

Cross Party Group Disability Meeting Minutes 28/07/2022

Location: Zoom

Chair: Mark Isherwood MS

Secretary: Megan Thomas, Disability Wales

Speakers: Marg McNeill See Around Britain, Ben Cottam, Federation of Small Businesses: Presentation on the “Business Without Barriers” report

Apologies: Mike Hedges MS, Peredur Owen Glyndwr MS, Heledd Fychan MS, Altaf Hussein MS, Owen Williams WCB.

1 – Minutes from previous meeting.

Matters Arising:

- Cost of Living Crisis
 - Morvenna has been in touch with Ben Lake MP about the cost of living crisis
 - Letter to Treasury to be sent in September, delayed due to Conservative leadership contest.

Chair put to vote if minutes from previous meeting represented a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

Vote passes

2 – Tribute to Vin West MBE, Mark Isherwood MS

Tribute to group member Vin West who passed away earlier this year.

3- Marg McNeill, See Around Britain

- See Around Britain is an online interactive map, which allows disabled people to see photographs of different locations to check it's accessibility. Available in multiple languages, including Ukrainian.
- Asking Cross Party Group to write to high profile figures in support of See Around Britain.

Key Points from Questions:

- Problems with Accessing Physical Environment

- Dismay that despite legislation being put into place about the accessibility of buildings, this is still a problem. Suggestion that this information needs to be included on tourist boards.
- Additional Suggestions
 - App could include rating system.
 - Other people and places to send the website to, including town councils, county councils and celebrities.

4 – Ben Cottam, Federation of Small Businesses: Presentation on the “Business Without Barriers” report

- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is an organisation with roughly 165,000 members across the UK.
- Mainly focuses on entrepreneurship and employment, pressure from COVID has stimulated conversations on disability, wellbeing and mental health.
- Disabled people more likely to be employed in smaller businesses
- Communicating to businesses that by not understanding needs of different communities they are not utilising full breath of talent. Especially important as there is a skills crisis in Wales and the UK so businesses need understand these issues.
- More support for businesses is needed, especially regarding disability.
- With the young person’s guarantee, it’s especially important that there is understanding of and support for young disabled people who want to start their own businesses.

Key Points from Questions:

- Self-employment often used as a solution to employment of disabled people, but isn’t suitable for everyone.
- Current support isn’t accessible
- The need to continue to advocate for the social model of disability and raise awareness with different public and private bodies.
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5 – Letter to Minister for Transport group discussion

- Crisis with transport in Ceredigion, not enough buses available. Particular issue for disabled people and older people.

- Swansea DVLA is in a crisis, understaffed and many applications are taking an extremely long time. Member has medical license, there's threat of losing license and causing isolation. Note: this is a non-devolved matter.
- Blue badges, concern only available in England. Blue badges are available in Wales, but issues with bureaucratic system and lack of accessibility of appeal process. The Group agreed to include this as an agenda item at a future meeting.

6 – AOB

Treatment of Neurodiversity in Justice System

- UK Judge described autistic people as “abnormal” and incapable of experiencing empathy during a sentencing.
- Concern about how to combat the negative stereotypes about neurodivergent and mentally ill people in the justice system and beyond.

Human Rights Bill

- Concern about the Human Rights Bill in Westminster.
- Welsh Government issued a response, there is a separate Cross Party Group covering the subject

Date of next meeting: Date of next meeting: 29th September – this date has now changed to 3pm on Friday 21st October.

Action points:

- Follow up with See Around Britain RE: contacting individuals/ organisations about supporting See Around Britain's work.
- Secretary to write letter to Transport Minister regarding issues raised in group discussion.