

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	1 July 2024
	Cabinet		17 July 2024
Subject:	Digital Equity and Inclusivity		
Report of:	Cabinet Member for Resources		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Iain Stark – Head of Transformation and Commissioning		
	Email: iain.stark@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel:	396156
Appendices:	1. None		

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update cabinet on progress to date on the digital inclusivity motion passed at Council in November 2023

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information in the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:
- (1) progress on exploring partnering with the DAISI (Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, Support and Innovation) project hosted by GRCC (Gloucestershire Rural Community Council) be noted;
 - (2) the update on the review of support to help residents on lower incomes to access social tariffs for broadband and mobile phone access and make recommendations for improvement be noted;
 - (3) the progress made on accessibility of the website and the further improvements planned be noted.
 - (4) the Council continues to explore using DAISI to support our residents. The Council will also consider how to use other community groups and locations (such as libraries) to support residents improve digital inclusivity.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 In November 2023 the council passed a motion for the following

- Request officers explore partnering with the DAISI (Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, Support and Innovation) project hosted by GRCC: leveraging their expertise in digital equity initiatives and existing resources.
- Officers review support to help residents on lower incomes to access social tariffs for broadband and mobile phone access and make recommendations for improvement.
- Officers review Gloucester City Council's Website and report back regarding its accessibility.

4.0 **Partnering with DAISI**

4.1 The council has entered into an exploratory partnership with DAISI with the initial scope of reviewing the accessibility of the website using their network of users and gathering feedback. Once this is completed there are potentially further avenues to explore with the DAISI project on supporting digital skills and inclusion. This work is on-going, and progress will be reported back updates to our website and to a future meeting.

5.0 **Review of support for residents accessing social tariffs for mobile and broadband**

5.1 Many the mobile and broadband suppliers offer a social tariff for their products these are detailed on the Ofcom website - <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs>. These tariffs are between £10 and £23 per month for broadband and £10 and £15 per month for mobile.

5.2 To access these tariffs a resident must be on one central government's administered benefits such as Universal Credit. To raise awareness for these we recently ran a campaign on social media highlighting these tariffs. We have also engaged directly with our residents who receive Universal Credit. Where there is an email address on record, this was used to communicate otherwise the information was included alongside a letter to them. This information is also shared on our website in our cost-of-living section <https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/community-living/cost-of-living/>.

5.3 Increased partnership working with projects like DAISI and other organisations, could provide more direct support to residents of Gloucester. This could be by providing a Digital Inclusion Navigator role that could co-ordinate support across the city. Tewkesbury Borough Council in partnership with the ILB and GRCC (DAISI) have recently launched this service.

6.0 **Review Gloucester City Council's website accessibility**

6.1 Since the motion was passed in November 2023, a considerable work has been carried out to review the accessibility of the website and make improvements. The council has invested in automated scanning tools that continually review our website content and suggest where changes are needed, why they need to be done and what needs to be done to correct them. When scanning of the website first began, the site met around 68% of the compliance framework. Following reviews and several upgrades to the web hosting the scanning tools now indicate the website is achieving 99% compliance.

6.2 The council is committed to ensuring that its online presence has the highest possible levels of accessibility and as such we will continue to work in partnership with organisations like DAISI to review and feedback on our sites along with ensuring any reported problems on the site are quickly resolved.

7.0 Future work

7.1 The Council will continue to explore its partnership with DAISI to support ways of improving digital inclusion across the city. The council will also explore where it can use other locations and groups within the community, such as libraries, to support residents with digital inclusion. Progress on this work will be reported at a future meeting.

8.0 Social Value Considerations

8.1 In alignment with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018, our commitment extends to ensuring digital inclusion across all our services. This legislation, which came into force on 23 September 2018, mandates that public sector websites are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities.

8.2 Our digital services are designed to be inclusive, providing equal access and opportunities for all residents, regardless of their abilities. We are dedicated to:

- Conducting regular accessibility audits of our websites to identify and address any barriers that might prevent users from accessing information and services.
- Publishing an accessibility statement on our website, outlining our compliance with the accessibility regulations and providing information on our commitment to digital inclusion.
- Responding promptly to accessibility audits and fixing any issues within the stipulated 12-week period to ensure ongoing compliance with the regulations.

8.3 We recognize the importance of supporting residents on lower incomes to access affordable broadband and mobile services and will continue to review how best to support residents access to social tariffs for broadband and mobile phone access.

9.0 Environmental Implications

9.1 Nil

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 £4,200 for work with DAISI to come from existing budgets

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

11.1 Nil

12.0 Legal Implications

12.1 The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 place an obligation on public sector bodies to comply with the accessibility requirement that is set out in the Regulations. Failure to comply with the obligations could lead to enforcement action being taken against a public sector by body and/or failure to comply with our public sector equalities duties.

13.0 Reasons for Recommendations

13.1 To note progress made

14.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

14.1

Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-compliance with Accessibility Regulations: Failure to meet the standards set by the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 could lead to legal consequences and damage the council's reputation.

Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced Service Delivery: By complying with accessibility regulations, the council can improve service delivery and ensure that all residents have equal access to digital services.• Innovation and Development: Addressing the risks associated with digital services can lead to innovation, such as the development of more secure and user-friendly platforms.• Partnerships and Collaboration: Exploring partnerships, like the one with the DAISI project, can provide opportunities to improve digital services and leverage external expertise.• Cost Savings: Effective risk management and embracing digital opportunities can lead to long-term cost savings and better resource allocation.

15.0 Community Safety Implications

15.1 Nil

16.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

16.1 Nil

Background Documents: None