

Public Document Pack

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Legal & Democratic Services

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07 February 2022

THE COUNCIL - THURSDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 2021 SUPPLEMENTARY PACK: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SHEET

Please find enclosed, for consideration at the next meeting of the Council taking place on Thursday, 25th November, 2021, the following items that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

4. **Questions from Members of the Public (Pages 1 - 10)**
 Questions and Answers sheet attached

5. **Questions from Members of the Council (Pages 11 - 24)**
 Questions and Answers sheet attached

Robert Harris
Principal Democratic Services Officer

(1) Question from Mr David Webb to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration (Cllr Nevin)

Question

On 10th October we had World Mental Health Day. How is the Council supporting Mental Health patients of all ages and how much money is allocated each year in tackling Mental Health from the Council?

Answer

It is worth noting that some services will be funded directly by Southend Borough Council and others by the Clinical Commissioning Group as part of a part partnership working arrangement.

Directly funded by The Council, we have the following services specific to those with Mental Health problems allocated at £0.83m PA:

- CYP Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Service Main Contract;
- The Mental Health Wellbeing Hub provides advice, guidance, and support alongside the ability to access The Recovery College with a range of wellbeing courses;
- Transitional Supported housing for adults with a mental health problems.

There are also several services funded by The Council that may not be specific for those with a Mental Health need but are accessible to Mental Health Clients. These include:

- Information, Advice and Guidance services;
- Carers services;
- Drug and Alcohol services;
- Homelessness Services and Housing First;
- Complex needs Hostel;
- Domestic Abuse services;
- Everyone Health & Sexual Health services.

There are also several services which the council are linked into via joint commissioning agreements. These include the following:

- IPS Scheme which is a Pan Essex employment support service for those with severe mental health conditions;
- The Employment retention project working to assist with difficulties within existing employment;
- The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme of talking therapies;
- Perinatal Mental health service for mums, mums to be and their families;
- 111 option 2 Crisis Response Service which is a 24/7 service offering immediate Mental health support.

The Council provides direct for those with Mental Health problems via the Social Care Teams and Essex Partnership University NHS foundation Trust (EPUT). People may receive services such as support within their home, Day Opportunities, Accommodation Services. The provision of these services is under a budget allocation of £4.9m for year 2021/22, this includes costs for Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy.

The council are currently producing three strategies which have recently been out for consultation:

- The Living Well Strategy, for people who might have a disability, a learning disability or mental health needs;
- The Caring Well Strategy, for people who care for others in an unpaid role, often family members. We are also working with a group of young carers, so their views are heard;
- The Ageing Well Strategy, for people who might need help to live independently or be in supported housing.

Also - In line with Government recommendations Southend, Essex and Thurrock Councils have produced a Southend, Essex, and Thurrock Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The Council also promotes national mental health and wellbeing campaigns and local websites through its digital platforms: [Health Matters | Livewell Southend](#) and [Health and Wellbeing – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council](#)

(2) Question from Mr David Webb to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection (Cllr Terry)

Question

In Westborough we have 4 fly tipping hot spots. Two have got worse over the past 12 months. Top of Brightwell and in the middle of the junction of Brightwell where the bins are. Both areas have been sent out letters to the resident, warning letters when evidence has been given to the Council. However, the bags need to be checked regularly to find more evidence because no-one has been fined.

How much has it cost the Council to clear fly tipping this year across the 13 wards and how many CCTV cameras do we have for fly tipping and what is the cost to put one up to catch fly tipping in one location for a few months and then move it down to the one in the middle?

Answer

The Council has 6 mobile cameras that can be used across the Borough, which are dependent on a power source usually from lamp columns. Mobile cameras have limited success in the detection of fly-tipping as they tend to displace the activity elsewhere. It costs £356 to install a mobile camera.

The Council currently spends approximately £1.7m per annum across street cleansing activities, which includes the removal of fly-tips.

(3) Question from Mr Jonathan Garston to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection (Cllr Terry)

Question

With increased ASB in the town please can I ask for an update of success with the existing PSPO, where they are in place?

Answer

There are 3 Public Spaces Protection Orders currently in force across the Borough:

- 2 covering the High Street, the Seafront (Shoebury to Westcliff) and Hamlet Court Road.
- 1 covering dog control order, borough wide.

In the period from 8th March 2020 to date, 2 Public Spaces Protection Order Fixed Penalty Notices have been paid, 9 non-paid Fixed Penalty Notices have been successfully prosecuted, and a further 14 have been summonsed and are awaiting a court hearing. There are 15 further non-paid Fixed Penalty Notices currently being prepared for a prosecution. Of the prosecutions undertaken, 2 have led to successful Court applications for a Criminal Behaviour Order, and in both cases, the individuals were banned from the High Street and surrounding areas for a period of 3 years.

A recently held joint operation with Essex Police “Op Jorvik”, was based on the enforcement powers of the Public Spaces Protection Order and targeted street drinkers engaging in anti-social behaviour in a specific part of the town centre. This resulted in 22 enforcement actions over a 12-hour patrol period.

(4) Question from Mr Jonathan Garston to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)

Question

Please can the portfolio holder give me his view on closing the seafront roads in the busy summer period. Was this course of action necessary and does the portfolio holder anticipate implementing this again?

Answer

A road closure order was put in place from Friday 1 October to be used should it be needed.

This was considered necessary following the trial of a late-night road closure of Marine Parade in July, which was in response to reckless driving and other anti-social behaviour that had led to some businesses having to close early.

The experimental road closure order gives the council the relevant powers to close the road to traffic at any time over an 18-month period but will only be used as a last resort to protect residents, visitors and businesses with the order being regularly reviewed.

The order applies to the area from the turnaround point on Western Esplanade (Robertos kiosk), through Marine Parade (City Beach) and ends at the junction of Southchurch Avenue and Eastern Esplanade (The Kursaal). Vehicles would only be able to turn left from Southchurch Avenue onto Eastern Esplanade.

We will continue to work hard with Essex Police to build on the good work we have seen in more recent weeks to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour and crime in those key hotspot areas, which would avoid the need to use the order.

(5) Question from Mr Robert Norton to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

Can the Cabinet Member explain why the new transport service for people with Learning Disabilities cannot get to Special Needs schools?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Mr Norton.

The Council was made aware at the start of the new contract that a small number of the larger vehicles could not drive under the canopy covering the front door at Kingsdown School. It is my understanding that vehicles transporting pupils with SEND can fully access all the other special schools in the Borough. In the case of Kingsdown, the vehicles get as close as they can to the main front door, and pupils are escorted by staff as normal. The Council will continue to work with the provider to explore how this situation may be improved over time.

(6) Question from Ms Philomena Johnson to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

What checks and testing was employed to ensure that the selected partner (London Hire) was both experienced in this type of service development and had the appropriate level of skilled, competent operational management in place to develop and deliver the service?

Answer

The Council undertook a long and detailed compliant procurement process. It utilised a competitive dialogue process for selecting the service delivery solution as well as the company that Southend would form the Joint Venture company with. Part of this process was for each bidder to provide written evidence as to their experience in the appropriate service delivery areas.

Detailed responses were received, and these were reviewed against a predetermined set of evaluation criteria. There were also a number of technical (quality) questions which focused on how the supplier would deliver the contract and specification in Southend. Scores were allocated according to the evaluation criteria and these we combined with the scoring from other parts of the written submission and then the total was combined with an affordability score. London Hire community services met all the requirements of the tender and were ultimately awarded the contract as they provided the best overall submission.

(7) Question from Ms Philomena Johnson to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

Why was the service started when it was known that there was insufficient staffing in place and that Vecteo was unprepared (risk assessment not completed, parent meeting and engagement incomplete, etc)?

Answer

Vecteo had provided assurances that the correct level of staffing would be in place for when the new operating model went live. This was provided following some uncertainties around potential TUPE transfers. The Council was only informed of the severity of the issue with the number of drivers and passenger assistants the day before going live.

Vecteo had confirmed that all the parent meet and greet sessions would be undertaken in advance of the go live date. The Council was only informed the day before the start of the new service delivery that some, but not all had taken place.

The Vecteo contract manager (no longer in post) confirmed during the lessons learnt review that he had been overly optimistic and had not raised it is a serious issue with either the Vecteo company board or the Council. The Vecteo contract manager had also stated that the risk assessments had been completed when asked prior to go live, this was clearly incorrect.

(8) Question from Mr Liam Slattery to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

What is the threshold at which SBC will act to remove the provider and under those conditions what is the plan?

Answer

The Contract with Vecteo contains a detailed service specification as well as specific requirements for performance monitoring. The performance against the contractual key performance indicators is the main route for performance monitoring and seeking improvement. The frequency of certain performance indicators being missed is taken into account when identifying routes within the contract to formally drive improvements. Contractual routes for seeking improvements include remedial plans (following audit and performance feedback) and a remediation notice (following the breach of a material obligation). Where the service does not improve and fails to meet the contractual requirements there are stated routes for escalation as well as the ultimate sanction of termination. This includes headings under breach of contract as well as consistent failure.

(9) Question from Mr Liam Slattery to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

Given the level of Council management now being employed in Vecteo, the added expense of management time and the commission of PWC, what is happening in terms of costs being recover from the contract partner (London Hire) to balance the additional spend in tax-payers money?

Answer

Vecteo has agreed to pay all costs associated with the secondment of the Council's transport management team into them. This secondment ended on 15th November 2021. The cost of the performance/compliance audit will be borne by the Council.

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Questions from Councillors

Question 1 from Councillor McGlone to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)

Question

Are there any plans (in any format) for a relief road through St Laurence Ward?

Answer

The Council has long-held aspirations to deliver a new road to serve the East of the Borough so that it can be accessed without adding to the pressure on the roads through the centre of Southend. The details of that route have not yet been settled and no funding is yet available to deliver it so at this time it remains an aspiration. This would be a significant piece of infrastructure which will require central government funding at the relevant time and something that may be needed to support future population, housing and jobs growth (subject to the outcome of the local plan in terms of allocated sites).

A preferred route has not yet been identified and a range of options are being considered, most of which necessarily pass through both Rochford and Southend land in various locations, including St Laurence Ward.

The Council recently consulted on a preparatory stage of the Southend new Local Plan, which posed a number of questions in relation to strategy options, potential sites and several issues facing Southend over the next 20 years. Within the Transport and Access section the consultation included questions on the principle of a new link road and possible connection points. The consultation feedback will inform further work and assessment and strategy preparation.

Question 2 from Councillor McGlone to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture, Tourism and Planning (Cllr Mulrone)

Question

Why was Sidmouth Play Area refurbished without any seating whatsoever?

Answer

The refurbishment of the play area in Sidmouth Avenue has revitalised the facility for local people.

Unfortunately, this play area has historically experienced problems with unwanted congregations, which resulted in the bench in the play area being removed. Due to the previous issues with benches at this site, a new bench was not included in the refurbishment project.

Officers have confirmed that they will organise for a bench to be installed in the play area. However, this provision will need to be reviewed if antisocial congregations occur as a result of the bench.

Question 3 from Councillor Cowdrey to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture, Tourism and Planning (Cllr Mulrone)

Question

It has been brought to my attention that Sea Holly (*Eryngium Maritimum*) is growing on our foreshores, with a real increase in growth from Thorpe Bay right along the Esplanade. The established plants are now dropping seeds.

I am aware that this is a protected species of plant, proving protection for other more scarce foreshore plants such as Sea Sandwort and Sean Bindweed.

Can the Cabinet Member please advise whether these plants are a naturally occurring phenomenon or whether they were originally planted as part of an alternative sea defence or other environmental strategy by the Council or other body?

Answer

Our foreshore is important to the borough for both tourism and biodiversity. The area has both national and international protected status due to its environmental significance. A recent survey of areas of our beaches found a number of coastal plants have been established, helping support birds and invertebrates.

The council has not undertaken any projects that have involved planting coastal plants for our sea defences. However, the coastal plants that have established on their own accord, are thought to be a benefit to coastal defences.

Although no planting has taken place, a current externally funded project, Sustainable and Resilient Coastal Cites (SARCC) is investigating taking a hybrid approach towards coastal engineering through the merging of traditional hard defences with green infrastructure; the pilot scheme will test the success of this approach.

Question 4 from Councillor Keith Evans to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)

Question

Shortly after the current administration took control of the Council, due to the backlog of requests regarding highways projects and issues, and then the subsequent reorganisation of the highways department, it was announced that there was to be a two-year moratorium on any new parking or highways projects/issues being considered.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm when this moratorium was revoked?

Answer

The parking and highways service has a duty of care to ensure the highway is safe for its users. The moratorium was put in place (and is still in place) to ensure only schemes relating to safety were considered to enable the service to deal with the backlog of requests. All requests received by the service are triaged to understand the need for implementation.

Question 5 from Councillor Keith Evans to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)

Question

Could the Cabinet Member confirm the number of new schemes and requests made by Councillors that have been considered, which had not already been 'logged' and in the 'system', prior to the moratorium on parking and highways projects and issues being put in place?

Answer

In May 2019 there were 77 outstanding schemes of those, 22 have now been moved into the junction protection programme. Of the remaining 55, 34 have been closed, 21 remain incomplete as of September 2021.

The service currently has 83 outstanding requests 40 of these on initial investigation are deemed to be non-safety requests and are not being progressed currently and 27 are deemed to be safety related which are now into the second stage of feasibility; with 16 still to be looked at.

There are currently 4 schemes still on the list from 2018, 17 from 2019, 12 from 2020 and to date 50 for 2021.

The service does not have any information on schemes that have not been logged or in the system.

Question 6 from Councillor Dear to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

At Full Council on 9th September 2021 the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning apologised for the debacle of the transfer of provider of the Council's Home to School (SEND) service. Six weeks on, we are still hearing of problems from numerous parents. Whilst his apology was welcome, parents want action.

When will this be sorted out?

Answer

Thank you for your questions, Councillors. As I stated at the last full council, we agreed that the initial transition from the previous provider to the new contract holder, Vecteo, was far from satisfactory, for which I then apologised. I absolutely recognise apologies without actions are meaningless, which is why I required officers within the council to work both directly with Vecteo staff, but also independently to monitor their actions that should be improving the arrangements for the majority of families and children.

These initial include regular daily reporting from Vecteo of any residual or new concerns raised by families including, where required. escalating these to the appropriate officer; greater consistency of staffing by Vecteo; ensuring all drivers and passenger assistants have a basic level of appropriate first aid training; and importantly establishing far better communication channels with both individual parents and the parents as a whole.

Whilst it is our understanding that there have been some improvements from the poor situation at the start of the contract, we also recognise that this is not a consistent picture for all families, and a small number of concerns continue to emerge.

As a result, we, as a council, in effect the “client” to the transport provider, are putting in place further and more robust measures to ensure that the improvements are felt for all families on a consistent basis. These latest measures include asking PWC to undertake a full audit of the contractual requirements placed upon Vecteo to ensure full compliance with the contract; further meetings of executive officers from the council with the parent company of Vecteo, London Hire; and if required bringing in additional senior management capacity to Vecteo to drive required improvements forward at the pace families rightly should expect.

Question 7 from Councillor Nelson to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

Could the Cabinet Member explain what went wrong in the two and a half years (between March 2019, the Cabinet decision to appoint Joint Venture Partner, and September 2021, the delayed commencement of the service) with the procurement, contractual obligations, and preparation for the delivery of the Council's Passenger Transport Service, in particular, that of the Home to School (SEND) service?

Answer

Following the Council's decision to create a joint venture company an extensive procurement exercise was undertaken to select an appropriate private sector partner. London Hire Community Services Ltd were successful in their bid and Vecteo was formed. The Joint Venture took over the running of the services in March 2020 and continued to use predominantly the same supply chain of sub-contractors to undertake the physical transportation work.

In April 2021 Vecteo announced that it intended to self-deliver transport services to 3 of the busiest schools. The subcontractors were informed, and a tender process was undertaken for those areas that were not to be self-delivered. Where self-delivery was to be undertaken then TUPE discussions were entered into with the existing subcontractors. All subcontracts expired at the end of July 2021 and new ones came into operation in September 2021, as did the Vecteo self-delivery operation.

The vast majority of the issues experienced within the first 2 weeks were in the areas that Vecteo had decided to self-deliver. These problems were created by a variety of matters but the key ones being Lack of appropriately trained/qualified staff (caused by TUPE issues and the current national shortage of drivers/skilled staff) and the lack of engagement/communication with parents/careers (caused by Vecteo resources being deployed onto staff recruitment).

Other matters such as the global covid pandemic, and contractual delays earlier in the process certainly did not assist a smooth transition,

but in themselves are not causes of the issues experienced. The lessons learnt review is due to be finished shortly and this will cover the matters in more detail.

The level of service delivered by Vecteo has significantly improved over recent weeks, but improvements are still required in certain areas, and we are working closely with them to ensure they are delivered.

Question 8 from Councillor Cox to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

At Full Council on 9th September 2021 the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning apologised for the debacle of the transfer of provider of the Council's Home to School (SEND) service. Six weeks on, we are still hearing of problems from numerous parents. Whilst his apology was welcome, parents want action.

When will this be sorted out?

Answer

I refer to my answer in response to Question 6 from Councillor Dear.

Question 9 from Councillor Boyd to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

At Full Council on 9th September 2021 the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning apologised for the debacle of the transfer of provider of the Council's Home to School service for SEND children and vulnerable adults. Six weeks on, we are still hearing of problems from numerous parents. Whilst his apology was welcome, parents would like action.

When will this be sorted out?

Answer

I refer to my answer in response to Question 6 from Councillor Dear.

Question 10 from Councillor Nelson to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

At Full Council on 9th September 2021 the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning apologised for the debacle of the transfer of provider of the Council's Home to School (SEND) service. Six weeks on, we are still hearing of problems from numerous parents. Whilst his apology was welcome, parents want action.

When will this be sorted out?

Answer

I refer to my answer in response to Question 6 from Councillor Dear.

Question 11 from Councillor Buck to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

At Full Council on 9th September 2021 the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning apologised for the debacle of the transfer of provider of the Council's Home to School (SEND) service. Six weeks on, we are still hearing of problems from numerous parents. Whilst his apology was welcome, parents want action. When will this be sorted out?

Answer

I refer to my answer in response to Question 6 from Councillor Dear.

Question 12 from Councillor Dent to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)

Question

Could the cabinet member for tell me when was the last time rules around residents parking schemes were reviewed, specifically the limit on the number visitor permits?

Answer

A new policy for Controlled Parking Zones was adopted in January 2021 which included a review of visitor permits; however, with any policy we continually review decision to ensure they reflect the requirements of the residents and the borough.

Question 13 from Councillor Dent to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture, Tourism and Planning (Cllr Mulroney)

Question

Could the cabinet member tell me how the quality and standard of service provided by Fusion is monitored and assessed, in particular in regards to the reopening of services post lockdown?

Answer

Fusion Lifestyle report to The Council at regular reviews regarding a variety of operational data such as customer feedback, number of participants, accidents, incidents, financial, repairs and maintenance. The data is challenged where necessary and is also used to inform changes to the services provided.

With regard to the reopening of services after lockdown, all sites had to be recommissioned and staffed again following redundancies. Fusion reopened SLTC initially and then all sites withing a few weeks and are operating on a demand led basis. This approach is to maximise financial viability given the leisure market continuing to adapt to significant change.

Question 14 from Councillor Courtenay to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

Could the Cabinet Member explain what went wrong in the two and a half years (between March 2019, the Cabinet decision to appoint Joint Venture Partner, and September 2021, the delayed commencement of the service) with the procurement, contractual obligations and preparation for the delivery of the Council's Passenger Transport Service, in particular, that of the Home to School (SEND) service?

Answer

I refer to my answer in response to Question 7 from Councillor Nelson.

Question 15 from Councillor Courtenay to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

At Full Council on 9th September 2021 the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning apologised for the debacle of the transfer of provider of the Council's Home to School (SEND) service. Six weeks on, we are still hearing of problems from numerous parents. Whilst his apology was welcome, parents want action. When will this be sorted out?

Answer

I refer to my answer in response to Question 6 from Councillor Dear.

Question 16 from Councillor Garne to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

What does the Executive Councillor for Children and Learning consider to be the most important feature in the provision of home to school transport for vulnerable children?

Answer

Thank you, Cllr Garne, for your question.

As I stated in previous meetings, safe and effective transport to and from school that allows pupils to arrive ready to learn is fundamental. In this respect, to ensure that Vecteo improve on the poor performance, we have required them to put in place a range of measures including appropriate risk assessments and better communication with parents and families.

Question 17 from Councillor Cowdrey to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

I am aware that work is ongoing on the Southend Borough Council Website and would like to know what, in addition to the usual accessibility measures such as changing font size and translation widgets, measure have been taken or are planned to increase the sites accessibility for disabled residents and visitors as well as those who are less digitally able?

Answer

Significant work has been undertaken and continues to be undertaken to ensure the corporate website is accessible to all residents.

May 2020 – the entire website was relaunched on to a new platform, which meant that back-end technical accessibility criteria, required by law, were met (WCAG2.1 AA criteria). This included:

- Code behind buttons readable by screen readers for those with sight impairments
- Colour contrast on the web design increased to comply with the regulations
- Simplified user journeys, especially to core content
- Ability to navigate the site using a keyboard, for those who are unable to use a mouse
- Focus for navigation visible
(and many more technical back-end improvements)

A new on-site search tool was added to improve the user experience in finding content

- Increased ability our end to modify search results, ensuring core content is as easy as possible to find

On-page content has been, and continues to be systematically re-worked to ensure

- Reading age of 9
- Images have alt-text for those who can't see them
- Graphs or diagrams have captions to explain what the data is and means

Pdfs – removing wherever possible, and placing content on web pages where it is easily found and read, and is accessible to screen reading software

- over 3,000 pdfs have been removed from the website
- This work is ongoing due to so many pdfs being on the site (this is a challenge, but one we are working through)
- New sections created for content previously buried in pdfs, for example: [The Future of Southend High Street – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council](#) and [Council Tax Bands and Charges – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council](#) and [Active and Involved – Annual Report 2020/21 – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council](#)

Accessibility statement:

- This was prepared, has been audited by central Government and sits on the website for anyone to view

Promotion of the need for accessibility across the organisation

- Case by case: we continue to educate all service areas that we deal with on the need for accessibility, when they need content on the website.
- Regular emails: All-staff emails monthly, pushing accessibility, the law, how to create accessible content etc
- Training organised on accessible pdfs – the second round of external training for individuals who produce regular reports takes place next week

Audits and testing:

- Members of the public and the SEND community were involved in the initial testing of the website and changes were made prior to launch based on their findings.
- Government Digital Service audited the website from Jan 2021 to Apr 2021. We made some changes on the back of this, and the GDS have said there is no further work needed on their part
- We followed this up with a deeper external testing phase/audit by The Shaw Trust (who use people with a range of disabilities to audit the site). We are currently working through their findings.

Feedback

- We receive comments via the Govmetric tool and make improvements to the site as a result.
- Any feedback on specific content will always be addressed by our team as we strive for further usability improvements.

The accessibility of the corporate website is a key priority in our team and we continue to make improvements to ensure we end up with a website that is best of class in accessibility, and that ALL our residents can use. It has been and still is a huge challenge, but we are making enormous progress, and despite having been signed off by central Government on this, we continue to audit, fix and improve.

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