

Disability Task & Finish Group

Findings of Task and Finish Group
commissioned by Health Scrutiny Panel

August 2018 – February 2019



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Preface

This Task and Finish Group was set up because an important question was posed by the Health Scrutiny Panel: 'Is Slough a disabled friendly town?'

To answer this, we need to talk not just about physical disabilities, but all disabilities. We also recognise that improving accessibility for disabled people will improve the lives of all our residents, including older people and families with children using push chairs.

As a resident of Slough for 67 years, I have been saddened by the negative press our town has received and firmly believe that Slough has so much to offer. Slough Borough Council could be a leader in creating a Disabled Friendly town and 99% of those surveyed for this Task and Finish Group by Healthwatch Slough agreed with this agenda.

This report has been a collaborative piece of work between the Health Scrutiny Panel and Healthwatch Slough, and has identified some really positive progress, but also some important issues to be addressed. In order to do this a more joined up approach between different services is required.

The group's work has highlighted that we need to be mindful that accessibility is not just about physical access to shops and public places, but also how people can get to these places and the wider public's awareness and understanding of disability. An awareness of the transport needs of people with disabilities should foremost in our minds to help reduce social isolation and ensure people are able to access services effectively. This includes access to suitable disabled parking and maintaining safe highways and footpaths.

The group is keen to look at how the Council can, in line with its Five Year Plan, ensure that all our residents have an opportunity to be part of the conversations to support positive changes that will make our town more accessible to everyone.

To address the issues we have identified, the group has made recommendations in the report below for the Health Scrutiny Panel to review. We hope that all these will be endorsed by Slough Borough Council, and that a clearly-defined action plan is put in place to ensure their implementation.

The Members of the Task and Finish Group would like to thank the officers and organisations who have provided information to the Group for their clear and transparent approach to our work. I would also like to thank Liam Toner, Chair of Slough Borough Council & Partner Employees with Disabilities Forum, Councillor Safdar Ali, Councillor Naveeda Qaseem, Councillor Atiq Sandhu, Councillor Dexter Smith and Councillor Wayne Strutton for all their support in completing this project, as well as the stakeholders listed at the end of this report.

Mr Colin William Pill
Chair of the Disability Task and Finish Group



Terms of reference

The following terms of reference were proposed by the Task & Finish Group at a meeting on 10th August 2018.

1. To investigate and make recommendations on the following matters:
 - 1.1 The level of inclusion offered for disabled residents and visitors in services offered by Slough Borough Council and partner organisations.
 - 1.2 The impact on this on equality for local residents.
 - 1.3 The provision of transport for disabled residents and visitors to Slough.
 - 1.4 The effect of this and other factors on access to services for local service users.

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Summary of recommendations and proposed areas for consideration

The Task and Finish Group, feel that the ultimate objective for Slough should be to create a town with full accessibility for all its residents and to provide a safe environment. Based on its investigations, the group have identified seven key areas which it would recommend form the basis of Slough Borough Council and partner's approach to making Slough a Disability Friendly Town.

- 1) Residents with disabilities should be provided with clear information on services available, and the wider public should be made aware of the challenges faced by them.
- 2) The council should review how its customers might best be able to report concerns around accessibility as part of its ongoing Transformation Programme.
- 3) The council should seek to improve the accessibility and safety of public transportation and taxis in the borough.
- 4) The council should raise awareness of the high quality leisure services available for disabled residents, and facilitate their use.
- 5) Full accessibility should be the default position for all future SBC buildings, and the council should utilise the opportunities presented by regeneration to embed accessibility in our town.
- 6) Further action should be taken to prevent the obstruction of pathways and the council should consider further locations where disabled parking may be appropriate.
- 7) GP surgeries should examine opportunities for implementing 'quick fixes' for improving access, and accessibility should be factored into all future designs as standard.

Within these areas, the group would also wish to propose a number of specific actions it feels will be most effective in helping SBC and partners to achieve these objectives:

Information & awareness

- Collating available guidance for people with disabilities on available services, and presenting this in a range of accessible formats.
- Requesting Slough Wellbeing Board bring together different workstreams - including the Safe Place Scheme, Dementia and Autism Awareness campaigns and the 'enabling environment agenda' developed by Slough Mental Health services. This could co-ordinate a new campaign to raise awareness of the challenges faced by disabled residents, with the potential involvement of different stakeholder groups including Slough Youth Parliament.

Transport

- Putting in place a programme to ensure that progress is made on making more bus stops DDA compliant.
- Reviewing the feasibility of expanding the remit of the Local Access Forum to include disability access to transport.
- Submitting freedom of information requests to establish the level of complaints bus companies are receiving from disabled customers in Slough.
- Commissioning a survey of disabled bus users, with the results to be reported back to the Health Scrutiny Panel.
- Ensuring that all SBC regulated taxis have ramps with raised edges.
- Undertaking mandatory checks to ensure that taxi drivers were using wheelchair anchoring facilities.
- Displaying notices in taxis as to the rights of disabled service users not to be charged differently.

- Using mystery shopping of both taxi and bus services to check compliance with standards.

Leisure

- Increasing the publicity of Slough's Leisure Offer for disabled residents and their entitlements.
- Reviewing the accessibility of pathways to Slough's new green gyms.

Buildings & planning

- Seeking to incorporate separate baby nappy changing facilities and disabled toilets in all new SBC buildings, and installing Changing Places toilets where possible.
- Ensuring disabled residents are consulted in the planning stages for the new town centre, to make Slough an exemplary area for those with disabilities.
- The Health Scrutiny Panel reviewing the impact of the Outcome 4 group's ambitions regarding Category 3 accessible housing in five years time.

Parking, highways & footpaths

- Investigating opportunities for establishing further disabled parking bays across the borough, in consultation with disabled residents, and with a particular focus on improving access to shops and local services.
- Reviewing recently installed crossing points to consider where double-yellow lines might be effective.
- Including information on the importance of keeping pathways clear in the aforementioned campaign, as well as the impact obstruction can have upon disabled residents.
- As the council regenerates Slough, ensuring that all new or re-designed pathways are DDA compliant.

GP surgery accessibility

- Sharing Healthwatch Slough's findings on accessibility in GP surgeries with the CCG and Slough's two primary care networks - Slough Health Alliance Provider Enterprise (SHAPE Network) and Slough Practices Alliance (SPA network) - with the Health Scrutiny Panel examining what progress has been made in two years time.
- Factoring in these recommendations into the design, or redesign, of GP surgeries going forward - with full accessibility being the default position.

1 Background to the Review

1.1 Introduction

The issue was first raised by the Health Scrutiny Panel on 26th March 2018. This was in response to the fact that, across a wide range of agenda items, the issue of disability access was continually emerging in debate. Given this, and the fact that the matter seemed too wide ranging to include as a standard report, the Panel agreed with the proposal that a Task & Finish Group was required. The Group's intended aim was to help Slough become a 'disability friendly town', encompassing a wide range of matters such as building access, transport and leisure options. Further support for this initiative was provided by Cabinet at its meeting on 16th April 2018, where they officially backed Health Scrutiny Panel's proposals for this review to take place. As a result, a report was taken by Health Scrutiny Panel on 28th June 2018 which outlined some key questions for the Group to consider; these were then formalised in the Terms of Reference included at the start of this report.

Given the wide range of relevant areas, the Group has undertaken one of the more comprehensive studies of any Task & Finish Group commissioned by Slough Borough Council. This has led to meetings being held with a number of departments:

- Transport
- Taxi Licensing
- Leisure
- Planning
- Highways and Parkin
- Slough Borough Council & Partner Employees with Disabilities Forum

This has also led to it making a high number of recommendations. It is now imperative that Health Scrutiny Panel decides how it will track progress with these recommendations as the Task & Finish Group is decommissioned and the Panel inherits its work in the future.

It is also worth noting that there are further areas which affect disabled residents' quality of life that fall beyond the Task and Finish Group's terms of reference, which may need to be examined by the council in the future.

The Task and Finish Group was chaired by Colin Pill and membership comprised Councillor Safdar Ali, Councillor Naveeda Qaseem, Councillor Atiq Sandhu, Councillor Dexter Smith, Councillor Wayne Strutton and Liam Toner.

1.2 The Approach

Given the above, the Task & Finish Group has held meetings with Slough Borough Council departments. This has helped assess the issues involved and the most productive areas for recommendations.

In addition, it has held meetings with key stakeholders. In October 2018, it met with the newly commissioned providers of the Online Disability Access Guide to hear how this service would support local residents and visitors in understanding provision in Slough. It has also held a joint public meeting with Healthwatch at the end of its investigation to discuss its findings and how they reflected the experiences of the local population.

The information from these events is included in section 2 of this report, and was used to formulate the recommendations at the start of this document. These recommendations were compiled by the Task & Finish Group at its meeting on 26th February 2019.

2 Information gathered

2.1 Meeting with AccessAble (providers of Online Disability Access Guide)

- 2.1.1 The organisation had a 3 year contract with Slough Borough Council. The work in Slough was about to commence in October 2018, with surveyors to be in operation before Christmas. An engagement event would then be held around the turn of the year, and this (alongside ongoing discussions with SBC officers) would help form the 200 buildings and facilities which would feature in the Slough access guide. By the time of this report, AccessAble will have provided a design guide; this document would outline the principles of design for planners, architects and related officers to use in creating public spaces. The Online Access Guide would also be ready for review by this time, but not for public dissemination.
- 2.1.2 AccessAble had been established as a social enterprise in 2002 (formerly known as DisabledGo), and had worked with local authorities (e.g. Croydon) since this time. The change in name reflected that the service was about access rather than strictly disability (for example parents with double pushchairs also had issues with access) and would include a mobile app. Overall, it was estimated that access issues were of relevance to 20 million in the UK, given the numbers of carers who also had to consider such factors in daily life.
- 2.1.3 The founder of AccessAble had described disability as ‘the death of spontaneity’, as all trips now had to be planned in advance. He also noted how his conversations regarding accessibility often boiled down to the same few questions. In addition, this led to many becoming increasingly withdrawn as they erred on the side of caution, and also had no wish to become a limiting factor in the plans of their social group. The aim of the guide was to inform everyday decisions and allow people to enjoy as full a life as possible. It contained a wide bank of data, and provided objective statistics rather than more subjective ‘Trip Advisor’ style reviews. It also went well beyond mere legal compliance, providing information on matters such as mirror heights, width of passageways and the like to help people understand the environment they may be encountering. In summary, it was hoped that the online access guide would help promote Slough as an accessible place where people could be independent. It was recognised that Slough was a place undergoing a significant amount of regeneration and that this offered a major opportunity to reshape the town as disabled-friendly.
- 2.1.4 As well as the moral incentive of improving facilities, local facilities could also benefit from ‘the purple pound’ (the spending power of disabled people). In total, this was estimated as worth £250 billion across the UK. Given the importance of small details (e.g. lever taps, dimensions of toilets) it was hoped that those creating these new facilities would see the benefits of relatively minor investment. The guide contained thousands of such details (over 200 regarding toilets alone) and was taken by AccessAble surveyors to ensure standardisation. Hospitals were covered separately with assistance from the NHS, whilst AccessAble also had contracts with some stores (e.g. Next, Marks and Spencers) with all branches in the UK covered.
- 2.1.5 Engagement events would be held twice a year throughout the contract, with the first one due in December or January. These also involved local businesses, with AccessAble having seen many such organisations keen to be involved. Given the advice AccessAble could provide using their expertise, and the changes that could be made at fairly low cost and inconvenience, the service was appreciated by many service providers. Indeed, groups of private sector companies had sponsored expansions to the portfolio of buildings covered by AccessAble in some local authority areas where they operated. All buildings which were surveyed would be re-surveyed every 12 months whilst AccessAble were active in the area.
- 2.1.6 AccessAble were aware that this was the starting point for all parties in the arrangement, with all sides due to learn about the process involved and benefits available over the 3 years of the

contract. There was also some anecdotal evidence that the work of AccessAble raised awareness amongst staff at the various buildings on the guide about disability issues, although this was not something that was formally measured. AccessAble were able to pass on analytics regarding who used the Slough guide, where they were from and other similar questions.

- 2.1.7 The service also provided route plans for key journeys (e.g. train station to high street) although these were fixed and limited in number. The data had also been offered for integration into some apps (e.g. Blackpool Transport) but was not freely open for 'datamashing' by third parties as the information could be misrepresented by external organisations. AccessAble was also able to produce internal analysis reports to assist organisations to receive guidance on best practice. This would also help with future proofing and ensuring that buildings in the guide could prepare for developments.

2.2 Meeting with Transport Team

- 2.2.1 The last audit of bus stops had been held some years ago, and found that 40% of bus stops had curb heights below 125mm (the minimum to enable the maximum permissible gradient for the ramp that is equipped on buses) and 90% of stops required work to comply with Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000. The causes for these stops' non compliance were varied, but a clear breakdown was not available. In addition, some work had been undertaken since the audit to rectify the situation but precise statistics on this were not available. The Transport Team may be undertaking a new audit between now and the Group's final report on the bus stops involved (approximately 300, with 150 equipped with bus shelters), although the resources available to the team may require this to be outsourced. Should the audit be undertaken and deliver its findings, the Group asked to work to remedy highly used bus stops (or those near health care facilities) to be prioritised over 'quick wins'.
- 2.2.2 When an operator alters a route, SBC may not establish new permanent stops as such alterations may be temporary. In addition, operators could then deregister such stops with 56 days notice leaving SBC's expenditure as superfluous. Equally, leaving behind a permanent structure which was no longer in use could prove confusing for those not used to using the service. However, there were no hard rules on when SBC would deem such route amendments to be permanent. Members also asked if routes and the degree to which they were subject to change could form part of negotiations for service tenders.
- 2.2.3 Buses in Slough (and many other parts of the country) had issues with providing full equipment for wheelchair users (e.g. straps). Members asked if the Local Access Forum (which currently focused on public access to land) could be expanded to include disability questions. In addition, the potential inclusion of a disabled service user in specifications for bus contract negotiations was raised. Should this be the case, Adult Social Care could support the process given their decision to ensure such representations were received during service design.
- 2.2.4 At present, complaints on services were received but not solely SBC's responsibility. As a result, the Group expressed an interest in using such complaints to provide quality monitoring information; however, commercial confidentiality may limit the data SBC can receive (e.g. route specific patronage information). In addition, a targeted study of disabled bus users could be commissioned for more detailed guidance as to current standards on transport.
- 2.2.5 Members also asked if disabled access specifications are included when tendering for routes are advertised and requested that this section of the specification is shared with other officers in the task group. Members also raised the separate issue of bus fares; it was agreed that this would be picked up with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair (Cllr Arvind Dhaliwal) as a potential agenda item.

2.3 Meeting with Taxi Licensing Team

- 2.3.1 SBC had 107 Hackney cabs licensed, with 57 of these providing wheelchair access. However, this provision could vary in terms of side or rear access, size of wheelchair catered for and size of vehicle. However, anchoring was mandatory. The Equality Act 2010 stipulated that Councils should implement a 50% disability access ratio for its fleet, which these statistics exceeded.
- 2.3.2 Ramps for wheelchair access were standard; however, members asked if the lack of a raised 'turn up' edge could lead to wheels going over the edges. Whilst such facilities were not mandatory, members felt this may be a suitable area for a recommendation in the final report.
- 2.3.3 Equally, whilst anchors for wheelchairs were mandatory it was questioned if they were being used. Members also asked if users with seatbelts on their wheelchairs were being checked if they were using them whilst travelling. The height of entrances could also prove an issue for taller wheelchair users. Any vehicles without the necessary equipment could have their licence suspended. They would then need to be repaired and obtain a new MOT before having the licence restored.
- 2.3.4 The SBC website included information regarding the precise facilities offered by taxis and the types of wheelchair they could accept. Ultimately, those making the booking needed to specify their requirements. However, it may be helpful to circulate such information for those who found themselves needing services for disability.
- 2.3.5 In October 2018, SBC made Passenger Assistance Training Scheme attendance mandatory for all taxi drivers, with all parts of the course to be completed. This training included information on anchoring, setting and positioning; all taxi drivers would complete this programme by the end of 2019. SBC was going beyond its legal obligations in this matter, with Hackney cab drivers having to take such training but not private hire drivers (who SBC were including). Even drivers whose vehicles were not wheelchair accessible were made to attend, as the spectrum of disability did not confine itself to wheelchair use. Drivers also had to attend safeguarding training which included relevant issues as well as matters such as child sexual exploitation.
- 2.3.6 There were 596 private hire vehicles licensed by SBC, of which only 10 had wheelchair access. SBC had contacted representatives from authorities across South East England to see if any of them had targets on this and how they enforced them (given the absence of powers given by Department for Transport in this regard). However, if a private hire company was asked to provide such transport and could not they were obliged to refer the user to a company which could.
- 2.3.7 Taxi drivers were not allowed to levy any surcharge on disabled service users. This included the caveat that the meter started to run once the journey was underway, not during the process of providing access for the wheelchair user. This matter was covered by a number of Byelaws and those not in compliance could be prosecuted; users who felt they had been subject to discrimination were asked to report the matter. However, should the user and the driver make a verbal agreement before the journey as to the price, this was binding even if it exceeded the metered cost of the journey. Members acknowledged this, but felt it could be publicised through signage.
- 2.3.8 In addition, whilst it was accepted that the website included detailed information on transport, members asked if a leaflet could be created for distribution. The draft of this leaflet could then be referred to local service users for their comments prior to distribution; Adult Social Care had experience of this and could be approached to offer assistance.

2.3.9 SBC's good work in the area was recognised; members felt more publicity for it could help users know their rights more clearly. The possibility of using the Citizen to promote SBC's robust approach was discussed by those present.

2.4 Meeting with Leisure Team

- 2.4.1 The Leisure Strategy had been in operation since 2015 and due for refresh in 2019. Accessibility for all residents was at the centre of its objectives. This had 3 core outcomes: improve core facilities, ensure neighbourhoods had facilities (e.g. green gyms in parks) and create a suitable programme of activity for local residents. On the second of these, the aim was to ensure that no resident was more than 20 minutes walk from an open air gym. On the last point, 100 sessions were held every week with many targeted at specific groups (including all forms of disability).
- 2.4.2 The first new core facility was Arbour Park. As well as being home to Slough Town FC this facility was to be used by the public. Prior to its opening, disabled users had been invited to attend and provide feedback; alterations were made on this basis (e.g. viewing facilities). It also had an evacuation chair as well as a lift, which had been tested; staff had also been trained on using it.
- 2.4.3 The Slough Ice Arena had been well used, especially by Adult Social Care. It also featured a viewing gallery with lift. In particular, SPICE (Special People On Ice) were regular attendees, with a dedicated Sunday morning session for wheelchair users. This event regularly attracted over 100 participants and may expand in the future.
- 2.4.4 The Salt Hill Activity Centre, given its nature, was less well suited to those with physical disabilities. However, 10 pin bowling had proved popular with 4 dedicated sessions a week for those with disabilities. Langleys Leisure Centre had been refurbished (rather than being a new build like the other facilities mentioned). It now featured a beach area with a hoist; the only area not readily accessible was the Jacuzzi. The Centre on Farnham Road would be the flagship of the Leisure Strategy. This was due to open in March 2019, and had consulted with disabled representatives from the start of its planning. Signage was provided in Makaton and Braille, and further feedback on design would be sought before its opening.
- 2.4.5 There were now 23 Green Gyms across Slough, with other related activities (e.g. Trim Trails) also provided. A partnership with The Great Outdoors Programme had been initiated to structure activities and support those using facilities. There were also 14 Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) with plans to expand this. In addition, some of these were floodlit. These had very high usage rates and were also used for Wheelchair Basketball (as well as sessions where wheelchair users and able bodied participants took part simultaneously). They were tarmacked and highly durable.
- 2.4.6 Active Slough was keen to emphasise engagement for all rather than elitism or competition. Those taking part could also drop in and out of sessions rather than committing to an entire programme. Users were also consulted, with the offer being revised as a result. Work on access was being undertaken (e.g. car parks, lifts, changing facilities). Gyms also used the most modern innovations to assist users (e.g. wheelchair access, visual impairment aids, ease of grip). This was a work in progress and would continue to evolve as issues were identified. The Patient and Liaison Service and Sport in Mind were also involved, whilst Sports Able offered disabled service users a more competitive form of sport if desired.

- 2.4.7 However, whilst the offer was in good shape there were concerns over the level of publicity it had attracted. Whilst a leaflet highlighting specialist provision could be of assistance, other innovations (e.g. use of a forthcoming NHS App to promote options) could be explored.
- 2.4.8 Most activities had concessionary rates; these rates were uniform for all who could claim them. There had been some concerns over 'carers' who were using facilities for free and ignoring those they were supposed to be caring for. As a result, members felt that some form of identification (including guidance as to care arrangements) could be produced to stop this. This could also help SBC track use of their facilities.
- 2.4.9 Staff undertook training on CSE, Adult Safeguarding and Manual Handling (with all managers taking Level 2 training on this).
- 2.4.10 Activate Slough had been based on external funding to construct specialist provision. It was being supported by a volunteer programme which was being constructed and could be circulated once complete.
- 2.4.11 However, members were also concerned that having baby nappy changing facilities in disabled toilets could present an infection control issue, and asked if this matter could be considered.

2.5 Meeting with Planning Team

- 2.5.1 The Task & Finish Group had raised concerns across a number of areas. Some of these related to roads and highways – as a result, the Group has asked that another meeting be scheduled for 2019 to cover these.
- 2.5.2 With regards to Building Control, members asked if SBC was going beyond the minimum statutory requirements. Given the high level of local need, it was felt that the 5% threshold may not reflect the population in question. However, a precise understanding of this level of need was not in place; the Group felt this area merited greater research. Existing materials (e.g. the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) may hold some relevant information, as could the Public Health Team. Healthwatch may also be able to offer a comparison with neighbouring authorities.
- 2.5.3 The Planning Policy Framework currently included a statement on the need for accessibility for all. The Local Plan had been presented to the Planning Committee on 5th December, whilst the Five Year Plan Outcome 4 Sub Group had also agreed to increase the level of accessible housing stock. This included a stipulation that 5% of all housing (new and existing) would conform with Category 3 of the National Accessible Scheme (Category 2 was the legal minimum). This would be presented as a potential Council policy in March 2019. In addition, all new buildings required a design and access statement.
- 2.5.4 New developments required evidence of need when considering accessibility in design; failure to do this could lead to developers questioning the requirements made and their resulting cost. It was also the case that Councils had to balance accessibility with the need for affordable housing and other considerations (especially the high density nature of Slough's housing requirements). However, a counter consideration regarding the long terms costs of adapting existing buildings or even moving residents to more suitable housing needed to be made too.
- 2.5.5 At present, there was a cap of 200 homes before SBC would require 5% of these to be accessible at Category 3 standards. Further information as to the reasons for this would be reported back to the Task & Finish Group.

- 2.5.6 Planning, building and the NHS at present had linked interests in the matter but were not fully co-ordinated. SBC had established the 'One Council' Group which was working on such matters; this Group could also help with understanding the precise nature of the level of local need.
- 2.5.7 Given the redevelopment of the town centre, there may also be an opportunity to transform the offer made for local residents and visitors. However, it was vital that this chance was taken during the initial planning stages; for example, at the existing Queensmere shopping centre a Motability service had been established but only after the building was finished, and as a result was not conveniently situated.

2.6 Meeting with Slough Borough Council & Partner Employees with Disabilities Forum

- 2.6.1 The forum kindly allowed the Task and Finish Group to attend their January meeting, to discuss the issues that had been identified by the group so far and gain their insight on both further issues to be addressed and action that might be taken.
- 2.6.2 Members of the forum noted the progress that has been made by the council in improving accessibility - particularly in regard to the new leisure facilities.
- 2.6.3 However, the forum did still feel that more needed to be done in the private sector, for example in small shops, and echoed the group's concerns around accessibility in the community - particularly relating to parking, highways, public transport and disabled toilets.
- 2.6.4 It was suggested that, in order to address this, the council might look to offer training for local employers, businesses and other organisations, as part of a wider campaign around disability awareness.
- 2.6.5 The forum's chair, Liam Toner, also highlighted the importance of improving access to information on the services and benefits available to people with disabilities; and it was proposed that the creation of a single document or resource, in accessible formats, might help to address this.
- 2.6.6 It was agreed that the representatives from the Task and Finish Group would return to the forum at a later date once the recommendations had been finalised, to review findings and discuss what more might be done to improve the wider public's attitude towards, and awareness of, disability.
- 2.6.7 It was also suggested that further work might need to be undertaken beyond the terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group - looking more broadly at people with disabilities' quality of life.

2.7 Meeting with Highways Team

- 2.7.1 This meeting focussed on the availability and suitability of disabled parking in Slough, and challenges disabled residents can face when travelling via public pathways, on foot or in wheelchairs. Members of the group felt these issues were of critical importance for ensuring that Slough can become a disability friendly town, and for preventing disabled residents from becoming socially isolated.
- 2.7.2 The Chair of the Task and Finish group raised concerns around the absence of disabled parking bays in several wards across Slough, such as Wexham Lea, and the challenges this can present disabled residents in accessing local shops and services.

- 2.7.3 The Chair also discussed issues around the design of disabled parking bays in areas such as the Town Centre, where the bays are placed end-to-end (for parallel parking), rather than side by side (echelon parking), without demarcated spaces between and around the bays to be kept clear. This can mean that disabled people have to exit their vehicle into the road - potentially into on-coming traffic - and can prevent residents from exiting vehicles that have been specially adapted for rear access.
- 2.7.4 The Highways team informed the Task and Finish Group of the statutory limitations around 'on-curb' disabled parking, which prevents the council from establishing echelon disabled parking bays in certain places. However, it was agreed that the Highways team could investigate potential opportunities for establishing more disabled parking bays across the borough within the current legislation, in consultation with disabled residents.
- 2.7.5 The Chair discussed the importance of crossing points at junctions in allowing disabled residents to travel throughout the town unimpeded, and highlighted the good work the council has undertaken in establishing these. However, he raised concerns that nuisance parking at junctions was obstructing many of these crossing points or otherwise rendering them unsafe. Members asked whether more double-yellow lines could be established, given that these are required for the council to be able to enforce parking restrictions.
- 2.7.6 The Highways team informed the group that double-yellow lines are not established as standard at such junctions, as vehicles are already restricted from parking within 10m of a junction, and took them through the consultation process by which changes are made. While it would not be practical to have double-yellow lines at every junction, the Highways team agreed that it would be possible to assess whether they should be introduced at those where crossing points have recently been installed by the council.
- 2.7.7 Members discussed how nuisance parking on pavements can prevent disabled residents from using pathways and asked for an update on the council's plans. The Highways team updated the Task and Finish group on the Pavement Parking Scheme which was trialed in 2015, and discussed how it sought to allow cars to park with two wheels on the pavement within demarcated areas, while preserving a minimum width of 1.2m for pathways. It is hoped to extend this scheme to further areas of the borough in the future.
- 2.7.8 The Highways team also apprised the group of potential legislation which will allow councils to ban on-pavement parking, as is currently the case in London. It is hoped that this legislation, were it to be passed, will give the council more flexibility to improve accessibility for disabled residents.
- 2.7.9 The group also considered further obstructions to public pathways, including overgrown hedges and vehicles parking over the end of driveways. The highways team informed the group of the action taken by the council to prevent these kinds of issues from occurring, but highlighted the limited resources available for inspection and enforcement.
- 2.7.10 To raise awareness of these issues, it was agreed that the Highways team could look to publish information on the importance of keeping pathways clear via social media and *Citizen*, as well as case studies of action that has been taken which has had a positive impact for disabled residents.

2.8 Joint meeting with Healthwatch Slough

- 2.8.1 The Task and Finish Group has been a collaborative piece of work between the Health Scrutiny Panel and Healthwatch Slough. This meeting provided an opportunity for the group to consider issues identified by Healthwatch in their report of September 2018 *Slough: A town*

that is accessible and inclusive for all. The full report can be found in the appendix, though findings on specific practices have been removed to allow them a fair opportunity to respond to Healthwatch's concerns.

2.8.2 Healthwatch Slough visited 17 GP surgeries in Slough in teams of two between July and August 2018. Although some of the surgeries visited were very well equipped, there were several areas where the teams had significant concerns.

2.8.3 Based on the issues identified, Healthwatch have proposed 4 key areas where they believe quick progress might be made to improve accessibility:

1. Signage

- a. Signs should be clear and unambiguous, at a readable eye level, readily distinguishable from the background, using standardised symbols that are universal and easy to understand.
- b. Reserved parking spaces should be denoted by clear signposting at the entrance and beside the space itself.
- c. Routes from entrance doors to lifts, stairs, enquiry desks and toilets should be clearly defined and unobstructed.
- d. Passageways should be kept clutter free.

2. Furniture

- a. Seating should be available in a choice of heights.
- b. Reception counters should be accessible and usable by disabled persons.
- c. Hygiene products, such as hand gel, should be available at an accessible level for wheelchair users.

3. Communication

- a. All surgeries should install a hearing loop.
- b. Surgeries should publicise to patients that a quiet space can be provided upon request.

4. Safety

- a. Doorways should be installed with a low threshold bar.
- b. Grounds leading up to the surgery should be smooth and safe for wheelchair users or someone walking with an aid.
- c. Handrails should be placed on both sides of ramps leading to an entrance door.
- d. Contrast is desirable between doors and walls.

2.8.4 The Task and Finish Group agreed that Healthwatch Slough's findings should be shared with the CCG and Slough's two primary care networks - Slough Health Alliance Provider Enterprise (SHAPE Network) and Slough Practices Alliance (SPA network) - and that the Health Scrutiny Panel should examine what progress has been made in improving accessibility in practices in two years time.

2.8.5 Members of the group also thought that these recommendations should be considered in the design of any new practices and discussed opportunities that may be provided in the years ahead by technology - such as telehealth - to improve access to GPs.

2.8.6 The group then discussed the results of Healthwatch Slough's survey on Disability Rights - the results of which can be found in the appendix. They were particularly pleased to note the widespread public support behind the council's aim to make Slough a disability-friendly town. However, the group did raise concerns around the large number of those surveyed who did not use public transport.

2.8.7 Healthwatch Slough also kindly provided their thoughts on the issues identified by the Task and Finish group up to that point, and helped the group to shape its final recommendations.

3 List of Meetings and Events

The following meetings were held by the Task & Finish Group:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 10 th August 2018: | Formation of terms of reference |
| 2 nd October 2018: | Meeting with providers of Online Disability Access Guide |
| 21 st November 2018: | Meeting with Transport Team (focus on bus services) |
| 27 th November 2018: | Meeting with Taxi Licensing Team |
| 4 th December 2018: | Meeting with Leisure Team |
| 11 th December 2018: | Meeting with Planning Team |
| 24 th January 2019: | Meeting with Slough Borough Council & Partner Employees with Disabilities Forum |
| 12 th February 2019: | Meeting with Highways and Parking Team |
| 26 th February 2019: | Joint meeting with Healthwatch Slough |
| 26 th February 2019: | Formation of recommendations |

4 Acknowledgements

The Disability Task & Finish Group would like to note it's thanks to the following contributors and witnesses, whose input helped form its recommendations:

Slough Borough Council:

Masum Choudhury	-	Transport Strategy Team Leader
Savio DeCruz	-	Service Lead Major Infrastructure Projects
Ginny de Hann	-	Service Lead Regulatory Services
Kam Hothi	-	Team Leader, Parking
Giovanni Ferri	-	Youth Worker
David Gordon	-	Scrutiny Officer
Alison Hibbert	-	Leisure Strategy Manager
Kerry Hobbs	-	Planning Policy Officer
Sally Kitson	-	Strategy and Partnership Manager
Tom Overend	-	Policy Insight Analyst
Michael Sims	-	Licensing Manager

External Organisations:

David Livermore	-	AccessAble
Arunjot Mushiana	-	Healthwatch Slough
Nicola Strudley	-	Healthwatch Slough

The Task and Finish Group would also like to acknowledge Living in Harmony and Slough Community Transport's work in producing the survey on Disability Rights.

The following resources were also used in background research:

Accessible Bus Stop Guidance	Transport for London
FirstGroup Plc v Paulley (2017)	Supreme Court Ruling
Nusrat Ghani MP Statement (7 th March 2018)	Hansard
Task & Finish Group – Use of Wheelchair Spaces on Buses	House of Commons