Appendix 1

Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee

Disabled Access to Council Public Buildings Spotlight Review

Report

9 March 2025

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1. Introduction and Terms of Reference

The Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee commissioned a spotlight review of Disabled Access to Council Public Buildings in July 2025 as part of its work programme for 2025/26. This topic was chosen by the Scrutiny Committee due to concerns raised by members of the committee about the challenges faced by disabled residents in accessing council buildings. However, during the scoping session, members and officers agreed to amend the scope. The initial scope proposed was to consider disabled access to council facilities. During this session, it was agreed that this may be too broad, so the focus was narrowed to council building. It was then further refined to council buildings with public access. At this stage, officers highlighted that this issue affects both staff and customers. Members were keen to ensure that staffing and recruitment considerations were included within the review. It was also noted that the review of the Council's existing Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy was still in its early stages and Members agreed that it would be useful to consider how the refreshed Strategy was shaped in relation to the areas outlined above.

1.1 The purpose of this review was to explore how well council buildings supported disabled access and identify further opportunities to enhance inclusion, both in accessing services and in creating equitable working environments. The aims and objectives for the review were to:

1. Assess legal compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant statutory requirements.
2. Accessibility of Council Buildings. Explore the current level of accessibility across council public buildings, including physical, digital, and procedural access.
3. Identify barriers that may hinder access for disabled individuals, whether structural, technological, finance, or policy related.
4. Review recruitment and inclusion policy. Review the effectiveness of existing policies in relation to staff recruitment and disability inclusion.

1.2 To explore accessibility of the recruitment process, inclusive job descriptions and person specifications, interview and assessment accessibility, policies and support for disabled applicants, staff training, and culture

1.3 Review the progress of the Council's existing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy.

1.4 To review the public consultation relating to the EDI Strategy consider how Members can help shape the final, refreshed strategy.

1.5 To consider how the EDI strategy aligns with and supports improved accessibility to council buildings and inclusion for disabled residents and staff.

2. Method of Investigation

2.1 The Spotlight Review Group held a meeting on 13 November 2025 to review the contributions of Services outlined in the review's scope. During the meeting, officers delivered presentations supported by statistics and evidence, outlining their role in advancing and supporting disabled access. These presentations highlighted key initiatives, progress achieved, and challenges encountered. Members of the Review Group engaged

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with the presenters by asking questions, seeking clarification, and exploring opportunities for further improvement.

2.2 The following members of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee formed the Review Group:

- Councillor Anne McCormack (Chair)
- Councillor Jeanette Banks
- Councillor John Hodkinson
- Councillor Allen Makin
- Councillor Damien O'Connor
- Councillor Bisi Osundeko
- Councillor Geoff Pearl
- Rita Chapman – Healthwatch Co-opted member

2.3 The following representatives attended the meeting on behalf of their agencies:
St Helens Council

- Steven Littler - Assistant Director Property and Economy
- Phil Ingham - Employee Experience Manager
- Anthony Rudd – Team Manager Buildings and Facilities
- Ben Murray – Principal Policy Lead
- Anna Davies – Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Officer
- Karl Allender – Scrutiny Support Officer

3. Background

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, local authorities are legally required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled individuals can access public services and facilities. Members had expressed a strong interest in understanding the extent to which council-owned public buildings are accessible to both customers and staff with disabilities.

3.2 Many of the Council's public buildings were constructed at a time when accessibility for people with disabilities was not a central consideration in planning and design. As the number of individuals with disabilities continues to rise, the Council faces considerable challenges in adapting these facilities. Key among these is the feasibility of making structural modifications to existing buildings, particularly in Victorian-era buildings such as the Town Hall and the Gamble building and securing the necessary capital investment to conduct these changes.

3.3 This report outlines key discussions, legislative frameworks, organisational commitments, and practical steps relating to disability inclusion. It highlights barriers to participation, strategies for improvement, and the importance of embedding accessibility across all areas of work.

3.4 There were 40,829 disabled people living in St Helens as of the spotlight review meeting, representing 22% of the Borough's total population. This figure had reduced slightly since 2011, when the proportion was 23.8%. Among disabled residents, 11.3% of the Borough's

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population reported that their disability affects their daily activities “a little,” while 10.8% reported that it affects them “a lot”.

3.5 Based on local estimates, the borough had approximately 6,539 individuals with mobility disabilities, 3,678 with dexterity disabilities, and 4,086 with hearing and visual impairments

4. Findings

4.1 In relation to the Councils workforce demographics, 131 employees had declared a disability, which equated to 4.34% of the total workforce.

This represented an increase from 3.22% in 2018/19, indicating progress in disability disclosure and inclusive employment practices within the Council.

Equality Act 2010: Definition and Application

4.2 The Equality Act 2010 established the legal framework for protecting individuals from discrimination and promoting equality across workplaces, education, and wider society.

4.3 This section outlines the definition of disability under the Act and the implications for accessibility and reasonable adjustments.

Definition of Disability

4.4 Under the Equality Act 2010, disability was defined according to two key criteria:
Substantial impact

4.6 The condition must have had a significant effect on a person’s ability to conduct normal day-to-day activities.
Substantial:

- “Substantial” was interpreted as more than minor or trivial.
- Examples provided included requiring longer to get dressed, having trouble concentrating, or facing mobility challenges.

Long-term nature:

- The impairment must have lasted at least twelve months or be likely to recur.
- Temporary conditions, such as short-term injuries, were excluded.
- Chronic or recurring conditions were included within the definition.

Scope of Disabilities - The Act recognised a wide range of disabilities, including:

- Physical impairments
- Sensory impairments (e.g., vision or hearing loss)
- Mental health conditions
- Neurodivergence (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other cognitive differences)

4.7 In Summary, this broad scope ensured that individuals with diverse needs were protected under the legislation.

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Accessibility Considerations

4.8 It was acknowledged that achieving complete accessibility in all environments was extremely challenging due to the diversity of needs and that what may be accessible for one individual may still present barriers for another.

Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments

4.9 To address these challenges, the Act placed a duty on employers, service providers, and educational institutions to make reasonable adjustments. These adjustments aimed to remove or reduce disadvantage for disabled people. Examples included:

- Provision of assistive technology or adapted equipment,
- Adjustments to working hours or flexible arrangements,
- Information in accessible formats (large print, audio, easy read),
- Modifications to physical spaces (ramps, accessible toilets, signage),

4.10 Officers noted that the principle of “reasonableness” balanced an individual’s needs with the organisation’s practical capacity, while ensuring inclusion wherever possible.

4.11 Discrimination by association was also discussed in detail. Officers outlined that individuals could be subjected to unfair treatment not due to their own disability, but because of their relationship or connection with a disabled person, such as a parent, carer, or partner. It was noted that this type of discrimination could occur across a range of settings, including employment and access to services, where assumptions or negative attitudes towards the disabled person impacted those associated with them. This principle formed a key component of the Equality Act 2010, which provided protection to individuals who were disadvantaged or excluded based on their association with someone who had a protected characteristic.

4.12 Members also considered other key pieces of legislation that collectively provided a strong legal framework for promoting equality, accessibility, and inclusion within local authority services. Taken together, these statutory requirements reinforced the Council’s responsibility to embed inclusive practice across all areas of policy development, planning, and service delivery.

The Council had been recognised as a Disability Confident Leader at Level 3, positioning the Council as a champion of disability inclusion. In addition, the Disability Impact Pledge was outlined, covering all the commitments made to support accessibility and inclusion. Reaffirming the Council’s commitment to improving accessibility, inclusion, and support for disabled people across the borough.

EDI Strategy Refresh

4.13 In relation to the Council’s existing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, the Task Group discussed the Council’s (EDI) framework. The main concern focused on how the framework worked in practice, with emphasis on understanding its real impact on staff and residents rather than viewing it solely as a policy document.

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4.14 The Council had collaborated with partners in the borough to actively identify and remove barriers for under-represented groups. As well as this, advanced equity by recognising and meeting people's diverse needs, practised inclusion in all areas of Council business, and ensuring that the Council's workforce and service providers were equipped to deliver accessible, safe, and inclusive services to the borough's diverse community.

4.15 The Council had also collaborated with partners in the Liverpool City Region (LCR), demonstrating that the positive actions working together had delivered change that had benefited residents across the city region.

4.16 Members queried whether staff audits had been undertaken to capture employee perspectives and identify any support needs. Officers noted that although staff audits were undertaken during the recruitment process, fewer than 35% of employees had provided their (EDI) data. This limited the Council's ability to build a complete picture of workforce demographics and identify any gaps or areas requiring targeted support.

4.17 Officers acknowledged that improved onboarding processes were needed to encourage new starters to provide their EDI information at the point of recruitment. Strengthening this approach would help ensure more accurate and comprehensive data collection, supporting more effective workforce planning and monitoring.

4.18 Members noted that such audits would have offered valuable insight into the workforce experience, enabling the Council to better understand any barriers faced by employees. This information could have supported the effective targeting of resources, training, and wellbeing initiatives, and would have assisted the organisation in ensuring that its internal practices remained inclusive, responsive and aligned with statutory duties.

Digital Exclusion

4.19 The Task Group raised concerns about increasing numbers of council services being delivered online and the issue of digital exclusion of some residents. While making services digital had the potential to improve efficiency and accessibility for technology-enabled residents, it also risked excluding those without internet access, adequate digital skills, or suitable devices. Members also noted that disability can significantly affect a person's ability to engage with digital services. For example, residents with visual impairments may struggle with navigating websites. Individuals with learning disabilities, cognitive impairments or neurodivergent conditions may find complex navigation, dense text, unclear instructions, or time-limited online forms particularly challenging. These barriers can compound existing inequalities and reduce residents' ability to access essential services independently.

4.20 Officers confirmed that these challenges were being addressed through the EDI strategy, which aimed to ensure equitable access to services by identifying barriers, supporting alternative routes to engagement, and promoting inclusive digital practices. This included encouraging the use of accessible design standards, providing alternative communication formats, and ensuring that digital channels did not replace but complemented face-to-face and telephone-based support.

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4.21 The importance of locality planning was highlighted as a key approach to improving access and support at a community level. Members noted that, within the Council, locality plans were developed to reflect the differing needs, priorities, and demographics of neighbourhoods across the borough. This approach enabled services to be shaped around local circumstances, ensuring that support was targeted where it was most needed and that barriers to access were reduced. Locality planning also strengthened partnership collaborating with community organisations, voluntary groups, and local stakeholders, helping to deliver more responsive, inclusive and place-based services.

4.22 A question was raised about whether residents were routinely sent surveys to gather feedback on disability access. Officers explained that this formed part of the wider customer experience workstream, which was focused on understanding how residents interacted with council services and identifying any barriers they faced. Although results of the customer experience survey were not available at the time of the review, as part of this approach, mechanisms were being developed to ensure a consistent feedback loop, enabling residents to share their experiences of accessibility, both positive and negative.

4.23 In addition to formal surveys, further engagement was taken forward through the EDI Strategy, which included targeted consultation with disabled residents, community groups, and representative organisations. This work aimed to ensure that the voices of people with lived experience directly informed service design, policy development, and improvement activity. By strengthening these engagement routes, the Council sought to build a more accurate picture of accessibility challenges across the borough and to ensure that services were inclusive, responsive, and aligned with residents' needs.

4.24 The Task Group discussed whether the Council had secured funding to support the development and progress of digital programmes. This highlighted the practical reality that while strategies and plans are vital, they required sustained investment to be effective. Members emphasised that without adequate funding, ambitions around digital inclusion, locality-based support and disability access risked remaining aspirational rather than achievable. Officers noted that the Council continues to actively seek funding across all relevant areas, including those relating to disability access, to ensure that services can be delivered in an inclusive and accessible way and that progress is not constrained by financial limitations.

4.25 The development of the EDI strategy was centred on the principles of equality of access and equality of opportunity. The Council recognised that these values had to underpin all aspects of service delivery and employment practice. The aim was not only to ensure compliance with legislation but also to embed inclusion into the culture of the organisation. A key ambition was to build stronger links with communities and co-produce the strategy, ensuring that it reflected lived experiences and addressed real needs.

4.26 Officers confirmed that the next steps in developing the strategy were already underway. Engagement with youth groups and disability groups had been prioritised, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by inequality are heard.

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4.27 The research's initial findings were intersectional, acknowledging that individuals could experience overlapping forms of disadvantage based on disability, ethnicity, gender, age, or socio-economic background. Engagement activities were scheduled to continue until December 2025, with several focus groups planned to gather detailed feedback. In February 2026, the Council was due to begin developing the framework and "bones" of the strategy. The final strategy was scheduled for launch in summer 2026.

4.28 During discussions, several important points were raised particularly in relation to the existing approaches and the new EDI Strategy. It was mentioned that emphasising the importance of ensuring that residents voices are genuinely heard was a key difference in the new strategy approach. Officers explained that resident associations would play a role in disseminating information and gathering feedback.

4.29 Healthwatch also acknowledged the importance of involving experts and commended the innovative approach toward the EDI strategy.

4.30 The EDI Strategy development process was designed to be inclusive, collaborative and evidence-based. By engaging widely, consulting with experts and creating structures such as steering groups and staff forum, the Council aimed to produce a strategy that was both ambitious and practical. The timeline reflected the need for thorough consultation and co-production, ensuring that the final strategy launched in 2026 was robust, representative, and capable of driving meaningful change across St Helens.

Recruitment Through a Lens of Inclusivity

4.31 Officers emphasised why disability inclusion mattered to the Council, noting that if it was done well, it would strengthen the local labour market and create new opportunities.

4.32 The Task Group discussed in detail the barriers to inclusion in recruitment, including legacy mindsets and traditional recruitment practices, which were seen as limiting the Council's ability to attract a diverse range of applicants. Members noted that addressing these issues would require cultural change across the organisation, alongside efforts to build staff confidence and capability in adopting more inclusive and modern recruitment approaches. Skill gaps among recruiting managers, particularly in relation to inclusive interviewing and reasonable adjustments, were also identified as contributing factors.

4.33 External barriers were also highlighted. These included digital exclusion, which affected applicants who lacked access to online recruitment platforms or the digital skills needed to navigate them. It was further noted that some residents perceived council roles as being out of reach, either due to a lack of awareness of available opportunities or assumptions about required qualifications and experience. Challenges in attracting and recruiting neurodiverse candidates were also raised, with Members recognising the need for more tailored support, clearer communication, and adjustments throughout the recruitment process to ensure equity of access.

4.34 The Council's commitment went beyond building initiatives. It aimed to open opportunities as widely as possible and encourage responses to employment events. Practical steps included offering alternative assessment methods, such as job walk-arounds or informal

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conversations over coffee, and ensuring that information and questions were shared in advance.

4.35 Technology was seen as an enabler, for those who were not digitally excluded, with tools such as the 'My Jobs' accessibility features, while community engagement and positive action initiatives were also key.

4.36 Officers noted that the Council was fully committed to shifting mindsets through action, technology, and cultural change, and emphasised the importance of removing barriers to achieve inclusion.

4.37 The number of council disabled employees was rising, but less than 35% of employees have provided their EDI data, highlighting the need for improved onboarding processes to gather this information. However, the Council, it was acknowledged, was well on the way to shift this cultural mindset and enabling opportunities for all.

4.38 Reasonable adjustments were also discussed. These included flexible working practices, accessible technology, and adaptations to physical workspaces. Officers noted that adjustments to support neurodiverse employees had become increasingly prominent in recent years, reflecting a growing emphasis on measures such as clearer communication practices, access to low-stimulus or quiet work areas, and the use of assistive software. However, progress in fully embedding these adjustments continued to be limited by existing infrastructure, including older office layouts.

4.39 Since January 2024, 155 reasonable adjustments had been recorded. The introduction of the adjustment passport enabled employees to carry their agreed adjustments throughout their employment journey, ensuring continuity of support. Staff networks played a key role in ensuring that issues and insights reached senior leadership and executive boards, while transparent communication was strengthened through platforms such as Hive.

4.40 The Council was clearly committed to leading on disability inclusion through legislative compliance, proactive pledges and practical measures. While challenges remained, particularly around digital exclusion, recruitment barriers and data collection, progress was evident. Continued action, engagement, and investment would ensure that accessibility and inclusion were embedded across all areas of work.

4.41 The Task Group discussed staff networks, specifically why the disabled staff network was separate from other staff network groups. It was explained that this had been an established approach, like networks created for Asian and ethnic minority staff. Officers highlighted that the Council was now looking to extend networks further, including men's and women's groups, to broaden engagement. This led to a wider discussion on how staff integration could be improved, both to ensure employees felt supported and to encourage those who were reluctant to disclose their needs.

4.42 Furthermore, it was confirmed that the Council had particularly good relationships with trade unions, who were actively involved in policy reviews and staff networks. Their input

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helped to shape both policy and strategy, ensuring that employee perspectives were embedded in decision-making.

Property Services

4.43 The Property Service was an enabling function within the Council. It played a critical role in supporting other services and the wider council operation by ensuring that the physical estate was fit for purpose and aligned with the way services were delivered.

4.44 Officers highlighted that the council estate comprised a wide variety of buildings, each requiring ongoing maintenance and, in some cases, significant refurbishment. Changes to the estate were managed in two main ways: through the maintenance budget overseen by the Property Service, and through capital investment that allowed for wider refurbishment projects. These efforts focused on buildings that were actively in use, ensuring they remained safe, accessible, and compliant.

4.45 Compliance with legislation had been a driving force behind the changes made to council buildings. The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 provided protection for disabled individuals and was a catalyst for public buildings and business premises to be developed to make them more accessible.

4.46 Circa 2000, the Council established a dedicated team, including a specialist surveyor tasked with ensuring compliance with the 1995 Act. This work continued following the Equality Act 2010, which reinforced and expanded accessibility requirements.

4.47 Specific challenges had been identified in relation to St Helens Town Hall and its associated facilities. Recommendations had been made regarding the Town Hall car park, which had posed accessibility issues. The access gate had since been made accessible, and a brand-new access control system was out for tender to address outstanding concerns.

4.48 Members of the public had raised issues about the Council's Contact Centre, while wheelchair users had highlighted the need for car parks to be made safe. These matters formed part of a wider programme of work focused on the Town Hall and the Gamble building.

4.49 Reasonable adjustments were further discussed, with recognition that they covered a wide variety of needs beyond wheelchair access. Officers noted that staff processes were designed to accommodate a range of requirements, including breathing difficulties, with occupational health assessments used to guide adjustments. Emergency action planning for wheelchair users had been implemented, with Evac chairs provided and training delivered. Consideration had also been given to the needs of blind and visually impaired individuals, with further improvements under review.

4.50 Officers provided examples of good practice, including the Ashurst Primary School project, where planning created opportunities to embed accessibility from the outset. However, barriers and challenges remained, particularly in relation to historic public buildings. A piece of work had recently been commissioned to examine how the Town Hall could be

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adapted, alongside a formal report outlining the Council's ambition to transform the Gamble into a Creative and Learning Hub—supporting regeneration, culture and community access—which was presented to Cabinet in November 2025.

4.51 Furthermore, limited resources remained a constraint, but capital funding was being utilised wherever possible to make improvements. The Council recognised that change was constant, particularly as understanding of disabilities evolved, with neurodiversity emerging as a growing area of focus. SEND projects had provided valuable learning opportunities in this regard.

4.52 The Property Service continued to play a vital role in enabling services across St Helens Council. While challenges remained, particularly in relation to historic buildings and limited resources, officers highlighted that the Council was committed to prioritising accessibility, complying with legislation and adapting to the evolving needs of disabled and neurodiverse individuals. Ongoing investment, training and engagement would ensure that the estate remained inclusive and supportive of all residents and employees.

4.53 Officers noted that funding remained a challenge, but accessibility was not compromised. While budgets required adjustments, accessibility was regarded as a priority. Victorian buildings presented difficulties, with lifts that were approaching the end of the useful lifecycle. Fire safety processes were being strengthened, with clear identification of fire wardens and training put in place. Locality hubs had undergone full assessments to ensure they were usable by everyone, supporting positive public relations and reinforcing the Council's commitment to inclusion.

5. Conclusions

Disability Network

5.1 Officers noted that a Disability Network had been convened to ensure that staff with disabilities and where possible input from residents to ensure that Staff and residents had a direct and meaningful voice in shaping the EDI strategy. While comparisons had been made with approaches taken by other local authorities, the Council remained committed to developing a refreshed strategy that was tailored to the specific needs, priorities, and lived experiences of residents in St Helens. The Task Group agreed that the disability network would be paramount in ensuring the strategy is shaped by the lived experiences and priorities of disabled residents.

The Task Group highlighted education as an area where the Council needed to do more, both internally and externally. The Task Group welcomed the introduction of the staff disability network, particularly as it is intended to feed into the wider Equality Group and subsequently to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This will give staff networks the opportunity to influence policy directly. Managers also noted that the induction process should consistently capture information about disabilities to ensure that new employees are supported from the outset. Members would like to receive an update on the networks progress and an outline of any key outcomes.

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Disability Week / Month 2026

5.2 Opportunities to collaborate with the Liverpool City Region (LCR) working group were being explored. Members recognised the value of aligning local activity with wider regional initiatives. Disability Month had also been identified as a potential platform to bring in external perspectives, highlight lived experience, and showcase best practice from across the sector. This was seen as a useful opportunity to strengthen partnership working and raise the profile of the Council's commitment to inclusion.

Recruitment, staff & Careers Awareness

5.3 Members noted that a staff audit would offer valuable insight into the workforce experience, enabling the Council to better understand any barriers faced by employees. This information would support the effective targeting of resources, training, and wellbeing initiatives, and would assist the organisation in ensuring that its internal practices remained inclusive, responsive, and aligned with statutory duties.

5.4 Members and officers discussed several areas for improvement that had been identified. These included plans to upgrade access control systems and replace outdated card-based technology, improving both security and ease of use. The potential introduction of braille signage was under consideration, although it was noted that advances in AI and speech-response technology might offer alternative or complementary solutions. Hearing loops were also being reviewed to enhance accessibility for residents and employees with hearing impairments. In addition, the growing need to better support neurodiverse employees and residents had been acknowledged, with recommendations made for the introduction of neurodiversity training across the Council. Taken together, these developments reflected the Council's ongoing commitment to strengthening accessibility and inclusion and highlight the importance of sustained investment and continuous improvement as services evolve.

5.5 The Task Group agreed that, based on the evidence considered, the Council was clearly committed to leading on disability inclusion through legislative compliance, proactive pledges, and practical measures. While challenges remained, particularly around digital exclusion, recruitment barriers, and data collection progress was evident. Continued action, engagement, and investment will ensure accessibility and inclusion are embedded across all areas of work.

5.6 Members acknowledged that as we look ahead, the Council recognised that more data was becoming available, allowing the Council to learn in greater depth about its employees and their experiences. This insight will be invaluable in shaping future strategies. To ensure progress continued, there will be a regular review of policies and practices, with adjustments made where necessary to reflect evolving needs and expectations. It was suggested that these developments should be tightly bound with the disability network and a EDI strategy steering group or similar board to monitor address matters arising.

Training & Development

5.7 The growing need to support neurodiverse employees and residents had been acknowledged, with recommendations made for neurodiversity training across the Council.

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Integration into refreshed EDI Strategy

5.8 Members acknowledged the research being undertaken to ensure qualitative information was embedded in the updated Strategy and that the use of questionnaires and interviews, noting the importance of ensuring these are backed up with meaningful questions.

5.9 Members were reassured that disability inclusion remained a core strand of the council's EDI work particularly around access. Members suggested a recommendation to maintain oversight of progress by reporting back to the Committee on the implementation of the refreshed EDI Strategy, with particular focus on disability access to council buildings and wider inclusion.

6. Recommendations *(DRAFT)*

6.1 The Task and Finish Group recommend that:

1.Disability Network

Lead: **Employment Experience Manager**

- Recommendation: That the Committee receive feedback and progress updates, as part of the Recommendations Update report from this review by March 2027 on the progress and outcomes from the network. The network has been established to provide ongoing advice and lived-experience input, feeding into the Equality Group and subsequently to SLT.
- Purpose: Ensure staff with disabilities have a voice in shaping council policy and services, including recruitment, and access to council buildings/services.

2. Disability Week / Month 2026

Lead: **Principal Policy Lead / EDI Officer**

- Recommendation: Organise a Public-facing activities during Disability Access Week during 2026.
- Purpose: Highlight barriers faced by disabled people and showcase how the council is addressing them in its buildings and services.

3. Recruitment & Careers Awareness

Lead: **Employment Experience Manager / Principal Policy Lead / EDI Officer**

- Recommendation: Use Disability Awareness Week and the council's Careers Fair focussing on inclusivity to promote variety of Council roles.
- Purpose: Demonstrate the breadth of modern council careers (AI, digital, sustainability, community engagement) and attract diverse talent, including young people. Consider linking - Partner with schools, colleges, and disability employment services to highlight opportunities and improve life chances.

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4. Training & Development

Lead: **Property Services / Training / OD**

- Recommendation: Audit training needs with relevant teams, particularly when adapting council public buildings with disability awareness in mind. Include training with a focus on neurodiversity awareness.
- Purpose: Build staff capability to understand and respond to the needs of neurodiverse colleagues and residents.

Action: Explore the potential of targeted training for managers and colleagues involved in planning and commissioning council estate development.

5. Integration into EDI Strategy

Lead: **Principal Policy Lead / EDI Officer**

- Recommendation: As part of the Recommendations Update Report to be received by March 2027, include a concise update to the Adults Scrutiny Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress made in embedding disability inclusion within the refreshed EDI Strategy.
- Purpose: Ensure disability inclusion remains a core strand of the council's EDI work and that Members maintain oversight of progress.
- Action: Officers to report back to the Committee on the implementation of the refreshed EDI Strategy, with particular focus on disability access to council buildings and wider inclusion.

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