

14 December 2015**Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND
INCLUSION****ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY (SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS) FOR
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To invite the Committee to comment on the Department's proposed Accessibility Strategy (Support to Schools), attached as **Appendix 1**, and recommend it to Policy Committee for approval at its meeting on 6 January 2016.

Information and Advice

2. The Equality Act 2010 replaced and consolidated the previous discrimination legislation in England and Wales. Under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the Local Authority is required to prepare and implement an Accessibility Strategy for those schools and nurseries for which they are responsible.
3. The Strategy illustrates the methods used by the County Council to increase the extent to which pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are supported to participate in schools' curriculums. This includes the planned improvement of the physical environment of schools; methods by which information is made available to all pupils, including those with SEND; and ways in which assistance and support is provided to schools.
4. The County Council has produced a Strategy in Draft, which is currently available via the Nottinghamshire SEND Local Offer
5. Following the implementation of the Equalities Act, there were changes to the responsibilities of schools and school governing bodies. During the summer of 2011, the County Council provided training aimed at informing schools and governing bodies of their specific roles and responsibilities. Four hot topic sessions were presented, which were open to all governors from all schools and the course was also offered to governing bodies to have the information presented directly at their school. Thirty three schools took advantage of the offer of individual training sessions.
6. Written guidance has also been issued to schools, examples of which are attached: Equality Act 2010 (summary issued to Governors in summer 2011, attached as **Appendix 2**) and Policy Checklist Maintained 2015/16 (updated each year, current copy attached as **Appendix 3**), which reminds governing bodies of the policies that should be

produced for each school and the need to consider equality legislation when changing any policies.

7. The County Council undertakes a number of initiatives aimed at increasing the access of pupils with SEND to the curriculum. One of the most visible of these initiatives relates to the physical adaptation of buildings. This is undertaken through both the provision of individual pupil specific adaptations and by the inclusion of access considerations within routine maintenance projects.
8. Requests for pupil specific adaptations are received from schools and considered by the Disabled Pupils Access Panel, which meets on a monthly basis. The Panel assesses the requests and decides what 'reasonable adjustments' might be made to improve pupils' access to the curriculum. The 'reasonable adjustments' include: specialist ICT Services; Occupational Therapy support; specialist equipment or building adaptations. The building adaptations have included the installation of hygiene suites, ramps, acoustic ceilings, platform lifts, security fencing and calming rooms.
9. During the period April 2014 to March 2015 work was undertaken in 26 (mainly primary) schools around the County to improve physical access/sensory provision. Since April 2015, another 34 projects have commenced.
10. A recent analysis of the secondary schools in the County has indicated that 69% of the schools are substantially or fully wheelchair-accessible. Of the remaining 31%, the majority of the sites have a topography that would make it financially impractical to adapt them so that all areas of the curriculum were wheelchair-accessible.
11. The Accessibility Strategy highlights the partnership between the County Council and schools in maintaining an accessible building stock. The County Council funds any necessary adjustments and schools undertake to maintain the provision and gain the County Council's agreement to make any future alterations to accessible areas.
12. The Strategy has been issued for consultation with the Nottinghamshire Participation Hub. The responses received have indicated that the Strategy clearly identifies the support mechanisms available for pupils with physical disabilities, but that it insufficiently addresses the issues of Sensory Disabilities. This is an area of development that the County Council is currently considering.
13. The maintenance of the current levels of support available to pupils in Nottinghamshire schools would not involve the need for any additional funding. Any possible future developments would, however, necessitate further consideration.

Other Options Considered

14. No alternative options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. The rationale for the recommendation is to ensure that the Local Authority has in place an Accessibility Strategy, which enables it to comply with the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) comments on the proposed Accessibility Strategy (Support to Schools), attached as **Appendix 1**
- 2) recommends the proposed Strategy to Policy Committee for approval at its meeting on 6 January 2016.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 19/11/15)

17. The recommendations in the report fall within the terms of Reference of the Children and Young People's Committee.

Financial Comments (SS 20/11/15)

18. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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