

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD



Report subject	Blue Badge Update
Meeting date	12 May 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report provides an update on the recommended actions made in relation to the Informal working group report update submitted to Corporate and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 October 2024.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: (a) The updates in this report are noted. (b) The Overview and Scrutiny Board provide any further comment
Reason for recommendations	To ensure O&S are aware of the current performance of the blue badge service and actions taken to maintain performance.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Andy Martin
Corporate Director	Matti Raudsepp, Director Customer & Property
Report Authors	Stuart Walters, Customer Services Manager
Wards	Council Wide
Classification	For Update

Background

At its meeting on 21 October 2024, Overview and Scrutiny Board discussed the blue badge service and the following actions were recommended:

- a. The Portfolio Holder/Leader and the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Department for Transport to raise the concerns outlined by the O&S Board in relation to fee setting restrictions, and that the Portfolio Holder take the issue forward with local MPs and the Local Government Association. The Board sought to encourage local authorities to raise these issues with the Department for Transport and request that central government gives local authorities the freedom to set fees which cover the cost of administering the system and that the system should be simplified in terms of renewal processes.
- b. A further update be brought back to the Board in approximately 6 months.

Update

2. In relation to recommendation A, the Department for Transport were contacted by the Portfolio Holder.
- 2.1 Lilian Greenwood MP, Minister for the Future of Roads, responded to the Portfolio Holder on the 25 November 2024, advising the following: [Appendix 1]
- 2.2 The Department for Transport is responsible for legislation and governance of the scheme in England, with day to-day administration of the scheme remaining within the responsibility of local authorities.
- 2.3 The Department does provide non-statutory guidance to local authorities to assist them in administering the scheme but generally the procedures adopted are for local authorities to determine within the governing legislation.
- 2.4 No timescales are set for administering applications other than a suggested guideline that issuing authorities should aim to complete end to end applications within 12 weeks.
- 2.5 There are no current plans to review the maximum fee that local authorities in England can charge for each Blue Badge issued.
- 2.6 In addition to the letter written to the Department for Transport, Sir Christopher Chope MP submitted a written question on the 11 December 2024 to the Secretary of State for Transport. The question asked *if she will make it her policy that local*

authorities issuing Blue Badges within her Department's guideline timescale of 12 weeks will be able to recover the full costs of delivering that service.

- 2.7 Lilian Greenwood MP, Minister for the Future of Roads responded, as below, on the 16 December 2024.
- 2.8 The Blue Badge scheme is administered, funded and operated at local level by individual local authorities. There are no timescales set for administering applications other than a suggested guideline that issuing authorities should aim to complete end to end applications within 12 weeks.
- 2.9 In England local authorities are legally entitled to charge a fee of up to £10 for each badge issued which allows them to recover some of the costs involved in administering the scheme. The Department has no plans to amend legislation
3. In relation to recommendation B, there is the following update.
- 3.1 As of 23 April 2025, there are 22,410 Blue Badges on issue within the BCP Council area, an increase of 7% since October 2024.
- 3.2 New and 'renewal' applications were taking approximately 14 weeks for a decision to be issued when last reported to the board in October 2024.
- 3.3 As of 23 April 2025, decisions on new and 'renewal' applications are taking between 6 to 7 weeks.
- 3.4 The improvement in decision making time is due to the following changes:
- Creation and recruitment of an apprenticeship role to assist the processing team.
 - Implementation of pre-assessment screening to ensure applicants were informed of any missing or inadequate evidence before assessment commences.
 - Letter / Email templates reviewed and enhanced to reduce need for editing.
 - Implementation of a new work assignment plan.
 - Temporary assignment of officers to the blue badge processing team from within the wider customer service team.
 - Blue badge assessment officers undertaking overtime.
 - Access to Adult Social Care database to enable eligibility checks.
 - Increase in the number of customer service staff trained to handle blue badge enquiries, including payments.
- 3.5 The blue badge service lead officer visited colleagues in Dorset Council to understand their approach to application assessment and ways of working.
- 3.6 It was a useful visit that has prompted further changes in the ways of working and assessment as set out below.
- 3.7 To maintain the current level of service the service lead officer made further additional changes at the beginning of April 2025.
- Introduction of an eligibility scoring matrix, use of the matrix by the processing team will:
 - Enable faster assessments
 - Ensure all applications are assessed consistently

- Provide a reference for any challenge post application decision.
 - Enablement of the 'not for reassessment' flag within the blue badge system to reduce the evidence required for those applicants reapplying with a progressive condition.
- 3.8 The service will continue to advise applicants that new and renewal applications may take up to 12 weeks for a decision to be made. This message will only be amended if decision making time exceeds the 12 weeks, which it is not expected to do.
- 3.9 The service is confident that the changes implemented over the past 6 months will allow the ongoing decision-making time of between 6 to 7 weeks.

Summary of financial implications

4. The Apprentice post has been created to bring additional capacity to the process. This has been delivered within the Customer Services budget with no additional budget requirement.

Summary of legal implications

5. There are no legal implications connected with this update.

Summary of human resources implications

6. There are no human resources implications connected with this update.

Summary of sustainability impact

7. There is no sustainability implications connected with this update.

Summary of public health implications

8. There is no public health implication connected with this update

Summary of equality implications

9. There are no changes connected with this update which require an equalities impact assessment.

Summary of risk assessment

10. N/A

Background papers

None

Appendices

Letter from Minister for Future Roads