

# Report

5

Report to:	<b>Equal Opportunities Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>6 September 2011</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Corporate Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Blue Badge Reform</b>
----------	--------------------------

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ update the Forum on the national blue badge reform that is taking place and the introduction of the Blue Badge Improvement Service

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted.

## 3. Background

3.1. Between July and October 2010 the Scottish Government ran a consultation on the review and reform of the Blue Badge Scheme in Scotland ("the Scheme"). The Scheme gives a concession to severely disabled people to park where particular restrictions may otherwise apply, and plays an important role in helping severely disabled people access jobs, shops and other services.

3.2. There are currently over 270,000 Blue Badge holders in Scotland, many of whom say that they would be unable to travel without the certainty that they will be able to park close to where they need to be. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that this vital Scheme continues to provide accessible parking for those in most need.

3.3. In the consultation document, the Government set out the following proposals to improve to the Scheme by 2013:-

- ◆ extend the Scheme to:-
  - ◆ children under the age of 3, with specific medical conditions
  - ◆ severely disabled service personnel and war veterans in receipt of an award under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme
  - ◆ in the longer term, people with severe forms of autistic spectrum disorder and people with very advanced forms of dementia
- ◆ redesign the individual and Organisational Badges to make them harder to copy, forge or tamper with
- ◆ improve the management of the Scheme and make the eligibility assessment process fairer and more consistent
- ◆ introduce a national set of application forms

- ◆ develop a national database to allow local authorities to share data to reduce fraudulent misuse of the badge
- ◆ use independent medical assessments to assess eligibility
- ◆ introduce a mandatory appeals process for unsuccessful applicants
- ◆ remove the permission to park on double yellow lines and introduce a maximum limit for the length of time a vehicle can park on single yellow lines
- ◆ draw up a “Code of Practice” for those who administer the Scheme
- ◆ give local authorities new or amended powers to tackle misuse of the Scheme

#### **4. Blue Badge Improvement Service**

- 4.1. As part of the national reform of the Scheme, the Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS) has been created and will carry out various administration functions relating to the Blue Badge Schemes across Great Britain. The new service will be available to all local authorities in Scotland, England and Wales from January 2012, and will provide services, including:-
- ◆ the secure printing, personalisation and distribution of the new Blue Badge design
  - ◆ a central database of all Blue Badges on issue
  - ◆ an on-line application form
  - ◆ an initial enquiry support service to handle general enquiries from members of the public
- 4.2. Northgate Information Solutions have been awarded the contract to develop the service so that it is available from 1 January 2012. This service will include a central database of all Blue Badges on issue and it will be linked to an on-line application form to allow individuals and organisations to apply to their local authorities via the Scottish Government’s Blue Badge website.
- 4.3. Furthermore, in association with its partner Payne Security, they will design, securely print, personalise and distribute a new, more secure style of Blue Badge. A turn-around time of 5 working days has been agreed between the time a local authority submits award details to the BBIS and the badge being received either by the local authority or directly by the applicant.
- 4.4. To aid the transition to this new service and to the reforms as a whole, Northgate will provide an ongoing enquiry support service to handle initial general enquiries from members of the public. They will also establish a helpdesk and a managed service administration and support service.
- 4.5. BBIS will be a web-based service available over Government Connect (GCSx). It will be accredited to HMG security requirements (Impact Level 3) and compliant with data protection legislation. When local authorities join this service they will instead pay £4.60 per badge; a fixed rate for the duration of the contract.
- 4.6. Northgate will also offer optional services to local authorities through BBIS. These are data entry support services which will enable an applicant’s details to be entered onto the system by the supplier on behalf of the local authorities, in cases where paper applications have been received. The service will be offered on a cost per transaction basis.

#### **5. Employee Implications**

- 5.1. Prior to the reform taking place, we conducted a lean thinking review of our current blue badge process and sought to make a number of improvements at a local level.

These included a central record of all blue badges on issue in South Lanarkshire, improved quality of badge production, improved enforcement methods, and an improved application, assessment and issuing process.

- 5.2. The steps identified during the lean thinking review will allow for a smoother transition to the BBIS set up which will, in turn, provide improvements that we could not achieve at a local level. These are namely an improved quality of badge, a national database and a national standard of application and assessment which should all reduce the possibility and frequency of fraud which currently hinders the scheme.
- 5.3. In general these improvements will mean a reduced role for staff in some areas, though support to members of the public will still be required to ensure those who are unable to or prefer not to access the online systems are able to apply for and receive a badge should they be a legitimate applicant.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. Social Work Resources is introducing a charge of £20 for all badges that are issued.

## **7. Other Implications**

- 7.1. There is no risk associated with the contents of this report. Work is being carried out to ensure the effective implementation and integration with the BBIS and this will provide benefits both to the Council and service users in relation to the delivery of the Blue Badge Scheme and the effective enforcement of it in the South Lanarkshire area.
- 7.2. The BBIS will improve the sustainability of the South Lanarkshire Blue Badge Scheme by using resources more effectively to deliver a cost effective and efficient service.
- 7.3. The effective implementation of the revised Scheme will assist the Council to continue to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties.

## **8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 8.1. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the recommendations contained in this report and, where issues were identified, remedial action has been taken. The assessment is that the proposals do not have any adverse impact on any part of the community covered by equalities legislation, or on community relations, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council website.
- 8.2. Consultation on the proposals contained in this report has been carried out with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel and the South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership, as part of the lean thinking process, and will be ongoing.

**Robert McIlwain**  
**Executive Director (Corporate Resources)**

16 August 2011

**Link(s) to Council Values/Improvement Themes/Objectives**

- ◆ People focused
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

**Previous References**

- ◆ Equal Opportunities Forum – 16 March 2010

**List of Background Papers**

None

**Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Simon Cameron, Diversity Adviser

Ext: 3886 (Tel: 01698 453886)

E-mail: [simon.cameron@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:simon.cameron@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)