

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 22 JUNE 2010

SUBJECT: DUFFTOWN LIBRARY: DISABLED ACCESS

BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 Committee is asked to consider the proposals in respect of the provision of Disabled Access at Dufftown Library.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section A (7) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the monitoring of progress of projects within the Council's capital plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Committee approves the provision of a disabled ramp at Dufftown Library at an estimated cost of £10,000 and notes that this should be able to be met from the approved budget for the Libraries Integration Programme.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In reply to a written question by Councillor Paul at the meeting of this committee held on 25 May 2010, officers indicated that they would make every effort to ensure a report would be made available to this meeting identifying how disabled access might be achieved at the library at Dufftown and the financial implications thereof.

3.2 At the time of the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) Audit in 2004 it was identified that a permanent external ramp could not be provided at Dufftown Library as the Roads Department had a policy that "no ramps are built into the public footway". It was however indicated that "it might be possible to raise the height of the footway".

3.3 As part of the Libraries Integration programme it was agreed that the Dufftown Rent Office and Library be upgraded to provide a modern library, learning centre and community resource provision. In the finalising of the drawings and proposals for this provision it was identified that the aspiration to accommodate a disabled ramp within the footprint of the building was not feasible. Within the upgraded premises a power assisted door has been provided.

3.4 Helpful discussions between the local members and the Roads Department have allowed the Roads Department to consider possible options, particularly given that the pavement outside the library was widened subsequent to 2004. While the 2004 proposition that it might be possible to raise the height of the

footway to that of the library entrance is not technically feasible the roads engineers have indicated that because of the increased width of the pavement it is now acceptable to provide a disabled ramp, the estimated cost being approximately £10,000.

- 3.5 An alternative provision would be to have a fold away ramp, brought out on request by the member of staff and removed immediately after use. Such a provision however does not address access outwith library opening hours for learning courses, community use etc and raises concerns of health and safety. It would however be an acceptable interim measure until a permanent ramp is provided. Such a foldaway ramp should be able to be sourced on loan at no cost.
- 3.6 Most recent estimates of expenditure on the Libraries Integration Programme as outlined in **Appendix 1** would appear to indicate a possible underspend of c.£12,000 but there may be other costs for eg removal, additional essential small works eg external signs that require to be taken into account. Hence the cost of the proposed ramp at c.£10,000 might not be met by the capital remaining. It is most likely however that any “overspend” on the amount available would be of a modest amount.
- 3.7 Given that the provision of a disabled ramp to Dufftown Library is feasible and apparently within available financial resources Members may consider that to meet DDA requirements such provision is now essential.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

Completion of the Libraries Integration Programme is a priority within the Education Services Service Improvement Plan and supports key priorities within the SOA in respect of local priorities 3, 5, 6 and 11.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has a statutory duty to provide “adequate” library services. The proposed provision ensures the Council meets its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act .

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

i. Financial

The financial implications of the proposed £10,000 expenditure are set out in **Appendix 1** of the report. It is anticipated that the costs should be able to be met from the approved capital budget for the Libraries Integration Programme and that the works would be completed as a priority within the current financial year.

ii. Risks

Should this provision not be made the Council would likely to be under challenge in respect of DDA obligations.

iii. Staffing

There are no staffing implications.

iv. Property

The provision of a disabled ramp would enhance the potential usage of the premises.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have been carried out in respect of the technical aspects of the report with the Senior Engineer, Traffic.

The Senior Management Team of Educational Services has been consulted and supports the recommendation.

The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in respect of the financial implications and would confirm these as appropriate, based on current information.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 That the Committee approves the recommendations in respect of provision of a disabled ramp at Dufftown Library from within existing resources.

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Background Papers:

Ref: