

Notes of the 2nd Congleton Equal Access Advisory Group

Congleton Town Hall

Friday 15 March 2024 10am – 11.30am

Present: Deborah Lawson (Chair), Alec Scaresbrook, Tom Stephens, Diane Ritherdon, Denis Murphy, Cllr Kay Wesley, Chair of the Congleton Town Council Community Committee and Jackie MacArthur (CTC officer)

Apologies: Pam Carey, Nichola Brain

1. Deborah welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave quick introductions.
2. Discussed the notes of the previous meeting. Agreed that these notes should be available for the public to read on an Equal Access page on the Town Council website and that the Equal Access Page should be in the Discover Congleton but also accessible from the Health and Wellbeing Working Group page. Noted the group was a Steering/ Advisory group to Congleton Town Council. **Action Jackie to add to the website**
3. A key action from the previous meeting was to conduct a survey to gain further views and opinions from people with disabilities living in Congleton. This will help us to focus our work. Jackie circulated the detailed feedback from the survey along with summary sheets which were used at the meeting.

We talked through the issues, but quickly realized it was too big to tackle in one meeting. Agreed that:

- a) Sample size (120) is still quite small. Agreed to keep the survey open and try and get more responses at the Health and Wellbeing Fayre on the 26 March.
- b) Clarify the best way to refer to dementia in surveys.
- c) There will be a need for a Congleton directory of what is accessible and how to travel around Congleton - all to start compiling information
- d) Alec to do more research about which categories of mobility chairs and scooters are allowed on buses.
- e) Jackie to get the MD of Hollinshead Buses (Local services) to come to a meeting There is a need for better on-line and street information about buses.

- f) Lots of detailed information can already be taken from the survey– Kay and Jackie to go through actions mentioned and code – Green where CTC has powers to do something to resolve, Amber where CTC can lobby others to get something done. Red where changes are out of our control (eg gradient of roads)
- g) Parking – questioned if car parks are meeting the rules for disability parking. And if meeting the minimum if there is an argument that this needs to be changed to meet the demographics of Congleton. Jackie and Kay agreed to carry out an audit of the car parks for disability spaces.
- h) Request to sort out the disabled bay at the back of the Town Hall – make it more obvious. Same with Congleton Park bays by the Pavilion.
- i) Tom to send details of disability-positive websites – they encourage users to add details for their town. Action for all to add knowledge to these sites. Believe that Congleton is not very well covered on these national sites.
- j) Kay talked about Disability Positive Training that is available for businesses - possible area for the group to consider.
- k) Potential for CTC to look for more sites for benches, and request sponsors.
- l) Toilets is an area that Congleton Town Council is looking to improve.
- m) Raise the issue of placing bins back on the pavement with CEC team that manages that household waste collection.

Clear from the initial report back from the survey that there is a lot of detail and ideas. The chair suggested that it would be best to focus each of the next few meetings on one subject and create action plans. All agreed.

Agreed the focus for the next meeting would be making events more disability friendly. The chair asked group members to read through the survey's event section, think of some solutions and share their thoughts at the next meeting.

4. From the first meeting there was a suggestion that Congleton Town Councillors should consider Inclusivity of development as part of considerations when responding to planning applications. A sheet was circulated for comments. Note this is in addition to the legal requirements or CEC already approved policies.
5. There was a request from someone keen to join the group that the meetings start at 11am rather than 10am to make it more manageable. This was approved.

Date suggested: Friday 19th April 11am – 12.30pm