



RUNNYMEDE ACCESS LIAISON GROUP

ACCESS APPRAISAL OF VIRGINIA WATER LIBRARY
CARRIED OUT ON 06 JULY 2013

Those present:

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Please address any comments or queries by e-mail or print to:

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ACCESS APPRAISAL VIRGINIA WATER LIBRARY

LOCATION AND SURROUNDINGS	Virginia Water Library occupies part of a 1930s retail/residential building fronting Station Parade, although the library entrance is off the road linking Station Parade to the Bourne Car Park. Floor level at this point is some 500mm above pavement level. At present the library occupies one room only, but we understand that Surrey County Council plan to take over an adjoining vacant room which will double the floor area. We were told that work should be complete by the end of the year.
PARKING	
Do information and direction signs clearly identify and locate the building?	There is a fingerboard in Station Parade.
Is the directional signage to the main entrance clear?	The library entrance is set back within the building façade and the 'Public Library' lettering over the entrance is very discreet. However, we understand that a new sign will shortly be installed subject to planning permission being obtained.
Are there parking facilities?	Parking for the general public is available in the Bourne Car Park, 50 yds away and in the Memorial Gardens Car Park on the other side of Station Parade. There are three staff parking spaces at the rear of the building.
Are accessible parking spaces clearly signposted and near the main entrance?	There are two designated disabled parking spaces in the Bourne Car Park. However, there is no dropped kerb to enable wheelchair users to access the pavement leading to the entrance. There are also three disabled parking spaces in the Memorial Gardens Car Park.
ENTRANCE	
Is the main entry ramped with handrails on both sides or level access?	The main entry is ramped with a handrail on one side. A council waste bin was restricting access at the time of our visit. There are also three steps up to the entry, with reflective nosings.
Is the minimum width of the main entrance door 800mm?	Yes
Are the doors manual or automatic?	There are two sets of pad operated automatic doors forming a draught lobby.
RECEPTION	
Is the main reception area easily identifiable from the building entrance?	Yes
Is the reception desk an appropriate height for wheelchair users?	The reception desk is sufficiently small for there to be no problem.
Is there an induction loop installed at the reception desk?	Yes. The loop is clearly indicated, is tested monthly and works well.

ACCESS APPRAISAL VIRGINIA WATER LIBRARY

LIBRARY AREAS	
Is there good lighting generally and in particular in the reception area, toilets and corridors.?	Overhead lighting is good and there is also plenty of natural light.
Are internal and external pedestrian routes free from clutter and obstructions?	The bookshelves are somewhat cramped at present but this is likely to improve when the additional floor area becomes available. There is a children's area. There are a number of upholstered chairs with arms.
Are library shelves accessible?	All bookshelves are accessible for those in wheelchairs. At the end of each shelving unit is a label explaining the library's colour coding system: an excellent idea.
Is printed information available in large print?	Yes, there is a good selection of large print books.
Is audio information available as an alternative to visual print or text?	Yes, audio books are available.
What other facilities are available?	Free wi-fi. A photocopier. A large, visible clock. Art work on display from Virginia Water Art Society. There is a shelf to accommodate a laptop, but the plug-in point would be out of reach for wheelchair users. There is no Braille signage in the library.
COMPUTER AREA	
Is the computer area available to those with disabilities?	There are two computers, one of which has a slightly larger screen. Unfortunately neither has a specialised screen reader for the visually impaired.
MEANS OF ESCAPE	
Is there an emergency escape in case of fire?	The main entrance is also the emergency escape route and is clearly marked as such. When the new space comes on stream there will be a further escape door to the rear of the building, which has a steep ramp down with handrails both sides. The new escape door is slightly under-width (730mm) and currently opens against the direction of escape. Parked vehicles were blocking the potential escape route at the time of our visit.
What alarm response procedures are in place, and escape strategy for visitors who need assistance?	There is no alarm bell system at present but the library is sufficiently small for this not to be a problem. Staff are on hand to give assistance.
ACCESSIBLE TOILETS	
Is there an accessible toilet?	Currently there is only one toilet for staff use. When the extra floor space is available, a disabled toilet will be incorporated.

ACCESS APPRAISAL VIRGINIA WATER LIBRARY

CUSTOMER SERVICE	
Are any staff trained in using sign language?	No
Are staff available to read information for people?	Yes
Do the staff have a friendly and helpful manner?	Several friendly staff were on duty during our visit. Since the beginning of the year the library has been successfully run by volunteers of which there are about 50, all of whom undergo training.
Is one to one assistance available?	Yes
Are guide/assistance dogs welcome?	Yes
Have staff received any disability awareness training?	At least one member of staff has received such training.
GENERAL COMMENTS	We were very much impressed with the enterprise and enthusiasm shown by the volunteer staff, who help to make the library such a pleasant and welcoming public facility.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Install dropped kerb to the pavement leading to the Bourne Car Park and outside the library. 2. Relocate the laptop plug-in point to make it more easily accessible for wheelchair users. 3. Consider acquiring NVDA screen readers. These can be downloaded from www.nvaccess.org from its designers in Australia. A donation of \$5 is suggested because the provider's intentions are altruistic and not commercial. 4. Ensure all staff receive disability awareness training. 5. Ensure the entrance ramp remains unobstructed.