

ACCESSIBILITY IN THE CITY

Report of Assistant Director of Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Health and wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at its workshop on 22 June 2021 considered a range of issues relating to health and wellbeing across the city and agreed to look at accessibility as part of the work programme for 21/22.
- 1.2 The report looks to provide Members with an overview of the work that is ongoing across the city in terms of making it more accessible to residents and visitors with a range of mobility issues including the criteria and process in developing accessibility in Sunderland.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 When developing Highways / Traffic Projects officers follow the guidance set out in the Inclusive Mobility report issued by the Government.
- 2.2 The report gives guidance on designing and improving access to public transport.

The main purpose of these inclusive design aims is to provide good access for disabled people. They also aim to meet the needs of many other people, such as:

- people travelling with small children
- people carrying luggage or heavy shopping
- people with temporary mobility problems (for example, a leg in plaster)
- older people

- 2.3 All new projects fully consider accessibility needs throughout the extents and lifetime of the scheme.
- 2.4 The Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation Service have always set aside a budget / programme to quickly assist with small accessibility issues across the city which includes dropped crossings, amending steps to ramps, handrails etc.

3. FURTHER ACCESSIBILITY WORK

- 3.1 Further programmes have been developed to further improve accessibility across the city.

- 3.2 The Access For All programme was set up to target wider areas giving local residents better access to the facilities in their surrounding area, these have included multiple dropped crossings or footway extensions to allow better and easier access to transport links, doctor's surgeries, health centres and shopping areas as examples.
- 3.3 The Routes to School programme was set up to improve walking routes to and from schools. Safety and accessibility is the main aim of this programme in the hope that if routes to school are safer and more accessible this will encourage more parents to bring their children to school on foot or cycle and longer term instil in the children that this is the most appropriate way forward.
- 3.4 Sunderland Council work closely with Nexus and the Bus Operators to improve accessibility to the bus network. This has included the installation of many raised bus stop kerbs and bus stop clearways, both of which allow for buses to pull up at the safest point and allow ease of access for all users.
- 3.5 20mph zones and general speed reduction schemes, whilst not directly thought of as improving access, these schemes should improve road safety making areas feel safer to the public. Hopefully residents will then feel more comfortable in accessing the facilities available to them.

4. MOVING FORWARD

- 4.1 The Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation Service are currently considering and finalising the 2022/2023 works programme.
- 4.2 The programme is developed from requests for service through Members, residents etc and any previously agreed programmes.
- 4.3 Access For All, Routes to School and 20mph zones are due to be continued. These schemes should continue to improve accessibility across wider areas.
- 4.4 The Minor Scheme programme will also continue and will target small quick wins to improve accessibility at individual locations.
- 4.5 All Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation service schemes will continue to take into consideration accessibility issues whilst developing all current, planned, and future schemes.
- 4.6 The Infrastructure, Planning and Transportation Service will continue to engage with Members, the Councils Key Partners / Stakeholders as well as residents when developing schemes. Any accessibility issues raised then being fully considered before a scheme moves forward.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note and comment on the update and information provided.

Contact Officer: Stephen Dixon, Group Engineer, Traffic Projects Team, Infrastructure and Commercial Section.