

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

14th August 2012

ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TASK GROUP – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Relevant Portfolio Holders	Councillor Bill Hartnett, Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership, Councillor Phil Mould, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management and Councillor Greg Chance, 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

We RECOMMEND that

DISABLED PARKING

- 1) the former covered market area, located to the rear of the Debenhams unit, should be converted for disabled parking and used as a collection and delivery point by Dial a Ride vehicles, as detailed in Appendix B (of the main report), for a trial period of 12 months.**

- 2) a user friendly version of the map (detailed in Appendix E of the main report) demonstrating the location of disabled parking spaces and Shopmobility in Redditch town centre should be produced and promoted on the Council's website, on the Redditch Matters e-magazine and on the Palace Theatre's website and should be promoted to local businesses to use;**
 - a) the contents of this map should be reviewed every twelve months to ensure that the information remains accurate;**

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- 3) **Redditch Borough Council should work with the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to introduce collection and delivery points in the town centre that could be used by vehicles transporting people with disabilities;**

TAXI SERVICES

- 4) **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;**
- 5) **taxi drivers should be offered disability awareness training, which would include information about manually assisting people with disabilities, by Redditch Borough Council;**

BUSES

- 6) **Worcestershire County Council's Transport Department should work with local bus operators to apply for any future Better Buses Area Funding from the Department for Transport to finance the installation of audio-visual equipment on buses operating in Redditch Borough;**

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7) **a disability awareness session should be delivered as part of the Member Development Programme at Redditch Borough Council;**
- 8) **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;**
- 9) **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;**

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- 10) **Redditch Town Centre Partnership work with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to:**
- a) **provide people with disabilities with access to a changing places toilet;**
 - b) **enact the RNIB React signage system for the benefit of customers with sensory impairments;**
 - c) **display priority seating stickers on seats already situated in the shopping centre; and**
 - d) **introduce additional seating in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, involving an investigation of the ergonomics of the seating provided;**
- 11) **Officers undertake further work into the following areas that should be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee at a later date:**
- a) **a review of the potential to install a canopy over the ramp access to Shopmobility; and**
 - b) **a joint review in partnership with Apollo 2000 of the potential for the Council to undertake landscaping work in the company's car park in return for using the car park as a collection and delivery point for Dial a Ride vehicles;**
- 12) **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive the following update reports in six months time:**
- a) **an update concerning the support provided by Officers to the Redditch Disabled Access Group in relation to disability issues; and**
 - b) **a report monitoring the implementation of the group's recommendations.**

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 Fry, Hartnett, Quinney and former Councillor A. Clayton. An initial report was presented for the consideration of the Committee in April when Members concluded that further

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work was required. Following the elections in May 2012 Councillor Fry was appointed to Chair the group. In addition Councillors M Chalk and Smith were appointed to replace Councillor Hartnett and former Councillor A. Clayton. The group was tasked with completing this additional work by September 2012.

- 3.2 The main focus of the review was on the accessibility of Redditch Town Centre for 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.
- 3.3 During the first stage of 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 For the second stage of the review the group was tasked with undertaking further consultation work. A number of the group's recommendations had implications for partner organisations, though it had not been possible to consult all of these bodies prior to May 2012. In particular, the group had postponed consulting with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre until the sale of the centre had been completed, which did not occur until May 2012. The group decided that this was the most appropriate course of action to take to ensure that any feedback received from representatives of the centre reflected the position of the new owners.
- 3.6 The group was also tasked with investigating current access arrangements for Dial A Ride customers to the Shopmobility service. Concerns were expressed during the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in April 2012 that Dial A Ride vehicles were creating barriers to other vehicles attempting to access Car Park 2 and that the access point was not therefore safe for customers.
- 3.7 To address these concerns the group visited Shopmobility in July 2012 to observe current access arrangements. To ensure that the group secured an authentic customer experience Members travelled to Shopmobility on a Dial A Ride vehicle and the Chair travelled in a wheelchair. To minimise the impact of this field trip the visit took place during a quiet period for the service.

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- 3.8 Members welcomed the excellent service provided by both Dial A Ride and Shopmobility staff. The Dial A Ride vehicle was not observed to cause any obstruction to other vehicles and the location where the buses stopped did not create any risks for pedestrians or customers.
- 3.9 However, concerns were expressed by Members regarding the ramp access to Shopmobility from the entrance to Car Park 2. An anti-slip surface has been applied to the ramp, which receives a priority cleaning service during periods of inclement weather. However, Members were concerned that during periods of persistently bad weather the surface of the ramp could become slippery, creating a risk of customer falls, because there is no cover at present over the ramp. To address these concerns the group is proposing, in recommendation 11a, that further review work should be undertaken to identify the potential to install a roof of some form over the ramp.
- 3.10 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been asked to make a decision on the group's twelfth 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.

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. Whilst these financial costs have implications for Redditch Borough Council in some instances there are also implications for the Council's partner organisations as detailed in the main report.
- 3.10 Redditch borough Council would be required to allocate financial resources to implement recommendation one. The group has been advised that £14,000 would be required to introduce disabled parking in the former covered market area. This figure would cover the costs involved in: marking out the disabled parking bays, marking pedestrian routes, providing signage for the area and reinforcing the existing steel columns that support the roof structure in the former covered market area. Administrative costs and the costs of Officer time would need to be added to this figure together with additional costs that might be incurred if civil parking enforcement is extended to the area.

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.

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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.

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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