

Deputation to Council, Speech

Name of group: Pavements are for People

Lord Mayor and Members of Council, thank you for allowing us the time to come and talk to you today.

With us today Debbie Linford Engagement Officer for Guide Dogs for the Blind, Maqsood Sheikh Regional Campaigns Officer for RNIB, Mary Naylor volunteer campaigner and National Federation of the Blind member & TBC.

We are part of a working group set up with the help and support of Leeds City Council & the Police and Crime Commissioner called Pavements are for People to.

Together we have held action days, held focus groups, visited waste crews, given talks to raise awareness and looked at different ways in which we can keep our foot paths safe and clear for all pedestrians.

With somebody becoming blind or partially sighted every fifteen minutes, our streets must be more accessible, yet they remain a daily obstacle course. Getting to work, the shops, the GP surgery, or accessing local services can be like running the gauntlet, with increased fear and anxiety, and a real risk of injury. Some people have told us that they are so intimidated by the risks outside they stay home and become isolated.

We are here to ask Leeds City Council to commit to a Street Charter that puts a clear policy at the heart of your local decision making.

A Street Charter is a simple document that shows a commitment, or list of commitments, which is abided by everyone involved.

By signing the Charter, Leeds City Council makes a pledge to implement the Charter's action points.

Local authority's such as Hull, Liverpool and Solihull have committed to a Charter with city's such as York to follow soon. Charters are a tried and tested engagement tool that can be used to recognise quality, set standards, define duties, gain agreement and establish goals.

We feel a Charter is needed to work towards a long-term solution, that takes into account the local geography, characteristics and features of the area, while at the same time being shaped by the knowledge of people who rely upon safe streets and clear footpaths.

We **have / can** supplied you with copies of other local authority's Charters and a draft of a Charter which highlights some of the key issues we have found in Leeds.

Before we finish I would like to read to you some quotes from blind & partially sighted in the Leeds area:

"I heard some people laugh when I walked into a tree. I was very upset"

Sometimes people park completely on the pavement and blocked it totally and I have to walk in the road which is very scary, I hurt my arm on a door mirror”

“I avoid going out on bin day if I can”

On behalf of Pavement are for People thank you for today.

We sincerely hope that Leeds City Council will join the growing list of councils by committing to a Street Charter.

Lord Mayor and Members of Council, thank you.