

DISABILITY ACCESS MEMBER-LED REVIEW – CABINET RESPONSE

To: Cabinet

Date: 4th March 2014

From: Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/A **Key decision:** No

Purpose: This report sets out the suggested Cabinet response to recommendations from the Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the disability access member-led review.

Recommendation: Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Consider and comment upon the findings and recommendations contained within the report
- b) Consider and agree the responses to the recommendations as set out in section 2 of the report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the findings of the member-led review on disability access on 4th February 2014.
- 1.2 The Committee made a number of recommendations that it has asked be reported to Cabinet.

2. RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set down below (shown in bold), as well as the suggested Cabinet response.

2.1 Recommendation 1: Reinvigorate Equality Activities

Officers should seek to reinvigorate the equalities 'agenda' across the Council, within existing resources, using the new Equalities Strategy as a starting point.

This recommendation is Partially Accepted.

The Council is required to satisfy the Public Sector Equality Duty (a) to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

The Equalities Strategy demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to comply with equality legislation and ensures that members and officers consider equality in all policies and activities that impact on people with disabilities. The Council prepares Community Impact Assessments on existing policies, procedures and practices impacting on the design and delivery of existing facilities or services; and avoids the introduction of inappropriate policies, procedures or practices in the design and delivery of public facilities or services or in the discharge of the County Council's public functions. Community Impact Assessments are produced for all significant transport schemes that may have an impact on disability access.

Further work to communicate the Equalities Strategy and the use of Community Impact Assessments needs to be undertaken across the Council.

2.2 Recommendation 2: Action Plan for Disability Access

The Council should prepare a detailed action plan for improving disability access through its provision of public services.

This recommendation is Not Accepted.

Disability is one of nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Whilst it is recognised that disability is a particular issue in relation to the built environment, a case has not been made for focusing specifically on disability as opposed to any of the other protected characteristics. Furthermore, the approach taken by the Council is to empower services to regard disability access as an integral part of their service planning and delivery through inclusive design.

A key area is the built environment. The Local Transport Plan, which sets the policy framework for transport investment, includes priorities for disability access, whilst officers involved in work relating to the built environment work under professional guidelines and practices that include consideration of disability access and call on expertise to assist with particular issues. An example of such practice is recent work where the Council's Accessibility Officer has been involved in a review of providing access to new housing developments.

Community Impact Assessments must demonstrate that inclusive design has informed the process from inception, without which it would not be ready for approval.

Given the above, it is not considered to be the best use of the Council's funds to prepare a detailed action plan for disability access and that such work would not bring additional benefits to people with disabilities.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

3.1 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most

Policies and design of public realm and buildings are undertaken with full consideration of the needs of vulnerable people.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities

Transport and mobility are essential for access to jobs and services such as healthcare, libraries and to community groups. Consideration of the needs of people with disabilities is an essential element of designing schemes and services.

3.3 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The ability of people with disabilities to access jobs and skills opportunities is essential for individuals and for the economy of Cambridgeshire.

3.4 Ways of working

Inclusive access is a key principle of design that is adopted right across the Council. A joint member/officer group oversees work on equalities and each service adopts best practice and the appropriate professional guidelines to ensure that full consideration is given to disability access. Community Impact Assessments are integral to the Council's decision making from policies, through business planning to scheme design and service delivery.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource and Performance Implications

The Council's limited resources mean that expenditure needs to be targeted at work that maximises value for the user. The aim is to use existing resources as much as

possible, rather than create new workstreams that would be costly and divert activity from service delivery.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The key legislative requirements are under the Equality Act 2010.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

The Equality Duty set out in S149 of the Equality Act requires the Council to have ***due regard*** to the need to:

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation

The Council regularly engages with disability groups as part of its policy and scheme related work.