

Briefing Note

Committee name: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 19 May 2025

Responsible officer: Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

This note provides information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the officer indicated.

This briefing note is designed to provide Committee Members with an update on our ongoing work around accessibility, equalities, diversity and inclusion.

Accessibility

A significant amount of work is happening around accessibility across multiple service areas. This briefing note sets out some of the work that has been carried out to date and identifies areas of further development.

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Customer Services

The Customer Services Team manage the main reception at the Municipal Offices, operate the main switchboard, and manage the main enquiries mailbox. They also serve as the first point of contact for pest control issues. They are available to the public and can be contacted via telephone, in writing by email and post and in person at the reception in the Municipal Offices.

Customer interaction with departments is managed via telephone or by in person appointments only. Customers are generally directed to the telephone booths to talk to departments directly or to use the public access computers in the reception area, which can be used to contact the service areas of the council via their webpages.

Disabled Access

The main reception at the Municipal Offices can be accessed by wheelchair users and those with limited mobility via the level access at the rear of the offices and the internal platform lift. The main reception desk is split level, enabling access to wheelchair users and all heights.

In addition, we have a private meeting room, with a desk height telephone, that can be used by wheelchair users or those that need more space.

However, following a meeting with the accessibility forum where the outside directional signage and internal platform lift were discussed. It was found that large electric wheelchairs do not fit into the platform lift and the directional signage could be improved.

Working with the National Star College, we are reviewing access and the associated signage. In addition, it is proposed that we create a video showing the accessible route into the office for use on our website. If this is successful, we will look to expand this to making more videos of our other locations in the future.

Deafness

A Hearing loop is set up in reception to enable those with hearing loss to hear the receptionists more clearly.

Sight Impairment

The council does not have a designated supplier for large format and braille printing, however this can be organised on an as and when required basis. Documents can be printed in larger formats using the council printers.

Other Languages

The council has access to language line, this a telephone interpreting and translating service. It can be used for communicating with individuals who cannot, or prefer not, to speak English.

We acknowledge that our current approach may require those with disabilities to request or seek out some of our provision as opposed to it being more obviously available. We are committed to reviewing this and to having clear signage and messaging setting out the facilities that we have for those with disabilities.

Democratic Services

As a local authority accessibility to our decision-making processes is essential. We therefore have the following mechanisms in place:

Access to reports

All reports are presented in accessible format as far as possible and are made available on the council's website. Hard copies are available on request.

Access to meetings

Disabled Access: Members of the public are welcome to observe or take part in council meetings. However, the current layout of the council chamber means that those with limited mobility and wheelchair users are unable to access the public gallery due to the stairs.

These means that in reality it would be difficult for a wheelchair user to attend a public meeting without prior notice, as they will need help to access the building out of normal office hours and assistance to use the lift into the Chamber. Furthermore, a visit from the Disability Forum has identified that the lift into the Chamber cannot accommodate a large electric wheelchair, meaning that access would not be possible. This is an issue both for members of the public wanting to take part in or observe a meeting, or for an elected councillor who is a wheelchair user.

In addition, proper evacuation of a wheelchair user from the Chamber in the event of an emergency could be challenging. The evac chair would be required for the stairs out of the Chamber and those at the front of the building to pavement level.

Whilst the live streaming of our meetings via You Tube does enable those who are unable to attend to watch meetings online, active participation is not possible.

The 'Get Involved' page on our website advises:

Accessibility

Please note, access to the Municipal Offices for wheelchair users or anyone using a mobility aid is via the Royal Well entrance at the rear of the building, with a lift to take you to the ground floor where the committee rooms are situated, and a further lift to help you into the Council Chamber, if required. Hearing enhancers are available in our main committee rooms for the hard of hearing. Please email [Democratic Services](#) or call 01242 264246 in advance if you are likely to require any additional assistance when attending a meeting.

Deafness: An assistive listening system is available for councillors, officers and members of the public participating in council meetings who have any hearing impairment. However, we are currently unable to provide meeting sub-titles or transcripts for anyone watching with hearing impairment

Sight: At present, save for the accessibility tools on our website we have very limited provision for those with a sight impairment. Documents can be produced in large print

relatively quickly, although requests for braille would take some time and would unlikely be made available in the time between the publication of agendas and the meeting.

Other languages: Our website functionality enables users to view content in a number of different languages and we have access to language line (see above under customer services) but at present we are unable to provide any further assistance to those whose first language is not English.

The sale of the municipal offices presents an opportunity to review and address some of these issues as the council seeks to identify alternative premises for its public meetings.

Communications Team

The communications and marketing team have been trained on how to produce accessible content. This covers:

- Visual assets – for example colour contrast in posters and images for social media, using alternative text descriptions when publishing images online and on social platforms, such as Facebook
- Writing in plain English
- Other accessibility considerations covered in our staff guidance on the intranet and OurSpace
- Digital accessibility is well understood by the team and is a consideration in all the content they produce

Websites

At present we are still operating two websites; www.cheltenham.gov.uk and www.cbh.org, however a project is now underway to create a single website which will be a key platform for sharing information in accessible formats.

In 2021 Our cheltenham.gov.uk site was the subject of a full audit by the Shaw Trust, a charity that works to challenge inequality and support people with complex needs into employment. The Shaw Trust also provided training on website accessibility and making accessible Word documents and PDFs. These training sessions were attended by colleagues across the organisation in early 2022.

Following the audit the web team worked through an extensive list of issues and our website currently has an accessibility rating of 84% (or 'great') in the Silktide¹ list of council websites accessibility. Our accessibility statement provides more information on the accessibility of our website and alternative provisions: [Accessibility statement | Cheltenham Borough Council](#) and our accessibility tools provide functionality such as an ability to change the language, text to speech, colour preferences and font spacing and size.

¹ Silktide are a leading provider of accessibility services. Their accessibility rankings have replaced the SOCITM (Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation for local public services) Better Connected rankings of council websites usability

Unfortunately, the Silktide report only gives cbh.org a rating of 47% (or 'poor') which reflects the limited amount of accessibility work which has been done to date. Whilst an accessibility toolbar provided by ReachDeck is installed on cbh.org which does provide users with some basic accessible features, such as a text to speech function, this doesn't address accessibility issues with the website's design. It is therefore essential that a full content review is completed as part of the creation of the new website.

To support our work, we have digital accessibility policy which has been approved by the Leadership Team and the cabinet member working group for ICT.

The communications and marketing team continues to offer support and training for colleagues on the creation of accessible web content and documents and OurSpace provides a range of guidance documents and examples for use by employees.

A key piece of work that is still in its infancy is moving away from reliance on PDFs as a means of publishing information. The GDS (Government Digital Service) advises against the use of PDFs where possible as they're not designed for screens, are harder to make accessible, harder to use and less likely to be kept up to date, among other reasons. The GDS have published a blog on why content should be published in HTML and not PDF. This will be taken into consideration as we review all our web content in preparation for going live with a new website.

Once the new website goes live it is essential that it remains accessible. We therefore need a clear method for regular auditing. We are currently in discussions with ICT about joining their Silktide account for running automated accessibility checks.

Staff intranet(s)

The creation of the OurSpace has provided an opportunity for new content to be fully accessible. However, little work has been done on the legacy sites of CBCi and CBHQ staff intranets in terms of accessibility. Given that these legacy sites will be "switched off" at some point it is not intended to review these, although content will be reviewed as it transitions onto OurSpace.

Communities Team

Accessibility Forum

The Communities Team provide support to the Cheltenham Accessibility Forum, which was initially set up to advise the Cheltenham Development Taskforce on accessibility and brings together representatives of groups and people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments. The Accessibility Forum provides collective responses to relevant planning and licensing applications, such as new applications for a-boards or outside seating areas. It was also instrumental in shaping the designs for the Montpellier Gardens toilet refurbishment and has been involved at all stages of consultation on the new taxi policy.

Forum members visited the Municipal Offices public areas and committee suite to provide feedback on accessibility for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments. Some actions were taken (such as improvements to signage, lighting, repainting the white strips on the main steps into the building) but some (such as improving the lifts into the Council Chamber and to reception to enable access by larger wheelchairs) were not

feasible at the time. National Star College students also visited Leisure @ Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium to offer feedback to Property Services.

The forum has developed a list of town centre highways priorities relating to pavements, dropped kerbs and crossings which are with Highways and also previously arranged a simul specs walk for CBC officers and elected members to simulate walking round the town centre with sight loss.

Grants

The council has just agreed a health grant of £9.5k for Goals Beyond Grass to put on inclusive cycling sessions at Belmont School, alongside establishing a new weekly session at the Prince of Wales Stadium.

The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy fund, in 2023, funded a portable disability ramp for Cheltenham Cricket Club; a safe crossing in Warden Hill Road to improve safe access to Bettridge, Belmont and Bournside Schools; sensory beds at wheelchair height in Pittville Park; improvements to access at Fiddlers Green park and a new perimeter path to improve access for wheelchair users at King George V park.

The team also sit on the Glos Funders fortnightly panel meeting which brings together funders with a focus on disability and accessibility.

As part of our work with the National Star College the council received feedback that 2 wheelchair users are unable to sit next to each other when attending performances at the Everyman, therefore this year as part of the grant provided to the Everyman we have requested that the grant agreement states that we would like them to do some specific work around accessibility.

NCLB/HAF

NCLB large events (such as Party in the Park) include a quiet hour for families with young people with special educational needs.

As part of the HAF offer, there are some SEND specific sessions in Cheltenham such as Chelt and Glos Gymnastics and Bloodhound Engineering. The other providers do also undergo accessibility training with Active Impact, and work to ensure their activities are as accessible as possible for those with additional needs, however, how well suited they are to children with physical disabilities definitely varies between provider depending on the nature of the activity. There is also a county wide SEND specific provider who's role is to deliver sessions for those children with higher level needs.

Other EDI work:

The communities team also support the following:

- Inter Faith Week events with Cheltenham Interfaith
- Holocaust Memorial Day annual act of remembrance
- Community Pride grants made in 2024 to support Culture Fest; Pride in Cheltenham; a Celebration of the Hindu festival of Durga Puja and My Voice My Cheltenham at Cheltenham Literature Festival
- A one-off grant to Cheltenham Alliance for Race Equity for a co-ordinator
- A small annual grant to Sahara Saheli multi-cultural women's group

- Flag flying in support of key dates in the LGBT+ annual calendar and Black History Month
- Attend the county Hate Crime Partnership and deliver training and awareness raising in Hate Crime Awareness Week.
- Attend the county Armed Forces Covenant group and LGBT+ Partnership

Licensing Services

Taxi Licensing

We are committed to delivering a mixed fleet in line with the Department for Transport Best Practice Guidance. Our current licensing policy provides that any new hackney carriage vehicles must be wheelchair accessible, and that all current hackney carriage vehicles (aside from the proprietors that were affected by the 2021 policy) must be replaced with a wheelchair accessible vehicle. At present there are 61 wheelchair accessible vehicles licensed in Cheltenham, although it is acknowledged that wheelchair accessibility does not necessarily mean suitable for all types of wheelchair.

In addition, to ensure our drivers are actively able to assist those with disabilities our driver training courses include a section on driver responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Other Policies

This year we will be reviewing the street scene policy. This will include a pavement licensing policy which will enable us to promote Inclusive Mobility for accessibility to furniture and highway users.

We will then move onto the street trading policy later this year which will also be updated with Inclusive Mobility.

Cheltenham Disability Forum and Inclusion Gloucestershire are now consultees in all policy reviews to gain their feedback. They are also stakeholders at Gloucestershire Licensing Officers Group.

Planning Services

Applications and Decision Making

Accessibility is integral to planning both in terms of process and outcomes. It has long been the case that planning proposals (both existing and historic) can be viewed remotely on the council's website, whereas in the past this was only possible if physically visiting the council's offices; this has transformed the way in which stakeholders interact with the planning team and planning system more broadly. The website is largely accessible, but it is acknowledged that it could go much further, particularly in respect of using alternatives to PDF documents for example.

The monthly Planning Committee meeting is now webcast via YouTube and again, as with the introduction of the public access Planning website some years ago, this has transformed the way in which stakeholders interact with the Planning Committee process; this has been particularly beneficial to those with accessibility issues. It is acknowledged

that further accessibility improvements could be made to committee webcasts through the use of subtitling software, for example, as well as in other areas.

The government consulted (in October 2024) on proposals to allow remote attendance at Planning Committee meetings by both members of the committee and third parties (via video link). These proposals, if enacted, will further transform the operation of Planning Committee meetings in an accessibility and inclusivity sense. The government's response to the consultation is awaited.

Planning Fees

Householder planning application fees are waived for a disabled person wishing to create a means of access and/or provide for their improved safety, health or comfort; this exception from the fee is a national legislative requirement. The council also offers a 100% discount on pre-application advice to disabled persons where the works in question are for the benefit of a disabled residential occupier.

Planning Policy

Public participation in the formulation of planning policy is wide-ranging and mindful of the need to be inclusive and accessible. The council's Statement of Community Involvement (2023) sets out the council's policy for involving interested parties in matters relating to development within the borough. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out that, amongst other things, Planning consultations will:

- use plain English and will be provided in different formats or languages upon request;
- engage with communities, including hard to reach groups, at the earliest opportunity;
- engage with voluntary bodies; racial, ethnic or national groups; religious groups; disabled persons groups as well as business groups.
- modify traditional consultation methods, where appropriate, to engage with hard-to-reach groups.

The fine detail of accessibility arrangements is largely a matter for the Building Regulations rather than the Planning system but accessibility, in the broad sense, is a material consideration and within the scope of planning policy. The Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy sets out the overarching planning policies for the borough and our immediate neighbours. The Cheltenham Plan sets out Cheltenham-specific planning policy. The need for development to be located such that it ensures accessibility to local services for pedestrians and cyclists and those using public transport is a key design policy requirement (Policy SD4). Balancing conservation interests while improving accessibility (where relevant) is a key component of Policy SD8 (Historic Environment). A key strand running through the council's residential planning policies is that new housing be built to a high standard of accessibility and adaptability as well as to address specialist accommodation needs.

At present there is no requirement for a specific number of properties to be accessible in developments, however, in the Joint Core Strategy Policy SD11: Housing Mix and Standards, it references under 2(ii) that "Housing should be designed to be accessible and adaptable as far as is compatible with the local context and other policies...".

We don't have anything specified in the Cheltenham Plan in terms of numbers / percentage. Whereas Gloucester City Council have a policy (A6: Accessible and adaptable homes) that does require a certain percentage (25%) to meet Building Regs M4 (2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings, and that 4% of the affordable housing component has to meet Building Regs M4 (3) 'wheelchair user dwellings' and Tewkesbury BC have a similar policy (RES13 Housing Mix) although their policy references M4(2) and M4(3) being "provided in accordance with up to date evidence of local need".

If the council was in a position where it fully understood the need, then we could, subject to viability testing seek to introduce a policy across the Strategic Local Plan area.

Environmental Services

Service adjustments

The Council offers a range of services within environmental services mainly via its service provider, Ubico Ltd, including kerbside waste collection including recycling, bring banks, grounds maintenance (mowing, hedge trimming, weed control) and street cleansing (litter bin emptying, litter picking, mechanical sweeping on highways and pavements, jet washing, graffiti removal and fly tip clearance). Majority of the services provided need no adjustment however there are occasions where adjustments are needed such as:

- Assisted collections for kerbside services where residents benefit from support physically moving the bins and boxes for collection or remembering when to do this. This is easy for residents or their carers to request and is often provided informally by crews who notice residents are in need of help. New technology helps ensure there is consistency with all crews knowing the property is flagged for this additional support at no additional cost.
- Sorted recycling – our policy requires residents to sort recycling into different boxes or bags for presentation at kerbside. Residents who find it difficult to sort recycling for a variety of physical or mental health reasons are exempt from being required to sort their recycling and crews will do this for them. Again the new technology helps ensure there is consistency with all crews knowing the property is flagged for this additional support.
- Bulky waste service – residents who are unable to physically dispose of large items of household furniture at the GCC Household Recycling Centre are able to book a bulky waste collection. This is a paid for service and the Council continues to review where there should be discounts in place for residents on low incomes.
- Recycling receptacles/containers – residents are required to pay the delivery cost for receptacles however a discount is offered for those on benefits. Residents are not required to collect receptacles. Where necessary exemptions are made regarding the charging to ensure residents do have the required containers to continue recycling.

Access to sites

The HRC at Swindon Road is currently closed and no adjustments are needed currently. This will be reviewed if the position changes. The Swindon Road depot site is not open to the public and is operated by Ubico Ltd who are responsible for access arrangements for

staff and other site users. Access ramps are in place however health and safety considerations for an operational waste site have to be considered.

Communications

The environmental services team have been trained on how to produce accessible communications and publicity content. This covers:

- Visual assets (including colour contrast in posters, images for social media, online text descriptions and social platforms)
- Writing in plain English for the many communications with residents
- Digital accessibility is understood by the team and a consideration when producing content

Website content: The team have a significant amount of information for environmental services on the website and this is gradually being reviewed and updated in conjunction with the web team ensure it meets accessibility guidelines.

Customer contact: The team seek to reply to residents in the same format they have communicated with us however where residents have specific needs face to face or telephone contact is made where written communication is less appropriate.

Documents in other formats: Although we do not have a designated supplier for large format and braille printing, this is something that we would organise as required in conjunction with customer services. Documents can be printed in larger formats using the council printers.

Council Buildings and Assets

With over 250 commercial properties the Council owns a diverse portfolio of buildings and open spaces, ranging from our public toilets to sports pavilions as well as our leisure facilities and historic venues that make our town so special. Ensuring these special places are accessible to all are part of the council's core values. Awareness training for our customer facing teams, investment into our publicly accessible properties and forward planning are all pivotal to ensuring our town is a safe, welcoming, inclusive and inviting place for all to visit.

The Equality Act of 2010 sets out protective measures for those people who have a disability, it ensures they are treated fairly and equally to an able-bodied person and protects them from discrimination. The Act requires employers and bodies providing services to anticipate the need for reasonable adjustments, including physical adjustments to properties, so as not to discriminate.

This piece of legislation replaces the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 which drastically changed the way in which disabilities were perceived, broke down barriers and encouraged property owners and operators alike to fully consider the way in which a disabled user would have a positive experience when visiting a property. Furthermore, the provision of inclusion and full disability access in the built environment can deliver social and business benefits.

Disability Rights UK has a wealth of resource regarding making buildings accessible, they have joined forces with the RIBA to set out guidance notes in relation to the design and

refurbishment of buildings which has been a particularly useful tool when looking to improve our spaces to make them more inclusive.

During 2023 a group of students from the National Star college assisted CBC Property Surveyors in providing first hand advice on their experience of visiting some of the council's properties. The students, all with varying disabilities, visited the Recreation Centre, Pump Rooms, Town Hall and Municipal Offices. The students met with CBC Property Surveyors and the building operators to gain an understanding of accessibility, the facilities available and in return we were given an insight into some of the challenges the students faced, together with advice on both some short and longer term measures that could be implemented to make their experience of the venues a positive place to visit.

Below is a summary of the measures the council has in place, detailing the areas where 'reasonable adjustments' and investment has been made to enhance our special town to make it an inclusive place for all to visit.

Historic Properties, Leisure & Community Facilities and event venues.

At the Pittville Pump Rooms, arguably the town's most prestigious and iconic building, a good level of thought has been put into making the building accessible for all to visit and enjoy. The building is owned by Cheltenham Borough Council and operated by The Cheltenham Trust, its main function is an events venue, hosting weddings, concerns and community events. From the East Approach Drive there are 6 disabled car parking bays and level access to the building. Automatic double doors allow unhindered access into the foyer and box office area where there is a lowered reception hatch. There is good circulation space leading to the main hall and rear bar area together with accessible toilet and adequate signage. The main hall also has a hearing loop and a lift offers access to the upper floors on request, where there are several meeting rooms.

Similarly, the Town Hall has 3 parking bays in close proximity to the building, these are available on request at the time of booking as the area is predominantly used by staff. From the car park level access is available into the building. At the front of the building ramped access to the main entrance exists, there is good circulation space for wheelchair users to access all areas of the ground floor and contrasting décor assists those with visual impairment. Again, there is a hearing loop on the ground floor of the auditorium. There is no access to the balconies but as all the services are made available on the ground floor, including accessible toilet cubicles, 'reasonable adjustments' have been made.

There is a similar set up to the above two properties at the Art Gallery & Museum (Wilson) with both lift access to all floors, level access to the front and rear entrances and an accessible toilet. Assistant guide dogs are welcome at this property which allows visitors to explore 3 floors of art and historic collections. Signage is good with details of whom to contact if visitors require a personal assistant to accompany them and an induction loop exists on the ground floor, including the café area.

By contrast, St Mary's Mission, doesn't offer so much accessibility but equally the tenant advises they would accommodate specific requirements for visitors to the building as needed.

Recreation Centre & Prince of Wales Stadium

Whilst originally built in the 1970's the above facilities have been extended, refurbished and have evolved with 'business need' over a number of years. The Recreation Centre, a Leisure Centre as opposed to a sports centre, appeals to all members of the community. There are classes specifically tailored to those with additional needs, the elderly, as well as babies and toddlers. The site is fully accessible with a disabled passenger lift to the café and offices on the upper level as well as a lift to the spectator gallery in the main swimming pool and hoist facility for those less mobile to access the main swimming pool and teaching pool areas. More recently, a splashpad area and soft play have been added to the facility to create a safe space, meeting the needs of those with sensory requirements.

Within the change village there are accessible shower and toilet facilities as well as family change areas. Most recently the centre has been decorated to allow better movement around the space for those with visual impairment and the main reception area has an induction loop for those with hearing difficulties. Externally, there are disabled parking bays as well as parent and child bays in close proximity to the centre.

Whilst the Prince of Wales Stadium is less geared to meet the needs of those with a disability, it does have the benefit that such facilities are provided opposite at the Recreation Centre.

Oakley Community Centre

This is a purpose-built property providing office and community resource accommodation. The property is laid out over two floors and provides two designated parking spaces. The property has several entrances all of which provide a level access into the building. Accessible toilets are available both to the ground and first floors. A lift is present to gain access to the first floor. There are no onsite facilities provided for hearing-impaired visitors, but an abstract colour scheme and LED lighting provide some aid to the visually impaired.

Crematorium

The main crematorium is a purpose built single storey modern facility, approximately seven years old and was built to be fully accessible. There is suitable parking provision, level access approach, power assisted doors and internal facilities including accessible WCs as well as an induction loop and a good level of contrasting features to assist those with sight impairments. The location and setting have been well thought out to provide a peaceful and calming space for the bereaved as well as those who are neurodivergent with well landscaped and sensory areas.

Municipal offices

The main CBC Municipal Offices is a Georgian terraced building in the centre of Cheltenham. The building occupies 5 floors. Accessible parking spaces are available to the rear of the building along with a level access approach. A wheelchair platform lift is provided internally to access the ground floor. A further passenger lift is available to access the upper floors. Induction loop and other assistance items are available at the main reception. Procedures are in place to assist disabled persons to access services within the building.

Crematorium Office

The crematorium office is a small single storey building constructed in the 1920s. The building's reception is used by members of the public and reasonable provisions are afforded, staff provide any additional facilities that may be needed.

Car Parks

The council owns and manages a number of level car parks across the borough, including two multi-storey car parks. There is ample provision for disabled parking, parent and child parking as well as lift provision in the multi-storey car parks. Our car parks are well lit areas offering pedestrian walkways in contrasting colour schemes to keep the users safe from moving vehicles.

Greenspace, Parks & Gardens

The council maintains over fifty play areas and recreational areas, with Pittville Park being its flagship facility. The play area was designed to be inclusive in terms of equipment being suitable for children of all abilities, and incorporates tactile elements, sound, and access points to equipment that can be utilised by children and carers. The same principles apply to all project briefs developed as part of the council's annual play area improvement programme.

In consideration of recreational facilities enjoyed by older generations, the council has also constructed three boules/pétanque courts to meet local demand. Similarly, there are numerous green spaces that now incorporate outdoor fitness equipment.

In terms of general access to green space the council has been successful in securing funding in partnership with community groups to install circular paths to many of its larger playing fields that can now accommodate year-round all weather access to both recreational and semi natural green space. Furthermore, some allotment sites now have adapted plots with paved surfaces and raised beds for tenants with restricted mobility.

Green Space Officers recently attended a "Nature without Barriers" event organised by the Barnwood Trust in collaboration with the Gloucestershire Nature Partnership, which has prompted further thought about the type of information contained on the council's parks web pages. Pictorial and written lists of facilities can provide reassurance to people for whom anxiety is a restricting factor when considering a visit to a public space.

As part of our work with National Star College and Accessible Gloucestershire we will shortly be commencing a review of access to our parks and gardens.

Pavilions & Playing Fields

The council owns and manages a number of sports pavilions that are let to local sports and community groups. The pavilions are purpose-built properties providing changing rooms, showers and toilet facilities for sporting events. Some of these properties benefit from on-site parking and disabled spaces and where this cannot be provided street parking is generally available nearby. Where level access is not available, a ramp is provided making the pavilions accessible for all and at the time of booking the organiser is advised which facility may suit their user group the best. The majority of the pavilions are laid out across one floor and many benefit from an accessible toilet complete with panic alarm. There are no onsite facilities provided for hearing-impaired visitors, but an abstract colour scheme provides some aid to the visually impaired.

Public Toilets

Bath Terrace is a purpose-built public toilet providing male, female and accessible toilets. The toilet block is set within a carpark and has 3 designated parking bays. Level access is

available from the carpark and into the building via a ramp. There is a single accessible toilet provided within the block. There is a similar set up at Imperial Garden and Royal Well, level or ramped access is available into the facility and an accessible toilet is provided.

Montpellier toilets have recently undergone a full refurbishment programme, making them inclusive and accessible for all. The purpose-built public toilet block provides male, female, accessible and changing places facilities. Street parking is available directly outside of the block and level access is available from the street parking into the building via a ramp. The changing places facility provides additional facilities for assisted disabled visitors, such as an electric hoist, bed, WC and shower.

Similarly, Pittville Park Changing Places facility offers a similar set up catering for those with additional needs. The facility is located close to the play area and has level access throughout. There is an abstract colour scheme and LED lighting within the change pod which provides some aid to the visually impaired.

Our changing places are cleaned daily by Ubico who report defects to the property team. In addition, they are subject to monthly detailed property inspections.

At present there are no plans for further changing places facilities to be installed, however we are aware of the concerns that there are no facilities open after the shops shut which could discourage those with additional needs from using restaurants/ other nightlife facilities. We will therefore work with the BID to explore options.

Housing Improvement Programme

As part of the Consumer Standards – under Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, registered providers must ensure that landlord services are accessible, and that the accessibility is publicised to tenants. This includes supporting tenants and prospective tenants to use online landlord services if required.

As part of the Gap Analysis, CBC determined that the control within this standard as 'Met'.

CBC provide tenants with a range of means of accessing services, who can seek support via the phone to our Customer Services team, through a dedicated website and Customer Portal, which links to our Housing Management System and through regular face to face meetings with our Tenancy Management team.

Computers have been installed at sheltered schemes and training has been provided to enable tenants to use the Customer Portal. A range of training is available free of charge to all customers at our Skills Hub which includes developing numeracy and IT skills.

Available services and support are advertised through a dedicated website and Customer Portal, social media posts, and newsletter (available in both physical and digital formats). Tenants are provided with a Tenant Handbook on sign-up, to ensure they have information on the services provided and how to report problems. The Customer Services team aim to direct customers to the appropriate services and support at the first point of contact. Increasingly, CBC is using QR codes on posters and leaflets to direct customers to further information and support.

Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel deliver an annual scrutiny programme. This is determined by the panel and scrutiny's are selected to address issues of most importance to tenants, identified via performance against tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) (customer feedback) and other feedback. In addition, the tenant panel engage in a full programme of consultation as part of the development of strategies and policies. We are working towards engagement with the wider tenant population and will develop this further. Completed tenant scrutiny reviews have been published on the website. CBC are committed to removing any barriers to engagement and will make any necessary adjustments to meet individual needs. Examples include considering the accessibility of venues, providing transport and making equipment available through the skills hub.

Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services. An annual report to tenants is published on the website and signposted to tenants through the newsletter and social media. This report includes details of how income was spent and how tenant feedback has shaped services in the last year. It is presented in a clear accessible format, making use of infographics and statistics. Financial statements are also published on the website and Companies House annually. This includes a breakdown of spending and the financial position, including a value for money analysis using KPI information. CBC have addressed issues with accessibility of the financial statements on the website.

Our ongoing programme of tenancy audits is currently gathering information which will enable us to have a better understanding of our tenants needs and our stock condition surveys are identifying properties which have adaptations to enable the creation of an adaptations register which will assist in matching housing applicant to homes that most suits their needs.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Following on from our recent merger with CBH, we are developing one ED&I policy and action plan that sets out our commitment to addressing inequalities and promoting ED&I across all areas of our work and our communities. We are also reviewing our respective 2024/25 ED&I actions to assess and report on progress and working together with housing services and other key stakeholders to agree targets for 2025/26. Our aim is to have a draft policy and action plan completed by the end of May together with a revised ED&I group structure and terms of reference.

Actions

Whilst this briefing note highlights a lot of good work in this area it is clear that there is still much to do as identified in these actions:

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale
Working with the National Star College review access to the Municipal Offices and the associated signage.	Head of Place Marketing and Inward Investment	October 2025
Working with the National Star College create a video showing the accessible route into the office for use on our website	Head of Place Marketing and Inward Investment	October 2025
Install clear signage and messaging in reception identifying the facilities that we have for those with disabilities	Head of Customer Services	September 2025
When identifying a location for the new council chamber consider accessibility issues	Democratic Services Team Leader	As part of municipal offices project
Ensure our new website is accessible, moving from the use of PDFs to HTML where possible and implementing a process for regular accessibility checks	Communications and Marketing Manger	December 2025
Ensure that grant agreement with the Everyman states that we would like them to do some work around accessibility to facilitate two wheelchair users being able to sit together and monitor compliance with this provision.	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships	May 2025 – April 2026
Review street scene policy and street trading policy.	Licensing & Public Protection Manager	December 2025
Work with National Star College and Accessible Gloucestershire to review of access to our parks and gardens.	Parks and Public Realm Manager	Commenced – conclude by April 2026

Work with the BID to explore options for further changing places.	Head of Place Marketing and Inward Investment	December 2025
Complete tenancy audits so that we have a better understanding of our tenants needs	Director of Housing – Customer and Community Services	October 2025
Create an adaptations register to assist in matching housing applicants to homes that most suits their needs	Director of Housing – Customer and Community Services	April 2026
Revised ED&I policy and action plan	Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity Manager	October 2025
Liaise with the BID about access to shops in the town, with a view to creating a map identifying all the accessible shops	Head of Place Marketing and Inward Investment	December 2025

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