

SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD 18th JUNE 2012

Subject:	Blue Badge Reform
Director/Head of Service:	Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director, Families and Social Care
Decision:	Non-key
Ward/Division:	All
Summary:	<i>This report was originally circulated to Cabinet Members at an information briefing. It provides an update on the implementation of the revised Blue badge service. It advises on the progress made on the new service.</i>
To Recommend:	This report is for Members' information.
Classification:	THIS REPORT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Introduction

- 1.1 On 1 April 2011 Kent County Council successfully launched a new process for issuing Blue Badges. This revised process was implemented to coincide with the transfer of Blue Badge funding from the NHS to Local Authorities, £162k was transferred from the PCT to KCC in 2011/12. The DH has committed £5.55m of the 2012/13 Health Reform Grant to local authorities for the Blue Badge scheme. LASSL (DH) (2012)¹ does not provide the breakdown in enough detail to determine the Kent allocation for Blue Badge.
- 1.2 On 5th December 2012 cabinet agreed to increase the charge for Blue badges to £10 in response to a change in legislation and the need to meet the increased costs associated with the Blue Badge reform:
 - Cost for badge production by external provider £4.60
 - Cost for Independent Medical Assessments
 - Loss of revenue as fee only applies for successful applications

Policy Context

- 2.1 Following national consultation the reforms to the Blue Badge program were set out in a letter to local authorities sent on 14 February 2011. The actions for Kent County Council were set out in a briefing to Cabinet Members on 4 April 2011. A further report was presented for Cabinet decision on 5th December 2012.

The Blue Badge Service

- 3.1 KCC successfully implemented the Blue Badge Information system on 1st January 2012.

The process for assessment of applicants has been revised to ensure that people receive a proportionate assessment. The number of applications processed through the new service has been:

- January 2011 1583 badges issued January 2012 1743
- February 2011 2157 badges issued February 2012 1608

Blue Badges are valid for 3 years staff will be required to add all the information relating to the applicant to the system, in 2015 staff will be checking information for existing holders and only adding full information for new applicants which will have a positive impact on staff time.

Compliments and complaints

- 4.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) has commissioned a National Blue Badge Information Solution (BBIS) from Northgate. This system is intended to reduce multiple applications and to reduce fraud by linking to Payne's Security who will be responsible for production of the new secure badge.
- 4.2.1 FSC has explored the options available in relation to the system, and has signed the access agreement for the Northgate system, this places any risk of failure with DfT (as commissioners). The expected date for implementation of the system is 1 January 2012, information on the system was published at the end of August 2011.

Fraud reduction

- 5.1 The Blue Badge Team have attended several of the District and Borough Parking Managers meetings to introduce the new badges and to discuss how KCC can work with them to reduce fraud. The meetings have been well received and mechanisms to work more closely will be progressed by Paul Rock, Fraud Investigation and the Blue Badge Team.

Next Steps

- 6.1 The on line application process is being developed by Northgate (system provider) at present the process remains manual due to the requirements for checking of relevant documentation.
- 6.2 KCC plans to review the in-house payments system capability against the requirements of the Blue Badge process. Northgate are also developing an on-line payments system which will also be considered.

6.3 The timeframe for review of an on – line system is dependant uon progress by Northgate and we are not able to define it at this time. It is anticipated that we will be able to look at the system early Summer 2012.

Recommendations

7. Cabinet Members are asked:

a) To NOTE:

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