

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 6
17 SEPTEMBER 2012	Public Report

Report of the Social Inclusion Manager, Neighbourhood Services

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DISABILITY ISSUES IN RURAL AREAS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To propose a series of access audits for rural areas by disabled people living in Peterborough working with Peterborough City Council and the Disability Forum.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Peterborough City Council works with the Disability Forum to provide comprehensive access audits across the rural areas of Peterborough, carried out and managed by the Disability Forum and DIAL.
- 2.2 To include this work as part of the Rural North Community Action Plan and as a pilot for involvement of disabled people in policies and planning for rural areas.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report and its proposals directly contribute across the entire Sustainable Community Strategy, by ensuring that all aspects of rural policy and service delivery consider and take into account the needs of people with disabilities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Disability Forum has been working with Peterborough City Council, the Primary Care Trust, Peterborough City Hospital, Nene Park Trust, Peterborough Train Station, Van Hague Garden Park and various other organisations and businesses across Peterborough to provide advice, information and guidance on various aspects of disability awareness and accessibility issues. We have been asked by the Scrutiny Commission to explore access difficulties for disabled people living in rural areas.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 This proposal will ensure that the views and experiences of local disabled people are incorporated into any and all future developments, and provide suggestions for improving existing rural provisions.

In addition:

- i. Work to date on access audits for the city have been unfunded and provided through the goodwill of untrained volunteers
- ii. There is no organisation *currently* providing access audits for Peterborough on a voluntary basis

- iii. Access audits for projects of this nature by qualified consultants are estimated to cost in the region of £10k
- iv. Our access audits will be in the region of £1k – £5k depending on size and depth of audit required
- v. Our findings lead us to believe that many professional access audits are carried out without the involvement and inclusion of disabled people
- vi. Disabled people living in rural areas will have the opportunity to influence decision making and plans in their neighbourhoods; they will also be able to improve skills, reduce isolation and improve general health and wellbeing
- vii. This pilot project in the Rural Areas will be a unique example of best practice for involving local disabled people in rural issues related to access and inclusion
- viii. Older people are now living longer and we are finding that many of the issues affecting older people in terms of accessibility and 'getting around' are the same as those with a physical disability

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 If the council chooses not to go ahead with this piece of work there may be lost opportunities for engagement with older and disabled people living in rural areas. Increasing our knowledge of access issues in rural areas will enable us to reduce isolation, improve health and increase opportunities for growth in tourism. By including disabled people throughout the process the council will reduce the need for revisiting work that doesn't meet the needs of disabled people.
- 6.2 There is a funding requirement for this work and it will be necessary to identify funding sources to enable this to progress. There may also be a resource implication as well as investment opportunities emerging from the audits, and any such agreed requirements will form part of the emerging community action plans for rural areas.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 We are working with professional access auditors who have worked on previous projects within the city to develop our model for 'Inclusive Access' volunteers. We will consult with all the disabled and older persons, groups and organisations in rural areas that we are able to make contact with to help in this work. The Disability Forum and DIAL will invite members to participate and will oversee the management of the work.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1
 - To seek funding, including applying for external funds, to undertake access audits in rural areas
 - To identify priority areas with the Rural North Neighbourhood Committee
 - To identify disabled residents living in rural areas to assist with audits if appropriate

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Example Access Audit for Village Hall