

**DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY - UPDATE
(Report by the Head of Administration)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update and further analysis of the consultation with District Council Members and Town and Parish Councils on disability access.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will recall at their meeting held on 4th December 2007, consideration was given to the results of a consultation exercise on access for those with disabilities to premises, facilities and other sites in the District, excluding those provided by the District Council. Members discussed parking on pavements, dropped kerbs and access to buses as potential areas of further investigation.
- 2.2 The Panel also referred to the benefits of introducing, for Council decisions, a dedicated group of consultees representing those with learning, physical and sensory impairments. Members went on to endorse a suggestion that those who cared for individuals with disabilities should be provided with free bus travel for work purposes. Finally, Members requested that Directions Plus (now Disability Cambridgeshire) be invited to a future meeting to discuss the study.

3 FURTHER CONSULTATION

Dropped Kerbs

- 3.1 The Panel decided that information on the precise location of defective dropped kerbs and areas where dropped kerbs should to be installed and their priority should be obtained from the Town and Parish Councils that had responded to questions on this subject. As a result, Town and Parish Councils who identified problem areas have been sent a letter requesting this information; a map that corresponds with their areas has been enclosed with each letter.
- 3.2 Once the information referred to above has been obtained, it will be forwarded to the County Council either for action or for identification of areas that fall outside its remit. Attention is drawn to the fact that those Councils that had experience of reporting defective kerbs or of requesting new ones had received a positive and expedient response from the County Council.

Illegal Parking

- 3.3 The Panel also asked that the Town and Parish Councils that indicated problems with illegal parking were consulted on where these problems occur. A map has been sent to those Town and Parish Councils in the same way as that reported in paragraph 3.1. This information will be forwarded to the Police for comment.

4 OTHER ACTION

Public Transport

- 4.1 As a result of the survey, Members asked that bus operators were informed of their views concerning the need for more low level buses and for public transport employees to be trained on the needs of those with disabilities. This request has been carried out for their consideration and responses are awaited from the bus operating companies.
- 4.2 Members also agreed to refer to the County Council a suggestion that those who cared for individuals with disabilities should be provided with free bus travel for work purposes. This request has been made to the County Council for their consideration. Carers UK recently instigated a campaign for recognised travel for carers so Members' comments also have been referred to this organisation.

5 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Transport

- 5.1 As requested at the last meeting, a comprehensive list of all issues raised from the questionnaire has been compiled (see Appendix A). Further analysis now is given to the issues raised and similarities between Councils are highlighted.
- 5.2 Many authorities reported on the infrequency and irregularity of public transport services. It was noted that the type of bus provided often was ill-equipped to cater for the needs of disabled passengers. This lack of access to vehicles such as buses was mentioned by most respondents reflecting, in particular, the needs of rural parishes. It was suggested that more low level buses should be provided and that the need for appropriate dropped kerbs/pathways leading to buses should be addressed as currently they limit individuals' mobility.
- 5.3 The idea of a disabled bus pass was warmly received; however, concerns over the hours in which the holder could use the pass were raised. It was also recorded that there should be a form of carer's bus pass for those who are required to travel with disabled individuals; this has been addressed in Section 4 of the report.

Illegal Parking

- 5.4 Greater penalties for anti-social parking in disabled (accessible) bays and adjustments to roads and paving were highlighted as key solutions to many parking problems. The majority of authorities reported on the inconvenience of illegal parking, in particular, outside schools at peak times and local shops and its effect on members of the public.

Information

- 5.5 It was reported that the majority of information surrounding the needs and requirements of disabled people was sought directly from disabled people themselves and, in relation to friends or family with a disability, from members of the community (see Appendix B for

