



Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 14th November 2022

Report of: Corporate Director - Operations, Homes & Communities

Subject: ACCESSABLE CONTRACT FOR WORCESTER

1. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 1.1 Approves the procurement of a 5-year contract with AccessAble (1st December 2023 – 30th November 2028) to maintain and keep under review the existing 321 Worcester City Access Guides and to develop a further 20, with a total annual contract value of £9,000;**
- 1.2 Approves that £27,000 of funding to be taken from the pandemic reserve for this purpose, covering the core contract period of 1st November 2023 – 30th November 2026; and**
- 1.3 Notes that a further report will be presented to this Committee before the end of the initial three-year contract period, setting out recommendations in respect of contract extension period and how this will be funded.**

2. Background

- 2.1 On 21st March 2022 the Health and Wellbeing Committee approved funding of £6,000 from the Small Projects Fund to continue the AccessAble service through until 30th November 2023. Committee requested a further options report from officers to consider future arrangements.
- 2.2 AccessAble, originally called DisabledGo, was set up in 2000 by Dr Gregory Burke, as a result of his own experiences as a wheelchair user and disabled walker.
- 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 guide is created by a specialist surveyor, using a unique research tool. Hundreds of pieces of information are collected, including measurements and photographs. Access Guides look at a user's journey from many perspectives; mobility impairment, learning difficulties, 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 Further information about AccessAble can be found at <https://www.accessable.co.uk/pages/about> where there is a British Sign Language Video translation https://youtu.be/ZG4yn3ZgO_Y

- 2.5 There are currently 321 separate Access Guides published on AccessAble's App and Website dedicated to Worcester City Council's account including the forthcoming Christmas Victorian Fayre.
- 2.6 All guides have been created through an in-person surveyor assessment. This number does not include the guides for University of Worcester, Worcestershire Acute NHS, Crowngate, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust and AccessAble's national partners like Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Odeon, Next, Holland and Barrett and Skipton Building Society. However, these guides will appear within a search for Worcester City venues and add further value to the council's contract.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 The Access Guides were used by 7,200 unique users in 2021-22. These users have viewed 14,696 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:
- 2.9
- Crowngate Bus Station
 - Sixways Stadium
 - Astwood Cemetery
 - Shopmobility Worcester
 - Perdiswell Leisure Centre
- 2.10 Worcester City Council officers are collaborating with Worcester BID to increase the awareness, use and number of venues with AccessAble guides. There is a shared aspiration to promote how accessible Worcester is for visitors and to encourage people to visit and stay longer in the city centre, from day visits through to evening experiences. The access guides also support our Purple Flag Award achievement.
- 2.11 To achieve this, links and signposting to the AssessAble website will be included on www.worcester.gov.uk, www.visitworcester.co.uk www.worcesterbid.com www.worcestercommunitytrust.org.uk websites and officers are looking at how the council can link within the DSCVR Worcester app ([Discover App – Everything you love. Everywhere.](#)).
- 2.12 AccessAble are designing Worcester specific window stickers with QR codes to go up in city venues. Also, the AccessAble information will be included in welcome packs for new businesses in the Worcester BID area.
- 2.13 AccessAble have various communication packages of which Worcester BID and council officers are reviewing to promote the service. Officers from Worcester BID and council will review surveyed premises twice a year to ensure they reflect the high street and identify priorities for review with AccessAble.
- 2.14 Worcester BID have also set aside a budget to support businesses within their area to be surveyed for an access guide.
- 2022-2023, £2,500
 - 2023-2024, £5,000
 - 2024-2025, £5,000

3. **Preferred Option**

- 3.1 Officers recommend maintaining the existing contract for 3 years to cover the period 1st December 2023 – 30th November 2026, with an option to extend the contract for an additional 2 years.
- 3.2 AccessAble have offered us the following terms:
- 2023-2026 at £6,000 per annum.
 - 2026-2028 at £6,750 per annum
- 3.3 With the Arches Project, Kepax Bridge, Scala Theatre and Angel Place developments, the City Centre and Riverside Park are going to change significantly. Officers recommend the following additional access guides to be surveyed as and when projects are completed to complement the existing offer.

| Estimated Year of survey | Venue / Route description |
|--------------------------|--|
| 2023-24 | Route – High Street to Commandery Car Park via Worcester Cathedral and The Commandery |
| | Route – Crown Gate Bus station to Worcester Museum and Art Gallery. |
| | Route - St Martins Gate Car Park to New Street via 2nd floor foot bridge and ground floor crossing |
| | Route – Bus station to Trinity House |
| | Route – Queen Street to The Cross via St Nicholas Street |
| | Route – Copenhagen Street to TIC High Street |
| 2024-25 | Route - Foregate Street Station to The Hive via The Arches |
| | Route – Foregate Street Station via High Street to TIC |
| | Scala Theatre and Angel Place |
| | Route – Foregate Street Station to Scala Theatre |
| | Cornmarket Toilets – Changing Places facility. |
| | Kepax Bridge |
| | Riverside Park |
| | Comer Gardens Institute – Comer Gardens Community Hall |
| | Museum and Art Gallery Toilets |
| 2025-26 | Route – Shrub Hill Station to Cornmarket via new route |
| | Cromwell Street project building |
| | The Commandery revised visitor route. |
| | Project X – subject to business case |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Shared Prosperity Fund capital projects |
|--|---|

3.4 Based on these surveys and the core contract terms the total cost would be:

- 3-year contract would be £27,000
- 3-years plus 2-year extension £45,000

3.5 It is proposed that a 5-year contract is tendered, with the option of break points beyond the end of year three, so that the councils can review the funding and performance of the contract.

4. **Implications**

4.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

To maintain the existing programme of Access Guides will cost:

- 3 years at £6,000 per annum
- 2 years at £6,775 per annum.

An initial 3-year core contract would therefore cost £18,000.

Additional guides can be added for example a large venue such as a community centre would cost £277 in year 1 with an additional £70 review fee each year after and guidance fee of £75. However, economies of scale will be applied when more than 1 survey is carried out at a time.

| Contract year | Support Contract Costs | Additional guide costs | Review fees | Total |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 2023-24 | £6,000 | £3,000 | £0 | £9,000 |
| 2024-25 | £6,000 | £2,500 | £500 | £9,000 |
| 2025-26 | £6,000 | £2,100 | £900 | £9,000 |
| 3-year contract | | | | £27,000 |
| 2026-27 | £6,750 | £750 | £1,500 | £9,000 |
| 2027-28 | £6,750 | £300 | £1,950 | £9,000 |
| 2-year contract extension period | | | | £18,000 |

It is proposed that the Council enters into an initial 3 year contract (1st December 2023 – 30th November 2026) that would include the additional guides being developed and kept under review as set out in para 3.3 at a total cost of £27,000.

It is proposed that this is funded from the pandemic reserve.

Subject to approval of this report, a further report will be presented to this Committee prior to the end of this contract term that will consider the option of extending the contract and how it might be funded.

4.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Council has demonstrated best value in accordance with the Procurement Code and Guidance and therefore will not tender this opportunity.

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.
- Supports the recent Purple Flag Award.
- Promote the City inclusively to visitors, encouraging them to visit, return and stay longer due to the information available.

Ward(s):

All Wards

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Background Papers:

none