

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD



Report subject	Blue Badge Update
Meeting date	17 November 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report provides an update on the performance of the Blue Badge service following its previous report to Overview & Scrutiny Board on 12 May 2025.
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 improvement work in place and actions being taken to improve performance.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Andy Martin
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Lynda Anderson
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Update

Background

1. At its meeting on 12 May 2025, Overview and Scrutiny Board asked for the service to return to its meeting in 12 months to report further on improving Blue Badge processing times.
2. Several improvements had already been adopted which saw processing time reduce to an average of between 6-7 weeks, and further improvements were suggested as follows:
 - Introduction of an eligibility scoring matrix to enable faster assessments, whilst documenting decisions made during the assessment process and ensuring applications are assessed consistently.
 - The enabling of a 'not for reassessment' flag within the blue badge system to reduce the evidence required for those applicants reapplying with a progressive condition.
3. There was also an action for the Portfolio Holder to follow up on whether the issues raised with the Department of Transport has also been raised with the Local Government Association.

Update

4. This update has been brought forward from May 2026, at the request of Overview & Scrutiny Board, following a concern raised by a Councillor to the Board about increasing processing times.
5. In the last report, it was confirmed that as of 23 April 2025, there were 22,410 Blue Badges on issue within the BCP Council area, an increase of 7% since October 2024. This figure has remained stable at this level.
6. BCP Council receive on average 10,500 applications a year or 880 per month. These join existing applications already in the process of being assessed.
7. Throughput is dependent on verification of information and the provision of evidence to ensure the applicant meets the required threshold for the issuing of a Blue Badge. Currently, 65% of applications do not come with adequate evidence, which causes delays and a sizable caseload.
8. The assessing team is made up of 5 people although many work part-time. The total hours across the team are equivalent to 3.6 FTE.
9. At the time of the previous report in May of this year, new and 'renewal' applications were taking an average of between 6 to 7 weeks which was an improvement on the previous processing times of 14 weeks when reported to the Board in October 2024.
10. However, the processing time has since increased again, and in September 2025 there were approximately 600 applications waiting to be assessed which had been in

the process for longer than 12 weeks, and 2000 applications which were still within 12 weeks.

11. 12 weeks is the suggested guideline given by the Department of Transport for processing applications.
12. The decline in processing times since May 2025, occurred for several reasons:
 - Although we gained an Apprentice role to support admin functions within the team, we subsequently lost an experienced staff members and a further member or staff was absent for a period. This significantly affected the capacity of the team.
 - Temporary staff assigned to support the team reverted to their substantive roles.
 - We removed the temporary 'lighter checks' in place for renewals.
 - The introduction of the eligibility scoring matrix meant staff needed to amend their practice, which coupled with loss of staff, impacted the number of applications being processed as they learned the new approach.
13. The action to introduce a flag to highlight cases which will not need reassessment has been implemented but given the period for reapplication for most will be 3 years, we are not likely to see the impact of this for some time.
14. 127 cases currently have this flag in place.

Current Performance

15. Since Cllr Martin proactively advised Councillors Blue Badge processing times were increasing we have been working to reduce the backlog and tracking progress.
16. As of 2 November 2025, the number of applications awaiting assessment for over 12 weeks has decreased from 600 to 296 and the number waiting up to 12 weeks has reduced from 2000 to 1619. Work continues to bring these waiting times down.
17. Processing times by type of application are averaging at:
 - PIP/DLA – 1 week and 4 days
 - New – 14 weeks and 2 days
 - Renew – 12 weeks and 3 days
18. The team have borrowed some resource from Business Support and other parts of the Customer team to help support processing. They have also filled the vacant post within the team. These are not permanent additions to the team and will not resolve the issue long term.

Process Review

19. The processing of Blue Badge applications has been problematic for the Council within the suggested 12-week timeframe for some time. Whilst efforts have been made to improve parts of the process, it is evident that there are continued ups and downs in performance.
20. The cycle of borrowing staff to achieve more timely outputs is not a sustainable way to continue and the fragile resilience of the team to cope when staff are on leave, sick or move on from the organisation brings with it continued risk to processing times.
21. Over the last 4 weeks a project has started to look at the process end-to-end utilising the skills of a Business Analyst to understand where improvements and efficiencies can be gained.

22. A list of 'pain points' have been recorded, integration between systems and customer interfaces mapped, and a suite of suggestions compiled for a new 'to be' process to be designed.

Customer Improvement

23. Members of the O&S Board will be aware that when the Council Wide Transformation Program was closed in March 2025, a commitment was given to move remaining work into business-as-usual delivery or into dedicated programmes.
24. The [Operating Model](#) is at the heart of the Council's Corporate Strategy in expanding digital services, developing centres of expertise, and driving through change using data and insight, to improve the quality of services to our residents.
25. The Transformation Programme delivered a single BCP Council Customer Relationship Management System (CRM), and the next step, through a dedicated programme, is to systematically and progressively undertake process reviews to improve the experience for our customers whilst realising increased efficiency and digital proficiency.
26. As part of the scoping work, the Blue Badge process is being used to form a framework to enable a stream of end-to-end process reviews within the contact centre, and a core group of colleagues are working towards a potential process rebuild within the CRM for April 2026.
27. The work will report through the Customer Programme Board and ultimately will underpin future end to end service redesigns.
28. Whilst the work on the Blue Badge process is still in its early stages, we hope to reduce the number of systems in use, implement a process which comes direct into the Council rather than via the generic Government service, recognises the different steps required in approving different types of applications, and provides integrated guidance to improve understanding amongst applicants about eligibility and requirement for evidence.

Summary of financial implications

29. There are no financial implications associated with this report. Any improvements need to be delivered within existing budget arrangements.

Summary of legal implications

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

Summary of human resources implications

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

Summary of sustainability impact

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

Summary of public health implications

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

Summary of equality implications

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

Appendices

35. There are no appendices to this report.