



DESUIF

Disability Equality Service User Involvement Forum

**Focus Group Meeting, Friday 5 December 2014,
Council Chamber, Gateshead Civic Centre.
Council Budget Consultation 2015-17**

Those attending:

Darren Ramshaw (DR) – Council Housing, Design + Technical
(Part-am)

Christine Pickersgill (CP) – GAP Manager: Chairing Meeting

Steve Hudson (SH) – GAP Consultancy: Notetaker

Ian Atkinson (IA) – GAP Staff

M A Dunsford (MD) – Service User

Jacqui Morrow (JaM) – Service User

John Morrow (JM) – Service User

John McKenzie (JMc) – Service User

Ros McKenzie (RMc) – Service User

Apologies:

Kevin White – Service User

Yvonne White – Service User

Bill Spratt – Service User

Louise Clough – Service User

Joanne Watson – Service User

1. Reduce specific maintenance that supports flood risk prevention

Issues raised:

Impact if result is higher risk of flooding – concern over: -

- Greater impact on disabled and elderly persons in regard to access to properties, the environment and infrastructure, as well as personal health risks;
- Potential increased impact on pavement and road surfaces, and creation of potholes, impacting on safety of access as a pedestrian or vehicle user;
- Impact of flooding is higher for disabled travellers, getting in and out of vehicles, and WAV (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle) users unable to use vehicles with rear/side access lifting platforms, due to danger of submersion and damage to vehicle and/or wheelchair user;
- Access via drop kerbs become more hazardous when even partially submerged in water;
- Impact of flooding, and any resulting potholes, is higher for all disabled and elderly persons with impaired mobility, including those who are ambulant disabled persons, sensory impaired persons, and wheelchair users;
- Submerged potholes, invisible on approach, have a higher impact on disabled drivers of adapted vehicles, whose control and steering of the vehicle can be seriously hampered by the resulting impact on vehicle.
- Flooding also increases risk to life as well as access for disabled and elderly persons.
- Does not seem a sensible proposal given the experience of recent years and current forecast / expectations in regard to climate change.

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on Disabled and Elderly persons.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

2. Reduce road resurfacing maintenance

Issues raised:

Impact of reduced planned resurfacing maintenance: -

- See above comments at 1;
- Not a welcomed proposal;
- Also impacts on wheelchair users as well as mobility scooter users, who often need to use the road as their pedestrian route due to lack of drop kerbs or obstructions on pavement by bollards, signs, parked vehicles, other users, or narrow paths;
- What monitoring will be used to inform planned maintenance and repairs, such as to inform the proposed Highways Asset Management Plan?

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on Disabled and Elderly persons

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

3. Reduce dedicated advice on archaeology listed building/ conservation, urban design and landscape advice issues

Issues raised:

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 2/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------

- Impact of proposal on disabled people – considered to be minimal.
- Potential mitigation of any impact on disabled people by referral to Access Officer and/or DESUIF for advice.

Conclusion: Minimal impact on Disabled and Elderly persons.

DESUIF supports this proposal.

4. Reduced capacity in support for the Natural Environment

Issues raised:

- Impact of proposal on disabled people – considered to be minimal.
- Ecology can also impact negatively on access for disabled people, e.g. insistence on root preservation of trees or avoidance of other naturalised areas can have adverse implications for pedestrian route gradient or results in route diversions, which impede accessibility.
- Potential mitigation of any impact on disabled people by referral to Access Officer and/or DESUIF for advice.

Conclusion: Minimal impact on Disabled and Elderly persons.

DESUIF supports this proposal.

5. Generation of additional income

Issues raised:

Introduction of wheelie bin charge for new properties: -

- Already appears to be operation for new Persimmon Homes in Birtley;
- No objection to proposed charging for bins, providing bins are adequately marked or coded by Council to deter theft and to ensure return to correct property after emptying;

Increased Charges for Bulky Waste Collection: -

- Higher impact on disabled and elderly persons and those on low income, who will find it harder to pay increased fee;
- High potential for increased fly-tipping, costing more for Council to clear;
- Higher potential for an increase in households storing waste in back gardens/yards, creating adverse impact on neighbourhood as well as potential increased pest control issues;

Conclusions:

Introduction of wheelie bin charge for new properties: DESUIF supports this proposal, but recommends bins are adequately marked or coded by Council to deter theft and to ensure return to correct dwelling.

Increased Charges for Bulky Waste Collection: DESUIF does not support this proposal due to higher potential impact on Disabled and Elderly persons.

6. Installation of bus lane cameras

Issues raised:

- Concern if this impacts on taxi use of bus lanes;
- Concern if this impacts on taxis picking up/dropping off in bus lanes;
- Potential impact on school transport using taxis/private hire, if prohibited from bus lanes;

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 3/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------

- GAP have previously made representations to Council and Licensing several years back, in support of taxis using bus lanes;
- Taxis and Private hire vehicles are often the only means of public transport in many cases for many disabled people, so any prohibition from bus lane use adds time and cost to their journey to work, school, health appointment, leisure activity for health and wellbeing, or retail activity.

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on Disabled persons if this proposal supports the exclusion of Taxis from Bus Lanes.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

7 Reduction in private sector housing support

Issues raised:

- Impact on Falls Prevention Service should be mitigated by referrals to Home Improvements Team OT or Housing Adaptations Team OT (Small Adaptations Budget);
- Likely to be higher impact to those on low income, or living in accommodation unsuited to their needs;

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on Disabled and Elderly persons, and those on low income.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

Areas to consider 2016/17:

Response: Difficult to consider or comment on these subjects without knowing the specific proposals.

Universal Services: Local Economy: Draft Proposals 2015/16

1 Review financial support to NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI)

Issues raised:

- Likely to impact on tourism, culture, and commerce;
- Difficult to identify any specific impact on disabled people.

Conclusion: Minimal or neutral impact on Disabled People.

DESUIF supports this proposal.

2 Stop the Council's contribution to the Quaylink bus service

Issues raised:

- No alternative accessible means of accessing quayside for disabled and elderly persons unable to use stepped routes or who have difficulty with steep inclined routes, other than taxi or private hire vehicle at increased cost, or using a private vehicle;
- No alternative accessible pedestrian route to accessing quayside for disabled and elderly persons unable to use stepped routes or who have difficulty with steep inclined routes;
- Existing Quaylink busses provide very good accessible transport, which may not be replicated by alternative vehicles, including other low-floor buses;

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 4/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------

- Increased potential exclusion from public events, venues and facilities at quayside for disabled and elderly persons;

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on Disabled and Elderly persons. If proposal adopted, existing Quaylink bus operation should be retained for accessible park and ride use, such as for events.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

3 Review of economic and housing growth services

Issues raised:

- Lack of evidence of positive outcomes for disabled people, possibly due to a lack of equality monitoring;
- Lack of evidence to show awareness and understanding of problems for disabled people with regard to employment and housing needs.
- Without evidence of outcomes from previous and current work we are unable to identify whether there would be a definite negative impact on disabled people.

Conclusion: GAP's response to this proposal is **“Neutral” subject to confirmation of outcomes benefiting disabled people, otherwise** our response would be **“Positive” in support of the proposal.**

4 Reduction in capacity to undertake development management, spatial planning, empty property enforcement and trading standards

Issues raised:

Development Management: -

- We understand constraints on officers, but we believe there is not enough weighting given to disability issues such as those issues regularly reported by DESUIF and GAP.
- Some concern over possible impact on availability of pre-application advice, which we believe is important to clients/customers;
- Access Officer and/or DESUIF should be involved in pre-application advice on projects with a high potential of importance to disabled people;

Spatial Planning: -

- There appears to be inadequate weighting given to “inclusive design” currently;

Trading Standards: -

- Potential higher impact on elderly persons, disabled persons, and persons on low income, who appear to be more at risk of fraud, scams, or purchasing counterfeit items;

Empty Properties: -

- We perceive there to be minimal impact on disabled people, as such properties can be less suited to return to use for the needs of such people.

Conclusions:

Development Management and Spatial Planning: In regard to these services we believe there to be inadequate weighting currently given to Disability Issues and Inclusive Design. While some mitigation of any staff reduction in these services may be possible through the involvement of the Access Officer and/or DESUIF, which should be increased in regard to Pre-application Advice and within

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 5/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------

Spatial Planning projects more generally, any reduction in staffing may result in less time for such engagement as well as impacting on the current systems for consultation. **DESUIF does not support this proposal.**

Trading Standards: In regard to this service we believe any reduction here will have a greater potential impact on elderly persons, disabled persons, and persons on low income. **DESUIF does not support this proposal.**

Empty Properties: In regard to this service we believe there to be minimal impact on disabled people. **DESUIF supports this proposal.**

Universal Services: Communities, Culture and Leisure: Draft Proposals 2015/16

The following responses reflect issues and where relevant concerns relative to the Environment and provision of buildings or facilities for which the Council has responsibility.

GAP to separately consult their members and prepare a GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

Action: GAP

1 Review Neighbourhood Management and Volunteers and Voluntary Sector support

Issues raised:

- Loss of support to volunteers and / or loss of resources to build capacity could result in loss of some community centres and libraries, with resulting impact on the neighbourhood environment and access to facilities and services, which the Council have responsibility to provide;
- Impact of closure may be increased travelling and costs to access services, or exclusion from access to services.

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on disabled people, elderly people, and persons on low income.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

2 Reduction in the overall Leisure provision:

Issues raised:

- Reduction in available times for leisure facilities and activities, or loss of facilities through closure, will likely have a higher impact on those persons who are already prone to health inequality, and those who already have difficulty accessing such services, including disabled and elderly persons.

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on disabled people, elderly people, and persons on low income.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

3 Reduce services provided by Sport Physical Activity and Health team

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 6/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

4 Reduce funding to community centres in 2015/16 and cease all financial support to community centres after 2016/17

- See notes and comment at 1 (Review Neighbourhood Management and Volunteers and Voluntary Sector support) above.
- Removal of funding support too early could result in closures with resulting loss of services and facilities, with resulting impact on the neighbourhood environment.

Conclusion: Higher potential impact on disabled people, elderly people, and persons on low income.

DESUIF does not support this proposal.

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10: Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

Areas to consider 2015/16 and 2016/17: Review Library Service:

- See notes and comment at 1 (Review Neighbourhood Management and Volunteers and Voluntary Sector support) above.
- Retention of library services as currently proposed appears to be at risk, if other proposed cuts in funding are approved that are likely to impact on sustainability of volunteering and community facilities.

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

Areas to consider 2016/17:

Response: Difficult to consider or comment further on these subjects without knowing the specific proposals.

Universal Services: Public Health:

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

Targeted Services: Children and Young People's Services, and Adult Services:

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues.

Internal changes which could generate efficiencies and savings: Draft Proposals 2015/16:

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues for GAP response to:

- o **Organisation Structure**
- o **Reviewing the Council's funding, financing and strategic investment.**

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 7/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------

Reviewing of working practices and supplies, including: -

Reduction in cleaning of Council buildings

Issues raised:

- GAP is concerned for the potential impact on cleaning and hygiene of toilet and changing facilities, which can have a serious impact on the health and wellbeing of disabled and vulnerable individuals.

Conclusion:

GAP supports this proposal providing that the cleaning and hygiene regimes of toilets, showering/bathing, and changing facilities are appropriately maintained for the protection of staff, volunteers and service users.

Charge for collection of green waste

This proposal is already being implemented as identified in the Council's report.

Issues raised:

- GAP has previously expressed concerns around the potential impact of this change in service delivery and any resulting negative environmental or health impact, including: -
- Increased potential for fly tipping;
- Higher impact on low income households, which may also including vulnerable individuals;
- Higher impact on disabled people who are likely to be less able to access alternative services, i.e. unable to take waste to an authorised / approved location;
- Increased potential for this waste to be left in people's gardens, creating an environmental risk or anti-social impact.

Conclusion:

Higher potential for a negative impact on disabled and vulnerable people and those on low income.

Higher potential for a negative impact on disabled and vulnerable people and those on low income. **DESUIF is against this action without appropriate mitigation, such as including: -**

- i. Providing large community skips for Green Waste;
- ii. Not charging people on benefits for collection of Green Waste, e.g. those persons on Housing Support Benefit.

Refer also to separate GAP Report on provision of services relative to Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, and Disability Issues for GAP response to:

- **Review the way we access specialist advice – public health**
- **Delivering the Meals and Shopping service**

Steve Hudson, Design, Access and Disability Equality Consultant

Technical Group Consultant to Gateshead's [DESUIF](#)

Gateshead Access Panel, Registered Charity 1063858

Telephone: 0191 443 0058 Fax: 0191 487 7298 Direct Line: 0191 416 6560

Email: accessconsultant@btinternet.com Web: www.access-gateshead.org.uk

Ref: DESUIF Focus Group Notes: Council Budget Consultation 2015/16	File No: GAPCon-DESUIF-SH051214	Date: 29-12-2014	Page 8/8
---	------------------------------------	---------------------	-------------