

HEATHFIELD AND WALDRON PARISH COUNCIL

DISABILITY EQUALITY STATEMENT

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a Disability Equality Duty (DED) upon all public authorities. There is a requirement for all local authorities to have due regard to

- Eliminating discrimination
- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Eliminating harassment
- Encouraging participation of disabled people in public life
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people

Heathfield and Waldron Parish Council recognise the importance of developing a community where all residents can participate fully and equally. This Disability Equality Statement includes the proposed strategy for delivery of services, not just changes to buildings or adjustments for individuals. It aims to raise awareness of disability equality so that it becomes an integral part of all aspects of Parish Council functions.

There is a requirement for disabled people to be involved in the actual process of drawing up a scheme and not just form part of a consultative role. One of the challenges of the process, therefore, is the ability to achieve the active involvement of people with a wide range of disabilities who will have very different needs.

The Parish Council understand that this Statement is only the first step of the process and that there are considerable difficulties ahead in achieving the objectives of an action plan which might cover a period of 3 – 5 years. It is also recognised that the action plan targets also need to be realistic in terms of financial implications. The Council is already facing difficult budget decisions this year and it is anticipated that this will become even more of a challenge in the next few years.

Functions

An assessment of the functions and responsibilities of the Parish Council and the way in which they affect people with disabilities is in the process of being carried out and the involvement of disabled people who need to use our services will be vital in this task.

Below are some of the areas of responsibility that will have implications under the DED and it is envisaged that this list will require regular updating as new functions are identified.

Land and Properties

Burial Ground has a rural feel and appearance and access to individual graves can be difficult depending upon ground conditions.

Lucas Memorial Hall and Heathfield Community Centre – accessibility needs to be confirmed and facilities such as hearing loops checked for suitability.

Recreation Grounds need suitable paths to play areas and consideration needs to be given to the requirements of all users. Clubs using Parish Council pitches need to prove that they welcome players of varying abilities. Suitability of fencing, signage and gates needs to be ascertained.

Darch's Wood, Jubilee Park and public open spaces at Green Lane need to be assessed in terms of needs of disabled people.

Parish Council Office

The limitations of the office in terms of access arrangements are acknowledged. A bell has been installed to alert staff to those requiring assistance but the lack of space available means that those with mobility problems do have difficulty. It is not possible for wheelchair users or those with mobility problems to access the upstairs rooms and this means that no meetings can take place at the office. Consideration needs to be given to ways in which to meet the needs of other users.

Communication

Information published by the Parish Council is available in larger print upon request. Consideration needs to be given to other needs, such as putting newsletters and publications onto tape for those who are hard of hearing or having access to documents in Braille.