

Local Members Interest
N/A

Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Monday 28 February 2022

Accessibility Strategy

Recommendation

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Considers the Accessibility Strategy and supports its approval for sign off and adoption by Staffordshire County Council and schools.

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Equality Act (2010) states local authorities must, in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body, prepare an Accessibility Strategy.
2. A revised version of the current Accessibility Strategy has been developed for Staffordshire County Council (SCC) to ensure the Strategy reflects current legislation and local practice.
3. It is requested that the Accessibility Strategy is considered and supported for adoption by Staffordshire County Council and across Staffordshire schools.

Report

Background

4. The Equality Act (2010) states local authorities must, in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body, prepare an Accessibility Strategy.
5. An Accessibility Strategy should:
 - a. Increase the extent to which children and young people with disabilities can participate in the schools' curriculums.
 - b. Improve the physical environment of schools and increasing the extent to which children and young people with disabilities can take

advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools.

- c. Improve the delivery of information to children and young people with disabilities and their parents/carers.

Link to Strategic Plan

6. Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential (Strategic Plan 2022-2026).

Development of the Accessibility Strategy

7. A working group was formed to develop Staffordshire County Council's (SCC) Accessibility Strategy. The strategy was drafted considering the legislative requirements, good practice from other authorities, current practice and key areas for development within Staffordshire and feedback from a consultation. The revised Accessibility Strategy sets out the approach SCC will take to increase and improve access to education for children and young people with disabilities, so that they can benefit from educational provision to the same extent all children can.
8. An initial draft strategy was developed, input on this invited from a group of experts in this field and parents and carers. Comments received were used to develop an updated draft version.

Consultation

9. A consultation on the draft strategy was completed. This included an opportunity for people to complete a short online survey. In addition to the survey, other stakeholders were invited to comment on the draft strategy including local authority officers, partner agencies, schools, SENCos, parents and carers.
10. The consultation ran from 17 Dec 2020- 19 Feb 2021 with 42 responses received. The majority of feedback received (over 80%) was in support of the content of the Strategy for both schools and the local authority; stating it focused on the right priorities (81%). All feedback was considered and used to inform the final version.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Staffordshire Accessibility Strategy 2021 – 2024

Appendix 2 – Summary of Consultation Feedback

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