

**Accessibility
Scrutiny Inquiry
Review
& Action Plan -
October 2022**

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Overview:

The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook the inquiry over 5 evidence gathering meetings. At the start of each meeting the Panel received presentation summarising feedback from an Accessible Southampton focus group meeting attended by disabled people.

The focus group, convened by Spectrum CIL, considered the issues to be discussed at the subsequent Inquiry Panel meeting.

Objectives:

- a. To identify whether the **physical infrastructure of the city creates barriers for disabled people** to access all Southampton has to offer.
- b. To **identify good practice** being employed to improve the accessibility of towns and cities elsewhere.
- c. To **identify what initiatives and approaches could work well in Southampton** to improve the accessibility of the city.

Scrutiny Panel considered the principles of inclusive design as being:

- Inclusive – so everyone can use it safely, easily and with dignity
- Responsive – taking account of what people say they need/want
- Flexible – so different people can use it in different ways
- Convenient – All can use it without too much effort or separation
- Accommodating for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances
- Welcoming – with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people
- Realistic – offering more than one solution to help balance everyone's needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all.

Access City Award

Inquiry was conducted using the 4 key accessibility criteria used by the Access City Award. The Access City Award is a prize given by the EU every year to cities that work hard to be accessible:

- a. The built environment and public spaces
- b. Transportation and related infrastructures
- c. Information and communication, including information and communication technologies (ICT)

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d. Public facilities and services. such as transport access.

The following are key application criteria that an applicant city has to demonstrate:

- a. The actions implemented or planned are part of a coherent strategy or policy framework, rather than just ad hoc projects.
- b. Accessibility must be mainstreamed in the city's policies and its regulations.
- c. There is a corporate commitment to accessibility at a high level within the authority.
- d. Appropriate resources are allocated to implement these policies.

Any applicant city also needs to demonstrate clear involvement of disabled people and their representative organisations in planning, implementation and maintenance in city policies and initiatives.

Inquiry Theme 1: Accessibility to the built environment and public spaces

- Access City Award includes the following issues under this heading - City centre design, streets and pavements, parks, squares, monuments and open spaces. Feedback was provided to the Inquiry Panel - areas of concern with regards to the design of the city and accessibility were classified into the following areas -
 - City Design – Getting around the city
 - Buildings and Spaces – Retail & Public
 - Buildings and Spaces – Homes
 - Accessible Toilets
 - Planning and Building Control

General Observations:

The Accessible Southampton Focus group identified the primary concerns in the built environment, with lack of reporting mechanism for access issues or maintenance needs:

- Street furniture e.g. bins, benches, signage on pavement
- Sudden changes in width or height of the pavement, shortage of dropped kerbs e.g Hill Lane between Atherley Bowling Club and Taunton's College
- Pavement not defined from road space e.g. around Central Station
- Poor quality surface with cracked pavement
- Poorly phased traffic lights/pedestrian crossings
- Lack of accessible signposting and signage
- Crowded/noisy city centre space

Perception from disabled residents is that access requirements are routinely ignored by developers, and these are not actively policed by planners – there needs to be a much more proactive to insist that good access is proactively built into the design phase of new developments.

Recommendations:

- There is scope for planning policy as it relates to accessibility to be updated and reset - higher standards can be applied by the Council subject to planning conditions and policy, most developers will work to minimum accessibility standards unless required to do otherwise.

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- Local Plan refreshment provides an opportunity to secure higher accessibility standards for future developments which require planning permission and opportunity to add to the existing policy to include embedding an accessibility checklist.
- Development standards should include requiring all new housing development to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion
- Refresh of the Streetscape Toolkit – incorporate accessibility in the Council’s highways design standards moving forward.
- Work in partnership with Go! Southampton to deliver their ambition for Southampton to be an accessible and inclusive city through Accessible City workstream in partnership with Spectrum.

Rec No.	Action	Responsible Service Area	Service Area Comments/Output	Proposed Outputs/estimated timescales	Resources needed	Proposed Response
1	<p>Enshrine the principles of accessibility and inclusion within the Southampton City Vision Local Plan –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring all new development to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. • Requiring all new housing to be at least accessible or adaptable housing, with a minimum of 10% wheelchair accessible. • Consider children and parents views and insights, especially of those children with a special educational need and disability (Child Friendly) 	Strategic Planning	Will be both an ‘Accessible and Inclusive Design’ and ‘Space Standards’ policy in the new Southampton City Vision (SCV) Local Plan to address these bullet points. The latter will require a proportion of new housing development to be accessible to people with reduced mobility and wheelchair users either on completion or with only limited adaptations required in the future. The policy proposes applying increased standards to developments of 10 or more and 50 or more homes. The proportion and threshold will be determined after further work is undertaken including a viability assessment. No percentage is yet identified.	Draft policy with option ready for end of October consultation.	Low for policy drafting	Accept
2	Embed an accessibility checklist within existing planning policy for	Strategic Planning	Will be writing a new accessibility policy for the new SCV Local Plan. At this stage we can include the	Draft policy with option ready for end	Low for policy drafting	Accept

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	inclusion into Southampton Vision Local Plan		option to require an accessibility checklist to be submitted to support applications but the content of such will need expert knowledge which we don't have in house. This task is therefore partially dependent on the outcome of the above task of employing an Access Officer.	of October consultation. Decision on checklist to be taken in 2023 and next steps dependent on above task.	Medium for application of accessibility checklist as expert knowledge not currently available in house.	
3	Work with Go! Southampton and the city centre BID area to support their inclusive premises initiative developed in tandem with Spectrum CIL	Go! Southampton	Meeting to be arranged with new Go! CX to establish a way forward with resources available. Work with Child Friendly ambassador organisations such as West Quay and GO! Southampton to ensure children's voices, including those with a disability are incorporated into design activity	Autumn 2022 meeting to scope	Initial scoping – Low – further resource tbc.	Accept
4	Changing Places toilets - Council should apply for funding if the Government announces a new round of grants to develop the provision of Changing Places to support publicly accessible facilities.	Property Services City Services	Property Services are responsible for the maintenance of existing SCC toilet facilities and City Services the day-to-day cleansing. Beyond maintenance and cleansing of existing facilities there is not a SCC lead service, programme or budget for future programme of enhancements to toilet facilities.	TBC	Service area responsibilities need confirming and resource identified to lead programme of enhancements and capital and rev budgets supported by future external funding opportunities.	Requires further work

Inquiry Theme 2: Accessibility to transportation and related infrastructures

- The EU Access City Award criteria includes the following issues under this heading - measures related to the car parks, airports, railway stations and bus stations, taxis, trains, buses and trams, proximity, interconnectivity of public transport and journey information availability.
- Feedback was provided to the Inquiry Panel - areas of concern with regards to the transport were classified into the following areas:
 - Transport modes – buses, trains, ferries and taxis
 - Parking provision
 - Shopmobility services
 - Signage

General Observations:

- Infrastructure, provision and end to end journeys can be designed with accessibility in mind, thereby removing barriers and enabling everyone to access the various modes of transport available. Public transport should include all, segregated transport can be expensive and exclusionary.
- Good access should be built in at the design phase. Ask disabled people as co-production is cost effective.
- Consider the whole experience - Booking / tickets, getting to the public transport destination, interchanges of multi-modal trips e.g. car-taxi-bus-train. It doesn't matter how good/bad provision is if customer service is wrong.
- Proper consideration of pedestrians, particularly those who have impaired senses, when designing scheme layout at bus stops, train stations etc.

Recommendations:

- Utilising best practice guidance, and the proposed Southampton Disability Access Forum, ensure that good access is built in at the design phase of transport infrastructure schemes, including parking.
- Through the proposed Disability Access Forum, review signage in Southampton, including the Legible Cities signage, to make it more accessible to disabled people.
- Explore opportunities to move to 100% wheelchair accessible hackney carriages and to increase the number of wheelchair accessible private hire vehicles in Southampton.
- Explore opportunities to establish ShopMobility schemes in Southampton's district centres.

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- Plan disability street and car parking provision to accurately reflect disabled people’s needs e.g. proper dropped kerbs, larger spaces for vans and protect disabled parking spaces in the Civic Centre Car Park when planning events in Southampton City Centre.
- Review signage in Southampton, including the Legible Cities signage, to make it more accessible to disabled people – review to be conducted with the input of disabled people.

Rec No.	Action	Responsible Service Area	Service Area Comments/Output	Proposed Outputs/estimated timescales	Resources needed	Proposed Response
5	Development of an Inclusive Transport Strategy to sit alongside the Local Transport Plan, the emerging City Vision Local Plan, Cycling Strategy and emerging Walking Strategy.	Integrated Transport	Part of transport policy pipeline to develop an improved inclusive transport policy. To be reviewed if this will be a standalone policy document or imbedded into others. Including a refreshed LTP4 by 2025.	Policy review workshops with Cllrs/ Stakeholders Q4 2022/23. Policy updated including LTP4 refresh by 2025.	Low High – but linked to wider policy commitments.	Accept
6	Establish a Southampton Disability Access Forum to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure good access is built in at the design phase of transport infrastructure schemes, including parking. - review signage in Southampton, including the Legible Cities signage, to make it more accessible to disabled people. Engage disabled people in the development of Equality Impact Assessments when it is expected that a new policy, development or decision will have an impact on disabled people	Integrated Transport	Currently in process of establish Accessibility Forum to take forward the transport and built environment specific recommendations from the Inquiry. This forum is built on the previous cycle forum, opening up decision making around schemes to include input from people who cycle, walk, use public transport and to actively take into account the needs of people with disabilities, especially if their mobility will be highly impacted by scheme proposals.	Legal advice indicates change from cycle forum to accessibility forum requires Cabinet approval. Cabinet Member for Transport and Regeneration has been briefed on recommendation to bring to Cabinet. Terms of Reference to be brought to 13 September Cabinet for approval.	Medium – initial intensive staff resource but linked to identified consultation requirements around new transport schemes. Resources required will diminish as process is integrated into consultation processes.	Accept

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7	<p>Governance Framework for accessibility improvements, including systems of reporting accessibility issues e.g. broken/lack of dropped curb</p>	<p>Highways Services</p>	<p>Currently proposals surrounding Accessibility Forum will include a mechanism for prioritising installation of infrastructure supporting accessibility dropped kerbs etc.</p>	<p>Timescales for establishing Accessibility Forum are as above</p>	<p>There will be a budget set aside for Accessibility Forum members to manage and dictate how this is allocated.</p>	<p>Accept</p>
8	<p>Employ a dedicated Access Officer works across the Council and its private sector partners on all aspects of access improvement.</p> <p>The Access Officer would co-ordinates Accessibility Forum, investigates and responds to all access related complaints received by the Council and works with internal and external partners to implement changes to buildings, facilities and practices. This role ensures that accessibility is at the heart of planning.</p>	<p>Stronger Communities</p> <p>Organisational Development</p>	<p>A Diversity & Inclusion Officer is already in post with funding is secured until March 2023. Further funding is linked to progress against Diversity and & Inclusion Action Plan, as well as budget pressures overall, and will be reviewed prior to March 2023.</p> <p>There is currently a permanent role appointed for an externally facing Community Cohesion and Diversity Officer.</p> <p>The Child Friendly Project Officer and Youth Participation Lead will ensure the views of children, including those with SEND are incorporated</p>	<p>Reviewing for internal D&I lead before March 2023</p>	<p>Medium – Permanent position for an outward facing Diversity and Inclusion role in place, but need to identify scope for appointing an Access Officer and what service this sits in.</p> <p>The Child Friendly City accreditation takes the approach that a child friendly city is an accessible city, and under this accreditation the rights of SEND children and their parents need to be incorporated into decision-making – needs proper ownership from all management levels in the council.</p>	<p>Requires further work</p>

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9	Refresh of the StreetScape Toolkit	Integrated Transport	<p>The review of the Streetscape toolkit has commenced. Workshops to be established with input from newly established Access Forum.</p> <p>Can workshops also incorporate the Child Friendly City process to formulate what makes a street child friendly. Children, particularly those with disabilities will be consulted building on existing good practice for our Child Friendly Street initiatives.</p>	Workshops in Autumn 2022. Target for March 2023 complete document	Low – resource already in place with Balfour Beatty Living Places	Accept
10	Working with Go! Southampton on the incorporation of the BID for the city centre and its Inclusive City workstream	Go! Southampton	<p>Meeting to be arranged with new Go! CX to establish a way forward with resources available.</p> <p>Work with Child Friendly ambassador organisations such as West Quay and GO:Southampton to ensure children’s voices, including those with a disability are incorporated into design activity</p>	Autumn 2022 meeting to scope	Initial scoping – Low – further resource tbc.	Accept
11	<p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training for officers on appropriate language to use when communicating with disabled people - Apply inclusive communication principles to all transport related correspondences and consultations. 	Customers & Communications	<p>Add subtitles to all council videos</p> <p>Southampton CC Style Guide</p> <p>Officers to take part in Rights Based Training for Children</p>	TBC	Minimal – this work can be done within existing teams.	Accept

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	Checklist to ensure that engagement meetings for the general public when consulting on public transport schemes are accessible.					
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Inquiry Theme 3: Accessibility to information and communication

- The EU Accessible City Award criteria focuses on access to the city authorities' official information and includes the following issues under this heading - measures related to access to the city authorities' official information e.g. accessibility of promotional multimedia information for local authority, advice and citizen feedback procedures on the accessibility of the website, online information provision in arts, culture, entertainment, sport facilities, signage and guidance in public places, outdoor or indoor, tourist information, accessibility of the public information kiosks, provision of assistive technology and inclusive ICT resources for the whole community in public libraries and online centres.

General Observations:

Emphasis of the Panel's discussion was on Southampton City Council's information and communication, and accepted that while improvements had been made, there were still some other key areas for improvement. The principles for inclusive and accessible information were identified:

- Information and communication should be written to be understandable to the audience in question
- If information or communication is aimed at the 'general public' then it needs to ensure that it will be accessible and understandable to all
- Consider if all the intended audience will be able to access your chosen communication method
- Use plain English & make it easy for staff to get it right
- Provision of accessible info should not be a cost issue

Recommendations:

- To improve consistency in how the City Council communicates with residents the Council should adopt an accessible information standard. Spectrum CIL has identified information standards that reflect best practice.
- Incorporate an element on the 'language of disability' within the customer service training that is proposed for council staff via the Customer Experience Programme. Guidelines have been developed by Spectrum CIL, to help ensure that Council officers use appropriate language when communicating with disabled people
- Develop a checklist to ensure that meetings for the general public are accessible.
- To make Southampton more accessible, and improve the lives of people with communication difficulties, adopt the standards underpinning the Community Access Symbol and seek to encourage citywide take up and accreditation of the initiative.
- To improve choice, control, independence and inclusivity, work with Go! Southampton and Spectrum CIL on proposals to produce access guides on a city-wide scale for Southampton – best practice identified by Scrutiny was approach in Sheffield.

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Rec No.	Action	Responsible Service Area	Service Area Comments/Output	Proposed Outputs/estimated timescales	Resources needed	Proposed Response
12	<p>Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt an accessible information standard across the council - Apply inclusive communication principles to all correspondences and consultations. <p>Checklist to ensure that meetings for the general public are accessible</p>	Customers & Communications	<p>We will develop an accessible information standard which will cover all communication with the public, electronic, phone, letter and for face-to-face meetings. This standard will seek to cover the use of inclusive communication principles.</p> <p>Once developed and checked by Spectrum and other bodies this will be internally promoted to encourage uptake / compliance.</p>	In place by end of 2022	Minimal – this work can be done within existing teams.	Accept
13	Work with Spectrum CIL to develop training for officers on appropriate language to use when communicating with disabled people.	Organisational Development (OD).	<p>Rollout of the Customer Experience Programme learning modules can include this, as well as in our induction and Diversity & Inclusion modules.</p> <p>Plain English is a standard we already work to and can be used as a part of the training and accessible information standard</p>	Content relevant for each modules can be created by our OD team with Spectrum CIL, before end 2022.	Low, as OD team can meet with Spectrum CIL in this timeframe and add appropriate content.	Accept
14	Adopt the standards underpinning the Community Access Symbol and seek to encourage citywide take up and accreditation of the initiative.	Organisational Development.	Need to explore free training offer from Communication Access UK - an initiative developed in partnership by charities that share a vision to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties.	Suggest we explore this in more detail to establish what we would be signing up to and what resources this requires from us to	Medium – no resource allocated to this and we have other accreditations to consider as well	Requires further work

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication Access UK developed Communication Access Symbol, underpinned by a free training package and standards. - Anyone can sign up to complete the training package. - Organisations will receive accreditation as Communication Accessible once they have committed to deliver the training and adhere to the standards. <p>Organisations will then be placed on a national directory and can display the Communication Access Symbol. Both certificates and accreditation are valid for 12 months and need to be renewed annually.</p>	achieve and renew each year.		
15	Work with Go! Southampton and Spectrum produce access guides on a city-wide scale for Southampton.	Go! Southampton	<p>Meeting to be arranged with new Go! CX to establish a way forward with resources available.</p> <p>Work with SEND Children's Forums and schools to help design access guides that are child friendly</p>	Autumn 2022 meeting to scope	Initial scoping – Low – further resource tbc.	Require further work

Inquiry Theme 4: Accessibility to public facilities and services

- The EU Accessible City Award criteria asks applicant cities to identify how accessibility is considered and integrated in the public services provided within their city.
- There are legal duties that underpin accessibility requirements, but principles considered the Inquiry for accessibility to facilities and services were:
 - Services need to be easy to get to – Publicised in places that reach the target audience; Adjacent car parking and served by public transport; Venue well signposted
 - Buildings need to be accessible for disabled people - Entrance / reception, meeting rooms, toilets, food / drinks
 - Information provided needs to be in accessible formats
 - Staff training & culture - Ensure properly trained staff that understand needs of disabled people.

General Observations

- Panel did not consider in detail the accessibility of specific public buildings or services in the city, but the focus groups identified general issues relating to the accessibility of public facilities and services in Southampton.
- Considerations were made around:
 - **Service information** - Many disabled people do not know what services there are – information directory needs to be updated to be user friendly and accessible.
 - **Accessible public buildings** - access to public buildings was a challenge in Southampton. Facilities are rarely designed to be fully inclusive. Gateway was indicated as fully accessible, but improvements need to be made to council leisure facilities.
 - **Equality Impact Assessments** - The City Council undertakes Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIAs) for all significant proposals and policies/strategies. Feedback from disabled people indicated that the process could be more rigorous, including engaging with disabled people where decisions are likely to impact them.

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Rec No.	Action	Responsible Service Area	Service Area Comments/Output	Proposed Outputs/estimated timescales	Resources needed	
16	Engage disabled people, potentially through the proposed Southampton Disability Access Forum, in the development of Equality Impact Assessments when it is expected that a new policy, development or decision will have an impact on disabled people.	Growth	<p>For Equality Impact Assessments when relating to transport schemes, these will be developed with input from disability representative groups through the proposed Accessibility Forum.</p> <p>Officers to seek to engage with disabled children's forums and schools to gain their views</p>	TBC	TBC	Requires further work
17	Undertake access audits of the City Council's public buildings and take recommended action to improve the accessibility of the buildings where practical and reasonable. All new public facilities should be fully accessible	Property Services	<p>Testing case will be the proposed redevelopment of the Outdoor Sports Centre facilities, to ensure that all proposals adhere to. This may be dependent on new accessibility policy for the new SCV Local Plan, which as mentioned above, is dependent on expert advice. However, parts of the redevelopment proposals are actively taking accessibility guidance and advice to design to highest standard of use.</p>	TBC	TBC	Requires further work