

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

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PART I **KEY DECISION**

REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY: HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL, 27TH JUNE 2019

DISABILITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALES

1 Purpose of Report

To present the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Disability Task and Finish Group and officers' proposed timescales for implementing them.

2 Recommendations

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- a) That the seven over-arching recommendations of the Disability Task and Finish Group laid out in section 5.3 be endorsed.
- b) That the implementation of the Group's specific proposals that underpin the recommendations, along the timescales laid out in section 5.5 be approved.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The work of the Task and Finish group supports the Joint Wellbeing Strategy's second priority:

2. Increasing life expectancy by focusing on inequalities

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

The Task and Finish Group's recommendations, if adopted, will help the council to deliver the following outcomes of the Five Year Plan:

- Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs

- Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay
- Our residents will live in good quality homes

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The majority of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations can be implemented within existing budgets. Officers felt that they were not currently in a position to agree any proposals which could not be.

The proposal to collate guidance for people with disabilities on available services will require the establishment of a project team, who will need to produce an assessment on the cost of doing so. This will need to follow the existing asset mapping work being undertaken by SBC and the outcome of the Transformation Programme - which is looking at opportunities for making it easier for residents to self-serve (See section 5.5).

The proposal to put in place a programme to ensure that progress is made on making more bus stops DDA compliant would require additional funding and was felt to be an inefficient way of addressing the issue of accessibility. Officers will contact the Task and Finish Group to see if there are alternative avenues for improving the accessibility of bus stops within existing budgets (See section 5.5).

(b) Risk Management

Risk assessments will be conducted by officers as necessary in the implementation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

Some of the Task and Finish Group's proposals relate to Slough Borough Council's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Should the implementation of the recommendations necessitate such an exercise, it will be carried out as required.

(e) Workforce

The implementation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations will require officer time and commitment, as well as agreement from line managers.

(f) Property

Some of the Task and Finish Group's proposals relate to the accessibility of Slough Borough Council's buildings in general, but there are no proposals relating to specific properties owned by the council.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Background to the Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish Group was formed in response to the fact that, across a wide range of Health Scrutiny Panel agenda items, the issue of disability access was continually emerging in discussions.

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.

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 the report.

5.2 Meetings

The Task and Finish Group has held meetings with the following SBC teams:

- Transport
- Taxi Licensing
- Leisure
- Planning
- Highways and Parking

In addition, there were further meetings with:

- AccessAble (providers of the Online Disability Access Guide)
- Slough Borough Council & Partner Employees with Disabilities Forum
- Healthwatch Slough

It was originally hoped that the group would be also be able to meet with representatives from Slough Youth Parliament, but this was not possible due to the timing of SYP's elections. However, should the recommendations be approved as council policy, the Task and Finish Group will seek SYPs feedback, and their support in making Slough a disability friendly town.

5.3 Recommendations

The group concluded 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 Task and Finish 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.

5.4 Implementation timescales and notes

The following recommendations can be implemented within existing budgets.

Short term (2019/20 municipal year)

Recommendation	Notes / comments
Submitting freedom of information requests to establish the level of complaints bus companies are receiving from disabled customers in Slough.	This will be done through a formal procedure in the Quality Bus Partnership meetings
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.	This work will be co-ordinated with the Consumer protection team. Officers may also contact Healthwatch Slough for their expertise / experience
Increasing the publicity of Slough's Leisure Offer for disabled residents and their entitlements.	Officers would welcome feedback on what methods of publication would be most effective.
Reviewing the accessibility of pathways to Slough's new green gyms.	
Including information on the importance of keeping pathways clear in the aforementioned campaign, as well as the impact obstruction can have upon disabled residents.	Officers will work with SBC's Comms team to increase awareness via various channels.

Medium term (2-4 municipal years)

Recommendation	Notes / comments
Commissioning a survey of disabled bus users, with the results to be reported back to the Health Scrutiny Panel.	This will be done through a formal procedure in the Quality Bus Partnership meetings
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.	Officers will review disabled parking borough-wide and conduct a statutory consultation on more disabled parking around shopping areas.
Reviewing recently installed crossing points to consider where double-yellow lines might be effective.	Officers will identify locations borough-wide and implement changes.

Long-term (5+ municipal years) or ongoing

Recommendation	Notes / comments
Seeking to incorporate separate baby nappy changing facilities and disabled toilets in all new SBC buildings, and installing Changing Places toilets where possible.	The Task & Finish Group report has also been shared with the team working on the localities strategy to feed into the design process for the new hubs.

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 council will ensure EQUI plans are included in consultations on plans for the town centre
The Health Scrutiny Panel reviewing the impact of the Outcome 4 group's ambitions regarding Category 3 accessible housing in five years time.	
As the council regenerates Slough, ensuring that all new or re-designed pathways are DDA compliant.	All schemes and projects have a process for reviewing accessibility issues and therefore will be addressed through this checklist and audit.

5.5 Proposals not yet timetabled for implementation

There were a number of specific proposals that officers were not in a position to agree to timetable as yet. Explanations and alternative proposals (in italics) are listed below:

Collating available guidance for people with disabilities on available services, and presenting this in a range of accessible formats.

There was concern that establishing a project to collate this guidance might replicate work that is already being undertaken by SBC's public health team to map available services and assets across the borough. It was also thought that how this information is presented to residents would be dependent on decisions around the council's website and interaction with customers which will be determined by SBC's Transformation Programme. As a result, officers felt that they couldn't provide an assessment of how much this proposal would cost to implement and were therefore not, as yet, in a position to agree to its implementation.

It was agreed, however, that the Policy Insight Team would return to examine this issue in a year's time, and consider the formation of a project team that could investigate options for addressing this recommendation, and potentially prepare a business case.

Putting in place a programme to ensure that progress is made on making more bus stops DDA compliant.

Officers had concerns that to fulfil the proposal as drafted they would have to conduct a full bus stop audit. The council does not have the resources to do this, and officers felt it would be an inefficient way of addressing issues around bus stops.

However, officers agreed that they would be able to make improvements to individual bus stops within existing budgets on a case by case basis, where they were made aware of issues. This was put to the Task and Finish Group's Chair Colin Pill, who agreed that Healthwatch Slough may be able to work with officers to identify these bus stops.

Reviewing the feasibility of expanding the remit of the Local Access Forum to include disability access to transport.

Officers reviewed this proposal. Unfortunately, the Local Access Forum is a statutory body, whose remit is limited to discussing public rights of way.

6 Comments of Other Committees

- 6.1 The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group were approved in principal at a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel on 25th March. Officers' proposed timescales for implementation were subsequently approved by the panel on the 27th June, and the Panel resolved that the Task and Finish Group's proposals should be taken forward for endorsement by the Cabinet.
- 6.2 The Health Scrutiny Panel also decided that it would appoint a champion, to help raise awareness around the importance of accessibility and support any campaigning activity.
- 6.3 The Task and Finish Group report was also taken to Slough Wellbeing Board on 8th May, to update them on the work of the group and seek their support for the proposal that the Board co-ordinate a new campaign to raise awareness of the challenges faced by disabled residents. The Board welcomed the group's recommendations and agreed to consider this request as they continue to develop their plans for the 2019/20 municipal year, though the board has limited resources and may need to focus campaigning activity elsewhere.
- 6.4 The Board's Vice-Chair, Dr Jim O'Donnell (CCG), also welcomed Healthwatch Slough's work on the accessibility of GP surgeries and agreed with the Task and Finish Group's recommendations on this issue.

7 Conclusion

The Disability Task and Finish Group has produced a wide-ranging and comprehensive set of proposals which, if implemented, could make a major impact in improving disabled residents' quality of life and enhancing the connectivity and accessibility of our town.

9. Appendices Attached

- A - Disability Task and Finish Group Final Report
- B - *Slough: A town that is accessible and inclusive for all*, Healthwatch Slough, September 2018 (appendices have been removed)
- C - Disabled Rights Survey Evaluation, Healthwatch Slough, December 2018

10. **Background Papers**

1. Agenda papers of the Health Scrutiny Panel, 25th March 2019.
2. Agenda papers of the Slough Wellbeing Board, 8th May 2019.
3. Agenda papers of the Health Scrutiny Panel, 27th June 2019.