

Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities	Agenda Item No. 6
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Report of the Assistant Community Cohesion Manager

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DISABILITY ISSUES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To review the findings of the disability access audits conducted in six rural localities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Commission is asked to note the contents of the access audits and the issues contained therein and consider commissioning the Directorate of Growth and Regeneration to develop an investment plan to address the recommendations in the access audits.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

3.1 The issues contained within the access reports link across all aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy through the identification of issues that directly affect disabled people in all aspects of their life.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 At its meeting in September 2012 the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities considered options to identify access issues that disabled people face in rural communities. It was agreed that independent access audits within rural locations would be commissioned. Audits were to be delivered in conjunction with disabled people who would be trained to undertake future access audits, subject to funding becoming available. Unfortunately, due to the limited budget available, it has not so far been possible to train disabled people as future access auditors. A reduced project proposal was instead developed and funded by the Community Cohesion Board who commissioned DIAL Peterborough to undertake the work. The work has now been completed and attached to this report listing a number of recommendations.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 DIAL Peterborough commissioned About Access Ltd to undertake audits in Eye, Glinton and Wittering. The access reports provide a detailed overview for each of the villages with recommendations and priority actions identified. The report identifies a number of common issues and recommendations that are likely to be replicated across all villages within Peterborough, these include:

- Increased provision of dropped kerbs
- Tactile paving at pedestrian crossings and dropped kerbs
- Removal of 'A' boards from pedestrian walkways/routes
- Regular cut back of vegetation on pedestrian routes
- Removal of bollards unless they are absolutely necessary. Bollards should be a height

of 1000mm with good contrast colour to background and incorporating contrast colour band

- Providing adequate Blue Badge parking bays (these should equate to at least 6% of total parking spaces in car parks)
- Notice Boards should be at a level that people in wheelchairs can read, using 14 point print and mixed lower case and capital letters
- Bus shelters should be provided on both sides of the road if possible
- Avoidance of gravel paths as they are a slip hazard
- Maintenance/regular checks of pedestrian routes to avoid trip hazards
- The use of gratings should be reviewed with an intention of replacing any existing ones with less discriminatory methods of keeping animals out of public areas.

Having identified the issues, the council needs to consider developing an investment plan to address the recommendations in the villages mentioned, and other rural locations.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – Any remedial works will require capital investment and may mean some of these recommendations are not affordable at this time, although urgent consideration should be given to priority one recommendations. However, incorporating this information into planned or future maintenance would keep future costs to a minimum by reducing the amount of remedial work needing to be carried out.

Discrimination and Equality – addressing the recommendations within this report will help the council to meet its obligations under the Equality Act.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Whilst disabled people have not been involved in conducting these surveys, the reports have been shared with a number of disabled people via DIAL Peterborough. Feedback from disabled people has been positive, with many people commenting on the quality and format of the surveys. In addition, the reports will be shared and discussed through the Disability Forum.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to recommend that the Directorate of Growth and Regeneration review the recommendations in relation to any future or planned maintenance. In addition, an investment plan should be developed to address the recommendations (subject to available funding).

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Eye village access report and recommendations
Glington village access report and recommendations
Wittering village access report and recommendations