

Access Policy

1. Fundamental Principles

North Wiltshire District Council in accordance with its Corporate Strategy:-

1.1 is committed to equal, independent access for all service users and employees to all of its services and facilities

1.2 is committed to the goal of creating a "barrier-free" environment which is accessible to all

1.3 will seek to ensure its own buildings are fully accessible and will seek to encourage effective solutions to the issue of improving access District-wide.

1.4 will seek to ensure Council information is accessible by provision in alternative formats

1.5 will promote the concept of "good access benefits all" both internally to all Council departments and externally to building professionals, interested groups, public agencies, businesses and the general public

1.6 will ensure that the internal Equality and Diversity group regularly review implementation of this policy and ensure and all Council tax payers, citizens and visitors to North Wiltshire enjoy 'barrier-free' access to services.

1.7 will help establish an external stakeholders group comprising of individuals representing all sectors of the community that will input into this policy implementation, and review progress being made with the strategy and action plan

1.7 will demonstrate commitment to improved levels of access and facilities in all relevant policy considerations, joint working with other agencies and resource allocation

1.8 will seek to promote access improvements in the wider community through its planning and licensing decisions

2. Definition of Access

2.1 access is a human rights issue as Disabled people should be able to use the same facilities as non-Disabled people

2.2 poor access prevents Disabled people from full participation in society and exercising their rights to employment or services

2.3 independent access is the priority aim as opposed to requiring assistance from a member of staff or companion

2.4 the term "fully accessible" refers to the external route to the building (including accessible car parking facilities) and all internal circulation routes plus the provision of specialised equipment where appropriate

2.5 the term "access for all" includes Disabled people as defined by the Disability Equality Act and Guidance Scheme, that is people with mobility impairments, sensory impairments, people with learning difficulties and people who experience emotional/mental distress. Older people and those with prams or pushchairs also benefit from inclusive access.

3. Employment

3.1 the Authority, as a large employer, should aim to set a good example with regard to access and recognise the benefits of an accessible working environment to enable all staff to fulfil their employment potential

4. Local Authority Buildings

4.1 all new buildings constructed by the Authority will be fully accessible

4.2 any adaptations to existing buildings must seek to improve the level of access

4.3 will provide a wheelchair available for use in the Monkton Park Council Offices. 4.4 any buildings purchased/leased by the Authority must be fully accessible or must include the costs of the necessary adaptations within the budgetary provision for occupation. Such adaptations should be undertaken within twelve months of the date of acquisition

4.5 in the case of listed buildings, alternative but effective solutions may be considered to reconcile the issues of accessibility and conservation

4.6 improved access in the built environment will be addressed including highways, traffic and pedestrian issues

5. Access To Information

5.1 The Council will ensure all its customers and staff can access services . and Information about its services.

5.2 all Council information should be offered in alternative media such as large print, audio tape, computer disc and braille. Priority should be given to information regarding citizen rights; information of a personal or confidential

nature or information, with legal consequences

5.3 sign language interpreters, videos with subtitles, advocates, induction loops and minicomms should be available to assist with communication where necessary

5.4 information materials should be non-discriminatory and should present positive language and images in relation to all sectors of the community to promote a welcoming culture and ethos

6. Responsibility

All Members, employees and others acting on behalf of the Council have a responsibility to work within the terms of the Disabled Access Policy. Strategic Business Managers will have responsibility for implementation and review of the Policy as appropriate in relation to their areas of responsibility, including the following issues:-

6.1 promotional work such as the provision of guidance notes for recommended standards of good access, awareness raising seminars, etc

6.2 involvement in the planning process to ensure Part M of the Building Regulations is enforced plus "best practice" issues beyond the scope of this legislation are encouraged

6.3 co ordination of access audits and a programme of improvements which receive resource allocation

6.4 liaison with the internal Equality and Diversity group and effective consultation direct with all the external stakeholders groups that represent disabled people and all other sectors of the community

7. External

7.1 This policy should also be taken into consideration in relation to planning applications, licensing public events, working with housing associations and/or dealing with matters of public transport