

**TO: ACCESS ADVISORY PANEL
2 JULY 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 the 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. Performance against this indicator is reported in the Corporate Services Quarterly Service Report. 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 has been previously measured, the Council has chosen to expand the range of buildings to be considered for improvement. These now include those associated with adult social care services and non-school 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 Changes in the Councils' property portfolio prompted a review of the list of buildings considered as being required to be publically accessible, which has seen some properties removed and others added. This change to the list means that our outturn as a percentage is not directly comparable with those reported in previous years. A copy of the current list of publically accessible buildings is appended to this report.

2013-14 Programme

- 2.3 Carried over from the previous year, a number of improvement works have recently been completed at the following adult and childrens' social care properties: the Youth Offending Service at 76 Binfield Road, the childrens' respite centre at Larchwood and the Bracknell Family Centre at Wick Hill Cottage. These works have included improvements to external access with the construction of better ramps and steps and, at Larchwood in particular, improvements to bathroom facilities.

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- 2.4 Work has recently begun on a wide range of improvements to Bracknell Leisure Centre. These works include such things as signage, handrails, toilet and changing facilities and the widening of a large number of internal doors. The wide scope of these works, and the need to avoid compromising the day to day operation of the centre, means that they will not be complete until September 2014.

2014-15 Programme

- 2.5 Whilst the work at Bracknell Leisure Centre is taking a significant proportion of this years' budget, we have been able to introduce a number of other projects into the programme to address some specific issues in other buildings. These include upgrading a wheelchair platform lift at South Hill Park (which is in Council ownership) and installing new, wider, powered opening external doors at Whitegrove Library. We anticipate that both projects will be complete in the next few months.
- 2.6 Whilst not specifically part of this programme, work is currently underway on a refurbishment and expansion of Great Hollands library. This project is due to complete later in July and the opportunity is being taken to address the outstanding access issues in that building as part of that work.
- 2.7 Work is also beginning on looking at improvements to North Ascot Library. However, whilst the building is not large, some of the identified issues are difficult to resolve and we are liaising with our colleagues in the library service to agree a suitable way forward.
- 2.8 When the works at Great Hollands library and Bracknell Leisure Centre are complete, our performance indicator outturn for publically accessible buildings will increase to 91.9%, representing 34 of the 37 buildings on the current list.
- 2.9 The list of publically accessible buildings will be revised again later in the year when a new community centre at The Parks is commissioned. As it is being built to current standards, this building will be designed to be fully accessible.
- 2.10 Having been added to our list of identified publically accessible buildings last year, we have now commissioned access audits of Charles Square and High Street car parks with a view to identifying possible improvements. Both buildings are currently the subject of discussions about general improvements in the context of the Town Centre redevelopment and it is hoped to incorporate any identified access improvement needs into those schemes.

Proposals Beyond 2015

- 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. The works described above at 76 Binfield Road, Larchwood and Wick Hill Cottage represents the first of those improvements and it is our intention to continue to develop future programmes using that data.
- 2.11 Assuming sufficient funding continues to be available; our priority will be 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. We will then continue to work through the audits of our other properties

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Background Papers

Publically Accessible Buildings List – June 2014

Contact for further information

Darren Burgess, Principal Building Surveyor, Property Services, Corporate Services

Tel. 01344 355184

darren.burgess@bracknell-forest.gov.uk