

## **Accessibility Advisory Group Annual Report 2017/18**

### **1. Overview**

#### **1.1 Accessibility Advisory Group (AAG) structure and members**

##### **Accessibility Advisory Group membership:**

##### **Co-Chairs**

Michael Bealing

Nick Ruane

##### **Members**

Tristram Ingham

Alan Royal

Solmaz Nazari

Stuart Mills

Rachel Noble

Erikka Helliwell

Rosie MacLeod

##### **Staff Support**

Crispian Franklin Team Leader – Acting Advisor

Helena Patuwai – Democracy Advisor

Jenny Rains Community Services Manager

Anna-Marie Miller Community Resilience Advisor

The AAG continues to be co-chaired by both Michael Bealing and Nick Ruane where Michael is coming to the end of his second term in October. The group will need to appoint a new co-chair by October.

Membership of the AAG has changed over the last term. One of the AAG members was re-appointed to his second term but then left early this year.

These are the members from the previous term who have left AAG:

Christine O'Sullivan and Lee Rutene left on 27 June 2017, Christine Richardson left on 26 September 2017, Julia Aguilar (2<sup>nd</sup> term) left in October 2017 and Tim Pate (2<sup>nd</sup> term) left in February 2018.

New appointments were made to replace the vacancies with the appointment of Stuart Mills, Nick Ruane, Solmaz Nazari Orakani who were appointed in August 2017 and Rachel Noble and Erikka Helliwell in March 2018.

Changes to AAG support personnel in the 2017-2018 year included the consecutive appointment of the following Democracy Advisors: Delia Nolan, Nevada Lee Mariu, Carline Thomas, Caleb Bridgeman (Senior Democracy Advisor) and Crispian Franklin (Team Leader). There were also changes to the AAG support team with Jenny Rains and Anna-Marie-Miller from Community Services providing support to AAG from June and Helena Patuwai from July 2018 onwards.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Accessibility Advisory Group**

- Advise Council on how to help grow a great and accessible City, where barriers to people with impairments are minimised.
- Bring lived experience and knowledge to Council around accessibility issues in the context of Council's roles and priorities.

The AAG will not be seen as representing all views on accessibility in the City.

## **1.3 AAG meetings and topics of discussion**

The AAG has had a busy year. Over 11 meetings that were held, AAG have provided feedback to Council on a wide range of areas including:

- Parking and mobility parks
- Several cycling projects and initiatives
- A number of waterfront developments
- The Chinese garden
- City planning
- the 10 year plan
- Let's Get Wellington Moving (several times)
- the development of the new Accessibility Plan
- The Accessibility Awards
- Walking initiatives and the communication of them
- The accessibility Wellington Airport
- Accessibility and museums

## 1.4 Challenges

Accessibility is core Council business because it is a factor in everything the Council does. The first thing people think of about accessibility is the built environment. It is clearly an important issue. Uneven surfaces were identified as the most pressing concern raised in a recent Council survey about accessibility issues in Wellington City. But the accessibility of information is also critical, because it impacts the extent that people can use council services, in democracy and get the information they seek. Because people with a disability are overrepresented in unemployment statistics, accessibility is also a core issue in social housing and affordable housing.

This year, the AAG welcomed aboard five new members. The new team members bring a depth of experience in leadership at a national level on disability issues, accessibility and inclusive policy design.

AAG's core challenge remains the same. Despite accessibility being at the core of all council business, there are still no dedicated subject matter experts on accessibility within Council. Therefore, the AAG is the only consistent source of accessibility advice within the council. That advice is constrained to a maximum of 12 2-hour meetings annually. That advice is only heard by those that attend and does not transfer to others in the organisation.

We have been regularly confronted by the gap in accessibility subject matter expertise within Council. On a regular basis the AGG has needed to explain the basic technicalities of accessibility requirements to officers. For example, we often need to reiterate the national standards for accessible information. This is a specialisation not held by council communications staff, presently. We are also regularly asked to advise on non-compliant mobility parking designs - with council staff being unaware that non-compliance can lead to 'mobility parks' that are inaccessible and don't get used. Recently, AAG was asked for its view on 'giving up' parks in the CDB, so that they can be made available for other users. Meanwhile, parks in the same area are being designated as car-share only. Because the Council committed to inclusiveness, positive ageing and resilience then it also needs to be committed to accessibility and accessible design standards.

New Zealand is currently undergoing examination by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Part of that process is the answering of a List of Issues (LOI). Two questions within the List of Issues (LOI) that Government is required to answer have specific relevance for the work of Council and AAG.

*(c) Measures taken for the provision of universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green and public spaces for persons with disabilities in line with Goal 11.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and considering particular barriers faced by women, children and older persons with disabilities;*

*(d) Steps to ensure that the wide application of the concept of **universal design** is endorsed by authorities at all levels of public service provision;*

Council must be mindful of this larger international challenge as Central Government currently is. To meet this challenge will require information from Council to support central Governments work at the UN. With AAG as a trusted partner to support this work resourcing must be dedicated to specific technical subject matter expertise to support Council and AAG with the technical nature of much of this work.

Accessibility is an area of increasing importance and policy significance, locally, nationally and internationally. Accessibility cuts across all council activities. AAG believes that the Council is committed to improving accessibility. But it is an area that demands greater in-house capability and capacity on the technical expertise on delivering accessibility.