelaine assured the committee that each case would be handled very sensitively and there would be no involvement of the media unless the person had given their full agreement..

The committee response was positive towards continuing with the planned responses as detailed by Shelaine.

Rob Platts thanked Shelaine for the great deal of work she had put into this matter in the past few weeks.

Chair

Future structure of the Committee

Rob explained that Shelaine Green had generously agreed to stand to succeed him as chairman at the AGM. He reiterated that other nominations were of course welcome but that he could not think of anyone better placed or qualified to take the post and recommended that member reps support Shelaine's election to the position in April. He explained that yesterday's meeting, the executive had discussed the possibility of Rob remaining in a non executive capacity within the GDA. Rob explained that although his plans for the next couple of years would mean he would be off Island much of the time, that he would be very pleased to provide assistance to the GDA in such a capacity and that he felt this could be achieved, as demonstrated in the past two weeks, by email and telephone. It is proposed that the position of non executive Chairman be considered for inclusion in the constitution at the AGM.

Rob stated that whilst he had not had the opportunity to confirm the situation, Wendy may not wish to stand for re-election as Secretary for a further term. Rob to discuss further with Wendy.

Constitution

Rob outlined his intention to put forward amendments not only as described above but also to allow individual membership of the GDA. Wendy has highlighted in the past that as the GDA is meant to be for the benefit of users, it makes sense to be able to include individuals as well as voluntary organisations as members. It is hoped that the

possibility of individual membership might encourage more user participation.

Currently, it is envisaged that individual members will be allowed one vote and each member rep (two per charity) will be allowed one vote.

Alf Salmon voiced concern that the voting might not be proportionately representative. Rob had also shared Alf's concerns but reflected that it is likely that charities and voluntary organisations would always outnumber individuals and, even if this was not the case and we had a sudden surge in individuals voting, then the vote is likely to be a more direct reflection of the will of disabled people. Rob also explained that Alf's concern could actually be extended to the current system as each charity had two votes, regardless of membership.

Rob invited member reps to provide alternative solutions if they could think of a better way of achieving individual membership. Suggestions need to be publicised 28 days prior to the AGM.

6. AOB

- Rob read out an email from Colin Ferbrache of the Combined Services Charity, offering possible wheelchair funding for ex servicemen. Colin's home phone number is 701011.
- Terry Dowinton from Guernsey Driveability announced a mini mobility road show which is being held on 14th April at the Grammar School. Details will be circulated by email to members. (The draft poster is included with these minutes)
- It was noted that the case of the Head of Elizabeth College might highlight disability awareness. Shelaine to follow up as possible case study.
- Pam's wheelchair dancing is this Friday at the Peninsular Hotel.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

7. Date of next meeting. Wednesday 25th March 7.00pm