University of Essex Access Forum (EAF)

Minutes of meeting held on November 9th 2016

Present: Rowena Macaulay, Charlotte Humphries, Penny Christmas, John Stevens, Francisco Sepulveda, Alexandra Seabrook, Jan Cooper, Kevan Wilding, Darren Baker, Karen Bush, Angela Jones, Michele James, Bryn Morris

Action

1. Apologies: John Crust.

   Note: David Sanders is no longer acting as Disability Champion and his position is unlikely to be replaced.

2. Minutes from previous meeting (June 15th, 2016) agreed. Matters arising:

   i. Quotation for automated doors has been received and passed to Ian Hack to agree. IH only just returning from extended leave so matter to be passed to Mark Freeman

   ii. Student Support Office automatic door is in place and seems to be successful. Remaining internal Silberrad doors are still receiving complaints (stay-backs not always working consistently?); similarly the automated front door.

      Silberrad SSO staff to keep vigilant eye and report directly to Andrew Sheppard (EMS) for immediate repair as necessary.

   iii. Zig-zag approach ramp to Silberrad from Library. MJ and RM met with Kevin Mascall to discuss options for improved safety and wayfinding. Agreed best option to be purchase of further box hedges to create solid barriers along the ramps stepped edges. BM happy to authorise necessary costs.

   iv. Barrier access seems to be working ok now for newly authorised Underpodia blue badge holders.

   v. Charlotte Humphries presented EMS management strategy for Underpodia parking during/post STEM build (circulated to EAF this week).

      At present, on paper, there are sufficient spaces for those needing them, although the reality has been that authorised parkers have still found their spaces taken quite regularly. The survey proposals will be implemented as demand requires. Interim efforts will focus on: i) increased monitoring of designated spaces by parking officers and fining as necessary (already underway), and ii) demarcation of red
spaces via installation of notices, mounted on posts i.e. at driver’s eye level.

3. BUILDINGS and ESTATE (standing item):
   
i. Principal builds underway in 2016-17, in addition to STEM, include The Innovation Centre (Knowledge Gateway), the Sports Centre extension, and Stage Two of The Meadows. Management strategies are in place for displaced and contractor parking.

   ii. The proposed new Amphitheatre on the lake is not going ahead at present due to cost, although there will be piers built out on to the lake and a path around it, linking with the BBQ area.

   John Stevens raised the issue of appropriate lighting as this has been raised previously by visually impaired students. Pavement uplighters in particular, where not supported by other lighting set higher, can leave other approaching path users insufficiently lit. This issue to be referred back to EMS to seek specialist advice on accessible lighting options in outdoor spaces.

5. Assistive technology and future provision

   The meeting acknowledged the absence of a university strategy on assistive technologies and agreed such a development might be a positive step, especially in view of DSA changes, which mean reduced funding for specialised facilities/support.

   Student Support seem best placed to take forwards although they have no IT experts themselves, so would need to be a collaborative effort between SSO, IT Services and the Library. Michele James to consider further.

   There is a dedicated Uni webpage on Assistive Technologies, here: https://www.essex.ac.uk/it/services/computers-and-software/

6. New charges for disabled drivers under podia were brought in for the first time in October, provoking some strong reactions among those affected, partly on account of the removal of what was considered to be a ‘reasonable adjustment’, partly on account of lack of consultation and advance notification.

   The meeting confirmed that the decision is subject to a six-month review. Charlotte Humphries to write to all disabled drivers affected to contribute their views on the new payment system and/or experiences Underpodia over the period up to May 2017.

   Kevan Wilding suggested that alternative options such as opt-in pay schemes also be explored.
CH reported that the Uni car parks are to be assessed for accreditation with Helen Dolphin’s ‘People’s Parking’ accessibility project.

7. Registration of Silberrad Changing Places toilet with Changing Places UK

To date our CP facility has not been registered on the nationwide CP database. There is no cost to registration and it would be good publicity for the University; possibly making the difference between a prospective student applying to Essex over another university.

Agreed that EMS should take forwards.

8. AOB

9. Date of next meeting – tbc

Rowena Macaulay