



Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 21st March 2022

Report of: Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities

Subject: PROPOSED ONE YEAR CONTRACT EXTENSION TO ACCESS-ABLE CONTRACT

1. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the contents of the report, and that the current Access-able Contract is due to expire on 30th November 2022;**
- 1.2 Approves a one-year extension of the Access-able Contract to cover the period 1st December 2022 – 30th November 2023;**
- 1.3 Approves the allocation of £6,000 from the Small Projects Fund, originally utilised to fund this scheme; and**
- 1.4 Notes that a further report will be brought back to this Committee within the next 12 months, outlining options for continuing to procure such a service moving forward.**

2. Background

- 2.1 In July 2017 Income Generation Sub-Committee and Policy & Resources Committee approved funding enabling the Council to sign up to what was then known as the Disabled Go service, but now known as 'AccessAble.'
- 2.2 Worcester City Council's current agreement expires 30th November 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.
- 2.3 The AccessAble website www.AccessAble.co.uk provides Access Guides which describe a journey step by step as you travel into and throughout a venue. Each one is created through an onsite surveyor assessment, using a unique research tool. Hundreds of pieces of information are collected, including measurements and photographs. Access Guides look at 'access' and 'disability' from many different perspectives. Mobility impairment, learning disability, sensory impairment, dementia and mental health. Accessibility information is vital, regardless of a venue's age, because everyone's requirements are unique to them. Information is therefore key to a positive experience.
- 2.4 There are currently more than 300 separate Access Guides published on AccessAble's App and Website including the City's Victorian Fayre. All Guides have been created through an in-person surveyor assessment.

- 2.5 Since the service launched in 2017, AccessAble have contacted all participating venues to collate details of refurbishments or changes in use. This has involved every venue being contacted by phone to talk through their Access Guide. Any structural changes have been reassessed in person by an AccessAble surveyor before the Access Guides have been republished.
- 2.6 Summary Access Guides review
- 49% of venue entries were up-to-date
 - 24% of venue entries confirmed their address
 - 15% of venue entries needed revisiting
 - 12% of venue entries were removed / changed address
- 2.7 Detailed Access Guides review
- 53% of venue entries were up-to-date
 - 3% of venue entries required data changes
 - 26% of venue entries confirmed their address
 - 7% of venue entries were uncontactable
 - 4% of venue entries needed revisiting
 - 7% of venue entries were removed / changed address
- 2.8 The Access Guides were used by 7,092 users in 2021. These users have viewed 26,180 pages relating to the Worcester City Access Guide in the period. AccessAble has seen a significant increase in user rates across its website. The most commonly visited guides are:
- Shopmobility Worcester
 - Crowngate Bus Station
 - Odeon Worcester
 - Sixways Stadium
 - Worcester Crematorium
- 2.9 AccessAble not only works with Worcester City Council, but also the University of Worcester, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust. Our national partners, M&S, Tesco, Odeon, Next, Holland and Barrett and Skipton Building Society. These are all included within the search for Worcester venues and add further value to the City's contract.

3. Preferred Option

- 3.1 Only 4% of Access Guide users find the information through council and partner websites. At present there are limited references to the AccessAble Access Guides available for venues across Worcester, this includes Visit Worcester. There is an opportunity to improve awareness and access to information in an inclusive City-wide offer, utilising the existing AccessAble Access Guides.
- 3.2 Worcester Business Improvement District (BID), the City Council and its partners intend to apply for Purple Flag status later this year. Enabling individuals to plan their visit to the city centre will contribute to the necessary purple flag standards required for managing the evening and night-time economy.
- 3.3 With capital investment looming for our City Centre and Riverside in particular, maintaining the existing contract with the same programme of Access Guides atwoud seem sensible. As and when projects are completed, surveys and guides could then be commissioned for each new venue if the council wished to.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

There is sufficient budget remaining in the reserve (Small Projects Fund) which funded the original procurement to cover the period of extension which will cost £6750.00.

Additional funding will need to be identified for 1st December 2023 onwards should the council wish to continue with such a service.

4.2 Legal and Governance Implications

No legal or governance implications have been identified in this report.

4.3 Risk Implications

No risk implications have been identified in this report.

4.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

Continuing to provide AccessAble guides will support the following themes within the City Plan

- Stronger and connected communities
- A prosperous city
- A healthy and active city
- A heritage city with a 21st Century culture

4.5 Equality Implications

The AccessAble service helps –

Promote the accessibility of places that enhance health and wellbeing so disabled people and carers are confident they can visit.

Support an asset-based approach in social care, focusing on what individuals can do, using the Access Guides to increase independence.

Meet Equality Act obligation to advance equality of opportunity and take a proactive approach to the needs of disabled people, older people and carers.

Monitor accessibility improvement across the City, using the project to raise awareness and encourage change.

4.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no HR implications identified within this report.

4.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no H&S implications identified in this report.

4.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

Inclusively promote individual venues and the wider City to maximise footfall and ensure people are aware of local assets.

Promote the City inclusively to visitors, encouraging them to visit, return and stay longer due to the information available.

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Background Papers: none