

# MINUTES OF ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY TASK GROUP

11 DECEMBER 2018

## PRESENT:

### Members of the Task Group:

Councillors Mrs A'Barrow (Chair), Mrs Bragg, Douglas, Mrs Garcia and Leigh Hunt

### Officers:

Chris Worman (Parks and Grounds Manager), David Collins (Property Manager) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

## 1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

**RESOLVED THAT** – Councillor Mrs A'Barrow be appointed Chair of the task group for the 2018/19 municipal year.

## 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Keeling and Mrs O'Rourke.

## 3. REVIEW OF THE ONE-PAGE STRATEGY

The task group reviewed and agreed the one-page strategy. It was noted that an Access Statement for the Visitors Centre had been produced giving details of the facilities.

Brooke School, Individual Support Solutions (ISS) and GLL were added to the list of consultees.

## 4. PROGRAMME OF WORK

The task group received briefings from the Parks and Grounds Manager and the Property Manager giving members background to the current arrangements and facilities and setting the scene for the review. The following points were made:

### ***Parks and Grounds***

- The approach by officers was not just about green spaces and was in line with the corporate objective to "Enhance our local, open spaces to make them places where people want to be."
- The Green Spaces Strategy contained a number of themed actions, one of which was accessibility.
- One key action related to wellbeing issues and the links to green spaces.
- Although not specifically related to disability, site management plans contain content based around accessibility. One example was the recent improvements made to Whitehall Recreation Ground. Following a wide-ranging consultation exercise the new play area was designed with the aim of being inclusive and making it accessible for all.

- The green spaces team takes this approach to all its projects and refurbishments and this included planting. The sensory garden in Caldecott Park had been located away from the main flower beds. There was a mix of sensory planting to include dramatic colours and scented perennials.
- The access for people with a disability was poor at some of the outlying sites.
- The review topic was initiated at the annual overview and scrutiny workshop by a member of the public who had difficulty accessing the park at Strawberry Fields. Other comments and complaints had been received about this site.
- This land had historic connections and was part of a large green network. The walkways consisted of bonded gravel that had worn away over time.
- It would be very expensive to tarmac the path, and this could cost around £120,000.
- Improvements and re-surfacing works were carried out on a section of the Great Central Way which was funded through a collective bid. The aim was to source funding for similar projections through the same type of collective bid for grants, wherever this was possible.
- Given it's an old railway cutting some access points for the Great Central Way were very naturally steep but there are alternative access points such as Abbey Street.
- The Council works in partnership with the Rugby Disability Forum on its projects and schemes. The management plan for Caldecott Park was now out of date and they have been a key consultee for reviewing the plan.

During further discussion the following points were made:

- The criteria was based on applicable or alternative access, where this was possible. Land such as country parks could be suitable for change, although given some of the natural constraints of some of the land full access is not possible.
- There was no list of accessible sites. It would be useful if some form of map was available, or some means of being able to signpost people to where this information could be found.

### ***The Built Environment***

Relevant legislation included:

- Disabled access for new buildings – regulations were prescribed in the Building Regulations Approved Document M volumes 1 and 2, 2015 (updated 2016).
- There was a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people within existing buildings prescribed in the Equality Act 2010 (legislation which superseded the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and became effective 2004).
- Workplace (Health, Safety, and Welfare) regulations 1992.

A breakdown for housing relating matters included:

- There is an Adaptation Policy in place
- The budget for 2018/2019 was £220,000
- The spend to date was £95,000
- Works carried out included:
  - Seven stairlifts
  - Thirty-five level access showers installed
  - Four doorway and kitchen adaptations
  - One set of rear French doors
  - Twenty-three grab rail projects
  - One hardstanding

Details for Council owned public buildings included:

- Original access reports and upgrade works were undertaken in 2005 on John Barford Car Park, The Town Hall, Lawn and Retreat, all sports pavilions and Watts Lane and Addison Road Chapels.
- Work undertaken at the Town Hall included disabled toilets to the ground floor, first floor and basement (including a level access shower).
- Further work was undertaken at the Town Hall in 2010 as part of the accommodation project that included the new reception area and external access ramps.
- The Benn Hall has disabled toilet facilities and access ramps (a portable ramp for access to the stage is hired when required).
- Rugby Art Gallery and Museum has disabled toilet facilities and access ramps.
- The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Leisure Centre (QDJLC) and Rainsbrook Crematorium are both newly built and met buildings regulations standards at the date of construction.

### ***Changing Places Scheme***

The Task Group were informed about the current position regarding the Changing Places Scheme as follows:

- The changing rooms were large spaces of around 16 sq m and contained a lot of equipment.
- The Council was in consultation with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to source grant funding.
- Discussions with Rugby First Limited resulted in the preferred option of the changing room and toilet being located at Rugby Central shopping centre, which was offered to WCC, and the Council was currently awaiting feedback.
- The shopping centre has the available space and it would attract greater footfall.

During further discussion the following points were made:

- The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 state that reasonable adjustments should be made meaning judgement would be required for older buildings.
- Adaptations to housing often needed to be carried out quickly.
- It was clear there were some access issues within the Town Hall. Making any improvements would be difficult and expensive, particularly replacing the ramps to the committee suite.
- Hearing loops had been installed in the Council Chamber.
- The adaption equipment can be recycled for different users because of the similar designs of housing. Three of our seven pieces of equipment was recycled.
- Housing officers took a prudent approach to supplying equipment and care was taken to look after assets, but recycling was only possible when safe to do so.
- There were no other budgets available for improvements or adaptations.
- The budget was based on historic information to match the amount needed.
- The Council no longer built housing so there was no standard house design which meant adaptations on new builds could be more challenging. However, the building regulations for new builds in relation to access were much better.
- It would be difficult to swap baths for level access showers because they needed a much bigger space, and the requirements of users varied.

- Individual assessments were carried out by occupational therapists which were forwarded onto the housing team. The requirements were specific to personal needs.
- Members asked about how issues or complaints were filtered down to officers and were informed that these came in either via the central administration team in the Contact Centre and directed to the relevant department. Any trends could be highlighted. In some cases, these were received by individual officers or managers.
- Annual surveys were also carried out to obtain feedback and collect data.
- The new asset management system collected data but did not hold historical information.
- It was important to consider future generations and the range of different types of disabilities, and not just the physical.
- It was noted that the policies relating to the licensing of taxis covered access for people with disabilities meant that this part of the review was well covered. However, there were no taxis that could take two wheelchair users at the same time. It was agreed this should be referred to the licensing team to be raised at a future meeting of the Rugby Hackney Owner Driver Association taxi forum.
- Members reported that disabled users of the swimming pool at the QDJLC had difficulty entering the pool because the hand rails had been fitted too far apart.

### **Next Steps**

To enable the group to report back to Whittle in March it was agreed that a questionnaire be produced and circulated to all consultees asking for their top three issues or concerns and comments relating to good or bad feedback or experiences.

A meeting would be arranged in January when the consultees would be invited to attend to present their responses. It should be made clear that there would be no budget attached to this.

## **5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The task group agreed that the next meeting would be held at 6pm on Thursday 24 January 2019.

A provisional date of Wednesday 20 February 2019 was also agreed for the following meeting.

**CHAIR**