

The Committee considered a report containing information about access to facilities at and management of the Bus Station project, arising from a request from Cllr Strutton.

The bus station was one of the first elements of the Heart of Slough (HoS) to be completed and much of the information put into the public domain and consulted on with specific groups was carried out through the HoS project consultation. Details of the reports made to the Cabinet and Committees were set out and full details of the consultation exercises were presented to the Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel in January 2013. Although it was not clear that targeted consultation was carried out with disability and access groups, it was quite evident that the extensive consultation would have ensured that any group with an interest in the proposals would have had the opportunity to comment.

The design of the bus station included a toilet for the disabled and a waiting room. These facilities were included in the lease of the café, and it is a condition of the lease that the café operator is responsible for keeping them open as well as for their maintenance/cleaning. The lease is currently under review although the maintenance responsibilities will remain unchanged. Additionally there is a wheelchair accessible public toilet that is easily accessed from the bus station, available at all times, which was maintained at no cost to the Council, although owing to delays this had been operational only since autumn 2013. The Committee noted that some basic operational/design problems at the bus station were still to be addressed, such as the overflow passenger drop-off area not being big enough for wheelchairs. Such a problem may have been picked up before the construction stage through effective consultation with disabilities groups.

Following completion of the bus station and the infrastructure works in the HoS, a 'lessons learned' workshop was held in early 2013. This focussed on the process of how the Council clients major projects rather than the details of the specific actions undertaken before and during the major construction. The Committee was informed that the Council's communications and consultation processes had improved significantly since the bus station project had commenced. For instance, during the design and construction of the Britwell Hub there had been extensive consultation with local groups as well as individuals feeding back written comments via forms for the purpose. As a result the responses had been used to inform and influence the design. In the design work going into The Curve project, extensive consultation had taken place with the Council's own Disabilities Forum comprising members of staff, and very useful comments in relation to induction loops, carpets, toilets, parking facilities and other such details had been received. It was recognised that there was no one umbrella organisation representing all disability groups in Slough with whom the Council could consult as a matter of course on such projects.

Following answers to questions, it was established that with the exception of the Planning Committee, consideration of the planning application (which of course did not deal with detailed matters of design) there had been little direct

member involvement in projects such as the bus station or The Curve. The recent presentation about The Curve, to which all members had been invited, had been poorly attended. As a result there had been limited opportunity for members to comment on detailed aspects of these projects as design evolved and construction began. It was suggested that this could be rectified if a core group of members was set up for each major project undertaken with whom consultations could take place. It was noted that project management for The Curve was being undertaken by Morgan Sindall, the Council's partner in the Slough Regeneration Project.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) To RECOMMEND that for all major projects undertaken by the Council, a core group of Members (cross party) be formed to engage with the officers and project designers at each stage of design and construction.
- (c) That the Assistant Director Adult Social Care be asked to look into the formation of an umbrella group that could represent the views of all disability groups across the Borough with whom the Council could consult.