



Accessibility Audit: City Hall & Town Hall

Report to: Economic Development, Transport and
Tourism Scrutiny Commission

Date: 17 September 2020

Lead director: Matt Wallace

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Castle
- Report author: Joseph Martin
- Author contact details: joseph.martin@leicester.gov.uk, tel: 0116 454 1298

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to summarise key findings of Accessibility Audits carried out in May 2020 for City Hall and Town Hall.

2. Summary

2.1 Access Audit Author

In response to a request from the City Mayor audits of City Hall and Town Hall have been carried out by accessibility consultants The Oakleaf Group. The Council currently relies on external consultancy for site access audits but has a City Mayor directive to develop this function in house in the future.

2.2 Report Scope

The reports provide clarity on the current provision of disabled access and accessibility within City Hall and Town Hall. Covering risk, priority and indicative rectification costs.

The reports acknowledge the following codes of practice and regulations:

- BS 8300:2009 Code of Practice for the Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of Disabled people.
- The Building Regulations Approved Document Part M 2006.
- BS 5588 Part 8 9999 Fire Precautions in the Design and Construction of Buildings: Means of Escape for Disabled People.
- National Disability Code of Practice.
- Easy Access to Historic Properties - English Heritage.
- Disability Rights Commission - Code of Practice.

2.3 City Hall summary programme and costs (APPENDIX A)

City Hall was built compliant to Building Regulations Approved Document M in 2014. The auditor considered the building continues to meet the spirit of the Equalities Act; however the evolving use of City Hall since refurbishment now dictates further work to ensure the Council fulfils its duties under the Equalities Act. The auditors recommend improvements which include:

- Upgrade of existing automatic car park barrier entry system to improve and provide greater accessibility and audibility.
- Replacement of the ground floor platform lift to Meeting Rooms 1 and 2: This lift was considered reasonably appropriate by the report authors. However; they recognised the reliability and control button locations mean that in actual use it is not. This is also applicable to the platform lifts on floor one albeit a lesser extent. An additional sum has been included to address these other lifts.
- Manifestations on the reception speed gates.
- Review and upgrade accessibility signage to the building.
- Providing varied seating, in the reception waiting area.
- Replacing failing Induction loop hearing enhancement system to meeting rooms, Presentation Suite and Attenborough Hall
- Replace twist action locks with a lever type in some to accessible toilets.
- Provide automatic accessible opening system to car park door rear of reception.
- Provide powered operation (or hold open devices) to assist with the opening of doors within the event space and wing access on upper floors.

The following costs are subject to full site surveys would be indicative for addressing the items in the report. A Capital funding bid would be required.

- Year one £4,700 plus platform lift replacements £40,000
 - Year two £81,800 plus power assistance to doors floors 2-4 £20,000 and signage upgrade £5,000
 - Year three £26,600
- Total £178,100**

2.4 Town Hall summary programme and costs (APPENDIX B)

The Town Hall remains a key building in the office accommodation strategy. The site having had; new fire alarm and access control system. Future works in the Town Hall are planned borne from recent condition surveys. It is proposed that Accessibility Audit work recommended by the auditors should be included in a wider programme which will address; maintenance backlog, sustainability measures and in the context of transforming services future use of the building. Examples of these opportunities are replacement of the Council Chamber platform lift or replacing the Council Chamber hearing loops during re-wiring work. Headline items from the auditors' recommendations include

- Upgrade to automatic car barrier entry system at Bishop Street entrance to Town Hall square to link to CCTV control
- Main entrance steps to be fitted with continuous handrails if this is still appropriate in the future (**draft scheme Appendix C**)
- Fitting handrails on one side of staircases (so that there are handrails on both sides).
- Replacing the platform lift to Council Chamber.

- Review and upgrade of accessibility signage within the building.
- Replacement of hearing enhancement systems to main entrance and registrar`s receptions.
- Installing induction loop hearing enhancement system to Council Chamber and Court.
- Ensuring step nosings are identifiable and tactile surfaces are applied to landings
- Installation of contrasting band to the glazing of fully glazed first floor doors.
- Providing powered operation to assist opening of main circulation heavy doors
- Replacing brass door sets to improve gripping ability on door furniture
- Replacing twist action locks with lever type to all accessible WC`s and repositioning of cistern flushes to operate on transfer side of cisterns

The following costs are subject to full site surveys would be indicative for addressing the items in the report. A Capital funding bid would be required.

- Year one £157,000
- Year two £84,050
- Year three £149,300

Total £390,350

The proposal is to include these works into a much larger programme of works which is in planning for Town Hall which will focus on essential maintenance and building usage.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are asked to note and comment on the contents of this report.

3.2 Estates and Building Services commission further accessibility audits of Council sites and will develop a planned approach to support this requirement with its in house team in the future.

3.3 Estates and Building Services will share the findings of Appendix A and Appendix B to this report with the Disabled Workers Group for comment and assigning a member of its Facilities Management team to be part of this group.

3.3 Estates and Building Services will seek to include the priority works at City Hall into the next appropriate capital programme for commencement as soon as possible.

4. Appendices

- 4.1 City Hall Accessibility Audit (FULL) Appendix A
- 4.2 Town Hall Accessibility Audit (FULL) Appendix B
- 4.3 Town Hall Main entrance handrails draft scheme (FULL) Appendix C

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The report identifies works estimated to cost £568,450, for which no funding is currently identified. It is proposed to include this in a future bid for corporate capital funds

Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, tel: 0116 454 4081

5.2 Legal implications

The Council is required to ensure that its buildings are complaint with the provisions of the Equalities act 2010 (as amended) in making reasonable adjustments to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged and enables the Council to comply with its public sector equality duty. The Council is also required to ensure that it complies with its duty to ensure the health and safety of its employees and visitors pursuant to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (as amended).

John McIvor, Principal Lawyer, tel: 0116 454 1409

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Whilst none of the individual measures proposed are likely to have a significant effect on carbon emissions by themselves, building works should consider sustainability wherever possible. This includes following the councils' sustainable procurement guidelines, including the selection of low carbon and sustainable materials, choosing energy efficient equipment and reducing waste in building and procurement processes.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, tel: 0116 454 2284

5.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in making decisions and carrying out their activities they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, 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 Act imposes a legal duty on employers and service providers (and some historic properties will be both) to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged when visiting a property.

The duty to make adjustments has three parts:

1. Changing the way things are done
2. Making changes to the built environment (such as providing disabled access to a building)
3. Providing auxiliary aids and/or services (for instance, providing special computer hardware for a partially sighted employee)

The aim of the Act is to provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, the same level of access for people with disabilities as that enjoyed by the rest of the public. Whilst historical buildings often pose a greater challenge than most, the obligation remains. But along with it exists the opportunity to broaden the appeal sites to reach the widest possible audience.

Whilst the accessible design of buildings is regulated by the Building Regulations Part M: Access to and use of buildings, the Equality Act does require "reasonable adjustments" to be made when providing access to goods, facilities, services and premises.

In practice, this means that due regard must be given to any specific needs of likely building users that might be reasonably met. Compliance with the requirements of Part M does not therefore signify compliance with the much broader obligations and duties set out in the Equality Act.

Carrying out an access audit is not an end in itself, but the first stage in a process that only has an impact if the outcomes are acted upon. The works are planned to be part of a wider programme of work and should lead to positive impacts on users especially those with the protected characteristic of disability.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer, tel: 0116 454 4148

6. Is this a private report? - No

7. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why? - No