
**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee – 9 November 2016

Subject: Accessibility of Venues

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Growth & Neighbourhoods
Director of Strategic Development

Summary

At the November 2015 Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee Member received a presentation entitled 'Recognising and Celebrating the Diversity of the City'. At that meeting members requested that a further report be brought to that Scrutiny Committee that set out the accessibility of venue across the city, including the HOME venue.

This paper is in response to that request and provides Members with information on activities and work that is being and has been progressed to ensure that our venues and buildings across the city are accessible to all.

Recommendations

That Committee note and comment on progress to date as set out in the report.

Wards Affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a brief summary of work that is being progressed in respect of accessibility to venues throughout the city.
- 1.2 The paper provides an overview of how planning and building control activity provides a regulatory function when progressing requests for planning approval to ensure that schemes have addressed accessibility issues under the statutory regulations. It provides a brief overview of how the Capital Programmes and Estates team ensure that accessibility issues are addressed as part of their schemes.
- 1.3 The report also provides information in specific activity that has been ongoing in the various service areas to ensure that we are keeping accessibility issues at the very front of our thinking when designing and delivering our services.

2.0 What has been done in the service areas:

- 2.1 In the section below there are a number of examples that set out what work has been progressed, is in progressed or planned to ensure that our venues' are accessible to all.
- 2.2 HOME:
 - 2.2.1 HOME opened in Spring 2015 as a purpose-built cultural facility for theatre, film and art. The original building was designed to comply with statutory requirements and national standards and guidance in respect of access, and is fully accessible throughout. HOME does not have its own parking facility but there is free on-street parking for blue badge holders on Whitworth Street West and a 25% discount has been negotiated on disabled parking at Q-Park on First Street, which is immediately adjacent to the building. HOME is also located close to Oxford Road and Deansgate railway stations and the Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink station.
 - 2.2.2 HOME has a broad programme of accessible events taking place each week. These include audio described, caption subtitled and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted theatre shows, as well as audio described and caption subtitled film screenings, and BSL interpreted gallery tours. There are also a series of relaxed events, performances and screenings that are friendlier to people with sensory disorders and learning disabilities such as autism.
 - 2.2.3 There are 18 spaces at the front of Theatre 1 for wheelchairs and work is underway to install removable seats in the first four rows of the theatre so that it can accommodate pre-booked coach parties of wheelchair users. In addition there are three permanent wheelchair spaces in the stalls. Provision for wheelchairs in the theatre is above the statutory requirements.
 - 2.2.4 During 2015/16 the number of audience members identifying themselves at booking as having a minor, moderate or severe disability was 21,264 (9% of

the total audience) against a target of 11,800. HOME's ambition over the next 5 years is to increase the number of users of the access programmes.

- 2.2.5 Feedback from visitors using HOME's access provision include;
- "I use a wheelchair. I love coming to HOME. The cinemas are comfortable and fully accessible. There is a disabled loo. The café is lovely. The staff are always friendly and helpful. I have been on my own and really enjoyed myself – 10 out of 10!"
- "Staff very helpful with mobility problems. Also they were very friendly without being pushy. No artificial "have a good day" stuff; the interactions felt natural and unforced."
- HOME has responded positively to any complaints or suggestions about access since the venue opened. Some of the changes made include changing the position of the BSL interpreter at theatre shows so that they are more clearly visible; improving online booking for wheelchair spaces and reduced tickets; improving the usher alert function for disabled audience members in the cinema screens; and increasing capacity for wheelchairs beyond statutory requirements in Cinema 2.
- 2.2.6 HOME is a member of the Disability Champion Network and the Greater Manchester Cultural Group for Deaf People.

2.3 Leisure Facilities:

- 2.3.1 In line with the existing strategy for sports and leisure, the Council has adopted a commissioning and contracting model which focuses on priding the strategic leadership to our contracted service providers, such as the Eastlands Trust and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL). The key measure of success for the service is to increase participation in sport and physical activity and widen access by under represented groups.
- 2.3.2 GLL currently operate nine community facilities on behalf of the Council and the Eastlands Trust Contract operate seven National / Regional Centres of Excellence. Two leisure facilities are currently directly managed by Manchester City Council (the Active Lifestyles Centre and Debdale Outdoor Centre) and a variety of lease arrangements with third sector organisations are in place, at arms length to the Council, at venues such as FC United, Ameachi Basketball Centre, Platt Lane, Withington Leisure Centre and Broadway Leisure Centre.
- 2.3.3 All eight community swimming pools/ leisure centres have assisted changing facilities with portable hoists, beds, wheelchairs and pool hoists. The three new facilities at Hough End, Beswick and Arcadia have 'changing places' i.e. high quality dedicated changes rooms with hoists. Induction Loops are installed in reception areas and in some instances in meeting rooms, excluding Abraham Moss Leisure Centre and Northcity Family and Fitness Centre. Two of the centres have signage in braille and four have signage appropriate for people living with dementia. All centres also have disabled toilets, lifts and disabled parking. In addition, consideration is now being given to the refurbishment or new build of Abraham Moss and the

refurbishment of Moss Side Leisure Centres. Any schemes that are progressed will ensure that accessibility and 'changing places' principles are included in as part of the project(s).

- 2.3.4 All Council owned health and fitness facilities have Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) Accredited fitness equipment installed, which meets IFI Equipment Design Standards and ensure that the provision is fully inclusive. The equipment enables both disabled and non-disabled people to benefit from a full body, cardiovascular and resistance-based workout.
- 2.3.5 All the National and Regional Centres of Excellence have disabled toilets and showers and have a portable hoist and bed that can be relocated to any of the centres. All these centres have induction loops and signage. In addition, all centre staff have accessed equity training such as; Effective Communication, Mental Health Awareness and Disability Awareness.
- 2.3.6 In addition to the physical provision, there are a significant number of targeted programmes for disabled people delivered in leisure centres, an example of this is the GOGA Inclusive Family session where disabled young people and their families can access sport and swimming sessions together, these sessions take place at Abraham Moss, Belle Vue and Wythenshawe Forum. There are disability sports clubs based in leisure centres a good example of this Mavericks wheelchair basketball club who are based at Belle Vue. Furthermore, Debdale Outdoor Centre has an accessible sailing boat ensuring disabled people can access water based sports.

2.4 Manchester Art Gallery:

- 2.4.1 Manchester Art Gallery is housed in an iconic Grade 1 listed city centre building and showcases the best art and ideas from across the world. The 45,000-strong collection spans six centuries of fine art, design, craft, photography and fashion. Visitor numbers have climbed spectacularly over the last 5 years to over half a million last year - making it one of the most popular galleries in the region. The gallery sits within Libraries, Galleries and Culture as part of the Neighbourhoods Service, in the Growth and Neighbourhoods Directorate and works in partnership with the Whitworth and Manchester Museum (part of the University of Manchester).
- 2.4.2 The gallery aims to be safe, welcoming and accessible to all – regardless of physical, sensory, social, and other access needs. The building is fully accessible, with lift and level access to both entrances and within the building. The exhibitions and events are planned with access issues in mind, and the gallery has developed a programme of engagement in partnership with local disability agencies (including Henshaw's and British sign language experts) to deliver interpretation, talks, tours, and sessions for new and established visitors with disabilities.

2.4.3 This programme includes:

- audio described tours to groups of visually impaired visitors;

- large print interpretation for all the gallery's major exhibitions and displays;
- bi-monthly tours for deaf and hearing impaired local people;
- monthly 'Making Conversations' sessions targeted at both hearing impaired and visually impaired visitors;
- monthly artist-led sessions for adults who have a variety of access needs;
- Subsidised travel for people who cannot travel independently to the gallery and are at risk of social isolation.

2.4.4 The artist-led sessions are experiential and explore the gallery's exhibitions and collections using a variety of creative techniques. These sessions are popular and valued for the level of access they give to the city's art and for the social opportunity they provide.

2.4.5 The gallery works with disability groups to programme activities and events for its Thursday Late programme. For example, a part of the autumn season, the gallery worked with Loud & Proud (a local disabled artists' group) on two Thursday Late takeovers. Disabled artists from Loud & Proud set up a series of pop-up dramatic interventions within the exhibitions and displays, drawing visitors into conversation and challenging the perceptions of disabled people. The sessions gave the artists a voice in the gallery, enabled them to showcase their talents and, drew in new audiences.

2.4.6 The Gallery also works with our Age Friendly Champions, and our fourth Age Friendly takeover in July 2016 - commemorating the Battle of the Somme, and their parents experiences of 1914-18 attracted over 700 visitors, made up of older people and their friends from the city.

2.5 Libraries:

2.5.1 All new and remodelled libraries (e.g. Central Library, Arcadia and Hulme High Street) are built to national guidance and standards on accessibility to ensure our buildings and services are fully accessible to all customers and stakeholders. Existing libraries offer level access and modifications to meet customer needs.

2.5.2 Where required, the Library Service will adjust services to meet the specific needs of particular customers to enable them to use facilities. For example, at Chorlton Library, staff have worked closely with a severely disabled customer to ensure that they are able to access the range of ICT services available. At North City Library, where the library offer has recently been consolidated onto one floor, it was agreed with Manchester College to allow a group of visually impaired customers, who regularly use specific equipment with purpose designed software, to use the same space (now part of the College Library) given the specific needs of a number of members of the group.

3 Disabled Access Day – 10-12 March 2017

- 3.1 Disabled Access Day is sponsored by Euan's Guide; a listing and review site that helps disabled people and their families know which venues are truly accessible. The first Disabled Access Day took place on 17 January 2015 with 261 venues across 11 countries getting involved and promoting accessibility through events and initiatives.
- 3.2 Disabled Access Day was repeated in 2016 and aims to become a recognised event in the annual equalities calendar. The next Disabled Access Day will take place over 10-12 March 2017 with an extended weekend of events and activities meaning more people than ever will be able to get involved. Participating organisations can get involved by submitting information on their planned activities to the Disabled Access Day website.
- 3.3 Manchester has extensive locations, services and attractions that aim to meet the various access requirements of disabled residents and visitors. The Council can provide ongoing support to Disabled Access Day on an annual basis by
- a) showcasing the accessibility of its own offer, and
 - b) influencing its partners to do the same.

Collectively, the Council and its partners will be able to incrementally promote various aspects of Manchester's accessibility offer and build its evidence-base for where improvements can be made.

- 3.4 The Council undertook consultation and engagement with disability groups in Manchester to inform the redevelopment of the public areas of the Town Hall Extension (i.e. the rates hall, the media suite) and Central Library. As a result, the complex hosts a range of accessibility measures that can be promoted through a series of events to coincide with the 2017 Disabled Access Day weekend.
- 3.5 The Equality Team will use its network of contacts across Manchester's public sector to promote Disabled Access Day and encourage others to develop events and initiatives to promote the accessibility of their services. Where possible and appropriate, organisations will be able to signpost to each other's initiatives thereby providing a greater benefit to disabled visitors.

4. How Planning and Building Control ensure that buildings are accessible

- 4.1 The planning process is one of the key mechanisms for delivering the Council's objectives for the built environment in terms of what things look like, how they are used and what they are used for. This is an holistic approach and goes well beyond the aesthetics of a proposal. There is no conflict between good design and how a building or space functions and the planning process aims to create safe, inclusive developments that are a cohesive and sustainable part of the city. This is a thread that runs through local planning policy and clear guidance is available on all of these matters to those wishing to invest in the City. This applies equally to both new developments and

where the use of a building may change or when it is refurbished. This can of course present very different challenges.

- 4.2 Applicants are expected to show how access would be addressed and for the majority of applications there is a requirement to provide a Design and Access Statement to be part of any planning submission. This focuses on all elements of the design and requires developers to set out their approach to access and how any specific issues which might affect access have been addressed.
- 4.3 The Design and Access Statement for HOME clearly set out how the principles of inclusive design had been incorporated and that the Council's Disability and Equality Group had been involved in the evolution of the design along with other stakeholders prior to the submission of the application. The aim was to make the building fully inclusive incorporating best practice guidance, BS Guidance and how it would meet Part M of the Building Regulations.
- 4.4 The statement further detailed how these principles were being incorporated into the design of the building.
- 4.5 Guidance on accessibility is available both nationally and through the Councils Guide to Development which includes principles of good design. The latter was introduced as guidance in 2007 and became an example of best practice integrating environmental, economic and social activities through the pursuit of design principles which aim to create safer and inclusive areas.
- 4.6 The current draft Manchester Residential Quality Guidance document focuses on the need to ensure that new homes can meet the needs of those with disabilities and can be adapted if and when required. These principles apply equally to non-residential development.
- 4.7 Part M of the Building Regulations sets out minimum national standards and provides the baseline for access requirements for development. Working together the Planning team who look at and beyond the building envelope and the Building Control team whose focus is on physical and structural work seek to achieve accessible development.

5. Our approach to managing and maintaining the operational estate to ensure buildings are accessible

- 5.1 The Estates Asset Management programme funds scheme to ensure that we maintain a fit for purpose operational estate. As part of the progression of the Asset Management Programme, Capital Programmes are commission to manage the deliver of works.
- 5.2 When all Corporate Estates schemes are being designed they will consider accessibility issues as part of the overall project/scheme and delivery. All proposal will have to comply with the national standards and guidance for access to buildings.

- 5.3 The recent refurbishment of the Bold Street offices to provide new accommodation for the Safeguarding team (as part of the Wenlock Way decant programme) was undertaken with full consideration being given to the accessibility of the building for staff and visitors/users of that facility. The scheme sought to be compliant with both the building regulations and national standards and guidance for accessibility.