



## Report to the Leader (Transport portfolio)

<b>Decision Date:</b>	5 April 2024
<b>Reference number:</b>	TR03.24
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Blue Badge policy</b>
<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b>	Cllr John Chilver Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing & Resources and Cllr Steve Broadbent Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Hazel Hutt, Head of Corporate Business Service
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	none specific.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>Adoption and approval of the Buckinghamshire Council Blue Badge Policy</b>
<b>Reason for recommendation:</b>	To document the procedures and processes to ensure fair and consistent administration for the issue of Blue Badges to Buckinghamshire residents.

### **1 Executive summary**

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council is committed to a fair and robust approach to determining the eligibility of applicants for a Blue Badge in Buckinghamshire.
- 1.2 This policy is implemented as recommended in a recent service audit and with strict adherence to the guidelines set out by the Department for Transport, published in August 2019.

## **2 Drivers for Change**

- 2.1 Buckinghamshire Council did not have a Blue Badge policy. Following a recent service audit, it was recommended that a policy was put in place. Blue Badges help people with disabilities or health conditions park closer to their destination. In addition, a policy will ensure sound governance practices essential for ensuring that the Council demonstrates a transparent process to comply with national requirements, robust and reliable local procedures are required to ensure that they are promptly issued and provide the necessary controls for effective enforcement of suspected abuse.
- 2.2 The Council has a target of twelve weeks to issue Blue Badges to eligible people. The Blue Badges Team are responsible for the administration of these, including issuing them, recovery and returning of Badges, fee income collection and to ensure enforcement of suspected abuse of Blue Badges in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Council Parking Enforcement Team.
- 2.3 The Blue Badge policy should be read in conjunction with the national guidelines and legislation relating to the national Blue Badge scheme. (see appendices).

## **3 Other options considered**

- 3.1 There are no options for consideration. Buckinghamshire Council already administers a Blue Badge scheme and policy will underpin the existing processes.

## **4 Legal and financial implications**

### **Legal Implications**

- 4.1 Suspected Abuse and Enforcement. The Council has Blue Badges Enforcement Officers within the Parking Enforcement Team who conduct inspections of vehicles with a blue badge. The Enforcement Officer would then remove the Blue Badge after confirming that there has been suspected abuse. They then issue a templated letter to be handed to the Council Office and the case is handled by the Blue Badge Team.
- 4.2 The Council can then take two different approaches:
- 4.3 If it is an aggravated circumstance, the Enforcement Officer issues a statement to Blue Badge Team. The Blue Badge team prepares the legal paperwork and sends witness statements to the Parking Officers. Finally, the Council's Legal Team check the case for accuracy and issue a summons notice.
- 4.4 If this is not an aggravated circumstance, the Blue Badge Team prepares a case summary and sends a caution to be signed by the misuser. If the badge holder has

more than one caution within the space of three years, then they will have legal action taken against them.

## Financial Implications

4.5 The £10 fee is the maximum amount that can be charged per Blue Badge issued in England and is based on Department for Transport (DfT) guidance, there are no current plans for future fee increases. The budgeted direct cost of staffing and administration costs are shown in the table below. The true cost of the service will include the maximum corporate overheads at 40% (e.g. to cover costs of ICT systems, office space, HR, Finance etc.). This shows the cost to the Council is £405k.

4.6 Costs and income:

<b>Blue Badge</b>	<b>2023/24 Budget</b>
Staffing	£311,641
Printing	£46,500
<b>Gross costs</b>	<b>£358,141</b>
Blue Badge income	-£96,600
<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>£261,541</b>
40% Overheads	£143,256
<b>Cost to the Council</b>	<b>£404,797</b>

### 4a Director of Legal & Democratic Services comment

4.7 The Director had approved the report and has raised the issue of resources for legal prosecutions as Cabinet have approved savings in the enforcement of prosecutions in Legal.

### 4b Section 151 Officer comment

4.8 The S151 Officer has read and noted the report.

## 5 Corporate implications

5.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment and an Equality Impact Assessment have been completed.

- 5.2 The Blue Badge service is part of the Business Operations service plan. Parking Services are responsible for Blue Badge Enforcement and have been consulted with.

## **6 Local councillors & community boards consultation & views**

- 6.1 No consultation or input required. Buckinghamshire Council already administers a Blue Badge scheme and policy will underpin the existing processes.

## **7 Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 7.1 Buckinghamshire Council already administers a Blue Badge scheme and policy will underpin the existing processes. The policy will be published on the Buckinghamshire Council website.

## **8 Next steps and review**

- 8.1 Once the Blue Badge policy has been approved, it will be published on the Buckinghamshire Council website and will be reviewed regularly.

## **9 Background papers**

Blue Badge policy

Buckinghamshire Council Blue Badge website link -

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/parking/blue-badge-scheme-for-disabled-parking/apply-for-or-renew-a-blue-badge/>

Department for Transport guidelines

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-badge-scheme-local-authority-guidance-england/blue-badge>

## **10 Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please contact the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) by 5pm on 3 April 2024.