

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Tuesday, 14th August, 2012

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Juliet Brunner (Chair), Councillor Simon Chalk (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, David Bush, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill, Gay Hopkins and Pat Witherspoon

### Also Present:

Councillors Alan Mason and Yvonne Smith

### Officers:

L Hadley, T Kristunas, D Poole, J Staniland, A Scarce, M Stanley and A de Warr

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

### Minute 50, Relevant Minutes Extract

#### ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

On behalf of the review group, Councillors Andrew Fry and Alan Mason provided the Committee with a presentation which summarised the additional work that had been undertaken since initial report on the subject was considered by Members on 17th April 2012.

Members and Officers raised a number of points about the content of the review.

#### Parking in the Former Covered Market Area:

Concern was expressed that there was a potential for pedestrian and vehicle conflict if the former covered market area was used for disabled parking and as a collection and delivery point by Dial-a-Ride vehicles.

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Chair

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To minimise the risks to pedestrians to the group had suggested that Fountain's Passage could be closed. However, the Committee was advised that Fountain's Passage was used by staff in the Kingfisher Centre as a fire exit route. Closure of Fountain's Passage could, therefore, potentially create a fire safety hazard.

Members noted that there was the potential to develop commercial operations in the former covered market area, which was designated in existing planning policies for retail development. As part of this process it was noted that a portion of the £100,000 allocated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the Redditch Town Centre Partnership could be used to support small business initiatives.

The group had considered the proposal and potential barriers in detail. However, Members were advised that additional consultation with representatives of the Fire Authority and local businesses would be useful prior to any decision being taken on the matter. Members therefore concluded that further review work should be undertaken on this subject by Officers.

### Collection and Delivery Points – Dial a Ride

Members expressed concern that Dial-a-Ride vehicles were not permitted to stop in disabled parking bays unless a Blue Badge could be displayed at the front of the vehicle. The general purpose of Dial-a-Ride vehicles, it was suggested, in terms of providing a service for people with mobility problems should be sufficient for a short stay car parking permit. However, Officers explained that a consistent approach had to be applied to the application of the parking rules in areas subject to the civil parking enforcement scheme and unfortunately Dial a Ride vehicles were not considered to be eligible.

### Taxis

Having heard that the Council's Taxi Licensing Committee had recently agreed that three inspection tests should be required for licensed taxi vehicles the group accepted that the relevant requirement within the recommendation should be increased from two tests to three.

### Tactile Signage

Officers suggested that funding for the installation of tactile signage in the town centre should be limited to Section 106 funding. The suggestion had been made that funding could also be derived from a new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Levy. However, as the arrangements for this levy remained to be clarified

Members agreed to remove references to this fund from the final report.

### Changing Places Toilet

The Committee was advised that following publication of the group's draft report Members had learned that evidence provided by an expert witness on the subject of a changing places toilet, had subsequently proved to be incorrect. For this reason Members agreed to remove a recommendation that had referred to this facility.

### RNIB React system

The group had also been proposing that the RNIB React system, a signage system that could provide guidance to people who were blind or visually impaired, be activated in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, as this system had been included in the original design of the centre. However, following publication of the report Members had been advised that appropriate maintenance process for the system and management arrangements remained to be clarified. For this reason it was agreed that further work was required to address the issue.

### Task Group – Chairing Arrangements

Concerns were expressed about the Council's current constitutional requirement that only members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be allowed to Chair scrutiny reviews. This requirement had necessitated changes to the chairing arrangements for the review from May 2012 which had implications for the continuity of the exercise. For this reason it was suggested that the matter should be investigated further by the Constitutional Review Working Party.

### Concluding Remarks

The Chair thanked Members of the group for their hard work. The group had welcomed the opportunity to complete the review and it was hoped that Members' recommendations would improve the experience for disabled people visiting Redditch town centre.

### **RECOMMENDED that**

#### **DISABLED PARKING**

- 1) **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;
- 2) 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

- 3) 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 three inspection tests and the MOT that the Council's licensing regime requires for each vehicle;
- 4) taxi drivers should be offered disability awareness training, which would include information about manually assisting people with disabilities, by Redditch Borough Council;

### BUSES

- 5) 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

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

- 8) 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;
- 9) Redditch Town Centre Partnership work with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to introduce additional seating in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, involving an investigation of the ergonomics of the seating provided;
- 10) 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;
  - 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;
  - c) a joint review with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, concerning the potential activation of the RNIB React system in the centre; and
  - d) a review of the implications of introducing disabled parking spaces and a Dial a Ride collection and delivery point in the former covered market area, as detailed in Appendix E.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) 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; and

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- 2) the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 9.05 pm