

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION FORUM

Monday 7 September 2026, Maidenhead Town Hall

Present: Lizzie Jones (Chair), Dennis Jeffrey, Peter Haley, Caroline Waites, Shasta Parveen, Yingni Lu (SEND Voices RBWM), Sharon Bunce, Dominic Manley

Present virtually: Steve Sansom, David Coppinger, Caroline Waites, Shasta Parveen, Lottie Barr

Officers: Ellen McManus-Fry, Lucinda Pinhorne-Smy, Sumayyah Zeib, Gemma Burgin

Officers in attendance virtually: Shasta Parveen

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and thanked members for their continued participation in the Forum.

The Chair advised that the meeting was being recorded to assist with the preparation of the minutes.

Members heard reflections on the importance of listening to lived experience and ensuring that disabled and neurodivergent residents are able to contribute meaningfully to discussions affecting their lives. Concerns were raised regarding increasingly negative public narratives about disabled people and the importance of promoting inclusion, understanding and respect across communities.

A round of introductions was undertaken.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Adam Bermange, Angela Clark, Cllr Helen Price, Jatinder Singh-Rakhra, Kirsty Northam (Vice Chair), Louise Sugden, Marion Williams, Robin Pemberton, Tim Clare and Victoria Holt.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were considered.

Resolved:

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters Arising

Wilderness Centre Parking

Ellen McManus-Fry provided an update regarding the Blue Badge parking improvements at the Wilderness Centre. Members were advised that the project was nearing completion, with final lining and marking works expected shortly.

The Chair welcomed the progress made and requested a final update once all works had been completed.

Action: Final update on Wilderness Centre parking improvements to be brought to a future meeting.

6. Development Plan

Lucinda Pinhorne-Smy provided an overview of the New Development Plan Scoping Consultation. Members were informed that the consultation represented the first stage in developing a new Development Plan that would help shape future growth, infrastructure and development across the borough over the next twenty years.

A wide-ranging discussion took place regarding accessibility and inclusion within future developments. Members highlighted issues relating to public transport accessibility, accessible housing standards, Blue Badge parking provision, access to town centres and the need for lifetime homes.

Particular concern was expressed regarding reductions in accessible parking within Maidenhead town centre and the potential impact on disabled residents' ability to access services, shops and community facilities. Members also discussed accessibility considerations associated with the Nicholsons redevelopment and future regeneration projects.

Caroline Waites and other members raised concerns that consultation materials had not been made available in Easy Read format. It was noted that this may have limited participation by some residents with learning disabilities and others who require accessible information.

Lucinda Pinhorne-Smy acknowledged the concerns and advised that accessible consultation materials would be carefully considered as part of future engagement activity.

Caroline Waites offered support in engaging self-advocacy groups and ensuring that people with learning disabilities had opportunities to contribute their views.

Action: An update regarding the Nicholsons regeneration project to be added to a future agenda where possible.

7. New Engagement Platform

Ellen McManus-Fry provided an update on the council's new Engagement Hub platform, which has replaced the previous consultation portal.

Members were advised that the new platform had been developed with accessibility in mind and had been designed to meet current web accessibility standards. The platform also provides greater transparency by allowing residents to view consultation outcomes and understand how their feedback has been considered.

Members welcomed the improvements and discussed wider accessibility considerations associated with council websites and digital engagement.

8. SEND Voices RBWM

Yingni Lu delivered a presentation on the work of SEND Voices RBWM.

Members heard about the organisation's activity over the previous year, including representation at strategic meetings, engagement events, parent support initiatives, coffee mornings and collaborative work with local partners.

The Forum was advised of developments including improvements to the SEND Local Offer website, delivery of Healthy Parent Carer training, support for parent carers and work to increase participation by children and young people in decision-making processes.

Discussion took place regarding employment and supported internship opportunities for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Members considered ways in which additional employers could be encouraged to participate and provide opportunities for local young people.

The Chair thanked Yingni for the presentation and welcomed the valuable contribution made by SEND Voices RBWM.

Action: Opportunities to support and promote supported internships to be explored further.

9. Equality Objectives Update

Ellen McManus-Fry provided an update on the review and refresh of the council's Equality Objectives.

Members were advised that work was beginning on the development of a new set of objectives to succeed the current framework when it concludes in 2027. The existing objectives focus on understanding inequality, embedding equality considerations in decision-making, reducing inequalities and developing an inclusive workforce.

Members discussed potential priorities for the future objectives and highlighted the importance of recognising intersectionality, ensuring inclusive recruitment practices and considering equality and diversity expectations within commissioned services and contractor workforces.

It was also suggested that progress against current objectives should be reviewed alongside development of the new framework.

Action: Forum members to submit comments and suggestions to Ellen McManus-Fry.

10. Living Well Together Cafes

Sumayyah Zeib and Gemma Burgin presented information regarding the proposed Living Well Together programme.

The programme aims to provide earlier intervention, information, advice and support within local communities, helping residents access services before challenges escalate into crisis situations.

Members were advised that the programme would involve collaboration between council services, health partners, voluntary organisations and community groups.

The proposal was welcomed by Forum members, who recognised the benefits of preventative and community-based approaches.

Dennis Jeffrey suggested engagement with established local user groups, while Steve Sansom highlighted opportunities to connect with existing dementia-friendly networks.

Action: A further update on the Living Well Together programme to be provided at a future meeting.

11. Residents' Panel

Ellen McManus-Fry provided an overview of work underway to establish a new resident panel provisionally titled Royal Borough Voices.

The panel is intended to provide regular opportunities for residents aged 16 and over to share their views on council services, policy development and community priorities.

Members welcomed the proposal but raised concerns regarding digital exclusion and potential barriers for residents who may find written surveys difficult to complete.

The importance of offering alternative formats was emphasised, including audio and video submissions where appropriate.

Ellen confirmed that accessibility considerations would be incorporated into the development process.

Action: Accessibility requirements and alternative methods of participation to be considered as part of panel development.

12. Consultations Update

Ellen McManus-Fry highlighted a number of consultations currently taking place across the borough.

These included the Appointeeship Service Charging Consultation, Public Space Protection Order Consultation, Development Plan Scoping Consultation, Call for Sites and Community Governance Review.

Members were encouraged to participate in consultations and share information through their networks where appropriate.

13. Any Other Business

Members shared information regarding a number of community events and activities, including an ADHD workshop to be held on 26 September (poster circulated to members), Wellness Wednesday activities and Merry Moments with Buttons and Bubbles to be held on 9 December 2026 (poster circulated to members).

Attendees were encouraged to circulate details through their organisations and networks to maximise awareness and participation.

14. Close of Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, contributions and continued commitment to improving accessibility and inclusion across the Royal Borough.

The meeting closed at the conclusion of business.

