



MANCHESTER DISABILITY FORUM

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Please reply to :

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 1984 at 5 30pm in St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, M12.

Present: Marge Cooper (Chairperson)
Linda Carroll
Kevin Hyett
Dave Rogers
Robbie Robinson
Martin Field

In attendance: Dorothy Whitaker, Juliet Woulfe

- 1 Apologies Jenny Anketell, Joan Taylor, Malcolm Fisher, Paul Weymes, Bernard Leach, Frank Tranter.
- 2 Notes of the last meeting (held on 3 September 1984) were accepted as an accurate record.
- 3 Matters arising
 - 3.1 From item 6.2: an outline was given of the meeting held on 4 September between some Forum members and Councillor Sheila Robertson. This had largely focused upon the way the public meeting about the proposed Disability Sub-Committee in the Town Hall should be run, and how stressed the principles which MDF had already submitted to the Equal Opportunities Committee.
 - 3.2 From item 9: further to the consideration of extending any regular invitation to members of the three Health Authorities to attend MDF Management Committee meetings. Martin noted that a letter had been received from the South Manchester Health Authority asking the Forum if it wishes to have their 'representative' replaced. This follows the resignation of the Councillor whom had been nominated as such a representative. It was felt that the previous meeting's consideration should stand, and that no such replacement was desired. Minutes of the Management Committee will, however, be made available to the Health Authorities.
 - 3.3 From item 10: with reference to the new Industrial Steering Group being promoted by the Spastics Society, it was agreed that collaboration with, and involvement by, the workers in the Manchester centre is more important than any solicited involvement from the Forum. Committee members felt however that it would be supportive to people working at the centre if it could be visited and some direct contacts made there. Dave expressed interest in this, and it was suggested Bernard would be likewise. It was agreed to write to the Society to this end, and to contact Sharon Hughes to ask for her assistance.

4 Co-ordinator's report

- 4.1 Martin's report was received with thanks. It was hoped that the Forum's office will be used for meetings now that the ramp has arrived.
- 4.2 It was noted that the Co-ordinator has been attending a large number of meetings on MDF's behalf due to a lack of other members being available.

5 MDF - future policies and directions

- 5.1 As this occupied the main part of the agenda a long discussion ensued, covering many points. These may be summarised as follows.
- 5.2
 - 5.2.1 Concern was expressed as to the falling numbers of Forum members actively involved in Forum affairs. Existing policy was noted for committee members to make contact with, and visit, other disability groups as an attempt to find new supporters - this has yet to be undertaken in any comprehensive form. One reason for this was suggested to be peoples uncertainty of 'selling' the Forum, of not being sure how to present what MDF has to offer or what it has achieved.
 - 5.2.2 It was further noted that there is an ambiguity in the Forum's present position on issues in general - that of whether it is supposed to be representing all disabled people, or only one independent part of the disabled community. One opinion was that the Forums independent character enables it to be critical of existing, conventional standards and services. Allied to this however, was the opinion that whatever level of theorising and comment, issues from the Forum, it will always be in need of firm contacts and support at 'grassroots' level. And it may be such grassroots support that is most lacking at present.
 - 5.2.3 The point was stressed that individuals within the disabled community have differing degrees of handicap, and vary widely in their abilities and understanding of disability issues. It was felt important however to bear in mind the need for there to be a broad and constant flow of information between all members of this community. With regard to an organisation like MDF, a point to always consider was that different people join for a variety of reasons, all of which can still be accommodated.
- 5.3 In terms of defining and clarifying the above points as to what the Forum's future role and involvements should be, these amounted to:
 - 5.3.1 to continue to seek wider support at grassroots level;
 - 5.3.2 to support the disability issues component of the Equal Opportunities Committee, but to remain in an unofficial 'ombudsman' role;
 - 5.3.4 to look towards other means of broadening peoples views on disability issues - eg. it was suggested that the Access Group could hold some meetings in the Frank Taylor Centre;
 - 5.3.5 that Forum members time and energies would be better served at present by concentrating on manageable specific issues, rather than on the more large-scale approach to disability issues. (This not least involves a re-think of the role that Forum subgroups are fulfilling, and it was agreed that the Education group could be best put in abeyance for the present, and its members energies channelled into other projects if possible.)

5.3.6 Two specific issues that it was agreed should be focused upon were:

i) that mentioned in 3.3 above, concerning the Spastics Society industrial group.

ii) the need to open a comprehensive dialogue with TAB, with a view towards working jointly on improving the overall information services for disabled people in Manchester.

5.3.7 It was further felt that there may be a need to define where the Forum and the GM Coalition of Disabled People may be duplicating an input onto disability issues unnecessarily.

5.4

5.4.1 It was noted that funds currently available for volunteers and members expenses were not being utilised. Neither had sufficient suggestions been received for equipment and resources to use from the office. Martin and Marge were accordingly delegated to acquire further materials as they considered appropriate, and it was agreed that petty cash be available for committee members so as they should not be asked to cover costs out of their own pockets.

5.4.2 The point was also raised of contributing to the expenses of work MDF is associated with (eg. the Community Car Scheme). It was agreed that such expenses could be covered subject to the approval of the Management Committee in each instance.

5.5 There was a brief discussion on finalising the revised constitution and the formal application to register as an Industrial and Provident Society. It was agreed that the position had been reached of where all MDF members should meet to ratify the proposed revision of the constitution. This general meeting will occupy the main part of the next Management Committee meeting.

6 Any other business

Marge noted that there was to be an open meeting in the North district, put on by the Social Services Department, to discuss the proposed Community Development Officer post being funded which will concentrate on issues affecting physically-impaired people. It was noted that the principles already put forward to the Equal Opportunities Committee will be equally applicable to this post and could be presented by her at this meeting.

7 Date of next meeting(s)

29 October 7 30pm at St Thomas Centre, M12

27 November 5 30pm