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SCRUTINY INQUIRY PANEL - ACCESSIBLE SOUTHAMPTON MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Councillors Vaughan, Mitchell, Coombs (Chair), Guest and Streets

14. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

The Inquiry Panel Chair, Cllr Vaughan, was in attendance but was not well enough to Chair the meeting. In the absence of the Vice-Chair, Cllr Coombs was elected as Chair for the meeting.

The apologies of Councillor Rayment were noted. Councillor Mitchell was appointed as substitute for the purposes of the meeting.

15. **STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

RESOLVED: that the final meeting of the Inquiry scheduled for 21 April 2022, be rescheduled to 28 April 2022.

16. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

17. **ACCESSIBLE SOUTHAMPTON - ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

The Panel considered the report of the Service Director Legal and Business Operations for the fifth meeting of the 'Accessible Southampton Inquiry'. The Panel considered 'Accessibility to Public Facilities and Services' and noted the presentations.

Summary of information provided:

What contributes to good accessibility in public facilities and services from Disabled People's Viewpoint – Ian Loynes, Chief Executive, Spectrum CIL

- A presentation was delivered by Ian Loynes, summarising the key issues raised at the Accessible Southampton Focus Group meeting.
- Key points raised in the presentation included the following:
 - Services need to be easy to get to and publicised so that the target audience is reached. Most people do not know what services there are and the Information Directories (eg SID) need to ensure up to date and accurate information is available and is user friendly.
 - Need to have a variety of transport options nearby and is well signposted.
 - Staff training & culture - Ensure properly trained staff that understand needs of Disabled People; Use appropriate language; Staff who listen, don't patronise or assume that they know best what is needed; Have undertaken Disability Equality Training.
 - Buildings need to be accessible for Disabled People (Best practice guidelines are available)

- Information provided needs to be in accessible formats
- Staff need to know what aids are available and how to use them
- The Council needs to be a learning Council.

Accessible Derby – Ann Webster, Lead on Equality and Diversity at Derby City Council

- Key points raised by Ann Webster during her presentation:
 - Ann’s role is to act as facilitator and enabler to support all Derby City Council directorates on its equality and diversity journey.
 - Chief Executive has overall leadership of Equality and Diversity along with the Senior Leadership Team. The Council work to the Equality, Dignity and Respect Policy and have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan to make it real.
 - Ann receives support from Senior Managers and there is cross party support for equality and diversity – This support is essential.
 - Equality Hubs, Forums and Employee Networks make a huge difference to Derby work and deliver their services – keeps us on our toes!
 - From the early 90’s Derby have adopted the social model of disability rather than the medical model. So, this means that right from the start Derby look at removing barriers for disabled people, promoting inclusion, rather than disabled people having to ‘fit in’ with inaccessible and sometimes hostile environments.
 - The Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty are key drivers for equality, diversity and inclusion, but they are only as good as the people who work to these.
 - A key part of the Public Sector Equality Duty is to ‘pay due regard to equality’ and so Derby still complete Equality Impact Assessments for their decisions.
 - Council’s do not police the Equality Act but can use the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality and remove discrimination – Derby are proactive in undertaking this role.
 - Derby temporarily shortened their EIA form for quick Covid related changes so we could tackle mitigation actions.
 - Huge barriers for disabled people during Covid - Derby used the Public Sector Equality Duty at this time to promote equality and get rid of discrimination - including contacting shops to give them tips on how not to discriminate against disabled people when they put in Covid restrictions and challenging high street businesses about their mask policies.
 - Derby has adopted an Accessible Communications Protocol so disabled people have information that’s accessible such as in a range of formats, sign video and mobile phones for Deaf people to text, BSL Videos – not being accessible can result in Court action.
 - To ensure staff are aware of the Council’s policies and approaches Ann does face to face training on equality and diversity with Derby City Council employees, on-line training is provided, and Ann promotes awareness at various team meetings.
 - Nothing about us without us – Derby involve Equality Hubs, Forums and employee networks right from the start of projects and in EIAs... eg - Moorways Sports Village – fire evacuation lifts, wet wheelchair, lift pods

- for dignity into the pool; and, New Entertainment Arena – fire evacuation lifts, changing places toilets, hearing loops, accessible seating.
- Derby were one of the first cities to insist that all hackney carriages must be wheelchair accessible – they had to go to Court twice but won both times!
- Ann is proactive in ensuring public spaces are accessible - Street furniture – is matt grey not stainless steel; Street cafes are checked for accessibility (Ann is consulted on this); Derbion Shopping Centre changed their brand new parking machine when disabled people told them it was too high.
- The Council works closely with the Business Improvement District
- What next for Derby? - More Changing Places toilets (now part of Building Regs) and accessible play equipment in our parks; Ask disabled people to check we have got things right from what they told us and if it's not change it!; Feel proud of our City, our communities and their voices.

Accessibility to the services and facilities provided by Southampton City Council – Mark Pirnie, Scrutiny Manager, SCC

- A presentation was delivered was delivered by Mark Pirnie.
- Key points raised in the presentation included the following:
 - The Panel have been informed at previous meetings about challenges relating to the accessibility of Southampton's built environment, transport infrastructure, communications and information. Good practice has also been highlighted throughout the inquiry.
 - To guide the Council's approach to accessible services SCC does have an Equalities Policy and an Equalities Action Plan – They were however drafted in 2013 and need updating.
 - SCC undertakes Equality & Safety Impact Assessments (ESIAs) for all significant proposals and policies/strategies. Oversight is provided by the Strategy & Policy Team, but the process could be more rigorous, including engaging with disabled people where appropriate.
 - A number of connected policies exist that support accessible services including the Customer Access Strategy; SEND Action Plan (linked to Children and Young People's Strategy); Disabled Adaption Procedure.
 - A number of positive developments should improve the Council's approach to accessible services. These include the following - Appointment of Diversity & Inclusion Lead (Time limited - internally focussed role); Looking to identify more EMT and Councillor Diversity & Inclusion Champions; Training – Proposed Diversity & Inclusion e-learning package, mandatory for all employees, agency workers and councillors & Face to face training on Diversity & Inclusion topics for both new starters and refreshers for staff; Southampton Information Directory (SID) is being updated; Proposals to update the Equalities Policy.
 - There is no Service Lead for Equality & Diversity that is championing the use of the Public Sector Equality Duty to promote equality and remove discrimination experienced by residents and visitors to Southampton.

Accessibility Southampton: Go! Southampton – Rebecca Handley, Deputy Executive Director/Operations Director at GO! Southampton Business Improvement District

- Go! Southampton provided written evidence that was considered at the 2nd meeting of the Inquiry Panel. Key points raised in Rebecca's verbal update to the Panel included the following:
 - The BID has an ambition for Southampton to be an accessible and inclusive city – A city designed with accessibility in mind, that listens to and understands its community. This will bring environmental, economic and social benefits to the city.
 - Go! Southampton wants to work with the City Council to deliver this.
 - Following the BID ballot in November, Go! Southampton have been developing a new 5 year business plan. Inclusion and diversity featured strongly in consultation feedback from the business community with a desire to invest resources to make Southampton a more inclusive place.
 - A new Inclusive City workstream will commence in April 2022 where business will be investing in initiatives that improve inclusivity across the city.
 - 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.
 - Go! Southampton is working with Spectrum CIL on accessible premises.
 - Go! Southampton will continue to work with SCC to tackle barriers identified in the Spectrum CIL audit. BID is passionate about decluttering the city centre to make it easier to navigate.
 - The Local Plan is key to influencing future developments – accessibility needs to be at the heart of new schemes.
 - Since the Spectrum CIL report was published officers from the City Council have been approaching Go! Southampton and Spectrum on accessibility issues and future proposals – If there was an external lead on this at SCC it would be helpful to the BID.