

Accessibility Policy

September 2019

Property and Facilities



milton keynes council



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Version Control

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Introduction

This policy relates to how the Equality Act 2010 will be considered and applied across all operational and commercial buildings where services are provided to members of the public, including the councils' core operational buildings.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act and protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act makes it against the law to discriminate against someone with one or more of the nine protected characteristics:

- age
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- gender
- sexual orientation.

Property owners and occupiers are affected by the provisions, which prohibit discrimination in relation to the disposal of property; giving consent to the disposal of property; managing property; providing a service to the public; and exercising a public function.

The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in 2011. It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees and requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Property and Facilities Team

The Property and Facilities Team will:

- Understand the Equality Act 2010 and its implications.
- Ensure that wherever possible, budgets are prioritised to ensure that accessibility improvements are carried out efficiently.
- Undertake a rolling programme of accessibility audits for all buildings and sites where services are provided to members of the public to ascertain if they are compliant with the Act and identify opportunities for improvements.
- Wherever it is not possible to improve accessibility issues in the building, ensure that an Accessibility Statement is made publicly available.
- Identify poorly performing assets and make recommendations to rationalise the property portfolio through relevant policies and procedures.
- Undertake Equality and Fairness Impact Assessments where relevant.
- When buying or selling, managing, maintaining, refurbishing or designing our properties the council will consider the implications of the Equality Act.

Accessibility Audits

The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments to be made in relation to accessibility. In practice, this means that due regard must be given to any specific needs of likely building users that might be reasonably met. Milton Keynes Council will develop and implement a plan to conduct accessibility audits for all buildings and sites where services are provided to members of the public, including the councils' core operational buildings, in order to assess compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The aim is to undertake these access audits on a rolling program with each cycle of audits taking no longer than three years to complete.

Accessibility work identified through the surveys will be broken down into three priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Items requiring immediate consideration as they are Health & Safety issues.
- **Priority 2:** Items requiring consideration for inclusion into short/medium term work programmes.
- **Priority 3:** Items for consideration/evaluation for inclusion within long term upgrading /refurbishment projects.

Allocation of funds

In order to allocate the funds available in the most efficient manner, Property and Facilities will prioritise works using the following criteria as a guideline:

- Where the issue relates to a core council building where services are provided to members of the public.
- A specific access issue has been brought to the Councils' attention by a member of the public or staff.
- There is a maintenance project planned that could integrate the work identified through the accessibility audits.
- There is a major refurbishment or construction project planned that requires additional funds in order to meet full compliance (over and above Part M), additional funding would require relevant approval.

The prioritisation of the works identified through the audits will allow Property and Facilities to focus funding on the most important work.

Accessibility Statements

For properties that provide services to the public and where it is not reasonably possible to improve access, an Accessibility Statement will be produced and made available to the public on site and online.

The statement will indicate the limitations to access and the systems or alternatives put in place in order to ensure the service is delivered to all.

Property and Facilities will lead on accessibility matters relating to non-residential property on behalf of Milton Keynes Council.

Process

Accessibility audits will form the basis of prioritising accessibility works in all buildings and sites where services are provided to members of the public.

Additional accessibility requests will be considered on a case by case basis in consultation with the relevant service area, having first considered removing or altering any feature preventing access; and/or providing reasonable means of avoiding the feature.

If it is not possible to improve accessibility to a building, an Accessibility Statement will be made publicly available.

Equality and Fairness Impact Assessments should be undertaken to support most accessibility requests. Property and Facilities will ensure that any adaptations do not have a negative impact on anyone protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Any new operational acquisitions must either be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, or capable of becoming compliant, unless there are exceptional reasons.

Any new designed buildings, extensions, or refurbishments must be compliant with the Equality Act 2010, Building Regulations Part M, and care and attention will be paid to ensure that all of the protected characteristics are considered within the design.

Authority

Authority for the improvement, refurbishment and maintenance of the Council's commercial property portfolio rests with the Director of Environment and Property but is delegated to the Head of Property and Facilities and subject to available budget.

Property and Facilities

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