

## **Report of Chair of Bristol Disability Equality Commission to Full Council November 2022**

1. Alun Davies was appointed chair of the commission in September 2021. In December 2021 an open recruitment process for commissioners was undertaken. There were 22 applications. 17 Disabled people were interviewed.

2. 11 applicants were appointed in February 2022. These are:

- Beth Richards – individual commissioner
  
- Gordon Richardson – individual commissioner
  
- Justin Smith – Centre for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People, organisation commissioner
  
- Laura Welti – Bristol Disability Equality Forum, organisation commissioner
  
- Leah Martindale – individual commissioner
  
- Lynne Parfit – individual commissioner
  
- Maria Mighty – individual commissioner
  
- Megan Belcher – individual commissioner
  
- Phil Gingell – individual commissioner

- Ruth Pickersgill – West of England Inclusive Living, organisation

commissioner

- Val Stansfield – Bristol Reclaiming Independent Living, organisation

commissioner

3. The members selected bring a very wide range of experience, knowledge and skill to the role. The remaining four commission places will be filled by January 2023.
4. The Commission held its first meeting in February 2022 and has met twice since. It's terms of reference have been agreed. Commissioners have been identified to lead on specific work areas. Commissioners have been appointed to a number of One City boards, including Children and Young people, Culture, Homes and Communities, Transport and Commissioners participate in the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
5. The Commission chair has been meeting with leaders of key organisations in the city. These have included senior Bristol City Council officers and chief executives of health bodies. The chair has also been exploring avenues of additional core funding for the work of the commission. A successful application was made to Quartet for £5,000 of funding per year for the next two years.
6. In August 2022, the Commission successfully applied to the National Lottery for funding. This funding will be used to undertake an engagement exercise with Disabled people across the city. Disabled people will be asked to identify their priorities and issues. The engagement will begin in December 2022 and end in March 2023.

7. The outcome of the engagement will be used to develop the Commission's action plan, this will be launched by the end of May 2023.
8. Commissioners have engaged with the relevant officers about the disproportionate implications of the Clean Air Zone on Disabled people. Dialogue is on-going. There has been progress on ensuring greater accessibility of the administrative systems, and consideration is being given to other mitigations. The commission remains concerned particularly over the issue of Disabled people who have a Blue Badge but not one specific vehicle.
9. The Commission has engaged positively with Adult Social Care in terms of implementation of budget savings in 2022-23. Work is on-going regarding the delivery of the recommendations of the Bubb report concerning Autistic people and people with learning difficulties. Alun Davies gave a progress report on this issue to Scrutiny in June 2022.
10. The Commission has engaged with West of England Combined Authority concerning the loss of the Dial-a-ride service suddenly in August 2022. This service provided vital transport provision to many Disabled people in the city. The West of England Combined Authority remains hopeful of identifying another provider soon.
11. The main issue of concern for the Commission are the impact of the cost of living crisis on Disabled people, and potential reductions in services across the private and public sector resulting from the current economic difficulties and recession. The Commission is extremely concerned that the levels of service reductions being anticipated across the private and public sector will result in significant reductions to services on which many Disabled people rely. The Commission would welcome urgent discussions with all partners and stakeholders across the city to understand the challenges and consider mitigations.