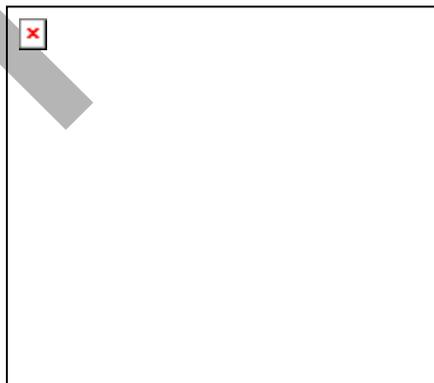
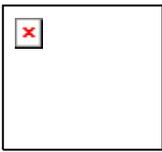


Accessibility Strategy Framework



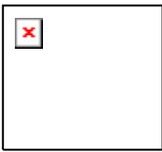
Belper Town Council
in partnership with
Accessible Belper





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Accessibility Strategy Overview

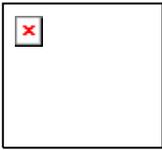
In developing an Accessibility Strategy this framework document aims to ensure that all residents and visitors to the town have the 'ability' to 'access' the numerous benefits, services and attractions that are available to the majority. It is applicable to all residents, shops, businesses and organisations within the parish of Belper and will not be limited to the Town Centre but will include the whole town and the villages of Blackbrook, Farnah Green, Makeney and Milford.

The strategy focuses on just one of the 9 'protected characteristics' identified in the Equality Act 2010 – namely 'Disability', although it would also impact upon a second of these characteristics 'age'. It is designed to help remove barriers for those with 'disabling conditions', a term used throughout the strategy, rather than 'disability', primarily because people who develop conditions due to age will often avoid the word 'disabled'.

Although the other protected characteristics are of high importance the analysis of the Accessibility Working Group is that people with a disabling condition are likely to experience discriminatory treatment not just through the attitudes and actions of other people, but also through the topography, layout and design of the physical environment. As such they are likely to be impacted upon more than people from the other protected groups. Fundamentally this is why the Council believes that a Strategy which supports people with disabling conditions is of vital importance to Belper and its communities.

However, it is also hoped that other local groups and councillors with similar commitment to other areas of inequality will bring these to the fore and develop policies and/or strategies that address these remaining protected characteristics. In that event, the experience gained in this piece of work would be gladly shared to assist in this process.

The strategy document itself has been designed to be a concise and focused document which sets out clear aims and is supported by an action plan which identifies initiatives designed to achieve each aim. Its concise nature aims to remove ambivalence and be easy to read and understand. Along with this framework document it has been developed in partnership between the Council and representatives of Accessible Belper.

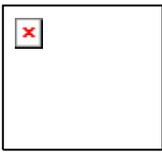


The reasons the Town Council believes the strategy to be so important are as follows:

- It is a basic human right for people of all ages and circumstances to be able to make use of all available facilities, services and public realm environments
- Belper has a strong heritage of innovation and inclusion and the development of the strategy supports this cultural feature of the town
- Increased use of the town's facilities and services by residents and visitors contribute to a thriving social environment, which can be enjoyed by all.
- Overcoming barriers to accessibility also reduces the risk of social isolation and associated mental health difficulties
- There are economic benefits to the town's shops and businesses through increased use by people with disabling conditions. The Purple Tuesday organisation estimates that the consumer spending power of 13.8 million disabled people and their families equates to £249 billion a year and rising at 14% per annum. At a time when the country has been hit hard by the impacts of COVID 19 the Council and its communities have a shared responsibility to help maintain a lively and prosperous town for the benefit of all.

The council is responsible for specific services, buildings and resources and will be able to make direct changes to these, in order to improve accessibility. However, the vast majority are owned and managed by other authorities, organisations and individuals; consequently dedicated partnership working and support will be required to bring about the constant incremental improvement that will positively impact on the lives of people with disabling conditions.

The question '*How can Belper be more accessible?*' needs to be constantly and consistently raised at every opportunity and responses to that question fed back to the Accessibility Working Group for inclusion in updated versions of this document.



SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Working in partnership with Accessible Belper.
- Existing relationships with numerous organisations and businesses.
- Ability to raise and allocate funds for specific projects.
- A strong community identity where people help each other.

WEAKNESSES

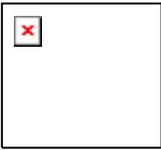
- Limited human and financial resources to deliver the aims and the action plan
- Resources in other areas of Local Government and more widely are also under pressure making engagement and support for delivery of some aspects of the strategy challenging.

OPPORTUNITIES

- To develop the town as a destination of choice for people with disabling conditions because of the facilities, environment and welcome.
- The 'Purple Pound' can provide an additional cash injection to the businesses within the town.
- To develop a team of Accessibility Ambassadors to help develop a mainstream environment of understanding.
- A new officer post has been recruited by Belper Town Council to help support delivery of the strategy and action plan.

THREATS

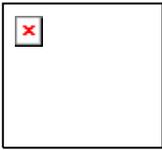
- Continuation of Covid-19 with repeated infection 'spikes' leading to alternative priorities and use of resources.
- Possibility that a subsequent Council could rescind this strategy.
- Once completed the strategy becomes an unused document.



Commitment, Practice and Delivery

During the Full Council meeting in June 2020 the Council agreed to form a Working Group consisting of 3 Town Councillors and 2 members of Accessible Belper. Its terms of reference were to develop the Accessibility Strategy and to oversee its implementation, so that it becomes fully integrated within all of the Council's work and services. It is envisaged the Working Group will continue its work for the foreseeable future but the key ingredients needed for the strategy to be successful include :

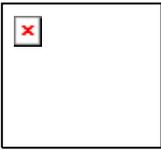
- The strategy will not be seen as an 'add on' or something optional or separate from BTC business. It will be incorporated into the infrastructure of the Council and form part of its everyday business agenda.
- Although there is a designated Working Group, all councillors will be encouraged and where possible, given the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing development so that it is 'owned' by the Council and to work as Accessibility Ambassadors in the town
- Improvements to Transport provision and services, public realm infrastructure (road, pavements, street furniture etc) are high priority items but require successful Partnership Working with Local Government partners at Borough and County Council level.
- A detailed Accessibility Impact Assessment (AIA) tool has been developed and will form a critical part of the strategy. It will be developed further to become a comprehensive toolkit to encourage businesses, community groups and the wider community to promote the needs of people with disabling conditions.
- The Council will need to amend its decision making processes to ensure that decisions made in formal committee and Council take Accessibility issues fully in to account. The process for considering grant applications will equally require a review to make sure that awards are made in the knowledge that the receiving body will ensure that accessibility considerations are taken in to account in any project or enterprise.
- It is critical that those people involved in producing the strategy, those who are involved in implementing it and most importantly the Councillors who vote for and accept its adoption, practice what they preach. Residents, volunteers, and employers will only accept this approach if they witness it being applied by BTC councillors and BTC



employees. With this in mind a link has been added to the Town Council web site, which would provide councillors, staff and the wider public access to online accessibility training provided by Accessible Belper as a starting point.

- The Council will also need to review the way in which it communicates through all forms of media. This will include examining the Council website, social media and printed media to ensure that people with disabling conditions can access the material
- No aspect of disability will be left behind. For example, The Council will raise awareness of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyard scheme amongst BTC members, staff and the wider public. This scheme is an initiative designed to act as a discreet sign that somebody has a hidden disability and may require additional assistance while out in public. Accessible Belper have received feedback that some people did not want to wear a very visible sunflower lanyard but would be more comfortable with the discreet sunflower badge and over 1,500 badges have been purchased and are freely available in a number of Belper shops and Belper Town Council's office at St Johns Chapel.

Finally, Although the strategy is owned by Belper Town Council and has been produced and implemented in order to benefit the town, its residents and visitors, it is also hoped that it would be recognised as a beacon of good practice and used where possible to influence and assist other councils and organisations in the region. This could not be achieved without the leadership and guidance provided by Accessible Belper.



Measuring progress and Funding

MEASURING PROGRESS

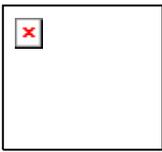
The framework and strategy have been devised with the sole intention of setting in place the structure and resources to improve the Town's cultural approach and environment, specifically in relation to its accessibility.

- It must not be seen as a tick box exercise.
- It must be a living document vital to the needs and aspirations of the Town
- It must be used as the foundation for continuous improvement in the approach to Disability.

To ensure that this is the case the Accessibility Working Group will develop a set of key outcome measures which are capable of being tracked for each of the identified aims in the strategy. It is important to differentiate outcomes from inputs e.g. measure the impact a series of awareness courses has on community groups running events, not how many courses were carried out. Outcome measures can be difficult to develop so it will be important to construct the right measures and have the relevant supporting evidence to aid measurement and evidence progress

Tools already in existence or being considered by the Working Group include

- Two surveys available for both residents / visitors and for organisations / businesses to complete. They are available on-line with access being provided via the Accessible Belper and Town Council websites. In addition, non-technological alternatives are available for those people who would prefer this approach. The results of these surveys can help provide a baseline against which improvement can be measured in the future.
- The forming of a user panel comprised of people with disabling conditions to provide input into the creation of initiatives and to "road test" them as part of the commissioning and delivery process. In that way the Council and Accessible Belper can devise solutions designed for and used by people with Disabling conditions



FUNDING

There are two different areas relating to funding that need to be considered to ensure that maximum progress can be made in improving the accessibility of the town. They can be categorised as:

- Council Funded Projects
- Council Supported Projects

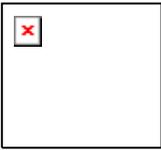
Where Council Funded Projects are concerned the two financial sources that Belper Town Council can access are the 'Precept' as a part of the annual rates payments made by every householder, and making successful grant applications for specific projects.

Work on the precept level to be levied begins in October of the preceding year and projects need to be identified at that stage. It is at this point that Councillors need to scrutinise every new proposal to ensure that they include an element that improves accessibility within the Town or is specifically about improving accessibility.

The Council is committed to increasing the number of grant applications it makes over the coming years wherever possible, and needs to ensure that adequate tools and resources are set aside to ensure that bids experience the best possible chance of being successful.

Currently, Council supported projects include applications from local groups and organisations to the Council for funding, either for a small one off grant, generally up to £1,000 or an annual payment known as an SLA which would generally run for 3 or 4 years before being reconsidered. In both cases a written application is required and the relevant form will be revised to include a section where applicants are asked to describe how the new funds, or a proportion of them would be used to improve accessibility within the organisation. In the case of SLAs, annual reports are also required and the pro-forma for this report will be revised to include a new section asking respondents to identify accessibility improvements made within the past year.

Very often, local groups and organisations who are making bids for grants and financial support from outside bodies need to demonstrate that they have the support of local councils in order to enhance their bid. In future the council's support in these instances would be dependent on the application including elements that demonstrate improvements to the organisation's accessibility.



MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is proposed that the Strategy as a whole will be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and it may be possible to combine this with an event which celebrates the achievements of people with a disabling condition. At the moment due to COVID it will not be possible to do this so the action group will explore other ways of reporting progress to the wider community and celebrating success through the use of videos, press briefings, social media etc.

The Accessibility Working Group will continue to meet and alongside Accessible Belper will oversee the delivery of the action plan. There may be occasions where requests for funding will need to be made to the Council in which case a full report will be provided with some context included on the progress being made in delivering the strategy. Furthermore, if the strategy needs to be amended at any point during the year or an action identified which requires funding, a report will be submitted to the Council for approval.

Members may require more frequent reporting and individual committees have it in their gift to receive regular updates or feedback on specific items during the year.

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