

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

Date of meeting

'AccessAble' - Disability Access Guides
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Report of Councillor Martin E Thacker MBE, JP, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Overall Strategic Leadership

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To update Cabinet on the AccessAble disability access guides initiative.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 In 2019 the Council set out its '*Vision, Values and Aims*' as part of its Council Plan 2019-2023. Amongst the Council Plan priorities is; '**Our Economy – Creating a business friendly District that develops skills and jobs**'. One of the key objectives of this priority is to; '**Develop and promote a visitor economy across the District**' with an action to develop a visitor economy and tourism strategy in 2020.
- 1.2 The Council in essence want both residents and visitors to explore and enjoy experiences in and around the District including its towns, countryside and heritage. The Council want to excite and attract new visitors for days out or short breaks and to enjoy great experiences, visitors who will stay longer and spend more whilst they are here – this in-turn will create jobs, support businesses and stimulate local economic growth. Being accessible is a fundamental factor that has to be considered in terms of the Councils visitor economy ambition.
- 1.3 There are over 13 million people with a disability in the UK with around 22,000 in North east Derbyshire who say that their day-to-day activities are limited due to disability or long term health. There is an increasing 'post-code lottery' with regards to accessibility information, in effect making some places 'no-go zones' for people with disabilities.
- 1.4 For these reasons, the District Council is leading on the development of Access Guides for those who live in the district and those who would like to visit. Working with an organisation called '*AccessAble*', the guides have the potential to cover all the places people want to experience – from Pubs and Restaurants, to Parks and Open Spaces, to Libraries and Leisure Centres, to Tourist Attractions, car parks and publicly accessible toilets.

- 1.5 Founded and developed by disabled people, AccessAble views comprehensive accessibility information as key to ensuring that disabled people and their families do not face inequality. AccessAble now works with over 350 different organisations, including 110 local authorities, 85 Universities and 60 Health Trusts across the UK and Ireland.
- 1.6 Once produced, this accessibility information will be accessed through a dedicated website and a mobile app but, crucially – all access guides can be integrated into all existing online information that can be found about an area, venue or event – from the Councils own website, to the individual venues and events websites, to tourism-focused websites such as Visit Derbyshire. The aim is to ideally develop Access Guides for all places that people want to go - providing the essential information that people need to make an informed decision on whether they can go (or not go) to a particular place.
- 1.7 The ambition is to set out a programme to cover the whole of the North East Derbyshire District area. An important element and potential contributor therefore will be Parish and Town Councils, this programme will enable Parish and Town Councils to take part at a scale appropriate to their area. To this end, a presentation of the product and associated costs was delivered to the District and Parish Councils Liaison meeting in early March 2020.
- 1.8 Following the presentation and meeting, Parish and Town Councils were provided with the presentation and a summary document including the costs to share with their colleagues. Along with these a template schedule was provided for each of the Parish / Town Councils to complete for all of the areas that they would like to include in the programme – on the understanding that the funding for which would be their responsibility. The cost / funding model is as follows;

Total fees to visit, assess, publish and promote Access Guides

- **Destination venues** £ 675
(Large tourist attractions, hotels and leisure centres - places you would stay overnight or spend a day)
Example Complex Detailed Access Guide
- **Large venues** £ 295
(Council offices, libraries, children’s centres, parks, restaurants, pubs – places with a varied offer or where you would then)
Example Detailed Access Guide
- **Small venues** £ 85
(Cafes, high street shops, post offices, pharmacies)
Example Summary Access Guide
- Public realm, high streets, key routes £ 985
Example Street Guide

- 1.9 Unfortunately, shortly after the District and Parish Liaison meeting, the Council, along with other organisations entered business continuity mode due to the

Coronavirus outbreak. Subsequently the Council have received no responses from the Parish / Town Councils in relation to this programme.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 Accessibility is of fundamental importance to a growing number of the District's population and, across the UK. Despite this, there is an increasing 'post-code lottery' with regards to accessibility information, with many areas providing almost no detailed information, making them, in effect, 'no-go zones' for people with disabilities.
- 2.2 A recent UK-wide survey highlights the stark contrast between the expectations of people with accessibility requirements and what is provided by the majority of public and private sector organisations. 99% of respondents said it was important to know about accessibility before visiting a new place and 98% searched for accessibility information in advance. The real-life impact of not having access information available was also clear, 75% said they felt nervous or anxious visiting somewhere new and 76% said they had not visited somewhere due to a lack of accessibility information.
- 2.3 The Council's ambition is clear in terms of the visitor economy, the District needs to become a destination in its own right, not simply 'next to' or 'on the way to' somewhere else. A place where the whole family could visit, a place with experiences to suit everyone. It needs to be an 'easier option' when people are in the market for a visit or short break. Being accessible supports this ambition.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 There are no negative equality impacts arising from this report. To the contrary, such an initiative will positively enhance the lives of many people who have some form of disability by improving access information.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 No alternative options have been considered – this is a bespoke product.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

- 5.1.1 The costs associated with the analysis of area and production of access guides is detailed within the body of the report. A final cost to the District Council is yet to be determined and will be considered alongside other priorities post COVID-19

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

- 5.2.1 None arising specifically from this report.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- 5.3.1 None arising specifically from this report.

6 Recommendations

That Cabinet;

- 6.1 Notes the content of this report.
- 6.2 Approves the recommencement of this initiative as part of the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan, with a view to a further report once a final cost position for implementing the scheme is understood.

7 Decision Information

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: BDC: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please indicate which threshold applies</p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No
<p>Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed</p>	Yes
<p>District Wards Affected</p>	All
<p>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</p>	All

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
<p>Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)</p>	
Report Author	Contact Number
Director of Corporate Resources: Lee Hickin	7218

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Report Reference –