

Staplehurst Access Group

2nd July Meeting

Sobell Lodge

Today we had a grand total of 10 people attending with one regular member sending an apology for his absence. This is the most we have had to date and is encouraging.

Minutes were taken and will be available later.

The same problems came up again about wheelchairs made to feel unwanted as customers in Staplehurst. Most managers were helpful in themselves but were restricted by head offices. Spar was considered the best in terms of willingness together with Martins but lack of space meant that the isles were always blocked to Wheelchairs.

Several members complained about the off licence not being at all willing to assist chair users, asking people what they want at the door is not good enough. Browsing and choosing is part of the pleasure of wine and is denied to disabled shoppers in this community.

It was unanimously decided to have one more try with the manager and if nothing was done by the next meeting then the issue would be handed over to the Regional Office of LCD to take up with the manager's superiors.

It was noted that the disabled spaces outside the Bell were in completely the wrong position as they are on a steep slope. This was upsetting to all members because they appreciated that the owner took a lot of trouble to mark them out. This is an example of where such awareness groups as this can assist if only people would seek out and ask. More publicity was considered to be the answer.

The other perennial question of independent access to the Parish Church was raised again. Enquiries of the church were not encouraging. However a suggestion is to be examined for another route and will be looked into. We were delighted to welcome for a first time Mr Alex Smith who very kindly offered to edit and design our page on the web site. Alex was given carte blanche to do what he thought best and was encouraged to add as many links as he wanted. With Alex came his carer, Dora from Hungary, so we have our first international member.

A report was made about the success of Sobell earlier in the week and it is hoped that a press release will be sent out next week.

We were all very pleased with the way the group is progressing. It seems to be developing into as much a chat and self help group with different members exchanging knowledge and tips.

It was reported that Borough Councillor Marion Ring has accepted an invitation to visit Sobell after she gives the guest speech at McCabe AGM

this September.

The Parish Council were thanked for their continuing interest and encouragement and members hoped that councillors realised that they are very welcome to sit in on any meeting.

Peter Spearink