

# Accessible Southampton? – Final Report



## Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

### PANEL MEMBERSHIP – 2021/22

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Councillor Coombs  
Councillor Guest  
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## Chair's Introduction

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### **Councillor Vaughan - Chair of the Accessible Southampton Inquiry Panel (2021/22)**

Disability matters to all of us. Over 14 million people in the UK are living with a disability and 1 in 4 households are affected by disability. This includes people with physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, emotional, age related and hidden impairments.

Evidence presented to the inquiry has identified that, compared to many places, Southampton is generally a good place to work and live for disabled people, however, significant challenges remain that prevent many of our residents from being able to access all that our great city has to offer.

It is currently perceived that accessibility has not been at the forefront of decisions, particularly on the built environment, with barriers still in place for residents and visitors to navigate the city independently and safely. By becoming a more accessible and inclusive city it will enable disabled people, and those with mobility issues, to access services and contribute fully to public life.

During the inquiry we have been informed about positive developments in the city that will improve accessibility as well as the potential to change attitudes and approaches that the Southampton City Vision Local Plan brings. We have also seen what can happen when cities prioritise accessibility. Getting it right helps all residents and visitors and can deliver significant environmental, economic and social benefits.

Our partners in the business community, through GO! Southampton, have outlined their ambition for Southampton to be an inclusive city that is accessible and welcoming to all. Now is the opportunity for the City Council to follow this example and work with disabled people in Southampton, and other key partners to make this ambition a reality by implementing the recommendations identified in this report.

I would like to thank all those that gave evidence and members of the Panel for their patience and support throughout the inquiry. Despite the challenges that holding meetings virtually can bring the Panel willingly listened to the detailed evidence in order to develop their understanding of the subject. For that I am genuinely grateful.

## Accessible Southampton

### The Aim of the Inquiry

1. In the foreword to the National Disability Strategy published in 2021, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Minister for Disabled People state that:  
*‘Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever your background, whether or not you have a disability – either visible or hidden – everyone should be able to participate fully, safely and free from prejudice in everyday life, enjoying all the freedoms and opportunities that entails.’*
2. The National Disability Strategy identifies that disabled people’s aspirations for their lives are no different from non-disabled people’s aspirations. However, the strategy recognises that disabled people’s everyday experience is very different from non-disabled people.
3. Every day, many disabled people:
  - wake up in a home that is not adapted to their needs
  - rely on an unpredictable transport network to get out and about
  - navigate inaccessible and inflexible workplaces or education settings
  - face limited choice and additional expense when shopping around for goods and services
  - use unresponsive and fragmented public services that do not meet their needs
  - feel excluded from leisure opportunities and socialising
  - find themselves barred from exercising rights due to accessibility challenges.
4. The national perspective outlined above corresponds with feedback provided about Southampton. Findings from a 2020 access audit commissioned by Go! Southampton and undertaken by Spectrum Centre for Independent Living (CIL), identified significant challenges older and disabled people experience accessing Southampton.<sup>1</sup>
5. Given the challenges outlined the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee recommended at the September 2021 meeting, that an inquiry focussing on opportunities to improve the accessibility of Southampton is undertaken by the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel.

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<sup>1</sup> [Access Southampton – Spectrum CIL, 2020](#)

6. The set objectives of the inquiry were:
  - 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.
7. The full terms of reference for the inquiry, agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, are shown in Appendix 1.

### **How the inquiry was conducted**

8. The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook the inquiry over 5 evidence gathering meetings. At the start of each meeting the Panel received a 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. This ensured that the views of disabled people were represented.
9. In addition to hearing the views of disabled people, the Panel received information from a wide variety of organisations. This included Spectrum CIL, AccessAble, Liverpool City Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Derby City Council, The Rose Road Association, Go! Southampton, SO:Let's Connect, transport operators in Southampton, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust as well as officers from Southampton City Council. A list of witnesses that provided evidence to the inquiry is detailed in Appendix 2.
10. The key findings, conclusions and recommendations from the inquiry are detailed succinctly later in this report.
11. Members of the Panel would like to thank all those who have assisted with the development of this review, in particular the following who has provided the Panel with invaluable advice throughout the inquiry:
  - Ian Loynes – Chief Executive, Spectrum CIL

## **Introduction and Background**

### **What is an accessible city?**

12. The Access City Award is a prize given by the EU every year to cities that work hard to be accessible. They define a city to be accessible when all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems. For example, a city is accessible when all people can easily:
  - get the bus or the metro to go to work
  - use ticket machines to buy a ticket
  - go around the streets or get in public buildings like hospitals and town halls
  - get information in ways that they can read and understand.

### **Why is it important that towns and cities are accessible?**

13. Over 1 in 5 people in the UK are disabled. That is over 14 million people in the UK living with a disability. It is a number that has continued to rise as people are living longer and treatments and technology in healthcare improve.<sup>2</sup>
14. 1 in 4 households are affected by disability, 45% of people aged 65+ have a disability and there are estimated to be at least 4.5m carers in the UK.<sup>3</sup>
15. Spectrum CIL estimate the number of disabled people living in Southampton to be approximately 37,500. This includes people with physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological, emotional, age related and hidden impairments.
16. Accessibility is key to inclusive cities. If cities are planned and designed poorly disabled people are further excluded. This exclusion means fewer opportunities for education, employment and involvement in community life. By tackling barriers and building inclusive cities it can enable disabled people, and those with access issues, to access services and contribute fully to public life.
17. Making cities accessible can also enable them to benefit from the spending power of disabled people and their household, often referred to

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020>

<sup>3</sup> [AccessAble presentation to the Inquiry Panel](#) – 07/10/21

as the purple pound. In the UK this is estimated to be worth £274 billion per year (2020) and this figure continues to rise.<sup>4</sup>

18. The Lord Mayor of Chester effectively summarised the benefits provided by an accessible city when the City of Chester was awarded 2017 EU Access City Award winner:

*“Improved accessibility brings not only reassurance and the necessary support to those who struggle with accessibility, but lasting economic and social benefits to the city”* – Cllr Angela Claydon, Lord Mayor of Chester

### **Overarching legislation and strategic context**

19. In addition to the benefits associated with an accessible city identified above, there are legal duties that underpin improving accessibility. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against all persons on the grounds of the protected characteristics that are specified in the Act. Disability is one of the specified protected characteristics. Protection from discrimination for disabled people applies to disabled people in a range of circumstances, covering the provision of goods, facilities and services, the exercise of public functions, premises, work, education, and associations.
20. There are legal obligations under the Equality Act for employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve access for disabled people.
21. In addition to the legal obligations to individual disabled people, public bodies also have a wider Public Sector Equality Duty to actively:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
  - Advance equality of opportunity
  - Foster good relations
22. The Duty requires public bodies to take into account disabled people’s impairments, when making decisions about policies and services, as the law recognises that disabled people’s needs may be different from the needs of non-disabled people. This might mean making reasonable adjustments or treating disabled people better than non-disabled people to meet their needs. Having due regard for advancing equality involves:
  - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://wearepurple.org.uk/the-purple-pound-infographic/>



- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

## **National Disability Strategy**

23. To build on the progress that has been made since disability discrimination legislation was introduced more than 25 years ago (now subsumed within the wider Equality Act), the Government, in 2021, published a National Disability Strategy.
24. Whilst it has been criticised by disabled people and representative organisations due to the lack of consultation, the strategy recognises that there have been many improvements in services, access and opportunities for disabled people. The employment gap has narrowed. Levels of understanding and visibility have increased. There have been profound changes in public attitudes towards disability. However, feedback from disabled people has identified that these positive changes, while welcome, are not enough. The vision for the National Disability Strategy is therefore to transform disabled people's everyday lives.
25. The strategy sets out actions that the Government will take on the path towards delivering the stated vision. A number of these actions are linked to making cities more accessible, in particular the focus on housing, transport and public services, and these will be referenced later in this report.



## **Key ingredients of an accessible city**

26. The EU Access City Award recognises the efforts made by cities to become more accessible; promotes equal access to urban life for disabled people and allows local authorities to promote and share their good practice.
27. The award celebrates a city's willingness, ability and efforts to become more accessible, in order to:
  - guarantee equal access to fundamental rights
  - improve the quality of life of its population and ensure that everybody – regardless of age, mobility or ability – has equal access to all the resources and pleasures cities have to offer.
28. The overarching message that the award scheme aims to communicate to the local level is that Europeans have a right to live in urban areas where services and leisure activities should be accessible to all. Cities should therefore strive to improve the quality of life for their citizens by enhancing accessibility.

## **4 Key areas of accessibility**

29. The evaluation criteria utilised for the EU Access City Award identifies four key areas of accessibility:
  - a) The built environment and public spaces
  - b) Transportation and related infrastructures
  - c) Information and communication, including information and communication technologies (ICT)
  - d) Public facilities and services.

## **Ownership, level of commitment**

30. The EU Access City Award also recognises the importance of ownership and commitment by a city's administration to implement accessibility action.
31. The following are key application criteria that an applicant city has to demonstrate:
  - The actions implemented or planned are part of a coherent strategy or policy framework, rather than just ad hoc projects.
  - Accessibility must be mainstreamed in the city's policies and its regulations.

- There is a corporate commitment to accessibility at a high level within the authority.
- Appropriate resources are allocated to implement these policies.

### **Involvement of disabled people and relevant partners**

32. Any applicant city also needs to demonstrate in the planning, implementation and maintenance of city policies, and initiatives aimed at increasing accessibility, the active and clear involvement of disabled people and their representative organisations.
33. Reflecting the relevance of the EU Access City Award objectives to the Accessible Southampton inquiry terms of reference, the inquiry was conducted following the 4 key accessibility criteria utilised in the Access City Award. Separate meetings looking at each criterion were scheduled. The issues of ownership, commitment and the involvement of disabled people were themes that cut across each of the Inquiry Panel meetings.

## **Accessibility to the built environment and public spaces**

The EU Accessible City Award criteria includes the following issues under this heading - City centre design, streets and pavements, parks, squares, monuments and open spaces, work environments, markets, festivals and other outdoor events.

**‘66% of disabled people said they had faced discrimination due to physical access issues’ – AccessAble UK Survey, 2018**

34. The way places are designed affects our ability to move, see, hear and communicate effectively. If cities are built with accessibility and inclusivity in mind it enables everyone to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities.
35. According to the Inclusive Design Hub, inclusive design is the design of an environment so that it can be accessed and used by as many people as possible, regardless of age, gender and disability. An environment that is designed inclusively is not just relevant to buildings; it also applies to surrounding open spaces, wherever people go about everyday activities. This includes shops, offices, hospitals, leisure facilities, parks and streets.
36. Inclusive design keeps the diversity and uniqueness of each individual in mind. To do this, built environment professionals should involve potential users at all stages of the design process; from the design brief and detailed design through to construction and completion. Where possible, it is important to involve disabled people in the design process.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Principles of Inclusive Design**

37. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) published and promoted the following principles of inclusive design as it relates to the built environment:<sup>6</sup>
  - 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

<sup>5</sup> <https://inclusivedesign.scot/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/the-principles-of-inclusive-design.pdf>

- 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.

### **How accessible is Southampton’s built environment?**

38. Feedback provided to the Inquiry Panel, reflecting the discussion at the Spectrum CIL convened Accessible Southampton Focus Group meeting, identified a number of areas where the accessibility of Southampton’s built environment fails to mirror best practice and adhere to the principles of inclusive design. However, before those issues were raised it was recognised that access, particularly in the City Centre, was generally good, and that there are plenty of examples of good design and access, particularly in retail areas.
39. The fact that most shops allow assistance dogs and shops make a lot of effort, and that Audio Loop Systems, when installed and operational, are really making a difference to hearing impaired people [NB: only very few installed/operational in shops and public buildings] were raised as examples of good practice.
40. The 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

#### **City Design – Getting around the city**

41. The most common hazards for people getting around the city on foot or in a wheelchair came from a wide variety of street furniture, such as billboards and other displays outside shops, inconveniently placed bollards or rubbish bins, and cafe/restaurant pavement tables. While such hazards cause difficulties for most disabled people, they can be particularly dangerous for people with visual impairments.

42. Problems with pavements causing obstruction or danger were also raised. For example, sudden changes in width or height of the pavement, shortage of dropped kerbs - resulting in people having to go onto the road - or cracked/broken paving, creating a tripping hazard. Examples where the pavement was not defined from the road spaces and the use of cobbles in paving were raised.
43. Poorly designed seating was referenced, and specific challenges faced by particular groups of disabled people - those with mental health conditions or Autism, as well as people who use assistance dogs were highlighted. A crowded city centre can be disorientating, or even hostile, environment for many people in these groups - to the extent that they will often be reluctant to go to the city centre at all.
44. Other issues raised included the lack of accessible signposting around the city for people with visual impairments and poorly phased traffic and pedestrian crossings.

### **Buildings and Spaces – Retail and Public**

45. Various access issues were noted in relation to cafes, bars and restaurants in the city centre. For example, internal steps put in for purely aesthetic reasons - thereby creating an unnecessary access barrier - and the current fashion for high tables and stools in many pubs and cafes, which are also inaccessible.
46. The most common problems with shops include:
  - stepped access at entrances
  - narrow and cluttered aisles or queuing lanes
  - poorly sited or designed displays
  - shortage of accessible lifts
  - poor lighting for people with visual impairments
  - lack of accessible changing cubicles
  - lack of accessible toilets or hearing loop systems - remain even after recent refurbishments
  - even some council owned leisure facilities are not fully accessible.

### **Building and Spaces - Homes**

47. Too few new houses are built to be accessible. Disabled and older people want to visit friends, family and neighbours just as much as

everyone else. If all homes had a basic level of accessibility built in, it would be less costly to adapt as people age or become disabled.

### **Accessible Toilets / Changing Places Toilets**

48. Problems with finding accessible public toilets when out and about in Southampton was highlighted. It was felt that, since the City Council closed many of the public toilets in the city centre, disabled people have to try to find toilets in shops - but these are often inaccessible and/or poorly maintained and designed, even in the modern leisure/retail developments in the city centre.
49. Southampton also has very few Changing Places toilets in comparison to other similar cities (10 as of March 2022<sup>7</sup>). A Changing Places toilet provides sanitary accommodation for people with multiple and complex disabilities. Even though not many exist, they are not widely used because people don't know they exist.

### **Planning and Building Control**

50. Feedback was critical of the City Council's approach to ensuring that new or refurbished buildings in Southampton are accessible from both a Planning and Building Control perspective. Expectations are that Planners should insist that good access is built in at the design phase of new builds. The perception is that guidance is routinely ignored by developers and often no access or bad access is included in new buildings and access is sometimes reduced when buildings are modified. At the Accessible Southampton Focus Group meeting disabled people stated that:

*"Access considerations should be put in place, and planning officers should ensure access rights are preserved – but they don't" ....and..*

*"Planning officers don't appear to 'police' access requirements"*

51. The Building Control Service was identified as a contributor to the lack of access as inaccessible provision is routinely granted permission.
52. A specific criticism related to the lack of support the Council provided to members of the public who wanted to report any access issues they come across when out and about in Southampton.
53. The following contribution from Rebecca Handley, Deputy Executive Director and Operations Director at Go! Southampton, the Business

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.changing-places.org/find>

Improvement District for the city centre, effectively encapsulates the feedback provided:

*'It is currently perceived that accessibility has not been at the forefront of decisions on the built environment, with many barriers still in place for residents and visitors to navigate the city independently and safely.'*

### **A disabled person's perspective – Jemma Brown**

54. Many of the issues raised were highlighted in the superb presentation to the Panel from Jemma Brown. Jemma is blind and lives with multiple disabilities, including chronic illness that causes chronic pain and fatigue requiring the part-time use of an electric wheelchair.
55. Jemma was asked to reflect on the challenges that she experiences accessing Southampton's built environment. Below is a summary of the key issues raised by Jemma:

- SCC is failing its citizens with a disability, we are left out of planning decisions and given very little thought when making decisions and planning on how the built environment impacts us.
- SCC are following a medical model of disability that is outdated & harmful, SCC expects me as a disabled person to adapt to force my body to work in environments that it was not designed for.
- The area around the station is one example of poor planning both in terms of traffic management and the impact on disabled people. Decisions to have the road and the pavement in the same colour scheme and have tactile crossing points but not actual crossings put pedestrians at risk - The pavement should be a space where I am safe but around the station this is not the case.
- SCC is investing in its road network but I have to tell you that in doing this they have not considered the accessibility implications. In many cases the level of the road has been dropped and the difference in level has not been fixed when it comes to dropped curbs meaning that in some cases what looks like a dropped curb is actually a step. This is the case for many of the roads along Hill Lane between Atherley Bowling Club and Taunton's College. It is incredibly difficult to get between the roads mentioned.
- Sadly, there are many shops and businesses in Southampton that are not wheelchair accessible and are also not offering reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled people meaning that there are areas that are totally no go.



- With a guide dog I have been asked to leave shops in the city centre.
- For me the biggest problem is there is no easy way of reporting accessibility issues like a broken dropped curb, there are no policies or programs in place. It is really difficult to report issues.
- When West Quay South was built I raised with both Guide Dogs, sensory services, and West Quay that the steps are incredibly dangerous there were no tactile markings and they are curved quite frankly it scared me, one wrong step and there would be a serious accident. West Quay and its contractors did nothing... it was about a year later the tactile markings were retrofitted but even these have been fitted not following best practice.
- I believe SCC should be holding the designers of planned works accountable where a public building is designed and proposed at a planning level SCC should be prioritising accessibility and where reasonable (e.g. public buildings) refusing planning applications that go against best practice.
- Right now it takes me, an unpaid individual, to affect change and put quite simply it is often too late by the time I flag it.
- SCC needs to be pushing for inclusion and equality with a joined-up approach - SCC needs to implement new systems of reporting accessibility issues.
- Gosport where I grew up has an accessibility forum, that just looks at the high street area disabled people can anonymously report issues and it can then be followed up by the forum. If no action is taken the forum have the power to then raise it with the local council who will then ensure the issue is resolved.
- My choices are limited by decisions made - lack of infrastructure and joined up thinking and to be honest I am fed up of this.
- I feel SCC should be employing disabled people to test accessibility features and review potential problems, this member of staff can also start an access forum for the city centre, my dream would be for this to become something city wide.

56. Jemma's full written statement provided to the Panel is available here:

<https://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s53904/Jemma%20Brown%20-%20Written%20evidence.pdf>

## **What is happening in Southampton to improve the accessibility of the built environment?**

57. At the Inquiry Panel meeting the Panel received representations from the City Council and Go! Southampton, informing them about developments planned or proposed that could address some of the accessibility challenges identified in the previous section.

### **Planning/Building Control - Southampton City Vision Local Plan**

58. Southampton's current planning policies relating to accessibility date from 2006. SDP 11 - Accessibility and Movement, states that Planning permission will only be granted for development which contributes to an attractive network of public routes and spaces for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles; secures adequate access for all pedestrians including people with mobility and sensory difficulties such as elderly people, disabled people, the very young and those using prams and wheelchairs.
59. For all Major development (10 dwellings/1,000sq.m) and new dwellings in Conservation Areas there is a requirement to produce Design & Access Statements that set out the applicant's case.
60. Officers at the meeting recognised that there is plenty of evidence that this in itself doesn't deliver accessible development.
61. Building Regulation applications are checked against Part M minimum standards (building regulations in England to ensure that people are able to access and use buildings and their facilities) at plan approval stage and via site inspection at completion stage prior to occupation.
62. Higher standards can be applied by the Council subject to planning conditions and policy. Officers recognised that most developers will work to minimum accessibility standards unless required to do otherwise.
63. There is scope for planning policy as it relates to accessibility to be updated and reset. Southampton City Council is currently refreshing the Local Plan that sets out the vision for future development in the city, identifies what areas should be developed, and what requirements and standards developers should meet in their proposals. This provides an opportunity to secure higher accessibility standards for future developments which require planning permission.

64. Whilst the new 'Southampton City Vision Local Plan' is being developed there is an opportunity to add to the existing policy to include embedding an accessibility checklist.

### **The Public Realm**

65. The Panel were informed that the Council has recently increased its funding for footway repairs. The footway budget is £1.5m until the end of 2022/23 (previous years circa £500k per annum). It was recognised that this could help improve accessibility.
66. In Southampton the design of the public realm is guided by the Streetscape Toolkit, and relevant Department for Transport guidelines. The Streetscape Toolkit was last updated in 2013 and a refresh is due to commence shortly.
67. The refresh of the Streetscape Toolkit provides an opportunity to incorporate best practice with regards to accessibility in the Council's highways design standards moving forward.

### **Go! Southampton**

68. The City Centre Business Improvement District (BID), that represents over 630 businesses, has an ambition for Southampton to be an accessible and inclusive city that is designed with accessibility in mind, that listens to and understands its community.
69. Following the BID ballot in November 2021, Go! Southampton have been developing a new five year business plan. A new Inclusive City workstream will commence in April 2022 where the BID will be investing in initiatives that improve inclusivity across the city.
70. The BID is committed to working with businesses to make premises more accessible through interventions such as hearing loops and training for businesses to be more accessible and understanding of visitors' requirements. This reflects the view presented by Spectrum CIL at a Panel meeting that it doesn't matter how good or bad provision is, if customer service is wrong.
71. Go! Southampton is working with Spectrum CIL on the accessible premises initiative and is passionate about decluttering the city centre to make it easier to navigate. It is keen to work with the City Council to deliver this and to tackle the various barriers identified in the Spectrum CIL access audit commissioned by Go! Southampton.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Access Southampton – Spectrum CIL, 2020](#)

## **Lets Loop Southampton**

72. Lets Loop Southampton is a voluntary organisation that aims to make Southampton the first city in England to have a hearing loop in every public space. Information presented to the Panel indicated that currently only 4% of shops have loop systems installed.
73. Lets Loop Southampton has a grant fund available to meet the cost of installing a loop system (they cost about £200). The initiative is supported by the City Council and Go! Southampton.

## **Accessible built environment - What cities are getting this right?**

74. Good practice from the following cities was presented to the Panel

### **Chester**

75. Named EU Access City Award winner in 2017, the only UK winner. Chester is an historic city with ancient walls. Where full access is not possible the principle of least restrictive access is applied in the design of the public realm making the walls as accessible as possible for people.
76. The Council is aiming to ensure that the most severely disabled people can visit and enjoy the city's leisure, heritage and cultural facilities. Examples of good practice include:
  - Storyhouse Cultural Centre – Accessibility is at the forefront of the design of the building. The facility is fully inclusive and includes a Changing Place toilet, gender neutral toilets and removable seating to enable people to sit together if a member of a party is in a wheelchair.
  - Access guides and interpretation panels show wheelchair access points for the historic city walls.
  - There are currently at least 15 Changing Places across the Borough of Cheshire West and Chester with more planned.
77. During the Panel's discussion with Cheshire West and Chester's former Senior Access Officer the following critical success factors were identified:
  - Improving access has been a corporate priority since the mid 1990's and is embedded in the culture of the organisation.
  - The One City Plan strategy which guides the future regeneration of Chester. The Plan puts accessibility high on the agenda.

- The Corporate Disability Access Forum (CDAF) set up in 2013 ensures effective engagement and input from disabled people. The Forum works with developers and architects to ensure that the needs of disabled people are considered and that, wherever possible, minimum standards are exceeded.
  - A dedicated Access Officer works across the Council and its private sector partners on all aspects of access improvement. The Access Officer co-ordinates the CDAF, 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.
78. The approach to accessibility employed in Chester has a positive financial impact on the city. In 2015 the average amount spent in Chester by Shopmobility customers was £79 per visit. Shopmobility customers alone spent approximately £237,000 annually in Chester.

## **Liverpool**

79. Reflecting Liverpool's long-standing commitment to accessibility, the city has strong planning policies in relation to accessibility. Urban Design 4 requires all new developments to meet the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. The Access Officer employed by the Council can insist on BS 8300 standards rather than minimum standards. Hotel rooms with ceiling hoists in Liverpool are an example of this.
80. Liverpool's Accessible Housing Policy is the most ambitious in UK. All new housing must be at least M4(2), accessible or adaptable housing, with 10% M4(3), wheelchair accessible. This will increase the supply of accessible and adaptable homes meaning that disabled people can remain in their homes, reducing the need for expensive social care packages & improving the sustainability of communities.
81. Liverpool has a Corporate Access Forum similar to Chester. The forum plays a key role in the design of new developments, this includes the new Everton FC stadium which will be the most accessible in the UK. The stadium will include 14 gender neutral toilets and 3 Changing Places.
82. As of December 2021, Liverpool had 37 Changing Places with 8 more planned for the city.

## **Recommendations to improve the accessibility of the built environment and public spaces in Southampton**

83. Having identified that in Southampton accessibility has not been at the forefront of decisions on the built environment, with many barriers still in place for residents and visitors to navigate the city independently and safely, it is clear that opportunities exist to address the impediments identified.
84. As Go! Southampton's written evidence to the Inquiry Panel stated:  
*'If you design a city with accessibility in mind, you can remove barriers and enable everyone to experience the city in a positive way and bring significant environmental, economic and social benefits..... Southampton has the potential to learn from best practice across the UK and Europe..... It is critical to understand and listen to the needs of our community, to reflect on their perceptions of accessibility in the city and co-create solutions that bring meaningful value.'*
85. Information presented to the Panel from Cheshire West and Chester Council identified that the average cost to the NHS of a trip or fall where an ambulance is required is £14,000. Given this figure, and the value of the purple pound (see paragraph 17), it is likely that, as stated by the City Council's Executive Director of Wellbeing (Health & Adults), investment in infrastructure to make it accessible will deliver a financial return to the city.
86. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's built environment the following actions are recommended:
- i. Enshrine the principles of accessibility and inclusion within the Southampton City Vision Local Plan - The Local Plan presents an opportunity for the city to enshrine within its development principles an overarching commitment to make accessibility and inclusion central to future development. Development standards should include -
    - 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.
  - ii. Whilst the new Southampton City Vision Local Plan is being developed embed an accessibility checklist within existing planning policy.

- iii. Update the Streetscene Toolkit to reflect available best practice with regards to accessibility of the public realm.
- iv. Establish a Southampton Disability Access Forum – Following the approach employed in [Chester](#), the Council should work with Go! Southampton, transport partners and local disability organisations to set-up and facilitate a cross-sector access forum. The forum, building on an existing Spectrum CIL led forum, would play a key role in designing and planning future developments as well as monitoring access across the city.
- v. Employ an Access Officer (potential for this post to work across Hampshire authorities) – This post would work across the Council and its private sector partners on all aspects of access improvement and would be, alongside the Access Forum, a focus for all built environment access related complaints received by the Council.
- vi. Changing Places toilets – Building Regulations have been updated requiring Changing Places toilets to be a condition of new developments that meet certain criteria. To support publicly accessible facilities the Council should apply for funding if the Government announces a new round of grants to develop the provision of Changing Places.
- vii. Work in partnership with Go! Southampton to deliver their ambition for Southampton to be an accessible and inclusive city.



## **Accessibility to transportation and related infrastructures**

The EU Accessible 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.

*“The world is different. You have to book if you want to use a bus; you have to book if you want to get a train. [Spontaneity] ... is a luxury.”<sup>9</sup>*

87. Transport has the ability to open doors, to unlock potential and to increase confidence. It enables people to see family and friends as well as seek and access employment. It can make the difference between feeling socially isolated and feeling socially included.
88. Transport can however also be one of the biggest barriers faced by disabled people. In 2019 Scope surveyed 2,000 people about how difficulties around using public transport affects their ability to lead independent, confident and connected lives. The research found that two thirds of disabled people had experienced problems using public transport in the last year and 30 percent of disabled people said that difficulties with public transport had reduced their independence.<sup>10</sup>
89. In 2018 the Government published an Inclusive Transport Strategy. The strategy sets out the Government’s plans to make our transport system more inclusive, and to make travel easier for disabled people.
90. The stated ambition is for disabled people to have the same access to transport as everyone else, and to be able to travel confidently, easily and without extra cost. By 2030 the Government envisages equal access for disabled people using the transport system, with assistance if physical infrastructure remains a barrier.

### **General principles for travel**

91. In his presentation to the Panel, Ian Loynes - Chief Executive at Spectrum CIL, outlined some general principles that should be followed by a city that has the ambition to have an inclusive transport system:

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<sup>9</sup> [National Disability Strategy](#) – Quote from Jessica, p39, 2021

<sup>10</sup> [Travel-Fair-report \(1\).pdf](#)

- Good access should be built in at the design phase. Ask disabled people as co-production is cost effective.
- Public transport should include all, segregated transport is not the answer (Dial-a-Ride) as it is expensive and exclusionary.
- Consider the whole experience - Booking / tickets, getting to the public transport destination, interchanges (car-taxi-bus-train).
- Proper consideration of pedestrians, particularly those who have impaired senses.
- It doesn't matter how good/bad provision is if customer service is wrong.

### **How accessible is Southampton's public transport and related infrastructure?**

92. The Inquiry Panel received information from transport operators in Southampton and City Council officers. This information, considered alongside the feedback provided to the Inquiry Panel following the discussion at the Spectrum CIL convened Accessible Southampton Focus Group meeting, provided an overview of the accessibility of Southampton's public transport system and related infrastructure.

#### **Buses**

93. There has been considerable investment in the bus infrastructure to improve the accessibility of the fleet and related elements. As a result:
- 230+ buses operate in Southampton, all buses can 'kneel' to meet raised kerbs at bus stops making it quicker and simpler for wheelchair users and those with mobility impairments to access.
  - Buses have at least 1 designated wheelchair space where wheelchair users have priority over other users.
  - Onboard the buses 86% have 'next stop' audio and visual bus stops – the remaining buses are being upgraded by operators.
  - Local bus operators provide large format printed timetables for the visually impaired – these are available from travel shops.
  - Bus Stops – The City Council uses the Transport for London (TfL) guidance for bus stop design which is considered to be over and above national guidance. A local 'Basis of Design' is being developed for bus stops.

- Bus operators participate in a number of schemes to improve the accessibility of buses. First are signatories to the RNIB charter to assist passengers with visual impairments – stopping at bus stops if there is someone waiting and talking to passengers about the route; Bluestar run Helping Hand Scheme using a card that provides information on any assistance they may require.
94. Key concerns raised by the Accessible Southampton Focus Group related to buses only having one designated space for wheelchair users limiting the ability of wheelchair users to travel together.

### **Trains**

95. There are eight railway stations in Southampton – Southampton Central plus seven suburban stations. Of the eight, only Southampton Central is fully accessible with lifts to all platforms, hearing loops, digital displays, available staff etc. The remaining stations are partially or not accessible.
96. Reflecting this, feedback from the Focus Group was that accessibility is generally good at Southampton Central and that most rail staff tended to be happy to help. However, as disabled people are expected to book tickets at least 24 hours in advance the lack of spontaneity or flexibility is a barrier to travel.

### **Ferries**

97. Red Funnel employ customer service staff to provide assistance before, during and after a voyage for disabled people.
98. They work closely with blind/visually impaired groups in Southampton and the Isle of Wight to make recommendations on how to improve the journey experience and they provide disability awareness training to all customer facing staff.

### **Taxis**

99. The number of hackney carriages in Southampton is fixed at 283 with plates 214-283 required to be Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV). Should any plate from 001 to 213 become available as a new licence it will also have to be a WAV. Therefore, approximately 25% of Southampton's hackney carriages are currently required to be wheelchair accessible.
100. There are currently 1,029 licensed Private Hire Vehicles operating in Southampton. Of these only 48 (4.6%) are WAVs.

101. Taxi operators have difficulty fulfilling wheelchair work because of the lack of vehicles, particularly at school run times when the vehicles are required for pupil transport.
102. Perhaps reflecting the lack of WAVs, the Focus Group feedback raised the issue of wheelchair users having to book in advance, except at Southampton Central, and questioned why all hackney carriages are not required to be wheelchair accessible.

## **Parking**

103. On street disabled parking is widely distributed in locations across the city centre, district centres and resident parking zones.
104. 143 disabled bays are available in City Council off-street car parks in the city centre and in district centres.
105. Level access and lifts to street level and walkways are available in all Council multi-storey car parks and surface car parks do not carry a charge for Blue Badge holders.
106. For new developments City Council Parking Standards set out the minimum number of disabled parking spaces required and design standards that must be adhered to.
107. Feedback from the Accessible Southampton Focus Group referenced the difficulty finding suitable accessible parking spaces, even outside of busy times and, reflecting a lack of engagement with disabled people, the lack of consideration of the real needs of disabled drivers in the design and placement of parking spaces and car parks.
108. Facilities need to reflect the variety of car designs with appropriate signage to reflect usage. Design challenges identified included:
  - Car park barriers are not usable by many disabled drivers simply because they cannot reach the buttons without leaving the vehicle, even asking for help needs a button to be pressed.
  - Car parks, and parking bays, are commonly not designed for bigger vans, most wheelchair accessible vans are bigger.
  - On street parking space restrictions make parking for people who need to exit at the rear, or side, of their vehicles difficult.
  - Not all on street spaces for disabled people have drop kerbs.
109. The Civic Centre disabled bays were identified as the best spaces in the city for wheelchair users however, currently, if there's an event going on, the Civic Centre car park is often closed.

## **ShopMobility**

110. In Southampton ShopMobility services are provided at West Quay Shopping Centre and in the city centre. The city centre ShopMobility scheme had almost 3,000 hires last year and information presented to the Panel by Spectrum CIL estimated that over a third of customers using the scheme spend over £50 per city centre visit.
111. The Focus Group raised the need for ShopMobility schemes in other shopping areas of the city.

## **Signage**

112. There are 130 directional signs in Southampton. The original design of the signs was subject to a DDA audit which recommended high tonal contrast.
113. Feedback from disabled people identified that some colours used are not good for visually impaired people and that signage could be improved to make it fully accessible to all disabled people.

## **What is happening that may improve the accessibility of public transport and related infrastructure in Southampton?**

114. Developments planned or proposed that could address some of the accessibility challenges identified in the previous section were presented to the Inquiry Panel.

## **Buses**

115. Under the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, buses and coaches designed to carry over 22 passengers, and which are used on local and scheduled services in the UK, must incorporate at least one wheelchair space.
116. The National Disability Strategy recognises needs and expectations of disabled people have changed in the last 20 years and includes a commitment that the DfT will review the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, starting with research in 2022.
117. In 2021 the City Council published a Bus Service Improvement Plan. The Plan, developed jointly with bus operators, includes a vision that buses are inclusive and provide value for money.
118. The Plan includes a request for DfT funding to deliver upgrades to all bus stops in Southampton to meet TfL accessibility standards; Accessibility audits to bus stops; Work with user groups to develop

assistive technologies; Continue Independent Travel Training; Innovative and capped fares.

## **Trains**

119. The National Disability Strategy references a suite of accessibility reforms for train travel. These include a duty on Great British Railways to improve accessibility and the development and implementation of a national accessibility strategy for the railways.
120. The strategy also commits the DfT to conduct a network-wide accessibility audit of station facilities at all 2,565 mainline railway stations in Great Britain to inform future investment decisions. In Southampton future improvements are being developed through updated Station Travel Plans.
121. All Aboard Project - In April 2020 Rose Road Association was awarded a grant from South Western Railway to address some of the barriers to rail travel for young people with severe disabilities.
122. The project has included the development of step-by-step guides using PCS (Picture Communication System) to travelling by train. The project finished in March 2022 and information is still being collected but the feedback that has been received to date has been largely positive.
123. South Western Railway staff have had training on the issues raised and are taking the issue seriously.

## **Taxis**

124. The Council is scheduled to undertake the next taxi unmet demand survey in April/May 2022. Through the survey the Council's Licensing Team have been requested to look at the issue of wheelchair accessible vehicles in more detail.

## **Ferries**

125. Red Funnel have plans for 2022 to improve the accessibility of vessels by upgrading lifts, toilets, seating and safety communications.

## **Southampton Airport**

126. In 2021 Southampton Airport established an Accessibility Forum and is in the process of making improvements to the accessibility of the airport.

## **Transport infrastructure improvements**

127. The Council is designing two transport interchanges, a rail / bus interchange, and a bus interchange. This presents an opportunity to reflect best practice in the design of these facilities and to engage disabled people.
128. As part of the Council's funding bid to the DfT under the Active Travel Fund, the Council has applied for £100k capital funding for Accessibility Improvements. If the bid is successful a governance framework will be set up to allocate the £100k. The Council is keen to engage disabled people fully in this process. The application was for funding for the 2022/23 financial year, and Council is waiting for an announcement from Government.

## **Inclusive Transport Strategy**

129. To support the objectives in Connected Southampton - the Council's Local Transport Plan, and the emerging City Vision Local Plan, the City Council will be developing a number of plans. These include an Inclusive Transport Strategy.

## **Accessible public transport and related infrastructure – What cities are getting this right?**

130. Good practice from the following cities was presented to the Panel.

### **Derby**

131. Derby were one of the first cities to insist that as a condition of license all hackney carriages must be wheelchair accessible. Derby had to go to court twice over this but were successful on both occasions.
132. The National Inclusive Transport Strategy (2018) identifies 53 local authorities where 100% of the hackney carriage fleet is wheelchair accessible. This includes Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council and Rushmoor Borough Council both located in Hampshire.<sup>11</sup>
133. Representatives from Cheshire West and Chester Council and Liverpool City Council informed the Panel that they require all hackney carriages to be wheelchair accessible. In these authorities

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<sup>11</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728547/inclusive-transport-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728547/inclusive-transport-strategy.pdf) - P67



the accessible fleet contributes to home to school transport and accessing day care provision.

## Chester

134. Chester's Bus interchange was awarded 2018 Accessible Transport Project of the Year. Designers followed best practice outlined in BS 8300 - 'Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment'.
135. The Corporate Disability Access Forum (CDAF) was consulted on the plans on 2-3 occasions, and this led to the designs being enhanced following the feedback received.
136. The interchange includes a direct phone line to Shopmobility, a 'map for all', a Changing Place toilet, tactile paving to enable visually impaired to navigate the bus station, and bins with yellow tops that are visible for partially sighted people.
137. The Access Officer was also a key consultee and worked closely with the project design team on the designs.
138. Cheshire West and Chester Council have also recently updated their signage strategy to reflect best practice.



The Map for All – Chester Bus Interchange

## Merseyside

139. Merseyside has 40 new trains that are accessible including level access from train to platform. There is no requirement for disabled people to book in advance for these services.

## **Recommendations to improve the accessibility of public transport and related infrastructure in Southampton**

140. Southampton's transportation and related infrastructure provides a number of examples where action has been taken to make travel easier for disabled people.
141. Challenges still exist for disabled people to access all aspects of the transportation system in Southampton, and it is unlikely that, even with the proposed initiatives identified, the ambition within the Government's Inclusive Transport Strategy of a transport system offering equal access for disabled people by 2030 will be achieved in the city.
142. The ability to be spontaneous with regards to travel plans remains a challenge for disabled people.
143. Southampton has the potential to learn from best practice. 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.
144. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's public transport and related infrastructure the following actions are recommended:
  - i. 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.
  - ii. Analyse the findings from the taxi unmet needs survey and explore opportunities to move to 100% wheelchair accessible hackney carriages and to increase the number of wheelchair accessible private hire vehicles in Southampton.
  - iii. With disabled people, review signage in Southampton, including the Legible Cities signage, to make it more accessible to disabled people.
  - iv. Explore opportunities to establish ShopMobility schemes in Southampton's district centres.
  - v. Recognise the importance to disabled people of the disabled parking spaces in the Civic Centre Car Park when planning events in Southampton City Centre.

## **Accessibility to information and communication**

The EU Accessible City Award criteria includes the following issues under this heading - measures related to access to the city authorities' official information. For instance: accessibility of promotional multimedia information of the municipality, 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.

*'Over 3 quarters of disabled people haven't visited somewhere they wanted to go because they could not find the information they needed.'* - AccessAble UK Survey, 2018

145. In her presentation to the Inquiry Panel, Anna Nelson, Chief Executive at AccessAble, outlined the importance of information provision, identifying it as one of the 3 key facets of accessibility, alongside the welcome and the physical space itself.
146. Information about accessibility has the power to make decisions. 76% of people that responded to an AccessAble survey in 2018 stated that they have not visited a venue because of a lack of information about access.<sup>12</sup>
147. Information provided not only needs to be available it needs to be accessible and inclusive. Millions of people across the United Kingdom have communication difficulties and 1 in 5 people in the UK will experience a communication difficulty at some point in their lives.<sup>13</sup>
148. Communication difficulties can occur for a range of reasons. If accessible and inclusive information and communications are not provided it can deny individuals with communication difficulties equality of access and opportunity.

### **General principles for accessible information & communications**

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<sup>12</sup> Accessibility and You Survey – AccessAble 2018

<sup>13</sup> [Communication Access UK – Inclusive communication for all \(communication-access.co.uk\)](http://communication-access.co.uk)

149. In his presentation to the Panel, Ian Loynes - Chief Executive at Spectrum CIL, outlined some general principles for accessible information and communication that should be followed:

- 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 equality groups (including disabled people)
- 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

### **How accessible is information and communication in Southampton?**

150. As the EU Accessible City Award criteria focusses on access to the city authorities' official information, the emphasis of the Panel's discussion was on Southampton City Council's information and communication. Discussion with the Council's Head of Customer and Communications provided the following overview.

151. The City Council has adopted accessibility standards that should be followed:

- Always start with the user/customer
- Give people options
- Design for the user who will find it the hardest
- Plain English is critical
- Keep it simple
- Listen to feedback and review regularly

152. The Council does not have set information standards but guidelines for written communication are as follows:

- Guidance outlines key considerations:
- Plain English
- Minimum size 12 font
- Use Ariel

- Make accessible versions available
- Use the corporate template

153. The Council has a contract in place with a translation service and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and where there is a demonstrable need the Council will translate printed materials – The Council have recently run some Facebook campaigns in 10 different languages.

154. The accessibility of the Council's website has increased significantly following the introduction of various template changes enabled by a new Content Management System. 99.2% of the content now conforms with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA, the statutory level, an increase from 67% at start of January 2021. 91.3% of content conforms to level AAA, the highest level and further improvements are planned.

155. The Council is seeking to increase digital inclusion in Southampton through public access computers in libraries, working with the Barclays Digital Eagles initiative and engaging with community partners.

### **Feedback from the Accessible Southampton Focus Group**

156. Whilst recognising that progress has been made in certain areas, the discussion at the Spectrum CIL convened Accessible Southampton Focus Group meeting raised a number of concerns about the accessibility of the Council's information and communication.

157. Feedback identified that whilst guidelines exist for information standards they are not being followed uniformly across the Council. Some services regularly send out information that is not in plain English, is not understandable to the recipients, and is not in the accessible format the customer has previously requested.

158. The Focus Group raised the inconsistent use of language by public services in Southampton. Words to describe disabled people, that are offensive to disabled people, such as 'handicapped' or 'bed/house Bound' are still routinely used. Words are important.

159. The Focus Group expressed concern that at times the only way to access a service or information is via the internet. There was support for services and information remaining available through a variety of channels.

160. Another important issue raised was that too many public meetings in Southampton are still inaccessible to disabled people either because of physical access, equipment such as a hearing loop or microphone not being installed or working, or through there being no access to BSL.

161. A number of these issues were recognised by the Head of Customer and Communications. In his presentation he identified that, as a large organisation with numerous departments and systems, and without a single customer recording system for client information, consistently applying good practice presents a challenge for the Council. He also recognised that more needs to be done to engage with customers, including disabled people at the start of a process.

### **Access Guides**

162. As previously identified, information about accessibility has the power to make decisions. A number of organisations work with venues, local authorities and other public bodies to, following an audit of premises, produce access guides that enable people to understand all the essential information they need about a location prior to arrival.

163. In Southampton both the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton (UHS) have published access guides in partnership with AccessAble. UHS launched their new site on 3rd December 2021.<sup>14</sup>

164. In comparison to other UK cities there are few access guides for venues in Southampton.

### **What is happening that may improve the accessibility of information and communication in Southampton?**

165. At the Inquiry Panel meeting the Panel received information about developments planned or proposed that could address some of the accessible information and communication challenges identified in the previous section.

### **Southampton City Council Customer Access Strategy**

166. In December 2021 the Council adopted a new Customer Access Strategy. The strategy's vision is:

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.accessable.co.uk/university-hospital-southampton-nhs-foundation-trust/access-guides/centre-block-southampton-general-hospital>

*'We want to put all of our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide appropriate support to those who need it ensuring that customer experiences are easy, effective and convenient.'*

167. Acknowledging this is a journey requiring ongoing effort to continuously improve, the strategy sets the principles and ambitions for where the Council wants to be.
168. Key to delivering this is the Council's Customer Experience Programme which is making improvements to digital channels; setting standards and redesigning services with a customer focus; delivering customer service and related training to all council staff; and, coordinating activity to support digitally excluded customers.
169. The Council is also seeking to link key customer IT systems to better understand the individual needs of each customer.

### **Communication Access Symbol**

170. Communication Access UK is an initiative developed in partnership by charities that share a vision to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties.



171. There has not been an over-arching symbol for communication access in the UK until now. Communication Access UK have developed the Communication Access Symbol, a new disability access symbol underpinned by a free training package and standards.
172. Anyone can sign up to Communication Access UK and complete the training package. Individuals will receive certificates confirming that they have completed the training, while organisations will receive accreditation as Communication Accessible once they have committed to deliver the training and adhere to the standards.
173. 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.
174. At the time of writing the Communication Access Symbol has not been seen anywhere in Southampton and no County/Unitary/District Council has been awarded the symbol.

## **SO:Let's Connect**

175. This project commenced in 2020 in response to services moving on-line during the lockdown. The service loans digital devices to people in Southampton, thereby helping residents become digitally connected. The pilot project has identified how important digital access is and funding is currently being assembled to enable the project to continue.

### **Accessible information and communication – What cities are getting this right?**

176. Good practice from the following cities was presented to the Panel.

#### **Sheffield**

177. AccessAble identified Sheffield City Council as an example of good practice with regards to providing information. Through the Accessible Sheffield project they are working on a citywide scale with AccessAble, Disability Sheffield and Nimbus Disability to support the ambitions of Sheffield to become an accessible and fairer city for all.

178. Access guides from AccessAble have detailed access information for over 2,000 venues in Sheffield, including shops, community halls, places of worship, Council buildings, hospitals, universities, bus and train stations, hotels, and more.

179. Each access guide includes information about a venue's facilities, including wheelchair access, automatic doors, accessible changing rooms, large print, sign language, and parking.

#### **Derby**

180. To support the principle that all individuals in Derby have a right to access and understand accurate and timely information in a way appropriate to their needs under the Equality Act 2010, Derby City Council has adopted an Accessible Communications Protocol.<sup>15</sup>

181. This Protocol is one of a set of policies around equality and diversity. The main aim of this Protocol is to provide a consistent accessible approach in how the Council communicates with people.

182. The Protocol outlines the support that will be provided by the Council, such as BSL interpreters, language interpreters, translations in various languages and formats, lip speakers, note takers, Deaf Relay

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<sup>15</sup> [accessible-communication-protocol.pdf \(derby.gov.uk\)](https://www.derby.gov.uk/accessible-communication-protocol.pdf)



interpreters, Easy Read information, BSL videos, Braille, large print etc to enable people to access and understand information.

183. The Council also works with disabled people to check whether the protocol is being applied consistently.

### **Recommendations to improve the accessibility of information and communication in Southampton**

184. The accessibility of the Council's information and communication has improved, particularly the accessibility of the website content.

185. The Customer Access Strategy outlines a direction of travel that incorporates elements of best practice identified and if implemented will, through initiatives such as the Customer Experience Programme, lead to better access for disabled people.

186. However, challenges still exist for disabled people to access all aspects of the Council's information and communication and to locate accurate information on the accessibility of venues in the city.

187. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's information and communication the following actions are recommended:

- i. To improve consistency in how the City Council communicates with residents the Council should adopt an accessible information standard. To support this approach Spectrum CIL has identified information standards that reflect best practice.
- ii. To help ensure that Council officers use appropriate language when communicating with disabled people, incorporate, within the customer service training that is proposed for council staff via the Customer Experience Programme, an element on the 'language of disability'. Once again, to support this, guidelines have been developed by Spectrum CIL.
- iii. Develop a checklist to ensure that meetings for the general public are accessible.
- iv. 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.
- v. 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, mirroring the approach followed in Sheffield.

## **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.

*'28% of disabled people had difficulty accessing public buildings 'all the time' or 'often' – UK Disability Survey, 2021*

188. As identified in the introduction to this inquiry there are legal duties that underpin improving accessibility. These include legal obligations for employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve access for disabled people and a requirement for all public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between different groups, including people with and without disabilities.

189. Guidelines for accessible public facilities and services were presented to the Panel by the Chief Executive of Spectrum CIL. A number of the aspects have already been considered in this report:

- 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.

### **How accessible are public facilities and services in Southampton?**

190. Perhaps reflecting the lack of access guides for public facilities in Southampton, particularly City Council premises, the Panel did not consider in detail the accessibility of specific public buildings or services in the city. The Accessible Southampton Focus Group discussion did however, reflecting the guidelines above, identify a number of general issues relating to the accessibility of public facilities and services in Southampton.

### **Service information**

191. Many disabled people do not know what services there are in Southampton and the information directory that is supposed to provide this information needs to be updated to ensure that accurate information is available and is user friendly.

### **Accessible public buildings**

192. Feedback provided identified that access to public buildings was a challenge in Southampton. Facilities are rarely designed to be fully inclusive, although Gateway was recognised as an accessible building. Disabled people raised the point that even some council owned leisure facilities are not fully accessible. Guidance is available to support the creation of accessible and inclusive buildings.

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

193. The Public Sector Disability Equality Duty 2011 requires that public authorities have an anticipatory duty to consider and think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. This includes disabled people. This duty is commonly delivered via Equality Impact Assessments.

194. The City Council undertakes Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIAs) for all significant proposals and policies/strategies. Oversight of the process is provided by the Strategy and Policy Team.

195. Feedback from disabled people indicated that the process could be more rigorous, including engaging with disabled people where decisions are likely to impact them.

*'Equality Impact Statements - Should be completed by people from different equality groups themselves, not just done by an officer that may, or not, know the issues that these groups experience.'* – Ian Loynes presentation, 18 November 2021 Inquiry Panel meeting

## **What is happening that may improve the accessibility of public facilities and services in Southampton?**

### **Southampton Information Directory**

196. In recognition that the Southampton Local Information Directory (SID), the City Council's online offer, was not performing the role it was designed to do, Southampton City Council is developing the SID following the principles of no wrong door and many routes to information.

197. The new SID will seek to have the best available advice and information from national and local sources, it will be structured to avoid users getting lost, and will be easy to update.

### **Accessible public facilities and services – What cities are getting this right?**

198. Good practice from the following city was presented to the Panel.

#### **Chester**

199. In Chester new public facilities and services are designed to be fully inclusive. The vast majority of public buildings have been adapted over many years. Grosvenor Museum has platform lifts at entrances, an accessible WC and a hearing loop system. The city's Forum Customer Service Centre offers a 'one stop shop' for all enquiries relating to council services. The centre's entrance has powered doors, low-level counters and is equipped with a hearing loop.

200. iConnect video kiosks have been installed at 12 Libraries across Cheshire West and Chester enabling people to speak face-to-face to Council customer service staff.

201. Cheshire West and Chester Council undertake robust Equality Impact Assessments and engagement with disabled people through the Corporate Disability Access Forum is expected.

### **Recommendations to improve the accessibility of public facilities and services in Southampton**

202. Challenges still exist for disabled people to access all public services and facilities in Southampton.

203. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's public facilities and services the following actions are recommended:

- i. 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.
- ii. Through the proposed access guides, 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.

## **Ownership, level of commitment and involvement of disabled people**

The EU Accessible City Award recognises the importance of ownership and commitment by a city's administration to implement accessibility action.

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

*'Accessibility plays a key role in removing the barriers disabled people still face in their daily lives. Accessibility thrives when there is a political will to make it happen and when policy makers actively engage in dialogue with experts and disabled people' - Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility<sup>16</sup>*

204. Reflecting the importance of ownership, leadership and involvement, the National Disability Strategy commits the Government to ensure disability is well understood by UK government departments and that the needs and experiences of disabled people are central to policy making and always taken into account by frontline staff.<sup>17</sup>

205. The EU Access City Award expects these features to be prominent in accessible cities. Local authorities are therefore expected to demonstrate:

- That accessibility is delivered via a coherent strategy or policy framework, rather than just ad hoc projects.
- Accessibility is mainstreamed in policies and regulations.
- There is a corporate commitment to accessibility at a high level within the authority.
- Appropriate resources are allocated to implement these policies.
- That there is active and clear involvement of disabled people and their representative organisations in the planning, implementation and maintenance of city policies, and initiatives aimed at increasing accessibility.

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<sup>16</sup> EU Access City Award 2017 - Examples of best practice in making EU cities more accessible p2

<sup>17</sup> [National Disability Strategy](#) – p21

206. Another key criterion that has emerged from the inquiry meetings that local authorities should be measured against, is the use of the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality, reduce discrimination and overcome barriers to accessibility.

207. When these collective features are evident in an authority it is likely that a Council is demonstrating a culture of accessibility & inclusivity.

### **Southampton - Ownership, level of commitment and involvement of disabled people**

208. The issues of ownership, leadership and engaging disabled people were raised at every meeting of the inquiry. Feedback from these discussions, and input from the Accessible Southampton Focus Group, has enabled the findings below to emerge.

#### **Coherent Strategy/Policy framework**

209. To guide the Council's approach to accessibility the City Council does have an Equalities Policy and an Equalities Action Plan. These documents were however drafted in 2013 and need updating.

210. A number of connected policies were identified that support accessible services including the previously mentioned Customer Access Strategy; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Action Plan (linked to the Children and Young People's Strategy); the Disabled Adaption Procedure; the Disabled Parking Bay Procedure; and the Disabled Adaptions Financial Assistance Policy.

211. Accessible / inclusive services are not referenced in the Council Plan and, as shown in the approach to taxi licensing, there is limited evidence that accessibility is mainstreamed in the city's policies and regulations.

#### **Corporate commitment at a high level**

212. Southampton Council has formally adopted the social model of disability rather than the medical model. The social model identifies the problems faced by disabled people as a consequence of external factors and seeks to remove barriers for disabled people, promoting inclusion, rather than disabled people having to 'fit in' with inaccessible and sometimes hostile environments.

213. Whether this commitment is being actioned has been questioned during this inquiry, notably by Jemma Brown in her contribution summarised in paragraph 55:

*‘SCC are following a medical model of disability that is outdated & harmful, SCC expects me as a disabled person to adapt to force my body to work in environments that it was not designed for.’*

214. Currently, the Leader of the Council has responsibility for diversity and inclusion within his portfolio.

### **Resources**

215. There is not a lead officer for equality/diversity or accessibility at the Council that has an external, citywide focus. Go! Southampton, in their presentation to the Panel identified that a lead officer at the City Council would help the BID co-ordinate activity with the Council.

216. Feedback from AccessAble and Spectrum CIL outlined the importance of properly trained staff who understand the needs of disabled people and are comfortable and confident about their engagement with disabled customers.

217. Training resources for Council employees on accessibility /equality & diversity has up to this point been limited, or for many non-existent.

218. The lack of training up to now possibly explains the view expressed by Ian Loynes at the inaugural meeting of the inquiry that the City Council was not a ‘learning council’:

*‘The City Council does not ‘learn’ – people come and go within the Council who have or gain expertise with respect to access. But that knowledge is lost when that person leaves. The City Council needs to acquire knowledge and standards and PASS this on to new staff.’*

### **Use of the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality, reduce discrimination and overcome barriers to accessibility**

219. Council’s do not police the Equality Act but have a duty to use the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality, remove discrimination and overcome barriers to accessibility.

220. It would appear that many venue owners and operators in the city are unaware of their obligations under the Equality Act. As outlined in previous sections, many shops, hospitality venues and premises in Southampton are still not accessible, much to the frustration of disabled people who do not think enough has been done to make venue owners and operators aware of their legal obligations.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Accessibility and You Survey – AccessAble 2018 - 88% of disabled people responded ‘no’ when asked do you think that that enough has been done to make venue owners and operators aware of their obligations under the Equality Act.

221. Feedback from an Accessible Southampton Focus Group meeting, presented by Ian Loynes to the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Inquiry Panel, encapsulated the views about the role being played by the Council:

*'The Council should be an ally to disabled people trying to resolve this, not a barrier.'*

222. As noted previously, there is no lead officer for equality/diversity or accessibility at the Council that has an external, citywide focus that can champion the use of the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality, remove discrimination, and address barriers to access experienced by residents and visitors to Southampton.

### **Involvement of disabled people**

223. Throughout the inquiry it has been evident that the involvement of disabled people and their representative organisations in the planning, implementation and maintenance of city policies, and initiatives aimed at increasing accessibility is ad hoc at best.

224. The Spectrum CIL Access Audit, when giving examples of best practice, stated that:

*'All of the cities that are noted as exemplars of accessibility take a co-production approach to access, with Disabled People and their organisations fully involved in design, planning, awareness raising and evaluation and monitoring.'*<sup>19</sup>

225. The Chief Executive of Spectrum CIL had a simple message for the Inquiry Panel at the inaugural meeting:

*'Ask the Disabled People of Southampton – They have a lifetimes experience – much better than any 'Expert' - There are 37,500 Experts by Experience in Southampton.'*

### **What is happening that may improve the ownership, commitment, and involvement of disabled in Southampton?**

226. The Inquiry Panel were informed of a number of developments within the Council that may help promote greater ownership of the principles of accessibility.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Pledge and Diversity & Inclusion Lead**

227. At the Council meeting in November 2021 the Council adopted a Diversity and Inclusion Pledge. The pledge commits the Council as

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<sup>19</sup> [Access Southampton – Spectrum CIL](#), 2020, p8



a colleague, an employer and partner to exceed our responsibilities under the legislation and to ensure we support all those that work for and with the Council. This is in keeping with the goal to be the most diverse and inclusive employer that the Council can be.

228. To support the delivery of the pledge, and associated action plan, the Council has appointed a temporary Diversity and Inclusion Lead. This appointment, and the pledge, whilst internally focused, demonstrate the Council is recognising the importance of inclusion and equality.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Training**

229. The Council's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan includes diversity and inclusion training. Sessions started on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and there will be two sessions a month.

230. The action plan also proposes an update to the Diversity and Inclusion e-learning package to make it more relevant and appropriate, and to make it mandatory for all employees, agency workers and councillors. As well as face to face training on diversity and inclusion topics for new starters and refreshers for existing staff.

231. To support the training and to increase ownership the Council is looking to identify Executive Management Team and Councillor Diversity and Inclusion Champions.

### **Ownership, commitment, and inclusion of disabled people – What cities are getting this right?**

232. Good practice from the following cities was presented to the Panel.

#### **Derby**

233. At Derby City Council the Chief Executive has overall leadership of Equality and Diversity along with the Senior Leadership Team. The Council work to an Equality, Dignity and Respect Policy and have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan to make it real.

234. From the early 90's Derby City Council have adopted the social model of disability rather than the medical model. This means that right from the start they are looking at removing barriers for disabled people and promoting inclusion.

235. Derby follows the mantra of 'nothing about us without us' and involve their Equality Hubs, Forums and employee networks right from the start of projects and in EIAs.

236. Derby are proactive in using the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality and remove discrimination. The Lead on Equality and Diversity acts as a facilitator, champion and enabler to help deliver this and receives support from managers and politicians.

237. To eliminate barriers for disabled people during Covid the Council:

- wrote to shops to give them tips on how not to discriminate against disabled people when they put in Covid restrictions
- challenged high street businesses about their mask policies.

238. The lead officer is proactive in ensuring public spaces are accessible and is consulted on urban design proposals and on requests for pavement licenses to ensure that they do not limit accessibility.

239. Derby work with partners to encourage them to promote accessibility. Through the lead officer the Derbion Centre changed their brand new parking machine when disabled people told them it was too high. Derby also work closely with their BID, and, as an example of this they did a walk around with visually impaired people who advised on where to put planters around the city.



Rams all over the city - but the Council checked with visually impaired people first.

240. To ensure staff are aware of the Council's policies and approaches the Lead on Equality and Diversity does face to face training on equality and diversity with Derby City Council employees, on-line training is provided and the lead officer promotes awareness at various team meetings.

## Liverpool

241. Liverpool has had a strong commitment to accessibility for a long time. Liverpool City Council has an Accessible and Inclusive City Cabinet Member to ensure that these issues are mainstreamed across the Council.

242. Liverpool's City Plan has an aim that - 'All residents live in safe, inclusive and welcoming neighbourhoods', a priority for this is to - 'Create and maintain safe and accessible public places, local facilities and green infrastructure, in partnership with our communities'.

243. As identified previously, these aims have been cascaded into the Council's planning policies where all new developments are required to meet the highest accessibility standards and the Accessible Housing Policy is the most ambitious in the UK for accessibility.

### **Recommendations to improve the ownership, commitment, and involvement of disabled in Southampton?**

244. In the opening presentation of the inquiry, the Council's Executive Director for Wellbeing (Health & Adults) stated that:

*'Everyone in the Council has a responsibility for accessibility at some level. Work needs to be done to create a culture of accessibility and inclusivity.'*

245. Cities such as Derby demonstrate what can be achieved when key ingredients are in place to create an inclusive culture that values accessibility.

246. The Council is taking steps to become more inclusive and that is to be welcomed. The creation of a Southampton Disability Access Forum has been proposed to help improve the involvement of disabled people. To improve the ownership and culture of accessibility the following actions are recommended:

- i. Include a commitment to accessible services and facilities in the next iteration of the Council Plan and adopt, for the city, the simple but strong statement that Southampton aims to be the UK's most accessible city by 2040.
- ii. Update the Council's Equality Policy and re-confirm the commitment to the social model of disability.
- iii. Ensure that disability equality training is incorporated within the Council's diversity and inclusion training.
- iv. Appoint a permanent Diversity and Inclusion Lead who has an internal and external focus, enabling them to be proactive and to advocate for equality and diversity in Southampton and raise awareness of accessibility obligations under the Equality Act.
- v. To promote good practice and to raise awareness of accessibility issues across the city, work with Go! Southampton and Spectrum CIL to establish an annual Accessible Southampton Awards.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

247. A summary of the key evidence presented at each of the inquiry meetings is attached as Appendix 3. All the reports, presentations and minutes from the inquiry meetings can be found here:

[Browse meetings - Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Accessible Southampton | Southampton City Council](#)

## **Conclusions**

248. Accessibility is key to inclusive cities. By tackling barriers and building inclusive cities it can enable disabled people, and those with access issues, to access services and contribute fully to public life.

249. Whilst recognising that Southampton is more accessible than many cities, and that improvements have been made, evidence presented to the Panel has proved that Southampton is not a city where all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems.

250. Cities such as Chester, Liverpool and Derby have shown what can be achieved when a city prioritises accessibility and develops a culture that helps to facilitate this. Southampton has the opportunity to learn from the good practice identified and use this to inform and guide plans for improving accessibility in Southampton.

251. To make citywide changes to accessibility requires a culture of continuous improvement, leadership and continual engagement with disabled people. It is critical to understand and listen to the needs of our community, to reflect on their perceptions of accessibility and to co-create solutions that bring meaningful changes.

252. A number of timely developments mean that this is an opportune moment to make the leap forward this city requires to become more accessible. The most significant of these being the refresh of the Local Plan and the opportunity it presents to commit to making accessibility and inclusion central to future development in Southampton.

253. Improving accessibility helps all residents and visitors, not just older and disabled people, and can deliver significant environmental, economic and social benefits.

254. GO! Southampton have recently outlined their ambition for Southampton to be an inclusive city that is accessible and welcoming to all. As a City Council we have a moral, financial and legal obligation to the approximately 37,500 disabled people in Southampton to work with them, and others, to make this ambition a reality.

## Recommendations

255. In this report recommendations have been identified against each of the EU Access City Award key areas of accessibility. In summary, reflecting the key findings and conclusions the following actions are recommended to improve accessibility in Southampton:

256. **To improve the accessibility of Southampton's built environment:**

1. Enshrine the principles of accessibility and inclusion within the Southampton City Vision Local Plan - The Local Plan presents an opportunity for the city to enshrine within its development principles an overarching commitment to make accessibility and inclusion central to future development. Development standards should include -
  - 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.
2. Whilst the new Southampton City Vision Local Plan is being developed embed an accessibility checklist within existing planning policy.
3. Update the Streetscene Toolkit to reflect available best practice with regards to accessibility of the public realm.
4. Establish a Southampton Disability Access Forum – Following the approach employed in [Chester](#), the Council should work with Go! Southampton, transport partners and local disability organisations to set-up and facilitate a cross-sector access forum. The forum, building on an existing Spectrum CIL led forum, would play a key role in designing and planning future developments as well as monitoring access across the city.
5. Employ an Access Officer (potential for this post to work across Hampshire authorities) – This post would work across the Council and its private sector partners on all aspects of access improvement and would be, alongside the Access Forum, a focus for all built environment access related complaints received by the Council.
6. Changing Places toilets – Building Regulations have been updated requiring Changing Places toilets to be a condition of new developments that meet certain criteria. To support publicly

accessible facilities the Council should apply for funding if the Government announces a new round of grants to develop the provision of Changing Places.

7. Work in partnership with Go! Southampton to deliver their ambition for Southampton to be an accessible and inclusive city.

**257. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's public transport and related infrastructure:**

8. 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.
9. Analyse the findings from the taxi unmet needs survey and explore opportunities to move to 100% wheelchair accessible hackney carriages and to increase the number of wheelchair accessible private hire vehicles in Southampton.
10. With disabled people, review signage in Southampton, including the Legible Cities signage, to make it more accessible to disabled people.
11. Explore opportunities to establish ShopMobility schemes in Southampton's district centres.
12. Recognise the importance to disabled people of the disabled parking spaces in the Civic Centre Car Park when planning events in Southampton City Centre.

**258. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's information and communication:**

13. Adopt an accessible information standard. To support this approach Spectrum CIL has identified information standards that reflect best practice.
14. Incorporate, within the customer service training that is proposed for council staff via the Customer Experience Programme, an element on the 'language of disability'. This will help ensure that Council officers use appropriate language when communicating with disabled people. Once again, to support this, guidelines have been developed by Spectrum CIL.
15. Develop a checklist to ensure that meetings for the general public are accessible.
16. Adopt the standards underpinning the Community Access Symbol to make Southampton more accessible, and improve the

lives of people with communication difficulties, and seek to encourage citywide take up and accreditation of the initiative.

17. Work with Go! Southampton and Spectrum CIL on proposals to produce access guides on a city-wide scale for Southampton, mirroring the approach followed in Sheffield. This will help to improve choice, control, independence and inclusivity.

**259. To improve the accessibility of Southampton's public facilities and services:**

18. 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.
19. Through the proposed access guides, 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.

**260. To improve the ownership and culture of accessibility:**

20. Include a commitment to accessible services and facilities in the next iteration of the Council Plan and adopt, for the city, the simple but strong statement that Southampton aims to be the UK's most accessible city by 2040.
21. Update the Council's Equality Policy and re-confirm the commitment to the social model of disability.
22. Ensure that disability equality training is incorporated within the Council's diversity and inclusion training.
23. Appoint a permanent Diversity and Inclusion Lead who has an internal and external focus, enabling them to be proactive and to advocate for equality and diversity in Southampton and raise awareness of accessibility obligations under the Equality Act.
24. To promote good practice and to raise awareness of accessibility issues across the city, work with Go! Southampton and Spectrum CIL to establish an annual Accessible Southampton Awards.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Inquiry Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – Inquiry Plan

Appendix 3 – Summary of Key Evidence



## Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

### Accessible Southampton Scrutiny Inquiry

#### 1. Scrutiny Panel membership:

Councillor Vaughan  
Councillor Coombs  
Councillor Guest  
Councillor Rayment  
Councillor Streets

#### 2. Purpose:

To identify whether the physical infrastructure of the city creates barriers for disabled people to access all that Southampton has to offer, and, if so, to determine what we can do as a city to address this.

#### 2. Background:

- In the UK 14.1 million people are living with a disability, that is over 1 in 5 of the population. It is a number that has continued to rise as people are living longer and treatments and technology in healthcare improve.<sup>20</sup>
- If national data is extrapolated to reflect the city's population, over 50,000 residents of Southampton are living with a disability.
- The Government has recently published a National Disability Strategy. The vision outlined within the strategy is to transform the everyday lives of disabled people. The Foreword from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Minister for Disabled People states that:  
*'Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever your background, whether or not you have a disability – either visible or hidden – everyone should be able to participate fully, safely and free from prejudice in everyday life, enjoying all the freedoms and opportunities that entails.'*
- In recognition that everybody should be able to participate fully in everyday life, the European Union has been running an Access City Award since 2010. The scheme recognises that disabled

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020>

people and older people may not be able to take a full and active part in the community and will be left out if cities are not accessible.

- The Access City Award scheme identifies an accessible city to be one where all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems. The criteria used for the EU Access City Awards are as follows:
  - a. Accessibility to the built environment and public spaces
  - b. Accessibility to transportation and related infrastructures
  - c. Accessibility to information and communication, including information and communication technologies
  - d. Accessibility to public facilities and services.<sup>21</sup>
- Across the UK and Europe there are examples of local approaches that are improving the accessibility of cities and transforming the lives of residents.

### **3. 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.

### **4. Methodology:**

- a. Seek the views of disabled people and stakeholders
- b. Undertake desktop research
- c. Identify best practice

### **5. Proposed Timetable:**

Six meetings between October 2021 and April 2022.

### **6. Draft Inquiry Plan (subject to the availability of speakers)**

#### **Meeting 1: 7 October 2021**

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<sup>21</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/s/pDUr>

- Introduction, context and background
  - The key features of an accessible city
  - An overview of accessibility challenges experienced by disabled people in Southampton as a result of the physical infrastructure of the city

To be invited:

- Anna Nelson, Chief Executive, AccessAble
- Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living
- Guy Van-Dichele, Executive Director Wellbeing (Adults & Health), SCC

**Meeting 2: 18 November 2021**

- Accessibility to the built environment and public spaces

(EU Access City Award Criteria - City centre design, streets and pavements, parks, squares, monuments and open spaces, work environments, markets, festivals and other outdoor events.)

To be invited:

- To be confirmed
- Disabled people

**Meeting 3: 2 December 2021**

- Accessibility to transportation and related infrastructures

(EU Access City Award criteria - 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.)

To be invited:

- To be confirmed
- Disabled people

#### **Meeting 4: 20 January 2022**

- Accessibility to information and communication, including information and communication technologies

(EU Access City Award criteria - measures related to access to the city authorities' official information. For instance: accessibility of promotional multimedia information of the municipality, 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/visitor 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.)

#### To be invited:

- To be confirmed
- Disabled people
- James Marshall – Customer Access Strategy

#### **Meeting 5: 24 February 2022**

- Accessibility to public facilities and services

(EU Access City Award criteria - How accessibility is considered and integrated in the public services provided by your city - eg services provided in multimodal way and by different channels.)

#### To be invited:

- To be confirmed
- Disabled people

#### **Meeting 6: 21 April 2022**

To approve the final report of the inquiry and recommendations

## Appendix 2 - Inquiry Plan

<b>DATE</b>	<b>MEETING THEME</b>	<b>EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY</b>
<b>07/10/21</b>	<b>Agree Terms of Reference and introduction to the inquiry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guy Van Dichele, Executive Director of Wellbeing (Health &amp; Adults), SCC</li> <li>• Anna Nelson, Chief Executive, AccessAble</li> <li>• David Livermore, Director of Business Development, AccessAble</li> <li>• Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living</li> </ul>
<b>18/11/21</b>	<b>Accessibility to the built environment and public spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living</li> <li>• Jemma Brown</li> <li>• Mark Pirnie, Scrutiny Manager, SCC</li> <li>• Rebecca Handley, Deputy Executive Director and Operations Director at Go! Southampton</li> <li>• Amber Trueman, Strategic Planning Manager, SCC</li> <li>• Stephen Harrison, Service Manager, Development, SCC</li> <li>• Wade Holmes, Transport Delivery Team Leader, SCC</li> <li>• Cheshire West and Chester Council</li> </ul>
<b>02/12/21</b>	<b>Accessibility to public transport and related infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living</li> <li>• Graham Garnett, Inclusive Design Officer, Liverpool City Council &amp; former Senior Access Officer at Cheshire West &amp; Chester Council</li> <li>• Emma Hurst, Project Co-ordinator, Rose Road Association</li> <li>• Pete Boustred, Divisional Head of Green City and Infrastructure, SCC</li> <li>• Wade Holmes, Transport Delivery Team Leader SCC</li> </ul>

<b>DATE</b>	<b>MEETING THEME</b>	<b>EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phil Bates, Licensing Manager, Southampton and Eastleigh Licensing Partnership</li> <li>• Red Funnel; First Hampshire, Dorset and Berkshire; Go South Coast; Taxi operators; Southampton Airport</li> </ul>
<b>20/01/22</b>	<b>Accessibility to information &amp; communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living</li> <li>• Rosie Dowty, Lead Speech &amp; Language Therapist, Southampton Community Learning Disability Service, Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust</li> <li>• Kate Dench, Learning Disability Joint Commissioning Manager at the Integrated Commissioning Unit</li> <li>• James Marshall, Head of Customer and Communications, SCC</li> <li>• SO:Let's Connect</li> <li>• Southampton Library Service</li> </ul>
<b>24/02/22</b>	<b>Accessibility to public facilities and services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living</li> <li>• Ann Webster, Lead on Equality and Diversity at Derby City Council</li> <li>• Mark Pirnie, Scrutiny Manager, SCC</li> <li>• Rebecca Handley, Deputy Executive Director/Operations Director at GO! Southampton Business Improvement District</li> <li>• Sheffield City Council</li> </ul>
<b>28/04/21</b>	<b>Agree final report</b>	

The minutes for each meeting, the evidence submitted to the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel and presentations delivered at each meeting is available at:

- [Browse meetings - Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - Accessible Southampton | Southampton City Council](#)

### **Appendix 3 – Summary of key evidence**

Key evidence provided to the Inquiry Panel at each meeting can be accessed via the following link:

[Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – Accessible Southampton](#)