

**Body:** Cabinet

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008

**Subject:** "Access Eastbourne"

**Report Of:** Councillor Andrew Goodwin, Disability Champion

**Ward(s)** All

**Purpose** To inform Cabinet of the decision reached by the Disability Involvement Group and advise them of their preferred choice of delivery in order to promote Eastbourne's accessibility. Also, to request funding is allocated in 2009/10 budget and 2010/11.

**Recommendation:**

- Cabinet accepts the decision of the Disability Involvement Group and agrees with their recommendation to fund a local project.
- Cabinet approves a £23,500 budget to be released for this project with no ongoing financial commitment
- Cabinet agrees the next steps outlined in the report and approved the reporting mechanism recommended.

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## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Cabinet received a report in July providing the background to promoting Eastbourne as an accessible town. In this report Cabinet were advised that two different models were being looked at in more detail, and that a presentation of both had been organised for later in July. The two different models were a) enter into a contract with a national organisation such as DisabledGo, or b) fund a locally based project working in partnership with the local community (the project looked at was 'Accessible City Guide' being delivered by Brighton and Hove's Federation of Disabled People (FED)).
- 1.2 The Disability Involvement Group (DIG) was asked to provide feedback to the Council on their preferred choice by September. However, owing to supplementary questions being asked and other work priorities it was not possible to gather all the information required for the DIG to make an informed choice by September, and therefore the report was delayed to December.

## **2.0 DIG's decision/recommendation**

- 2.1 A special meeting of the DIG took place on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008 to discuss

the content of the July presentations. Also discussed were the responses to the supplementary questions asked of each organisation. Every DIG member in attendance was given the opportunity to have their say and at the end of the discussion a vote was held on which project each member wished to recommend. Those in favour of a local project made up 92% of the vote. Therefore, the DIG recommendation is for a local project.

- 2.2 It should be clarified that although the DIG's membership consists of twenty disabled people, some of whom are independents, the majority represent an organisation or community group. DIG members representing organisations/clubs/groups etc were voting on behalf of their groups. DIG members also suggested that 'extra' access meetings should be held in addition to DIG's scheduled meetings as every member wished to be involved.
- 2.3 DIG members made it clear that they were committed to this initiative; they wanted to help shape the project; they wanted to be involved and continue to have their say. DIG members also thanked the Council for raising it and for the support given to it so far.

### **3.0 Next steps**

- 3.1 The bullet points below are some of the requests put forward by the DIG which will need to be taken forward:
- project to be run by a locally based social enterprise which has links to the disabled community so monies remain in the town
  - Steering Group should be established for project with three representatives from DIG
  - 'Access Guide' should not be lost but enhanced
  - technical access information is important but this should be accompanied by personal reviews i.e. what it is like to stay in a hotel, eat in a restaurant, travel on private and public transport etc as this provides a better idea of what to expect
  - training is essential for any disabled people wishing to take part
  - awareness should be raised around Disability Discrimination Act and the duties surrounding access to goods and services
  - project should not be seen as working against anyone but working with everyone
  - DIG will hold extra 'access' meetings and wish to act as guide/providing feedback to steering group
  - hard copies of audits should be available as well as web based
  - local printers and organisations should be used
  - disabled tourists should be attracted to town so involving Eastbourne Hotels association was considered important
  - don't try too much too soon as capacity must be a consideration
  - assist with consultation events across the town involving a wide range of organisations/sectors
- 3.2 The wish list above shows how important this project is for local disabled people. Their commitment to it and to keeping the project local is overwhelming.

- 3.3 Discussions around the next steps have commenced but it is important to stress that these have only consisted of three meetings. No other work has taken place pending Cabinet's acceptance of the DIG's decision.
- 3.4 Meetings have taken place between Councillor Andrew Goodwin, Disability Champion and the Communication and Participation Manager, with Eastbourne's Association of Voluntary Services and East Sussex Disability Association (both agreeing to be involved) and internal officers who gave advice and guidance on approaching and working with organisations in the town.
- 3.5 Once Cabinet have made a decision, and if this is to accept all recommendations put forward, work will commence in a number of areas. The first being to establish a Steering Group who, in liaison with the DIG, will set the scope of the project, agree a communication strategy and organise consultation events and commence work on a brief for a social enterprise to take on and deliver the project.

#### **4.0 Reporting mechanisms**

- 4.1 Once a social enterprise is in place it will be accountable to the Steering Group. The Steering Group will evaluate the project, monitor its work and use of resources and oversee its general progress. The social enterprise will be required to produce quarterly reports for the Steering Group covering their work etc.
- 4.2 Cabinet will be kept informed by twice yearly updates from the Disability Champion, Councillor Andrew Goodwin. Articles will also be placed in the Members Newsletter by the Communication and Participation Manager.
- 4.3 In line with DIG member wishes the DIG will: receive updates; be able to influence and recommend ways forward for the Steering Group; represent disabled people; source volunteers; assist with consultation events and promotion of the project; provide user views and act as test group for website and printed materials.

#### **5.0 Resource Implications**

##### 5.1 Financial

The financial implications to the Council are £23,500. This figure was explained in detail in the 9<sup>th</sup> July Cabinet report.

##### 5.2 There are three options open to Cabinet:

- a) to fund the project in its first year as a one-off payment
- b) to fund the project over two years in equal amounts of £11,750
- c) fund the project over three years in equal amounts of £7850

All three options would enable a social enterprise to seek additional funding from other sources. Cabinet will need to determine whether to provide

funding in the revenue budgets for the next (up to) three years or allocate the full sum from the Strategic Change Fund.

### 5.3 Staffing

Work to co-ordinate and progress this project throughout 2009/10 is highlighted in Strategy and Democracy's divisional Service and Financial Plan. It will form part of the planned work for the Communication and Participation team next year. However, the work carried out to date and the work required up to year end has been unplanned. The implications are discussed in the Service and Financial Plan for the division.

## 6.0 Other implications – Equality

6.1 The work of the DIG and the Council's involvement with this group is an excellent example of how community engagement can be successful in driving initiatives forward. This particular project supports the Council's disability equality work. It also gives a clear indication of how important the Council sees the involvement of community groups within its decision making process.

## 7.0 Conclusion

7.1 It is evident from the feedback received that the initiative to promote Eastbourne as an accessible town is supported by disabled people. Their desire for, and commitment to this project being locally based has been clearly expressed. Further consultation must now be carried out to raise awareness of the project across a wider audience. It is important that the communication strategy for this project promotes the common themes of: improving the lives of disabled people who live and work in the town; improving information and opportunities for disabled people to visit the town; is not about working against anyone but with everyone; and that improving access for disabled people improves access for all.

**Monica Elsen**  
**Communication and Participation Manager**  
**Background Papers:**

The Background Papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

*9<sup>th</sup> July 8<sup>th</sup> Cabinet Report 'Promoting Eastbourne as an accessible town'  
Disability Equality Scheme  
Disability Equality Duty  
Report to DIG 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008*

To inspect or obtain copies of background papers please refer to the contact officer listed above.