

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 2nd July 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

PORTFOLIO: Resources

SUBJECT: Disabled Go – Accessibility and Equality Services

WARDS: Borough-Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To progress the suspension of contract procurement standing orders 4.1 to 4.2 to enable the Council to enter into a contract with Disabled Go to develop an Access Service in Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That: -

- 2.1 In light of the exceptional circumstances set out below, Procurement Standing Orders 4.1 to 4.2 be waived on this occasion in order to enter into a contract with Disabled Go for the provision of an Access Service in Halton.**
- 2.2 The Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Resources be authorised to negotiate terms and enter into a contract for Access Services in Halton with Disabled Go.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Disabled Go Service is the UK's leading provider of accessibility and equality services. It is unique as it seeks to provide personally assessed, pan disability rather than access information which enables people to make informed, confident choices about the places they like to access. The Service covers all types of venue, regardless of how accessible they are, recognising that people will need to know what is not accessible to them as much as what is. It also appreciates that how accessible somewhere is to someone will be very different depending on their access requirements. The Service seeks to give people the information to make an informed choice, not to make these choices on someone's behalf. There is no other similar provider of the service.

- 3.2 The organisation was set up in 2000 as a result of founder, Gregory Burke's, experiences and frustrations trying to access his local community as a wheelchair user. Disabled Go is an SME and is a not for profit social enterprise.
- 3.3 Disabled Go works with more than 250 public and private sector organisation on its unique Access Guide Service. This includes 90 local authorities, where the project helps achieve objectives across multiple service areas far beyond access and equality.
- 3.4 Disabled Go work with a diverse range of Councils overseeing everything from large cities to rural counties, key tourist destinations and areas of significant economic regeneration.
- 3.5 The information collected by Disabled Go surveyors has been developed in constant consultation with disability organisations to ensure that it meets the needs of people with a wide variety of impairment. The research template is reviewed by 100+ consultation groups a year to ensure it develops and evolves with user requirements. Surveyors use a bespoke online tool which ensures the quality and consistency of data not just across an area but the UK as whole. To date Disabled Go has personally assessed, published and maintained access information to over 125,000 venues.
- 3.6 Disabled Go has worked with many Councils to integrate their accessibility information into area specific websites, information portals and directories. By doing this accessibility is embedded in the offer to residents and visitors rather than being a separate resource enhancing engagement inclusion. Disabled Go has worked with areas which wish to attract an increased number of visitors and improve the information on offer to existing visitors. Disabled Go is committed to engaging and working in partnership with local disability and community organisations. The organisation tailors projects depending on how involved local organisations would like to be.
- 3.7 **Benefits**
- 3.8 The Disabled Go Services strongly links to Equality Act obligations, tackling the barriers faced by disabled people to access their community and promoting equality of opportunity. The project involves disabled people, older people and carers as well as assisting authorities promoting equality across their area. However, the benefits of the project extend beyond this assisting in the delivery of key priorities across Council department and local partners.
- 3.9 The provision of comprehensive access information enables people to confidently access venues and services, building personal resilience and independence. This in turn leads to disabled people accessing and contributing to their communities and being in a position to improve their own health and wellbeing. Disabled Go is working with a range of authorities to integrate accessible information into directories being developed as part of the Care Act and local SEND offer provision to enable both children and adults to face less barriers to fulfil their potential.

- 3.10 Disabled Go is equally working with a wide variety of authorities to enable them to promote equality, social inclusion and access to cultural and leisure opportunities whether that be to a resident or visitor. The Disabled Go Service would add value and enhance existing information and be fully integrated into Halton's current resources.
- 3.11 An Access Guide is just not about enabling people to be part of their community but also ensuring they are able to contribute to it as consumers and employees. With 1 in 4 households having a link to disability and disabled people being accountable for an £200+ billion annual spend in the UK alone promoting accessibility and facilities should be viewed as an essential part of building a vibrant economy and prosperous borough.
- 3.12 From a tourism perspective Disabled Go can assess and publish information to the majority of cultural and leisure venues across the borough. This information can easily be integrated within the Council's website. By integrating this information more thoroughly resources to the borough would immediately be more inclusive and welcoming to individuals with access requirements. This would encourage disabled people and their families to visit attractions in the borough with confidence, being fully informed of facilities and Halton's commitment to inclusion. The Guide can also include information and accessibility of the borough's hotels which would enable disabled people to confidently plan a stay, converting someone's day trip to an overnight or multi night stay. The need and economic benefit of providing this depth of information is increasingly being recognised by private organisations. Disabled Go recently completed a project for Whitbread to profile all 600+ Premier Inn Hotels and these hotels now display a link to their Access Guide.
- 3.13 In developing the Access Service the Council would seek to work with the following local partners initially:
- Clinically Commissioning Group
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Halton Disability Partnership
 - Local SEND
 - Voluntary/Faith/Community sector

4.0 POLICY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Council through its Corporate Plan is committed to promote the equality of opportunity, promoting good relations celebrating and valuing diversity eliminating unlawful discrimination. This includes promoting equality for disabled people and progressively making Council buildings accessible to all and encouraging partner/external organisations to do the same where possible.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council would need to finalise a contract fee with Disabled Go. Based on previous contracts negotiated it is estimated 1,000 buildings can be surveyed for approximately £35,000. Given the size of the borough the Council may consider a smaller number of buildings which would be surveyed. This could be in the region of 500 buildings so the cost would be significantly lower. There would also be a small revenue cost after 3 years to update the Information. Funding for the access survey can be found from the Contingency Budget but the Clinical Commissioning Group have been asked to make a contribution. Liverpool City Council already have an arrangement in place with Disabled Go and other Councils in the city region have expressed an interest in the service so there remains the opportunity to commission the service on a wider city region basis which may reduce costs further.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Service would provide a confidence in access information to enable children and young people to confidently access venues and services, build personal resilience and independence. The integrated accessibility information would feed into the local SEND offer provision.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The Council provides a wider range of sporting and recreational opportunities to residents from participation grass roots level to that of regional and national level to enable individuals to realise their full potential. By improving access information to sports and recreational venues they will encourage greater take up of activities.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Access Service will progressively make Council buildings, partner buildings and private sector buildings accessible to all and in encouraging partner organisations will encourage other partners and private sector operators to do the same where possible.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 None

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The Access Service is consistent with the Council's commitment to promote quality of opportunity valuing diversity and promoting good relations.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None.