

**TO: BRACKNELL FOREST ACCESS GROUP
29 JANUARY 2014**

**Access Improvement Programme Progress Report
Director of Corporate Services**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has a continuing commitment to fund access improvements to its' public buildings through this capital programme. Schools and other educational buildings are not included in this programme and are dealt with separately.
- 1.2 The Councils' performance is measured on the percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people. This report is intended to inform Members of the panel of our progress in this regard.
- 1.3 In addition to the buildings against which that performance indicator is measured, the Council has now chosen to expand the range of buildings to be considered for improvement. These are to include those associated with adult social care services and non-schools buildings associated with childrens' services. Access audit information has already been gathered for these properties and a programme of works is now beginning to be implemented.
- 1.4 Beyond those additional buildings, the Council also intends to undertake access audits of other operational buildings. This will become the first step in extending the benefits of access improvements to all staff and visitors to our properties.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Publically Accessible Buildings List

- 2.1 The list of buildings that were deemed publically accessible was originally created to enable reporting to central government of progress against Best Value Performance Indicator 156. The Council is no longer required to report against that performance indicator but has chosen to maintain the list as a good measure of our own progress.
- 2.2 Recent changes in the Councils' property portfolio have prompted a review of the list of buildings considered publically accessible, which has seen some properties removed and others added. This change to the list means that our outturn as a percentage has reduced from that reported last year but it should be noted that those figures are not directly comparable. A copy of the revised list of buildings is appended to this report, which includes details of those removed and highlights the properties that have been added.

2012-13 Programme

- 2.3 The works to improve Bracknell Library were finally completed in December 2012. Access improvement works were incorporated into a wider internal refurbishment of the building, which has resulted in a much increased publically accessible area across three floors. All floors are now accessible via two lifts and the works also included a range of other improvements such as signage and powered entrance doors.

- 2.4 The works that comprised the rest of this years' programme have met with varying degrees of success. A project to provide accessible w.c. facilities at Crown Wood community centre was completed, whilst a project for improvements at Coopers Hill was begun and then put on hold as it became apparent that discussions were underway regarding the possibility of redeveloping the site.
- 2.5 Other projects in this years' programme included works at Sandhurst Library as part of our publically accessible building obligations and at 76 Binfield Road, Larchwood and Wick Hill Cottage as the first stage of expanding the scope to other properties. Unfortunately, progress on these projects was delayed due to staffing changes within the Construction & Maintenance team. However, that issue has now been resolved and design work has commenced with a view to completing the necessary works by the end of the current financial year.
- 2.6 An additional project to upgrade a number of community centres to assist the hearing impaired was also completed. This followed a survey commissioned by the Badhogs support group.
- 2.7 With the completion of the improvements to Crown Wood community centre and Bracknell Library, our performance indicator outturn now stands at 87.2%. This represents 34 of 39 publically accessible buildings as defined by the recently revised list of buildings described in item 2.2 above.

2013-14 Programme

- 2.7 Of the few remaining publically accessible properties requiring attention, several are the subject of wider development plans that are being considered separately. We've therefore turned our attention to Bracknell Leisure Centre for this year.
- 2.8 The scale of this building was always going to make meeting our obligations a challenge from both practical and financial perspectives. As a consequence of this realisation, we've recently completed a cost analysis of the recommendations contained within the access audit for the site. This has produced estimates of £154k to meet basic compliance standards plus a further £128k for additional works to meet current standards.
- 2.9 Work is now progressing on a specification to match the £100k budget that we currently have, with a view to completing the remainder of the work with funds from budgets in future years. This does mean, however, that we won't be able to record the building as compliant this year and that our outturn will not increase until the works can be completed.

Proposals Beyond 2014

- 2.10 As mentioned in previous reports, we have access audit information that identifies improvement works valued at approximately £830k across our childrens' and adult services buildings. There are, however, many other buildings that have not yet been considered, such as the two car parks that have been added to the revised publically accessible buildings list. Therefore, one of our next tasks will be to commission access audits of those buildings. Taken together with our existing data, we will then be able to assess and report on the full scale of the challenge to make all of our buildings accessible.

- 2.11 Assuming sufficient funding continues to be available; our next priorities for improvements will be to complete the work at Bracknell Leisure Centre so that it can be recorded as compliant. We will then continue to work through the audits of our other properties to address specific issues that will have the most impact, beginning with those buildings that provide front line services for residents in the childrens and adult social services sectors. We will also be reviewing the wider proposals for the handful of remaining publically accessible buildings to ensure that appropriate access improvement works are incorporated.

Background Papers

Publically Accessible Buildings List – November 2013 Revision

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