

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 17 JANUARY 2017

ANGUS STREET CHARTER

REPORT BY HEAD OF TECHNICAL AND PROPERTY SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This report notes the Council's position with regard to services provided to the blind and partially sighted in terms of the Street Charter Toolkit.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the committee:

- i) note the content of this report;
- ii) agrees the Council's position with regard to the Street Charter Toolkit as detailed in the **Appendix 1**;
- iii) ensure the principles for New Street Design are incorporated in modifications or re-design exercises; and
- iv) agrees the Council should take advantage of national campaigns to publicise the access issue by using various media available to the Council.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Our communities are prosperous and fair;
- Our communities are learning and supportive;
- Our communities are safe and strong;
- Our communities are caring and healthy;
- Our communities are sustainable

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2014, the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) carried out a survey of over 500 blind and partially sighted people to find out more about the dangers faced by those experiencing sight loss. Nearly everyone who took part reported that in the last three months they had collided with at least one obstacle, and a third of people had suffered an injury from a street obstruction.
- 3.2 RNIB developed principles of a Street Charter and produced guidelines, explaining what a Street Charter can look like, the main problems and possible solutions available, and which laws and policies exist.
- 3.3 The issue was raised at a Pride in Place Member Officer Group meeting by representatives of RNIB Scotland. The institute is keen to engage with Councils regarding the suitability of streets for blind or partially sighted people.

- 3.4 This led to a meeting with representatives of the RNIB and Guide Dogs for the Blind Association where topics for discussion included; the siting of 'A'-boards, litter bins, tree branches, dropped kerbs, parking on pavements, pavement condition and trip hazards, scaffolding and road and utility works.
- 3.5 To see what the issues were and how accessible the streets of Angus are to users with various disabilities it was agreed, and after reference to Guide Dog handlers for a location, to carry out an audit of Arbroath High Street. Representatives of RNIB, Guide Dogs, Elected Members, other disability groups, a mobility scooter user and Roads staff were invited to take part in the audit. A discussion took place afterwards in the local theatre.
- 3.6 The survey noted problems with; parking (on double yellow lines and on footway), 'A'-board siting, street furniture siting regarding access, damaged kerbs, and such like. The survey also indicated a number of maintenance issues which have subsequently been scheduled for repair.
- 3.7 The issue of parking on yellow lines and on pavements at present requires enforcement by the Police. The Council is progressing Decriminalised Parking Enforcement, which will give the Council powers to enforce parking matters. At present parking on pavements is not illegal and the previous private Member's Bill is understood to be being considered in future legislation to be brought before Scottish Parliament to rectify this.
- 3.8 The Council currently has powers to regulate and enforce obstructions, obstructive branches, scaffolding and utilities work.
- 3.9 The street audit did show that in Arbroath High Street there were numerous 'A'- boards and that many had been placed where they may cause difficulty for other users and this could be addressed under the Council's statutory powers, including advice to retailers over positioning of signs.
- 3.10 New Street Design is covered by the government guidelines detailed below. The challenge for Councils is to ensure upgrades and modifications incorporate best practice.
- 3.11 The above was discussed at the Pride in Place Member Officer Group on 10 November 2016 where it was agreed that the Council's position with regard to the Street Charter Toolkit, as detailed in the **Appendix1**, was to be commended and brought before committee. Publicity to emphasise the access needs of all was agreed as crucial.

4. NEW DESIGN

- 4.1 In 2010 the Scottish Government introduced a new planning policy document, 'Designing Streets'. This document sits alongside 'Designing Places', which together sets out the Scottish Government's aspirations for design and the role of the planning system. Together, they are the Scottish Government's two key policy statements on design and place making.
- 4.2 Designing Streets marked a distinct shift, raising the importance of street design issues from the subject of advice to that of policy. In addition, all previous roads guidance and standards documents were superseded by Designing Streets.
- 4.3 Designing Streets puts place and people before the movement of motor vehicles. Therefore, when assessing the design of new developments the needs of pedestrians, particularly those with restricted mobility, is elevated above the needs of the motorist. Various audits can be carried out to ensure that new infrastructure is adequate in this respect, such as; a visual quality audit, a road safety audit, an inclusive access audit and walking and cycling audits.
- 4.4 In response to the requirements of Designing Streets the majority of Scottish Local authorities developed and agreed a national road standards document, the National Roads Development Guide (NRDG). The guide was adopted by Angus Council on 19 August 2014. (Report No. 331/14 refers).

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no new cost implications as a result of this report.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from the equalities perspective. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and available.

7. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Strategic Director – Resources, the Head of Corporate Improvements & Finance, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the local Police Commander of Tayside Division were consulted in the preparation of this report.

NOTE: The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report:

- Report No. 331/14 – Road Design Standards Document – Communities Committee – 19 August 2014

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Appendix 1 – Scotland: Street Charter Toolkit

Scotland: Street Charter Toolkit

The main challenges that blind and partially sighted people face when out and about:

- Inaccessible crossings
- New developments: shared space
- Parking on pavements
- Advertising boards (A-boards)
- Street and cafe furniture
- Wheelie bins and recycling bags
- Overgrown shrubbery and branches.

Inaccessible crossings

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce national guidance when it comes to the use of audible beeps, rotating cones and tactile paving. 	<p>We follow national guidance and have a long term commitment to install crossings with tactile paving as part of an annual programme and during footway re-surfacing schemes. For controlled crossings we install appropriate audible beeps and rotating cones.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly monitor and maintain the accessibility of crossings and look at increasing crossing times, especially in busy areas. 	<p>We maintain our signalised crossings (which combined with traffic control are repaired 98.8% (2016/17) of the time within 48 hours).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that reporting processes for potential new crossing points are accessible for blind and partially sighted people. 	<p>In place, our ACCESSLine and ACCESS offices are currently accessible to all users and will continue to be accessible as part of the Library/ACCESS Office integration in future.</p>

New developments: shared space

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with blind and partially sighted people to assess existing shared spaces on grounds of safety when new shared space schemes are put forward 	<p>There are relatively few existing shared spaces in Angus. An increase in the use of shared space is now filtering through as a result of Designing Streets. Where this takes place we need to pay particular attention to proposals for that space to be 'at level' as this provides no tapping edge for the blind or partially sighted. We are happy to work with the community where safety issues are identified (no history of reports). Scottish Government Planning Policy promotes the use of shared space and the council's roads standards recognise the principle of its use. There has been little take up by developers and the design is not favoured by roads maintenance staff.</p>

Parking on pavements

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavement parking 	<p>We supported the Private Members Bill to ban parking on footways and at dropped crossings, but have no local powers to ban such actions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use existing powers such as Traffic Regulation Orders to introduce bans where practical. • Work with the police to use their existing powers under the Highways Act and other legislation to keep the pavement 	<p>We work with the police on parking issues. The council is pursuing the powers available under Decriminalised Parking Enforcement and this will allow enforcement of existing Traffic Regulations (but not the power to issue tickets for footway parking unless a Traffic Order is in place).</p>

<p>clear of obstructions caused by parked vehicles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the police to engage with blind and partially sighted people and the wider community to improve awareness of the dangers of parking on pavements. 	
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Advertising boards ('A'-boards)

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local blind and partially sighted people to monitor and mitigate the impact of any temporary obstructions that appear on pavements. 	<p>We have looked at licencing 'A' Boards but this was abandoned due to the costly nature of the process. The licencing proposal recognised the use of 'A' boards to help support local retailers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local business owners to make them realise how 'A'-boards cause real difficulties for blind and partially sighted people and to consider alternative forms of advertising. 	<p>We look to ensure a clear width of 1.8m preferably and will speak to businesses about the sensible use of 'A' frames.</p>

Street and cafe furniture

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cafe furniture must be licensed, with care being taken to ensure that the tables and chairs are adequately cordoned off and do not constitute a hazard. Licensing requirements must be enforced. 	<p>In place, we have an annual licencing process, and enforce where necessary.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up accessible ways for blind and partially sighted people to report collisions and injuries they experience. 	<p>In place, our ACCESSLine and ACCESS offices are currently accessible to all users and will continue to be accessible as part of the Library/ACCESS Office integration in future.</p>

Wheelie bins and recycling bags

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All bin crews to be trained in why it is so important to store bins as safely as possible. 	<p>Collection crews are advised through tool-box talks and safe systems of work about the importance of returning bins to the rear of the footpath or other appropriate place following collection; this information is repeated during inclement weather (e.g. icing).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run awareness campaigns to encourage residents to be considerate in how they place their bins. 	<p>In place, we have a leaflet on streetscape issues, in which will be updated in due course. Where bins are permanently left out on footpaths we liaise with householders on an individual basis.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give consideration to the requirements of the Equality Act in relation to their waste collection policies. 	<p>Agreed in March 2014, our waste and recycling bin policy takes cognisance of equalities issues.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When negotiating contracts with waste management companies, build in 'clear highway' policies as part of the contract. 	<p>All collections are in-house thus this does not apply.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where residents can leave bins in an accessible area off pavements and footpaths, this should be required and bin crews should return bins back to this safe place as well. 	<p>We operate a kerbside collection, however if a particular access problem is identified in a specific area we will assess and put appropriate alternative arrangements in place as necessary.</p>

Overgrown shrubbery and branches

Street Charter options	What Angus Council does
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up accessible ways for blind and partially sighted people to report overgrown shrubbery and branches. Act swiftly upon these reports by alerting the residents or taking action if it is a council-owned property. Run awareness campaigns to encourage residents to be considerate in managing their shrubbery and trees. 	<p>In place, our ACCESSLine and ACCESS offices are currently accessible to all users and will continue to be accessible as part of the Library/ACCESS Office integration in future.</p> <p>In place, we deal with overhanging vegetation initially by local roads supervisor contact, and escalate this in accordance with the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 if necessary.</p> <p>In place, we have a leaflet on streetscape issues, in which will be updated in due course.</p>