

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Access Officer			Paul Hendry - Countryside Manager	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
Proposal:	To cease the Access Officer function.			
Total budget 15/16:	£48,000	Recommended officer saving 16/17:	£48,000 (100%)	
Initial proposed saving 16/17:	£48,000 (100%)	Final recommendation to Executive 16/17:	To proceed with this savings proposal, without any modifications.	
Nos of responses:	21 in total, three from Town / Parish councils, two from WBC, one from Unison and one from West Berkshire Disability Alliance (WBDA), one from the Green Party			
Key issues raised:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The information and advice provided by this post can be provided in other ways, internet, charities, stakeholders and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).• Impact will be minimal as the legislation has been in place for some time and the principles should be well known.• There is currently no organisation with this knowledge who can advise on inclusivity and access for disabled residents, putting them at a disadvantage.• The recent staff survey highlighted that disabled staff or those with mobility issues are at a disadvantage. Removal of this post will only make this worse.• The loss of this expertise and the advice it provides within and outside the Council will have a deleterious impact on disabled services making the situation worse for disabled people in the District. Much of what has been gained over the years will now be lost. There is a concern about impacts on services for disabled children.• Hackney carriage and private hire taxi drivers lack training in access for disabled customers. Mandatory training is required and is due to be carried out. This will no longer happen unless a private training provider can be found.• This post monitors compliance with the 2010 Equality Act, without this scrutiny the risk of challenge increases.• This post provides a link to stakeholders such as the Disability Alliance. This group provides advice to the Council on access matters like Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance and they comment on planning applications both large and small.• Increased cost to WBC seeking this advice from 3rd parties• Developers may save the expense of providing up to date and fit for purpose access and facilities in developments at the expense of the most vulnerable in society.• Those Parishes who responded valued the advice received.			
Equality issues:	The loss of advice will make situation worse for disabled people. WBC may fail to comply with the 2010 Equality Act.			

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Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Remove the post and make use of existing sources of advice such as the CAB, stakeholder groups and other charities. Keep the Council's website up to date with advice on provision of access for the disabled community.	This would require discussion with the CAB. This organisation would not be able to fulfil all functions of this post, i.e. liaison with council services such as Building Control, and consultations on planning applications. Use of the Council's website is certainly part of any package to manage the provision of information on this area of work although the expertise and resource to update the website will be lost.	
	Sign post people to other sources of information and advice like the CAB.	As above	
	Share post with another authority or organisation.	This has been considered previously. Other local authorities in the area have already cut their Access Officer posts and none have expressed an interest in sharing a post.	
	Charge private business for advice received through this post.	This is not considered a viable option. Charging as a source of income for this post has been considered but it would be highly unlikely to be sufficient to cover the costs of the post. Income generation would become the focus of effort and it's likely that some areas of work would suffer as a consequence.	
	This post can't be delivered differently so keep the post in the structure.	The salary saving is a significant saving. The post is not statutory.	
	Make the post part time to reduce the impact on vulnerable groups.	The salary saving is a significant saving. The post is not statutory.	
	The current postholder is not visible enough and their impact is therefore limited. Have a campaign to raise awareness.	Noted, if the post is retained then this will be considered.	
	This Post needs to focus on priority activities, reduce the job description and broaden responsibilities out to other existing officers.	Noted, if the post is retained then this will be considered.	

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Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Cut two additional libraries and use volunteers in libraries.	Library reductions are being considered in addition to this saving.	
	Abandon the councillors' allowance increase and pay for the post that way.	This is a matter for Members to consider.	
	Share post with another authority.	Needs further exploration but worthy of consideration.	
Suggestions for how others may help contribute:	Use of the Citizens Advice Bureau, however see above.		
Officer conclusion as a result of the responses:	The exercise has not highlighted any impacts that are not already anticipated.		
Officer recommendation as a result of responses:	Feedback has not uncovered any further issues which would prevent the council from proceeding with this proposal. It's therefore recommended to implement this proposal with no changes.		

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