

## Meeting needs of disabled people a key consideration of Council's work

**D**ID you know that around 25,000 of Charnwood's residents have a limiting illness or disability?

Considering the needs of people with disabilities is a key element Charnwood Borough Council takes into account when designing its services and carrying out recruitment.

The Council is constantly looking to improve services to ensure disabled people have free and easy access to them.

This includes Loughborough Shop Mobility, located at the Town Hall, accessible public toilets throughout the Borough, sheltered housing provision, the Wild Card Leisure Pass and the use of the two ticks employment standard which guarantees a job interview for any disabled applicant that meets the essential criteria.

Involving disabled people and receiving their feedback increases the likelihood of improving Council services for the better.

The Authority currently works with Charnwood Action Group and Charnwood Disability Forum to better understand the needs of people with disabilities in the Borough.

And the Council would also like to hear from residents about how it can improve services for disabled people.

Cllr Peter Lewis, Charnwood's Cabinet member for Equalities, said: "I've seen throughout Charnwood a spirit which recognises these things are not up to 'them' – they are up to each of 'us'.

"Together we can make a difference.

"What we're asking is that each of us stops to think for a moment about what it means to be cast aside or placed outside because of difference, because of incapacity.

"It can be terrifyingly frightening and incredibly lonely. I'm asking



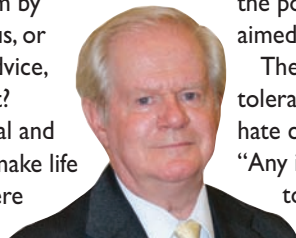
**MAKING LIFE EASIER:** Charnwood Borough Council is constantly looking at improving services for disabled people. Below: Cllr Peter Lewis.

**'We can all make a difference'**

that anyone who reads this does not just say, 'Yes', but considers any way in which he or she can show support.

"Look around. Where are the hindrances, the barriers, the dangers? Can you help us overcome them by working with us, or contributing advice, time and effort?"

"In a practical and personal way make life worth living here



for those who sometimes are driven to feel it isn't."

One area the Council will be focusing on over the coming months is hate crime.

A particular concern that Charnwood Borough Council and the police have is of hate crime aimed at disabled people.

The council has a zero tolerance approach to any form of hate crime, which is defined as: "Any incident which is perceived to be based upon prejudice

towards or hatred of the victim because of their disability or so perceived by the victim or any other person".

Hate crime is especially serious as victims are chosen and selected due to their personal characteristics and are not just random victims of crime.

"It's so easy to compensate for our own fears and frustrations, our own being 'put down', by taking it out on other people," added Cllr Lewis. "We all know the bully, who seeks out a victim, a weirdo, and puts the verbal boot in.

"It makes people feel big, secure and strong instead of puny and inadequate. Yes, it's human nature, you say – but that does not excuse it.

"A compassionate community is what we aspire to in Charnwood, where all are valued and none excluded. But it's up to everyone of us to make it a reality"

Charnwood Borough Council is a reporting centre for the Leicestershire Hate Crime Monitoring project.

This means people can come into the council offices and report hate crime to trained staff.

If you or anyone you know has been a victim of a crime due to their disability please come forward and we will do everything in our power to bring justice for the victim.

Charnwood Borough Council has developed a Disability Equality Scheme to formalise its commitment to promoting and delivering disability equality for all.

The document can be requested in a number of formats including Braille, audio cassette/CD, large print and electronic formats, floppy disk/CD-ROM/e-mail/word/portable document format (PDF) and rich text format (RTF). Please contact the Communications Team on (01509) 634 603 or email communications@charnwood.gov.uk.

If you want to be involved in making Charnwood more accessible to people with disabilities, please contact Janki Manek, Diversity Officer, on (01509) 632 527 or email equality@charnwood.gov.uk.