

Information/Discussion Paper

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11th January 2006

Promoting Disability Equality

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 At the 9th June meeting of this committee, terms of reference for a review of promoting disability equality were agreed. The review group has now met three times. This information paper summarises progress to date.

2. Update on work programme

- 2.1 At the first meeting of the group, the following work programme was agreed as the basis of the review.

Theme	Progress	who
An audit of how well the council is complying with existing disability legislation	Access audits underway. Need to look at other communication issues such as language, signage and the web-site	Iain Houston
A consideration of the new disability legislation	The new code of practice on the public sector duty has been discussed by the group	Richard Gibson
An assessment of demographic information	Maiden has been commissioned to produce up to date statistics on the prevalence of disability in Cheltenham	Richard Gibson
Looking at the staffing structure of the council	Review of recruitment processes being undertaken by Human Resources	Human Resources
Carrying out an impact assessment of key service areas	The group will test the following list with the Disability Forum on 11 th January 2006 Waste and recycling collection Housing – provision, tenancies, management Advice provision Urban design Community transport Access to council buildings Reception services Sport and play	all

Theme	Progress	who
Assessing and improving our consultation with disabled people	<p>It was agreed that Cheltenham Disability Forum will be used as a first 'port of call'. Members of the review group attended the last meeting of the forum to update them on the review and a more formal consultation exercise will be undertaken with the forum at their next meeting on 11th January 2006.</p> <p>The review group has also produced a list of other groups that represent / work with or support disabled people in Cheltenham. Once the service areas have been agreed, members of the review group will attend meetings of groups to discuss the role of the council in promoting disability equality</p>	<p>Geoff Sloman / Richard Gibson</p> <p>Geoff Sloman</p>

3. Other issues

- 3.1 As the new code of practice places a statutory duty on the council to prepare a three year disability equality scheme by December 2006, this needs to be included as part of the council's business planning programme for 2006/07.
- 3.2 As part of the business planning process, all new initiatives have to be assessed using the 'priorities assessment tool' which helps align projects to the corporate priorities. To enable the inclusion of the 'promoting disability equality' project, the review group used the tool to assess the linkages with the council's priority areas. The exercise was most helpful and the group were able to identify a number of areas where more work is needed.

Housing:

- There is a need to ensure that wherever possible, new housing units are built to lifetime homes standards

Crime:

- Need to consult with disabled community to assess their fears and perceptions on crime
- Need to ensure that hate crimes impacting on disabled people are considered as part of the SARA plan

Environment:

- The council should be consulting more widely with disabled people in the design and layout of environmental improvement projects. This might be in relation to pedestrianisation, cycle paths, dropped kerbs, lighting and signage.
- There is a particular issue around quality of paving finishes and faulty paving slabs which are potentially dangerous for disabled people
- Need to encourage more disabled people to recycle
- There are opportunities for the council to promote energy efficiency projects for disabled people

Transport

- There are opportunities to further improve disabled access to public transport
- More off-road cycle paths needed – they provide safe routes for disabled people in wheelchairs / electric buggies
- More suitable disabled parking provision and enforcement is needed
- Taxi vouchers are inadequate – there is an opportunity to provide a more equitable system for disabled people

Community

- Need to ensure that the emerging regeneration strategy explores the link between deprivation and disability and puts an action plan together
- Specific support is needed for the disability forum if it is to support the council in taking forward its disability equality duty
- More specific work on health and learning inequalities faced by disabled people needed

Culture

- There are more opportunities for the council to improve cultural related service delivery for disabled people
- In terms of tourism, a key weakness is access to the TIC which is very poor for disabled people
- Need to ensure that the emerging economic development strategy encourages employers to recruit, train and retain disabled employees.
- Need to ensure that leisure@ is fully accessible for disabled people, in particular looking at charging rates / availability of hoists and effectiveness of loop system
- Need to look at opportunities for outreach provision from art gallery and museum to

work with disabled community

- Need to ensure that disabled young people are given the opportunity to participate in council activities

Excellence

- More work needed from HR on tackling disability issues, particularly through improving recruitment procedures and rolling out training programmes
- More needed to promote positive images of disability in all our communications
- There is a need to link sustainability and disability issues

4. Next Steps

- 4.1** The review group will meet with Cheltenham Disability Forum on 11th January 2006 to agree the key service areas that the review will look at.

Background Papers	Project Brief – Promoting Disability Equality in Cheltenham, agreed by Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 th June 2005
Contact Officer	Richard Gibson, Corporate Policy Manager, 01242 235354, richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Cllr. Steve Jordan, Deputy Performance and Support Services Cllr. John Webster, Deputy Neighbourhood and Community
Scrutiny Function	Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee