

Report to HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Council Motion – Not Every Disability is Visible

Chair:

Councillor Shoab Akhtar

Report Author: Mark Hardman, Constitutional Services

16th March 2021

Reason for Decision

A Council Motion 'Not every Disability is Visible' was referred to the Health Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Committee referred recommendations for consideration to the relevant Portfolio Holder and Officer, and this report advises of their considerations.

Recommendations

1. The Health Scrutiny Committee note the report and agree to its submission to Council.

Council Motion – Not Every Disability is Visible

1 Background

1.1 At a meeting held on 9th September 2020 the Council referred the following Motion to ‘Overview and Scrutiny’ –

“This Council notes that:

- The charity Crohn’s and Colitis UK is encouraging venues providing accessible public toilets to install new signage. This is to help stop stigma and discrimination towards people with ‘invisible illnesses’ such as Crohn’s Disease or ulcerative colitis.
- There have been instances nationally where such individual using an accessible toilet have been accused by staff members of being ineligible to use them.
- These signs have two standing figures and a wheelchair user with the words Accessible Toilet and the logo ‘Not every disability is visible’.
- The Government has decided recently that large accessible toilets for severely disabled people – known as Changing Places – will be made compulsory for large new buildings, such as shopping centres, supermarkets, sports and arts venues, in England from 2021.

Council resolves to:

- Ensure that accessible toilets on Council premises bear these signs.
- Ask town and district centre retailers and leisure outlets to do likewise with their accessible public toilets.
- Seek advice from the charity Crohn’s and Colitis UK on the information and training we should provide to Council staff members. This is so they understand these illnesses and to prevent potential embarrassment for those who suffer with them
- Ensure that any Changing Places toilets in our buildings are properly signposted for visitors.
- Ensure that the requirement to provide new Changing Place toilets is included within the Council’s future plans for new public buildings in the borough.”

1.2 The Motion was referred to the Health Scrutiny Committee and considered at the meeting held on 8th December 2020. At that meeting the Committee received a detailed report on the matters raised in the Motion that considered the Crohn’s and Colitis UK ‘Not every Disability is Visible’ campaign and the accessible toilet signage recommended, and also the features of ‘Changing Places’ toilets and a Government announcement that such toilets would be made compulsory both in new public buildings and in those undergoing major refurbishment from 2021. The Committee also received a briefing paper and was addressed by Sarah Hollobone, Campaigns Manager, Crohn’s and Colitis UK.

1.3 The Committee resolved that

1. the issue of signage of accessible toilets as suggested by the Crohn’s and Colitis ‘Not every disability is visible’ campaign be forwarded to the relevant Cabinet Member and Officers to look at and cost up the necessary changes and to report further to this Committee to enable the Committee to prepare a report on this matter;
2. the provision of a Changing Places toilet facility at the Spindles Shopping Centre be referred to the relevant Portfolio Holder and Officers to look at and cost up to consider whether this could be provided, to apply for relevant grants and progress if the funding is forthcoming, and to report back to this Committee.

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- 1.4 The recommendations were referred to the Leader of Council (with regard to Portfolio responsibility for “Corporate property and assets”) and the Deputy Chief Executive in the first instance as the ‘relevant Officer’ in respect of matters relating to the Council estate, regeneration and building control.
- 1.5 The Leader of the Council gave his support to the costing of the proposals. The Director of Economy has provided the following update for report to the Committee –

“The Town Centre and Estates teams have confirmed the following actions in support of the resolutions from Health Scrutiny Committee.

- New corporate signage confirmed in alignment with the “*Not every disability is visible*” documentation (example attached).
- The new signs were costed and installed across corporate estate for all accessible toilets.
- Information has also been shared with TEAM OLDHAM estates colleagues for wider application in all public estate toilet facilities in buildings.
- The list of public toilets and information about accessible toilet facilities has been update on the council website for consistency and public awareness.
- Estates team are aware that any / all refurbishments to buildings need to ensure / include accessible changing facilities. This is embedded into the redevelopment plans for the spindles shopping centre and will be included as a baseline requirement for all corporate projects.”

2 Conclusion

- 2.1 The Committee may consider that, with the update provided by the Director of Economy, the Committee’s consideration of the Motion may be regarded as substantially concluded and the Council should be advised accordingly. The actions undertaken should likewise be advised to Crohn’s and Colitis UK also.

3 Appendices

- 3.1 The example of the new corporate signage confirmed in alignment with the “*Not every disability is visible*” documentation, as referenced in paragraph 1.5 above, is appended.

4 Background Papers

- 4.1 There are no background papers as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to this report.
- 4.2 However, the Committee reports and minutes related to this issue can be accessed as follows
- Health Scrutiny Committee, 8th December 2020 - <https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=457&MId=7992&Ver=4>