

Licensing Committee – 5<sup>th</sup> August 2008

## 6. Update on DDA Taxi Requirements

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### Purpose of the Report

To inform the members of the Licensing Committee of the latest government position on DDA taxi requirements.

### Recommendations

That members note the report.

### Background

Taxis have a key role to play in the provision of door-to-door services for disabled and older people. The combination of the personal service offered by taxis, their wide availability in terms of both time of day or night and area and their door-to-door operations mean that they are of particular value to people with disabilities.

Whilst access to public transport for disabled and older people in recent years has improved considerably, taxis remain a challenge for transport accessibility, primarily due to the structure and organisation of the taxi sector. In particular, the predominant design of vehicles used for this purpose in most countries remains difficult for many disabled and older people to use.

In 1994 ECMT Ministers of Transport approved a resolution which, amongst others, recommended that vehicle manufacturers and designers should be encouraged to address accessibility in the design of all taxis. Although progress in improving the accessibility of taxis has been made in some countries, implementing the 1994 resolution has generally been slow. Only one European country is known to have more than 20percent of its taxi fleet accessible for wheelchair users. Most countries have less than 10 percent, and in some cases none at all.

Given that there are in excess of 45 million disabled people across Europe, including as many as 3 to 4 million wheelchair users, it is clearly important that accessibility to taxi services should be improved.

Following the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 the government announced a target that all taxis in local authority areas should become wheelchair accessible over a 10 year period from 2010. South Somerset District Council was listed to be in the first stage of the DDA roll out commencing 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

The DDA 1995 however does not extend to private hire vehicles and is only aimed at hackney carriage vehicles.

## Current Government DDA Position

Until recently we had no communication from the government with regards to the situation. The last communication we had was dated 2003 when we were informed of the date of the changeover and that the government intended to set the standards for the DDA taxis.

On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008 a letter was sent from the DFT stating that following a number of representations making a case for a broader range of disabled peoples needs to be met in regulation rather than just restricting the matter to wheelchair access. As a result the expected regulations have not been made.

As a result the government is now intending to develop a consultation package for this summer to seek views on the way forward. This will without a doubt set the proposed time scale back from the intended 2010 start date.

The DFT have stated in their letter that accessible taxi policies remain a matter for individual licensing authorities.

## Financial Implications

Currently None

## Implications for Corporate Priorities

Possible impact on corporate aim number 3 improving the health and well being of our citizens.

## Other Implications

Possible criticism for not devising disabled access plan ahead of government requirements

**Background Papers:** *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*  
*Letter from Nigel Dotchin Department for Transport dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008*  
*International Road Transport Union Report "Improving Access to Taxis" 2007*

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