

As such, the Human Rights and Equalities Board was prevented from taking any position on the access question.

This is a defining moment for York as a human rights city. The Blue Badge access issue is by far the most challenging human rights challenge we have faced since the 2017 declaration. Parts of the human rights infrastructure in the city, built over the last decade, have failed. Specifically, we have serious concerns about a number of aspects of the functioning, leadership and credibility of the Human Rights and Equalities Board and its influence within the Council and wider community.

Secondly, the Council-funded Community Voices project, run by the Network, has also been compromised. Set up to engage groups not reached by normal consultation processes, Community Voices is intended to support marginalised groups to set their own agendas and bring them to the Council and other stakeholders in the city on their own terms. It is a supreme irony that this year Community Voices has worked with disability groups in the city – precisely those groups ignored by the Council in their recent decision.

The depth of concern in York Human Rights City Network leads it to:

- **express** its dismay at both the process and the substance of the decision the Council Executive has taken.
- **call** for a statement from the Council leadership on what its commitment to York being the UK's first Human Rights City means. Is there an ambition or intent and shared commitment to York being a human rights city, and if so, what does this entail in concrete terms, including in the council's policies and procedures, strategy, and training?
- **call** for an in-depth review of the Human Rights and Equalities Board, its terms of reference, leadership, way of working and role within the Council.
- **call** for a similar review of the Community Voices project, as there is no point in running such a programme if the Council has no intention of listening to the voices and agendas that emerge from disadvantaged groups in the city.
- **offer** its support to York Accessibility Action in its legal challenge to the Council on the access issue; and to the wider disability community in any further campaign to have the current decision overturned.

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