

**Tourism, Equalities,
Communities & Culture Committee**

Agenda Item 27

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Accessible City Strategy

Date of meeting: 15th September 2022

**Report of: Executive Director Housing, Neighbourhoods and
Communities**

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the progress in developing an Accessible City Strategy for the council and the next steps.
- 1.2 The development of the Accessible City Strategy is a follow on from the Council's Corporate Plan commitment to "improve access to all parts of our city and our services for people with physical, sensory, and learning disabilities. We will support disabled people into work, tackle discrimination and disability hate crime, and improve access to learning and leisure activities."
- 1.3 The creation of an Accessible City Strategy is also aligned with the important new policy initiative local authorities are being asked to commit to, signing up to and implementing the new Disability Impact Pledge, the principles of which are aligned with those of the new Accessible City Strategy.

2. Recommendations

That the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee:

- 2.1 notes the report and agrees to receive further update reports.

2.2 recommends to Full Council that it agrees that the Council should sign the Disability Impact Pledge.

That Full Council:

2.3 Agrees that the Council should sign the Disability Impact Pledge.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council has an ongoing commitment to ensuring that the city is accessible for all its residents and visitors. To ensure a systematic approach to embedding accessibility throughout council services, local disability-led consultancy firm – Freeney Williams – was commissioned in 2021 to draw up initial documents setting out the parameters and scope for the strategy – phase 1 of the development of the strategy. Phase 1 was concluded in May 2022.

3.2 Key documents produced to inform the strategy development are attached and include:

- a) A principles document setting out the key approaches and issues, including synergy with other initiatives and the need to address and embed intersectionality (appendix a)
- b) A strategic framework, to be populated as the strategy is developed, covering over-arching organisational issues as well as commitments, activities and proposed outcomes by Business Directorates (appendix b)
- c) A terms of reference for a new officer Task & Finish Group, with representation from each Directorate (appendix c)
- d) A terms of reference for a new Disability Panel, which will provide strategic, expert and impartial advice on the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the Accessible City Strategy (appendix d)
- A draft terms of reference for a Wider Reference Group, to enable engagement and involvement by the disabled community across the City in the strategy, providing further targeted expertise on specific disability issues by subject matter experts (appendix e)
- A good practice report detailing best practice models for possible consideration by the City Council (appendix f)
- An external stakeholder analysis (appendix g)

3.3. Easy read versions of the terms of reference for the Disability Panel and the Wider Reference Group were also produced to facilitate the active involvement of people with lived experience of disability in these key strategic groups.

3.4. Research undertaken indicates that Brighton & Hove City Council appears to be the first council in England to take such a holistic, integrated council-wide approach.

4. Engagement

- 4.1. In late autumn of 2021, the consultants delivered a presentation providing an overview of the Accessible City Strategy initiative to each of the City Council Directorate Equality Delivery Groups. These presentations were followed up with one-to-one meetings with internal stakeholders. The consultants also engaged with the internal Disabled and Carers Workers' Network. The outcome of this internal engagement is evidenced in an Internal Stakeholder Report (appendix h), which sets out the key considerations and aims, according to the specific context of the respective directorates.
- 4.4. The consultants also engaged with a number of disability organisations as well as with individual disabled people, the results of which are documented in the External Stakeholder Report produced (appendix g).
- 4.5. Briefings were delivered to the Equality and Inclusion Partnership and to Member Equality Leads, with regular updates going to the respective Directorate Equality Delivery Groups.
- 4.6. The inaugural meeting of the Task & Finish Group, comprising Directorate representatives as well as the Independent Chair of the Disability Panel and the Equalities Team took place on 28th April.
- 4.7. The foundation meeting of the Disability Panel was held on 27th July 2022 and the first meeting of the wider reference group is scheduled for September.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Phase 2 of the strategy's development runs from July 2022 to March 2023 and includes the following activities:
- a) Regular meetings of the officer task and finish group to steer and inform engagement with each directorate to secure awareness and understanding of the strategy and to develop actions to deliver the aims of the strategy.
 - b) Development of actions for inclusion in the strategy's action plan by council services with the support and guidance of the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team.
 - c) Series of meetings of the Disability Panel to establish and consolidate its purpose and membership and to provide external stakeholder oversight of the development of the strategy. Key will be recruitment of the individual D/deaf disabled and neurodiverse people to the panel.
 - d) Recruitment to and meetings of the wider reference group to ensure a broad range of disability organisations have input and can comment on the strategy.
 - e) The drafting of the front end of the strategy by Freeney Williams consultancy based on documents produced in phase 1.

- f) Discussion of the draft with Lead Members for equality from the three political groups Autumn 2022
- g) Presentation of the draft strategy to Disability Panel, Wider Reference group, BHCC Executive Leadership Team through January and February 2023.
- h) Presentation of the strategy for approval by the Tourism, Equalities, Communities and Culture Committee in March 2023.

6. Disability Impact Pledge

- 6.1. The Disability Policy Centre, a new thinktank on best practice around disability, aimed at ensuring accessibility is at the heart of decision-making, especially regarding the engagement and involvement of disabled people, has created a new Disability Impact Pledge. In their report 'Breaking Down Barriers' – launched in the House of Commons in March 2022 one of the key recommendations was to ensure that Local Authority buildings and services were accessible to local people.

The pledge is intended to demonstrate a Local Authority's commitment to ensuring that disabled people across their community are empowered across all areas of society; there are no associated costs for signing up.

The specific requirement of councils signing up to the pledge is that they strive for excellence in 10 key areas, which are:

- i. Review the accessibility of our council buildings, so that all our venues are welcoming to our community
- ii. Improve accessibility in the way that people can contact us as council, ensuring that there are several methods available for people with various needs
- iii. Review our website to ensure that it meets guidelines for best practice on accessibility
- iv. Make sure our communications are provided in accessible formats
- v. Appoint a designated Equality and Diversity Lead
- vi. Ensure our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- vii. Host all of our meetings in accessible venues
- viii. Ensure our staff are trained in equality, diversity and inclusion
- ix. Promote flexible working, assistive technology and other reasonable adjustments for our employees, to ensure that we as employers are 'Disability Confident'
- x. Consult and engage with our disabled residents and disability community groups on how decisions impact them. Be open to their feedback and continuous development

- 6.4. The pledge is valid initially for one year; no benchmark is expected.

- 6.5. To date Basildon and Cornwall Councils have signed the pledge, with 30

more Local Authorities reported to be interested.

- 6.6. Signing up to the pledge would send out a positive message to the disabled communities in Brighton & Hove of the City Council's proactive commitment to promoting access and inclusion for disabled people.
- 6.7 The council is already undertaking work associated with the ten key areas and the Accessible City Strategy will provide a much-needed framework for the council's activities now and into the future.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The development of the Accessible City Strategy and the Disability Panel and wider reference group will provide a strategic framework, currently lacking, to guide holistic, integrated council -wide actions to ensure accessibility by default.
- 7.2 As a leader in this approach the council recognises that this is the start of the process and the strategic framework being established will provide a tool to monitor the council's progress.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. Project management and leadership of the work is being carried out as part of core business of the Communities, Equality and Third Sector (CETS) team. A budget of £20,000 has been allocated from the CETS initiatives budget to support the work – principally funding the consultant. Financial implications arising from the strategy's action plan will be considered by the relevant service as part of their budget management processes and decisions on allocation of funding will be made in line with council's budget setting process.

Name of finance officer consulted: Mike Bentley Date consulted: 08/08/2022

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 Endorsing, approving or otherwise committing the Council to any charter, alliance or pledge is a responsibility of Full Council.

Name of lawyer consulted: Alice Rowland Date consulted: 16/8/22

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1. The intention of this work is to address identified disadvantage and lack of access experienced by disabled people who live, work, study or visit the city. The work is central to the council's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between communities, as well as to encourage civic engagement by under-represented groups. This links into the positive duty in the Equality Act to promote opportunities for disabled people including participation in

civic life. It also links in with and complements other key City Council Strategies including but not exclusively the Brighton & Hove Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy, and the Fair and Inclusive Action Plan.

11. Sustainability implications

11.1. No sustainability implications arise from this report.

12. Other implications

Social Value and procurement implications

12.1. No social value and procurement implications arise from this report.

13. Crime & disorder implications:

13.1 No crime and disorder implications arise from this report.

14. Public Health implications:

14.1 No public health implications arise from the report.

11. Appendices

