

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	17th July 2025 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Cathy Dean, Communities and Admin Manager		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	10.1 Disability Pride Month/ Equal Access Group Updates		
Background	<p>Congleton Town Council is working with residents to make its activities and the town more accessible. The Equal Access in Congleton group, chaired by disability advocate Deborah Lawson and Congleton people with a wide range of disabilities, is advising the Council on improving life for people with disabilities. While some issues lie outside the Council's control, understanding them helps to improve accessibility for all.</p>		
UPDATES	<p>July is Disability Pride Month, and Congleton Town Council has created a social media campaign to mark the occasion.</p> <p>Local author Deborah will launch her new book, <i>Damson's Friendship Wish</i>—a story about inclusion and kindness—during July. At Congleton Town Council's Play Day on 29th July, a colouring competition will give children the chance to win a signed copy of the book, with all entrants receiving a themed bookmark.</p> <p>As a social purpose project, a portion of the book's profits will fund free donations to schools, hospitals, and charities. From mid-September, Deborah will also donate books and educational packs to Congleton primary schools.</p> <p>Disability Welcome Scheme.</p> <p>The Disability Welcome Scheme uses practical checklists to help businesses improve accessibility in areas such as premises access, communication, staff awareness, and the overall environment.</p> <p>Congleton Information Centre, Crown Bank Dental, and Congleton Veterinary Centre have all achieved Silver Disability Welcome Awards. So far, 11 checklists have been submitted, with several other businesses close to reaching Silver status. With just a few small improvements, some could progress to the Gold Award.</p> <p>The Town Council will continue working with businesses, offering practical advice and simple interventions to support accessibility improvements.</p> <p>All businesses with a shop front are encouraged to take part. Leaflets are available from the Congleton Information Centre and on the Town Council's website.</p> <p>https://www.congleton-tc.gov.uk/business-support-development/disability-welcome-congleton/</p>		

	<p>Deborah Lawson, Chair of the Equal Access Group, was invited to speak on BBC Radio Stoke recently. They contacted Deborah about a case currently in the national papers, where a blind man was asked to leave a restaurant. The Congleton Disability Welcome Scheme was mentioned - https://deborah-lawson.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/deborah-radio-interview-20.06.25.mp3</p> <p>A member of the public commented on the interview via email:</p> <p>“Yesterday (Friday) I was listening to BBC radio and heard a great interview with a lady called Dr Deborah Lawson who was talking about business accessibility. It was very good. I've never heard anyone make inclusion and accessibility so accessible and straightforward for businesses to understand. Instead of feeling like it's a minefield, after hearing the chat, I feel like she shifted my attitude in a really good way.</p> <p>She mentioned about the work your council do to make the area more inclusive and I have to say, I had a google, and looked on your site and I was very impressed. If only more councils were like yours! Well done.”</p>
Financial Implications	<p>Council via a request from the Community Committee, agreed on a budget for the Equal Access projects on 29.08.24</p> <p>CO/10/2425 – 1) Support to the group in implementing a promotional Campaign for the Public (including social media and high-quality video) £1000. Disability Guide to Congleton £1000 Business (Shop/Pub) ‘Disability Welcome’ Scheme (certificates & stickers) £250.</p>
Environmental Implications	<p>Considered as part of each piece of work.</p>
Inclusivity Diversity Impact	<p>Equality and diversity are at the very heart of this campaign. We want to make Congleton as accessible as possible and communicate the town’s offer so that disabled people can plan visits to Congleton with confidence.</p>
Decision Required	<p>That Councillors note this report.</p>