

## **Committee: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 30 April 2019**

Agenda item: Do not complete

Wards: All

### **Subject: Accessibility at local stations**

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead members: Cllr Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport)

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. Council resolved at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel look at undertaking a report as part of its work programme that;
- 1.2. Highlights key accessibility issues at local stations
- 1.3. Outlines positive actions that Merton could take to help to improve access.
- 1.4. The purpose of this report is to give Members further information on this topic.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. The definition of accessibility is the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible.
- 2.2. The current public transport system can present a range of barriers to its use by disabled and older people. These barriers include the need to frequently plan journeys across a complex network in a high level of detail and in advance, inconsistent levels of staff availability and assistance, and the physical accessibility of stations and interchanges.
- 2.3. Key accessibility issues include:
  - Step free access to stations
  - Facilities available (accessible toilets, seating, induction loop)
  - The environment outside the station (signage and way finding, taxi drop off points, drop crossovers)
  - Nearby bus stop facilities (are they fully accessible, do they have seating, shelter)

- 2.4. Addressing these barriers, to create a more accessible and inclusive public transport system, will enable new trips to be made by disabled and older people, as well as making their current trips easier and quicker.
- 2.5. Merton's Transport Network includes 10 mainline rail stations served by Thameslink, South Western Railway and Southern Rail services. There are also 8 tram stops, 5 tube stations that run along the Northern London Underground line and a network of 28 bus routes. Wimbledon Station serves as a sub-regional transport hub and is served by National Rail train services (South Western mainline), London Underground (District Line), London Trams and bus services. The suburban station at Mitcham Eastfields puts the east of the borough within 25 minutes of central London (Victoria and Blackfriars).
- 2.6. Figures from the 2018 Merton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:
- In 2018, Merton had an estimated resident population of 209,400.
  - In terms of Merton residents living with a disability, an estimated 10.8% of people in Merton were diagnosed with a long-term illness, disability or medical condition in 2015.
  - 13.5% of Merton 16-64 year olds were recorded as Equalities Act core disabled or work limiting disabled.
  - 10.1% of Merton's working age population (16-64 years) population have a physical disability.
  - An estimated 1,686 older people (65 years and over) have dementia in Merton.

### **3 POSITIVE ACTIONS MERTON HAS TAKEN**

- 3.1. Merton has drafted its third Local Implementation Plan (LIP3) this year. The LIP3 is the Council's main transport strategy and sits alongside the Council's Local Plan and other future strategies. The Local Implementation Plan (LIP) is a statutory document prepared under Section 145 of the GLA Act and sets out how the borough proposes to deliver the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) in its area, as well as contributing to other local and sub-regional goals for the period 2019/20 to 2020/22.
- 3.2. The LIP identifies how Merton Council will work towards achieving the MTS goals of 'healthy streets and healthy people', a 'good public transport experience' and 'new homes and jobs'.
- 3.3. There are 49 objectives in the LIP3. Objectives 33-38 cover how Merton plans for public transport to be safe, affordable and accessible to all.
- LO33: Work towards ensuring that bus stops are fully accessible and that where reasonably possible they are accompanied by shelters and seating.
  - LO34: Work with TfL and other agencies to better understand Assisted Transport Service needs in the borough.

- LO35: Where movement is obstructed on a regular basis the council will look favourably on requests from bus operators to introduce parking controls or physical measures to ensure access.
  - LO36: Where reasonably practical the council will encourage developers to upgrade local bus stop facilities, including the provision of appropriate shelters and seating.
  - LO37: The council will use the planning process to secure complimentary improvements to support better access to public transport facilities
  - LO38: The council will work partners and developers through the planning process to identify and lobby for the provision of step free facilities at stations in the borough, including Raynes Park and Motspur Park.
- 3.4. Further to objective 38, the council has recently supported South Western Railways in its “Access for All” bid to the Department of Transport. The bid was for step free access at both Raynes Park and Motspur Park Stations. Merton pledged to review its capital programme in order to identify whether match funding can be committed should the bid be successful.
- 3.5. The council is also pushing for step free access at Wimbledon Chase Station through the planning process and delivery of a westbound access ramp for Haydon’s Road Station. Opportunity is also available to provide a second step free access for Morden Road Tram Stop.

#### **4 FURTHER POSITIVE ACTIONS MERTON COULD TAKE TO HELP IMPROVE ACCESS**

- 4.1. Commission AccessAble to assess Merton’s stations. AccessAble were commissioned to provide detailed online accessibility guides for the local area including restaurants, hotels, cinemas etc. Each entry features information on seating, blue badge bays, step free/level/ramped access, toilets or dementia-friendly trained staff. Morden South station is currently the only station listed. If the remaining tube, train and tram stations in the Merton area were assessed, it may provide further ideas on which stations need to be addressed. Accessable will assess stations when requested to do so. Further information can be found here: <https://www.accessable.co.uk/>
- 4.2. Ensure disability awareness training is available for staff
- 4.3. Larger, bolder signage in the local area for people with impaired vision
- 4.4. Provide more nearby seating areas for people who struggle to stand
- 4.5. Publicise the use of apps that can offer easily accessible information i.e.
- Signly will use the latest software to give people who are deaf or hard of hearing access to essential written travel, disruption and safety notices by delivering signed content directly to their smart phone or tablet. Signly will be developed as part of the Department for Transport’s commitment to

improving journeys for disabled rail passengers. It is one of seven projects, which will receive funding to make their ideas a reality.

- 'Welcome' Aboard App: a new service for people living with dementia and rail staff that provides two-way communication and a 'check-in' feature that alerts staff to a passenger's arrival at the station.
- 4.6. The disability equality charity Scope produced a report on public transport in August 2018, Independent Confident Connected, which brought together findings from research, workshops and a poll of 2,000 disabled people from across the country.
- 4.7. 1 in 4 disabled people said that they had been prevented from using public transport by other people's negative attitudes in the last year.
- 4.8. Consider what the Council can do to educate and encourage our residents and passengers to understand the needs of disabled people with physical, mental, cognitive or sensory impairments.
- 4.9. Publicise the enforcement of passenger rights - raising awareness of the obligations on transport operators, the processes for raising concerns or complaints and working with regulators to hold operators to account.
- 4.10. Encourage new ideas and local initiatives e.g. The Travel Buddy project. The Travel Buddy project offers alternative travel support for adults and young people with a learning disability. Travel Buddies are people with a learning disability who teach people how to travel safely, independently and with confidence, including road safety and awareness skills, and how to plan a route.

## **5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1. N/A

## **6 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 6.1. The public consultation on the Local Implementation Plan ran from 1 March to 12 April 2019. The views of the relevant statutory bodies; transport organisations; local and residents groups, as well as individuals were sought in particular whether the priorities were agreed with. The findings are yet to be published.

## **7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None

**8           LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1.       The Local Implementation Plan is a statutory requirement under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 and all London boroughs are required to develop a document setting out how it is going to deliver the Mayor’s Transport Strategy, its priorities and objectives at a local level.

**9           HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

9.1.       This is covered in the LIP3 and associated EQIA’s

**10          CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1.      There are no crime and disorder implications.

**11          RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1.      There are no health and safety implications associated with this report at present.

**12          APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

12.1.      None

**13          BACKGROUND PAPERS**

13.1.      None

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