

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 11 January 2024

Accessibility Commission

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Transport and Environment Committee is asked to note the Terms of Reference and next steps for establishing an Accessibility Commission for Edinburgh.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Daisy Narayanan, Head of Placemaking and Mobility

E-mail: daisy.narayanan@edinburgh.gov.uk

Accessibility Commission

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises progress towards establishing an Accessibility Commission for Edinburgh including its Terms of Reference and associated next steps to enable formal establishment.

3. Background

- 3.1 Several motions have informed the need to establish an Accessibility Commission for Edinburgh, with a core aim of supporting the Council in meeting Transport for All's [Equal Pavements Pledge](#). The approval of a [motion](#) by the Council in September 2021 established the Council's commitment to meeting the Pledge.
- 3.2 On 30 June 2022, the Council approved an [adjusted motion](#) seeking actions, including a round-table discussion with representatives of the Edinburgh Access Panel, to better understand priorities and improvements which could be delivered to improve accessibility across the city. The Council also agreed for an annual accessibility report, detailing the steps taken by the Council over the preceding 12 months to address accessibility issues and set out key priorities and additional actions to be taken in the following year. An [update](#) on the actions taken in respect of this was considered by Committee on 2 March 2023.
- 3.3 On 17 August 2023, a [motion](#) was approved by Committee reaffirming support for the Equal Pavements Pledge and noting that the majority of the Pledges are not being met. The motion supported progress on the formation of an Accessibility Commission and set out a number of areas for discussion by the Commission, once established.

4. Main report

- 4.1 In response to the motions summarised in section 3 of this report, work to establish an Accessibility Commission began in early Spring 2023, with an initial meeting comprising several accessibility group representatives, Council officers and Committee members (on 29 March 2023).

- 4.2 The meeting facilitated discussion on some of the challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing Edinburgh’s public streets and spaces. It also enabled the sharing of initial ideas around the role, remit and membership of a new Accessibility Commission. Councillor Scott Arthur chaired the group, and it was given an interim title - ‘Accessible Streets’ group.
- 4.3 Two further meetings of the Accessible Streets group were held in September and November 2023 to progress discussions on the establishment of the Commission, including the production of Terms of Reference and selection of a Commission chair and vice chair.
- 4.4 The Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) set out the remit, commission membership, elected member involvement and officer roles in the Commission.
- 4.5 This report seeks to make Committee aware of the establishment of the Commission as set out in the Terms of Reference, and the next steps (as set out in section 5 of this report).

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The next steps to establishing the Accessibility Commission are:
- 5.1.1 To hold the first meeting of the Commission, subject to Commission members availability, in February or early March 2024;
- 5.1.2 To establish a Work Plan and meeting timetable at the inaugural Commission meeting and provide an update to Committee once agreed; and
- 5.1.3 Thereafter, provide annual updates to Committee during the Commission’s lifespan (of an initial two years) to report on progress, challenges, opportunities and recommendations.

6. Financial Impact

- 6.1 The success of the Commission is largely dependent on the Council providing support for activities/administration. Some examples may include:
- 6.1.1 Financial support for Commission members to undertake site visits, for example, as required. It is expected that this should be no more than £1,000 - £1,500 a year;
- 6.1.2 Financial support to ensure meetings, communication and engagement on the work of the Commission are as accessible as possible, where Council resource is limited. This may include, for example, seeking external support to convert documents to ‘Easy Read’ format;
- 6.1.3 Funding (internal and/or external) to deliver the recommendations of the Commission. This will become clearer once the Work Plan and recommendations have been established and will be reported to Committee as appropriate; and

- 6.1.4 Officer resource in the form of expertise, knowledge sharing, reporting and in providing secretariat support.
- 6.2 The costs associated with the Commission's operations can be contained within the Council's Placemaking and Mobility revenue budget.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The Accessibility Commission will provide independent advice to the Council on the challenges, opportunities and actions required to ensure the city's public streets and spaces are as accessible as possible to people with disabilities. The Commission will therefore have a positive impact on supporting equal access to the city. Opportunities to consider impacts on poverty will also be maximised.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 The Commission is expected to have a positive impact on supporting people with different needs and abilities to travel as sustainably as possible in line with the objectives of the Council's City Mobility Plan.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The establishment of an Accessibility Commission responds to requirements via various Council and Committee motions, as outlined in section 3 of this report, to support delivery of the Equal Pavements Pledge.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [City Mobility Plan](#), approved by Transport and Environment Committee February 2021

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 Accessibility Commission Terms of Reference

Edinburgh Accessibility Commission

Terms of Reference

Contents

1. Remit and Deliverables
2. Roles and Responsibilities
 - Commission Chair and Vice Chair
 - Commissioners
 - Elected Members
 - Council Officers
3. Commission Meetings
4. Secretariat
5. Relationship with Transport and Environment Committee
6. Remuneration and Expenses
7. Information Sharing

1. Remit and Deliverables

- 1.1 Edinburgh's Accessibility Commission (the Commission) has been established for an initial two-year period to provide independent advice to the City of Edinburgh Council (the Council) on the challenges, opportunities and actions required to ensure the city's public streets and spaces are as accessible as possible to disabled people.
- 1.2 The Commission will have strategic role which will complement and support the remit of [Edinburgh Access Panel](#).
- 1.3 The Commission will primarily focus on examining overarching Council practices and processes, within the initial two years of its inaugural meeting, to deliver outcomes across the following key themes:
 - 1.3.1 **Design** – the Commission will set fundamental principles as to how the Council, working with partners and stakeholders, will ensure that policymaking and project delivery embeds accessibility into the design and development of our public streets and spaces. It will also establish a process to follow to support resolution, where possible, if principles are not being met.
 - 1.3.2 **Communication** - the Commission will establish principles as to how the Council, working with partners and stakeholders, will ensure its communications, including presentation/sharing of information, are as

accessible as possible to maximise awareness and input from disabled people in Council activities, with a focus on delivering accessible public streets and spaces.

1.3.3 **Engagement** – the Commission will set principles for the delivery of best practice engagement which facilitates meaningful contributions from disabled people on Council policymaking and project development and delivery.

1.4 At the outset the Commission will have defined a work plan to support delivery of the three key themes above. The following activities will support this:

1.4.1 Undertake a review of the effectiveness of activity currently undertaken to address accessibility needs across the city's public streets and spaces, including consultation and Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) processes;

1.4.2 Hear and respond to the experiences of citizens with disabilities who experience challenges in accessing Edinburgh's public streets and spaces;

1.4.3 Build on existing research, and the learning achieved by other Commissions across the UK, to find best practice examples of interventions and approaches to be adopted in Edinburgh to inform actions defined;

1.4.4 Input into national, regional and local consultations as appropriate;

1.4.5 Define a practical, realistic, affordable programme of short, medium and longer term actions and recommendations to improve accessibility across the city's public streets and spaces, informed by the [Equal Pavements Pledge](#) and feedback from engagement with key stakeholders; and

1.4.6 Define a practical approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the actions and recommendations defined by the Commission.

Ways of working

1.5 The Commission will develop and maintain a work plan to guide its work. To fulfil its remit, the Commission will need to conduct meaningful engagement with parties likely to be affected by, and contribute to, improving the accessibility of the city's public streets and spaces.

1.6 To ensure meaningful engagement, the Commission will actively involve stakeholders in its considerations, taking a range of opinions into account, with a view to developing a shared understanding of the key issues. The Commission will actively feedback actions to those consulted.

1.7 The Commission will support the Edinburgh Access Panel in providing a place where strategic issues can be escalated for discussion.

1.8 A Communications and Engagement Plan will be maintained, alongside the work plan, outlining how the Commission will engage with others and ensure its purpose/outcomes are widely publicised and understood.

1.9 The Commission will undertake site visits where appropriate to aid understanding of challenges and potential solutions.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Commission Chair and Vice Chair

- 2.1 Meetings of the Commission will be chaired by Zara Todd.
- 2.2 The Chair is independent from the Council, and responsible for determining the work plan of the Commission, in consultation with Commissioners.
- 2.3 The Chair is expected to:
 - 2.3.1 Prepare for, and attend, meetings of the Commission.
 - 2.3.2 Attend other meetings and seminars on behalf of the Commission (as required).
 - 2.3.3 Assist in the development, approval and monitoring of the Commission's work plan.
 - 2.3.4 Identify and specify potential areas for research.
 - 2.3.5 Establish good partnership working with other organisations and participate in reference groups, discussion forums and open meetings (as required).
 - 2.3.6 Provide effective leadership to the Commission, including chairing meetings and fostering sound decision-making and full participation by other members of the Commission in the exercise of their functions and in the work of the Commission.
 - 2.3.7 Act as the principal spokesperson and public face of the Commission, representing it at meetings with other bodies and at conferences / events and in the media.
- 2.4 The Vice Chair is Councillor Scott Arthur. The role of the Vice Chair will be to support the work of the Chair, deputising where needed.

Commissioners

- 2.5 Commissioners have been invited to sit on the Commission and will bring both individual expertise and expertise from the organisations they represent.
- 2.6 Commissioners are asked to:
 - 2.6.1 Exercise their talents and areas of expertise by briefing and guiding the Commission.
 - 2.6.2 Prepare adequately for Commission meetings by, for example, proposing agenda items, reading papers in advance, preparing and presenting papers for consideration, participating in discussion, and helping to reach a consensus view.
 - 2.6.3 Respect the views of other Commission members.

- 2.6.4 Act on the Chair's behalf in representing the Commission at meetings with other bodies, at conferences / events and in the media, where possible (and as agreed with the Chair).
- 2.6.5 Act as Commission champion/lead, where possible in relation to specific elements of the work plan.
- 2.6.6 Protect information received in confidence from unauthorised disclosure.
- 2.6.7 Identify and specify potential areas for research where possible.
- 2.6.8 Notify the Secretariat at the earliest opportunity if they are unable to attend scheduled meetings.
- 2.6.9 Attend Commission meetings regularly and on time.

2.7 The Commissioners currently comprise a representative from each of the following organisations below. Identification of additional commission members across the life of the Commission will be referred to the Commission for review in advance of any changes being made:

- 2.7.1 Edinburgh Access Panel
- 2.7.2 Edinburgh Trams
- 2.7.3 Equality and Rights Network
- 2.7.4 Euan's Guide
- 2.7.5 HCL Transport
- 2.7.6 Inclusion Scotland
- 2.7.7 Living Streets Edinburgh Group
- 2.7.8 Lothian Buses
- 2.7.9 Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living
- 2.7.10 Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland
- 2.7.11 National Federation for the Blind Scotland
- 2.7.12 People First (Scotland)
- 2.7.13 Royal National Institute of Blind People
- 2.7.14 Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans
- 2.7.15 Sustrans
- 2.7.16 The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Scotland)
- 2.7.17 The Scottish Assembly

Elected Members

2.8 Strong engagement and input from elected members on the work of the Commission will be critical to its success, both during the life of the Commission

itself, and for successful implementation of the actions and recommendations it makes.

2.9 Towards this it is proposed that:

2.9.1 A report will be presented to the Council's Transport and Environment Committee noting the intention to establish the Commission, these Terms of Reference and key next steps;

2.9.2 A representative from each political party on the Transport and Environment Committee will be invited to take part in the Commission; and

2.9.3 Annual updates will be presented to the Transport and Environment Committee throughout the life of the Commission to report on progress against the Commission's work plan, emerging actions and recommendations arising. This will provide strong governance and accountability.

Council Officers

2.10 Relevant officers across the Council's Sustainable Development division will support the work of the Commission by informing the work plan, actions, recommendations and engagement as required. The Council's lead service area will be Placemaking and Mobility.

3. Commission Meetings

3.1 The Commission will meet at least quarterly across its lifespan.

3.2 A work plan will be maintained as a standalone document by the secretariat (directed by the Chair) and used to inform the agenda items for meetings.

3.3 These meetings will be structured on a range of themes, as outlined in the work plan, and take place either online, at Council offices or a hybrid of both.

Absence

3.4 Whilst every effort should be made to attend all meetings of the Commission, it is recognised that the Chair, Vice Chair and Commissioners may need to be absent on occasion due to annual leave, conflicting arrangements or other requirements out-with their control.

3.5 Once you are aware that you are unable to attend, you should notify the Secretariat at the earliest opportunity.

Agenda

3.6 The agenda for each meeting will be decided by the Chair following discussion with the secretariat. If members wish to contribute agenda items, they are asked to notify the secretariat by email no later than 2 weeks before the relevant meeting. The secretariat will circulate the final agenda and all papers 5 working days ahead of each meeting.

- 3.7 Whilst time will be allocated for any other business, advanced notice should be given of any significant issues to be considered. These issues should be notified to the secretariat as above.

Conflict of interests

- 3.8 As a standing item at the start of each meeting, the Chair will ask members to state any potential conflicts of interest that may arise through the course of the meeting. In this context, “conflict of interest” refers to specific bias or financial interest that may influence the discussions and decisions of the Commission. Members are also expected to declare interests as they arise during discussions. In these circumstances, it would be for the Chair to decide an appropriate course of action. This may include, for example, asking the member to leave the meeting for the specific agenda item which relates to the conflict of interest.

Minutes

- 3.9 Minutes of meetings will be made available through the Commission’s dedicated web presence on the Council’s website within 21 working days of the meeting. The secretariat will circulate draft minutes to members within 10 working days of the meeting. Minutes will reflect the discussion but will not make specific reference to Commissioners by name. Points agreed will be noted accordingly.

Meeting documentation

- 3.10 In general, documentation considered by the Commission will be considered public, and will be made available online following meetings. However, it is acknowledged that there may be occasions where this default position is not appropriate; this will be at the Chair’s discretion. By way of example, relevant documentation for the Commission may contain information that is not in the public domain, contain issues of commercial sensitivity or raise copyright issues. Where possible, sensitive material will be partially redacted and published. Where the Chair considers that documentation should not be made available online, the minutes will include a record that they have been considered by the Commission.

Guests and information gathering

- 3.11 A wide range of stakeholders may be asked to provide input to the Commission at the Chair’s discretion. The Chair will determine the extent to which those invited to contribute to Commission meetings should participate in the remainder of the meeting on a case by case basis.

Decision Making

- 3.12 The Commission should, as far as possible, reach decisions by consensus. Where necessary, a vote will be taken where the Commission needs to make a decision. Each member will be allocated one vote and, in the event that no clear decision is reached, i.e. equal votes, the Chair will have the casting vote. All decision outcomes and the numbers for and against will be noted in the minutes.

Quorum for Meetings

- 3.13 The quorum for any Commission meeting and vote must be one third (rounded up to a whole number) of the complete membership.

4. Secretariat

- 4.1 The secretariat is based within the Placemaking and Mobility service area of the Council and will undertake the following functions as directed by the Chair of the Commission:
- Preparing and circulating agenda and related papers.
 - Arranging suitable locations and dates for meetings of the Commission.
 - Inviting individuals and organisations to meetings of the Commission, as directed by Commissioners.
 - Recording minutes and action points.
 - Drafting reports and other documents, as directed by the Commission.
 - Managing communications for the Commission, including:
 - dealing with all enquiries in relation to the Commission's work;
 - maintenance of the Commissions dedicated web presence;
 - publicising work online and coordinating other online engagement, as required; o drafting responses to press queries.
 - Commissioning and managing third party research and specialist input, as required.
 - Providing the Commission with updates on relevant areas of interest in the wider policy landscape, as required.
 - Notifying Commissioners of any significant issues or events (within the Council or otherwise) relevant to its work.
 - Synthesising existing research on energy transitions, monitoring relevant information/media.
 - Supporting the Commission to engage with Scottish Government officials and Ministers as necessary.
 - Administration of Commissioner remuneration, where appropriate.
- 4.2 The secretariat will also lead on drafting business cases to ensure the Commission has the appropriate funding to carry out its remit once its requirements become clear. This may include funding for items such as research support and the booking of venues for meetings or events.

5. Remuneration and Expenses

- 5.1 The Commission members may be remunerated for time committed and/or travel expenses.

6. Information Sharing

- 7.1 The Commission is committed to being as open and transparent as possible and will proactively share what information it can. Information to be released in consultation with the Chair and where appropriate, the Council's Data Protection Officer. Reports, Minutes and other information will be made available through the Council's dedicated webpages.