



**Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**Report of: Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: ACCESS ABLE CONTRACT UPDATE**

**1. Recommendation**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the contents of this report and in particular that the Access Able Contract is due to conclude in December 2022;**
- 1.2 Notes the work to be undertaken to investigate alternative options for publicising and advertising the Access Able Service to maximise uptake; and**
- 1.3 Notes that officers will undertake a review of the Access Able Service in order to bring a report to this Committee in Spring 2022 setting out options for continuing with such a scheme from January 2023 onwards.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In July 2017 Income Generation Sub-Committee and Policy & Resources Committee approved funding enabling the Council sign up to what was then known as the Disabled Go service, but now known as 'AccessAble.'
- 2.2 This contract comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and there is no provision to extend. The current contract required a set up budget of £25,000 plus ongoing costs of £6,000 per year.

**3. Information**

- 3.1 AccessAble produces access guides to places for residents and visitors, working with over 100 local authorities across the UK. Founded and developed by disabled people, the organisation views comprehensive accessibility information as key to ensuring that disabled people and their families do not face inequality. The availability of up to date accessibility information will be an important element when completing the Local Government Associations equality self-assessment toolkit.
- 3.2 An Access Guide for venues, shops and businesses lets visitors know what access will be like including the route they will use getting in and what is available inside. AccessAble uses 33 accessibility symbols to provide information about venues, covering key information about level access, ramps, parking, and more.
- 3.3 The Worcester City Guide consists of 170 Detailed Access Guides, 5 Route Guides, 126 Key Access Review Guides, 26 Summary Access Guides, and a specific Shopping

Area Guide to provide information on Worcester Victorian Christmas Fayre. These are published on [www.Accessable.co.uk](http://www.Accessable.co.uk) and the AccessAble App.

- 3.4 **Detailed Access Guides** contain around 1,000 pieces of information and typically they cover large venues like leisure centres or restaurants.
- 3.5 **Key Access Reviews** are purely symbol based and contain no detailed information or photos. These are being phased out by AccessAble.
- 3.6 **Summary Access Guides** replace Key Access Reviews and are a hybrid between the two in terms of information they provide. They have photos and one section containing core information, as well as the symbols.

#### **4. Use of the Services**

- 4.1 During 2021 (Jan to July) the Worcester City Accessibility Guide had 1,950 users and 7,373 page views. This breaks down to a monthly average of 325 users and 1,229 page views.
- 4.2 The top five Access Guides used were:
  - 1. Fairfield Centre
  - 2. Worcester Crematorium
  - 3. Worcester Crowngate Bus Station
  - 4. Warndon Youth and Community Centre
  - 5. Perdiswell Leisure Centre

#### **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 Further review of the current service is required before a recommendation can be made about the future of the service, renewing the contract term, the provider and the budget implications. Usage has been intermittent as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and there has not been a focus on promotion of the service.
- 5.2 There is a need to invest time in promotion and management of the service to allow for a more comprehensive review to be undertaken prior to the end of the contract on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.
- 5.3 Advice from the team at AccessAble indicates that the Council could enhance the usage of the AccessAble service with the following measures:
  - Arrange for AccessAble to demonstrate the service to staff and partners
  - Encourage community groups to access the service
  - Promote the Council's involvement with the service via existing comms links
  - Add an AccessAble link to the business directory on the Visit Worcester website.
- 5.4 The recently launched National Disability Strategy identified several recommendations that should be part of the future review of the service and the potential information that should be provided to the residents who live and visitors who come to the city:
  - make the UK the most accessible tourism destination in Europe
  - introduce a new free arts access card to make it easier for disabled people to enjoy the arts and cultural venues across the UK
  - make mobile applications accessible,

- ensure the safety of disabled people in buildings, for when there are emergencies,
- consider how we can support projects that will increase high street accessibility for disabled people, through the design of any future local growth funding,
- accelerate the roll out of specialist Changing Places toilets across the country
- encourage local authorities to build and refurbish more inclusive playgrounds for disabled children,
- improve the accessibility of buses, bus stations and bus stops
- improve accessibility of taxis and private hire vehicles
- create new accessibility standards for electric vehicle charging points

**Ward(s):** All  
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**Background Papers:** N/A