

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Community Committee		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	29 August 2024 7 pm	<b>LOCATION</b>	Congleton Town Hall
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	Dr Deborah Lawson, Cllr Kay Wesley Mayor and Jackie MacArthur – Equal Access Advisory Group		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>8 Progress Report of the Equal Access Advisory Group</b>		
<b>Summary</b>	<p>In October 2023 the Community Committee delegated responsibility to the Health and Wellbeing working group for seven actions relating to understanding, promoting and improving conditions for disabled people in Congleton. An Equal Access Advisory Group was formed made up of Congleton people with a wide range of disabilities. The Chair of the group, disability advocate Dr Deborah Lawson, will present an update on the group's work.</p> <p>A <a href="#">copy of her presentation can be downloaded from this link</a> (takes you to the Town Council's website)</p>		
<b>Background</b>	<p>The group has been developing project plans informed by the findings of an Equal Access in Congleton survey, alongside research, members' expertise, and input from the public and the 40-strong Equal Access Interest Group. The subjects covered include access to the Town Centre, Businesses, Events, Publicity and Education, Transportation and Council actions.</p> <p>The Town Council is already taking action: Introducing a SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) weekly session at the Paddling Pool, working with event organisers to make events more accessible, making our communications more legible, carrying out an audit of the car parks and uploading more relevant information related disabilities both on the Town Council website and other national websites which inform people with a disability about accessible places.</p> <p>According to the 2023 Department of Works and Pension data, 26% of people in the North West have a disability – applying that fact to our population means there would be 7,410 people in Congleton living with a disability.</p> <p>By improving our events, communications, transport options, buildings, and facilities to cater for those with a disability, we can raise standards for the benefit of everyone.</p>		
<b>Next Steps</b>	<p>In order to start delivering change, the group will need to commission work, through the Town Council, that has costs associated with it.</p> <p>Some funding can be made available via the existing Community Development marketing budget, but the group may also need to apply for some match funding or request additional funding from the Council. At budget setting we would like to see a budget created for Accessibility within Community Development in the same way as we have a budget for Green Campaigns.</p>		

	<p>The main aims are to create:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional Campaign for the public - including social media, advertorials, press and high-quality video. £1000</li> <li>• Disability Guide to Congleton - featuring an accessibility map, information on shops, places to eat and drink, toilets and transport options. £1000</li> <li>• Business (Shop/Pub) 'Disability Welcome' Scheme - certificates &amp; stickers. £250</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>The group estimates that £2250 is required to complete the three pieces of work it would like to commission. At least 50% of this can be met from the Community Development Marketing budget. The group will apply for match funding to complete the tasks. It would like the Town Council to consider creating an Accessibility campaign budget in the same way the Council has a Green Campaigns budget for 2025/26. With 16.2% of the population having some form of disability, positive steps that we can take to improve and promote the offer could increase footfall and spending in the town.</p>
<b>Environmental Implications</b>	<p>The group's work focuses on improving the built environment for everyone. Promotional activities will adhere to the town council's usual publicity guidelines, using environmentally responsible paper and inks.</p>
<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	<p>Equality and diversity are at the very heart of this campaign. We want to make Congleton as accessible as possible and communicate the town's offer so that disabled people can plan visits to Congleton with confidence.</p>
<b>Decision Requested</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To confirm support for the Equal Access Group</li> <li>2. Support to the group in implementing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional Campaign for the Public (including social media and high-quality video) £1000</li> <li>• Disability Guide to Congleton £1000 Business (Shop/Pub) 'Disability Welcome' Scheme (certificates &amp; stickers) £250</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Include ongoing accessibility work in the Council's forthcoming Business Plan</li> <li>4. Support expenditure as outlined for the above</li> </ol>