

## **AGENDA ITEM 7 - Petition - "Accessible beach 4 Pompey"**

### Administration's response:

The City Council welcomes this petition and shares the objective that all residents should be able to access the beach and the sea, as long as this is safe. The City Council is pleased to have met and spoken with the residents producing this petition on a number of occasions and to have been supportive of the objectives in the petition both in regards to the actions which we have been able to implement to date and also to share the wider research we have undertaken.

The City Council has already provided two new access areas across the beach for wheelchair users including the necessary associated changes to the immediate vicinity such as disabled parking bays, replacement of sections of matting and the introduction of a turning circle of matting on the Eastney stretch. As soon as current circumstances allow Shop Mobility will have a presence on the seafront to further facilitate access through their pre-bookable mobility scooter service.

The beach is an active and complex moving form, especially the closer you get to the sea where even the more stable shingle at the Eastney end has sharply sloping banks down to the sea. At times the direction and volume of movement of the beach shingle changes. Providing an access point that does not move, on top of a beach that does move is technically difficult. Officers have linked to a number of projects both in the UK and further afield with similar technical challenges to explore solutions and share information. We are aware of some trials this summer in England which we hope might identify potential solutions for similar shingle landscapes with an all-terrain wheelchair option from the United States. We will report back through the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development's portfolio decision meeting later this year with an update on what we have discovered from these trials.

It is really important that the City Council puts resident's safety first, and that any access across the beach is safe, particularly for residents with health needs. The City Council cannot provide a solution where the advice we receive is that this is not safe to use. To the best of our knowledge the successful beach access schemes in the UK are all on sandy beaches although there is also much we can learn from these schemes about the breadth of infrastructure needed to support full access.

The rebuilding of the Southsea sea defences gives us an opportunity to be able to build in disabled access in a way that has not been done before and the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development has arranged for two members of the Portsmouth Disabled Access group to join the stakeholder advisory group for the Coastal Defence Scheme and an invitation has also been extended to Portsmouth Disability Forum and accepted. This is however a long term solution but we will continue to work to provide disabled access to the beach and seashore in a safe and manageable way.

Proposed by (Name) Councillor Steve Pitt

Seconded by (Name) Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson