

Report to Scrutiny Commission

Economic Development, Transport and Tourism
Date of Commission meeting: 4th December 2019

City Centre Accessibility Update

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and
Development

Useful Information:

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Summary

Appendix B1 outlines the ongoing work in response to the accessibility issues raised at the Commission meeting in August 2019.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny

Scrutiny is asked to note the contents of this report and comment as appropriate.

3. Supporting Information

At its meeting on 22nd August 2019 the Commission received a report from the Director of Planning, Transport and Development on City Centre Accessibility and a related presentation from Maureen Peberdy, representing Labour Disability. (Minute 21, "City Centre Accessibility", refers)

The table in the attached appendix sets the on-going work related to the questions raised and items recorded in the minutes of the August meeting.

4. Financial, legal and other implications**4.1 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

4.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

4.3. Climate Change implications

There are no climate change implications arising directly from this report.

4.4 Equality Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 also requires that reasonable adjustments be made so that disabled people are not excluded from places that serve the public, including publicly accessible open spaces. This duty is on-going and anticipatory and, therefore, reasonable and proportionate steps to overcome barriers which may impede people with different kinds of disabilities.

There are no direct equalities implications arising from the report recommendations as the report is for noting, rather than decision. However, the future and on-going approach to city centre accessibility will have equalities implications and any further proposals may require equality impact assessment to ensure that the PSED is paid due regard. The report focuses on disability access, however there are wider accessibility issues which could be taken into account which have not been mentioned within the feedback on access issues raised at EDTT, for example those with the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity.

Having said this, increased and improved disability access, taking into account a range of different needs, is likely to have positive impacts for the whole population and other protected characteristic groups. Although many of the comments focus on physical access, there are also some comments and suggestions which would be beneficial for those with conditions such as dementia, visual impairments, mental health conditions, and those with neuro diverse conditions such as autism and learning disabilities. Less visible or hidden disabilities will need to be an on-going consideration.

Accessible and inclusive design relating to access schemes in an around the City Centre will support the general aims of the PSED and will be beneficial particularly in removing barriers to participation in public life. Ongoing engagement and consultation with key service user groups, disability groups and organisations is a vital aspect of ensuring that an inclusive approach which is consistent with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 is taken.

In addition, an equality impact assessment will be required for future schemes to ensure that any potential disproportionate negative impacts on any particular protected characteristic/s are identified and mitigated and to ensure that the schemes are inclusive of individuals and groups with different protected characteristics.

Hannah Watkins, Equalities Manager tel. 0116 454 5811

4.5 Other Implications

None

5. Background information and other papers:

N/A

6. Summary of appendices:

N/A

7. Is this a private report?

N/A

APPENDIX B1

Access Issues raised at EDTT on 22 nd August 2019	Response
<p>Many people did not use certain retail businesses due to poor accessibility, barriers to entry, or poor customer service for disabled people.</p>	<p>Planning and Building Control regulations set out accessibility requirements for new shop development schemes requiring permission.</p> <p>In developing Connecting Leicester street/public realm improvement schemes, accessibility to business properties is a key consideration with an aim to remove barriers to entry wherever possible. The Healthy Streets Assessment is applied to relevant schemes and considers good access requirements.</p>
<p>Some people were not able to navigate cluttered environments, so did not use the city centre.</p>	<p>In our work in the city centre through Connecting Leicester and Legible Leicester schemes and in dealing with private sector proposals we aim to reduce/minimise street clutter and locate what needs to be retained (e.g. seating, bins, cycle racks, essential signing) in ways which minimise obstructions.</p>
<p>Investment in digital democracy could be an important aid to encouraging disabled people to use the city centre. For example, an app could be created enabling people to plan accessible routes, possibly using crowd-sourced information.</p>	<p>Consideration of such provision will be investigated</p>
<p>The provision of Changing Places toilets was very welcome, but these were only located in the city centre and at least one further one was needed there in order to spread the locations more evenly across the city centre.</p>	<p>Advice on where possible options for such an addition will be sought.</p>
<p>A safe space was needed for people who needed to move away from a crowded and/or noisy environment for a short time.</p>	<p>A number of new and safe/quiet public squares have been developed in recent years in the city centre such as at Jubilee Square, Cathedral Gardens, Market Square and New Walk Centre. A number of improved/newly pedestrianised streets have also been developed through the Connecting Leicester programme, creating many more safe spaces.</p>
<p>Induction loops and audio-assistive systems needed to be introduced.</p>	<p>More information required on options for this.</p>
<p>Ramps should be used where possible rather than steps.</p>	<p>In council development schemes ramps will be provided at recommended gradients. Features which currently exist with only steps e.g. footbridges are being progressively replaced with accessible alternatives such as ground level crossings</p>

In general, toilets in the city centre were very badly sign-posted;	Signing of toilets in the city centre has been included in the recently installed wayfinding system. This is due for review and updating of the map shortly and consideration will be given as to whether greater prominence can be given to signing toilets.
A booklet sign-posting people to facilities would be very useful. This could be stocked by the Information Bureau, as it already received requests for this information	Use of the Legible Leicester city centre wayfinding maps for this purpose will be considered.
Ability needed to be considered as well as disability.	Noted
The Council to consider entering the Access Award, which was a European Union award recognising cities that became more accessible to their citizens	This can be investigated.
That all Councillors be invited to advise Highways officers of locations in their Wards at which parking at bus stops prevented bus users from using the high kerbs at the bus stops and that Highways officers be asked to take appropriate action in response to such notifications	Awaiting information.
That the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation be asked to liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Commission to arrange a walk around areas outside of the city centre to assess the accessibility of those areas	Options for walkabouts under consideration.
Some disabled parking bays did not have dropped kerbs for access	These will be reviewed and proposals for providing appropriate dropped kerbs will be prepared
Some dropped kerbs were adversely affected by drain covers	These will be reviewed and proposals for making appropriate changes to dropped kerbs where there is any form of difficulty will be prepared
Cars parked over dropped kerbs preventing access	The review noted above will also cover this issue and proposals to tackle it prepared. Can also consider enforcement options
Alternative forms of access around the city centre	As part of the Transforming Cities Fund bid consideration is being given to options for improving accessibility in the city centre streets that have not been previously improved and potentially providing alternative means of travel around the city centre by bus