

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17th April 2012

ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TASK GROUP – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Relevant Portfolio Holders	Councillor Carole Gandy, Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership, Councillor Michael Braley, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management and Councillor Jinny Pearce, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport
Portfolio Holders Consulted	No
Relevant Heads of Service	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Head of Planning and Regeneration and Head of Regulatory Services.
Ward(s) Affected	Abbey
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

The report provides a summary of the findings and final recommendations made by the Access for Disabled People Task Group. The executive summary should be considered alongside the Access for Disabled People Task Group's final report which provides a more detailed description of the review process, the evidence basis for the group's recommendations and the implications of proposed actions.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

DISABLED PARKING

- 1) Majority Recommendation:
disabled parking spaces should be provided as part of any redevelopment of the former covered market area

OR

Minority recommendation:
a section of the former covered market area located to the rear of the Debenhams unit should be converted for disabled parking for a trial period of six months;

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- 2) subject to the proposal for disabled parking to be introduced in the former covered market area being approved the Council should approach Age UK about the possibility of providing access to a number of scooters from the charity's shop unit which is located in that area;
- 3) a user friendly map demonstrating the location of disabled parking spaces and Shopmobility in Redditch town centre should be produced and promoted on the Council's website, in Redditch Matters and on the Palace Theatre's website and should be promoted to local businesses to use;
- 4) the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work with Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department, the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and other partner organisations to introduce delivery and collection points for vehicles carrying passengers with disabilities. The following options should be considered for this purpose:
 - a) the Apollo 2000 car park;
 - b) the former covered market area;
 - c) land within the vicinity of the Palace Theatre;
 - d) an area beside the Lloyds bank branch in Redditch; and
 - e) an area in the town centre that could be used by customers of the Apollo cinema;

TAXI SERVICES

- 5) taxi companies should be offered licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than standard vehicles to incentivise taxi firms to increase the number of adapted vehicles in their fleets. The vehicles should be permitted to operate for these lengthier periods of time subject to passing the two inspection tests and the MOT that the Council's licensing regime requires for each vehicle;
- 6) taxi drivers should be offered disability awareness training, which would include information about manually assisting people with disabilities, by Redditch Borough Council;

BUSES

- 7) Worcestershire County Council's Transport Department should be asked to consider facilitating partnership working between Diamond Buses and another company in order to support the introduction of an audio-visual system on buses operating in Redditch. This

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arrangement should be extended to any other bus operator if they express an interest in introducing a similar system;

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8) a disability awareness session should be delivered as part of the Member Development Programme at Redditch Borough Council;
- 9) ward Members should be made aware that they can use their knowledge of the local community to assess the condition of the pavements and dropped kerbs located in their wards and report their findings for the consideration of Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and Redditch Borough Council's Environmental Services;
- 10) the Council's Planning Department should consider arranging for funding from Section 106 agreements to be allocated to the installation of tactile signage in the town centre for the use of people with sensory impairments and similarly funding for this form of signage should be incorporated as a requirement into a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule for Redditch;
- 11) Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and other relevant partners to ensure that more seating is provided in the shopping centre;
- 12) Redditch Town Centre Partnership should approach the new owners of the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to discuss the possibility of:
 - a) providing people with disabilities with access to a changing places toilet; and
 - b) enacting the RNIB React signage system for the benefit of customers with sensory impairments; and

to RESOLVE that

- 13) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive a monitoring report in six months time concerning the support provided by Officers to the Redditch Access for Disabled Group and elected Members in relation to disability access issues; and
- 14) the report be noted.

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3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 The Access for Disabled People Task Group review was commissioned in September 2011 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The group consisted of five elected Members: Councillor Mason (Chair) and Councillors A Clayton, Fry, Hartnett and Quinney.
- 3.2 Initially the group was tasked with reviewing a variety of issues impacting on people with disabilities living in the Borough. However, Members discovered that this remit was too wide ranging for a scrutiny review. For this reason the group's core objectives were reduced in October 2011.
- 3.3 The main focus of the review was on the accessibility of Redditch Town Centre to people with disabilities. In particular, the group was tasked with scrutinising accessibility of local taxi services and public transport, specifically buses as well as provision of disabled parking spaces in the town centre. Members considered the needs and requirements of people with different types of disabilities including, mobility impairments, sensory impairments and learning disabilities.
- 3.4 To complete the review according to schedule the group agreed that each member would be awarded responsibility for addressing key themes individually. Responsibility was divided between the members of the group in relation to: disabled access to taxis and licensing requirements; disabled access to buses; disabled parking and legal requirements for disability access; and community consultation. The information obtained by individual Councillors was reported for the consideration of the group.
- 3.5 During the review evidence was obtained from a variety of sources. This included face-to-face interviews with representatives of bus companies and local taxi firms, interviews with relevant Officers from Redditch Borough Council and scrutiny of written reports. The group also obtained information through consultation with local residents, particularly residents with disabilities.
- 3.6 The group consulted Officers from Redditch Borough Council with regard to the financial and legal implications of a number of actions that formed the basis of a list of draft recommendations. All the decisions about the group's final recommendations were made collectively and were based on the feedback that had been received from Officers, expert witnesses and local residents.
- 3.7 Recommendation One from the group has been proposed in two forms: a majority report and a minority report. In cases where Scrutiny Members cannot agree on a single final report the Council's constitution permits the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make no more than one minority report, representing the views of a minority of elected Members, in addition to the majority report for the consideration of the Council's Executive Committee.

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- 3.8 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been asked to make a decision on the group's thirteenth recommendation. The Committee has the power to make a decision on this subject because the Committee determines which subjects can be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. The Executive Committee will be asked to note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's decision on this subject.

Financial Implications

- 3.9 There are a number of financial implications which are detailed, where relevant, in relation to each of the recommendations in the Access for Disabled People Task Group's final report.

Legal Implications

- 3.10 There are a number of legal implications which are detailed, where relevant, in relation to each of the recommendations in the Access for Disabled People Task Group's final report.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.11 There are a number of service and operational implications which are detailed, where relevant, in relation to each of the recommendations in the Access for Disabled People Task Group's final report.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.12 The Equality Act 2010 focused on the needs of people with protected characteristics, which includes disabilities. Public bodies, including local authorities, have a lawful duty of regard to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The findings and actions detailed in the Access for Disabled People Task Group report should enable Redditch Borough Council to pay due regard to the needs of people with disabilities living in the Borough in line with these legislative requirements.
- 3.13 The group attempted to consult widely with local residents, particularly residents with disabilities, during the review. A variety of consultation methods were used which included issuing questionnaires to the public, consulting the Redditch Access for Disabled Group and meeting with members of the Redditch Older People's Forum. The information provided by residents through consultation was addressed further during interviews with expert witnesses and in the group's final recommendations.

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

The group's findings and recommendations need to be considered in detail. There is a risk that if this does not occur the extent to which Redditch Borough Council has paid due regard to the needs of people with disabilities may be open to question.

5. APPENDICES

There are no appendices to the executive summary.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Access for Disabled People Task Group - Final Report.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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