

Scrutiny Recommendations Update September 2021

Recommendation	Status	Notes
<p><u>Disabled Bays and Provision of Dedicated Disabled Bays</u> That Cabinet undertake to monitor the implementation and conversion of dedicated disabled bays going forward, with particular focus on the impact on the overall availability and distribution of disabled parking bays.</p>	Monitoring processes in place	<p>The dedicated disabled bay provision is now widely communicated, encouraging take up, with conversion levels being monitored. While the conversion of those bays is unlikely to directly impact on non-dedicated disabled provision in places of high interest, including town centres, monitoring will ensure that there is no gap in provision. The recent introduction of map-based traffic management orders makes this process easier and more efficient. This involved a full survey of all parking bays and restrictions borough wide prior to implementation. This now provides a full inventory and map of all disabled bays – at dedicated and non-dedicated locations. This allows officers to easily keep abreast of any changes on a street-by-street basis.</p>
<p>That Cabinet reconsider the eligibility criteria for disabled bays and the use of automatic entitlement based upon whether the person is in receipt of higher rate/enhanced rate benefit payments.</p>	Complete	<p>The eligibility criteria for dedicated disabled parking bays has been extended to include an entitlement subject to further assessment. This brings the assessment process for dedicated disabled parking bays more in line with the National Disabled Blue Badge scheme. Where required applicants with severe mobility restrictions may be assessed by expert assessors to determine eligibility. Those assessments are undertaken by the expert assessors who deal with Blue Badge assessments and are structured in a manner that covers eligibility for both services, where possible reducing bureaucracy and the need to undergo multiple assessments.</p>
<p><u>Applying for and renewing a Blue Badge</u> That Cabinet undertake to explore ways of ensuring that online payments can be made</p>	Complete	<p>The new parking management IT system (PMIS) is largely implemented, with one implementation yet to be complete. This included a new Blue Badge Case Management System (CMS). The CMS provides for online payments as well as gaps in other administrative processes that sit between the Department for Transport's (DfT) Blue Badge system (which accepts the application) and the production of the Blue Badge at the latter stage of the process.</p>

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<p>for Blue Badges. At present the £10 administration fee can only be paid via cheque which causes unnecessary delays. This may require engaging with the DfT and seeking changes to the government website. It is suggested that Local Members of Parliament could be engaged on this issue and their influence sought.</p>		
<p>That provision be put in place for Blue Badge applicants to be able to speak to the Concessionary Travel team directly.</p>	complete	<p>This arrangement is now in place and the telephony system allows applicants direct access to the officers dealing with their applications. This is in addition to the main Council contact number and set options to the Blue Badge team which allows an applicant to speak with the team. There is an online contact form on haringey.gov.uk that also offers direct online contact to the Concessionary Travel Team.</p>
<p>That Cabinet explore ways in order to make the process of applying, renewing and being assessed for a Blue Badge more streamlined and less disjointed. Specifically, the Panel would like Cabinet to consider:</p>		

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Whether regular updates could be provided to applicants on the status of their application?	Complete	The Blue Badge CMS integrates communications to customers at relevant stages of the application process, including where the status of their application changes (for example, request for further information, referral for assessment, request for payment etc.)
Whether this could be automated?	Complete	
Ensuring that applicants can upload documents online.	In place	Online document upload for the initial application is provided through the DfT solution, with these applications and all associated uploads being received in the CMS for processing. Further future development of the CMS solution may include an option for upload of any further documents should this be necessary for the customer. At present, the option to upload documents after the initial application is offered through the Concessionary Travel online contact form on haringey.gov.uk
That provision of an automatic renewal reminder email/letter to Blue Badge holders at the appropriate point, be explored?	Complete	The new Blue Badge CMS solution provides the functionality to automatically send renewal reminders to customers by post and email. This is configured to send reminders to customers 12 weeks in advance of the date of their badge expiry. This provides sufficient time for the customer's application to be reviewed and any assessments to be carried out.
<p><u>Enforcement and Blue Badge related crime</u></p> <p>That the Council should prioritise tougher enforcement of Blue Badge fraud in order to ensure that those will genuine mobility issues are able to use their vehicles. Training should be provided for Enforcement officers and</p>		<p>The service has undertaken enforcement of the fraudulent use of Blue Badges for several years. Those operations are led by service experts supported where necessary by the police and Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs). Those operations involve proactive onsite investigation of Blue Badge usage, as well as the investigation of irregularities reported by CEOs and residents.</p> <p>CEOs play a role in identifying potential abuse. The functionality of the new IT system allows validation of Blue Badges using the handheld software, which will link into the national database. It is appreciated that not all disabilities are visible, so adopting an appropriate degree of sensitivity in handling such matters is therefore sought.</p>

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<p>processes put in place so that any Blue Badge identified by a CEO was inspected and the badge holders' details cross referenced with the back office for possible misuse. The Panel heard evidence from Bromley that this could take as little as 30 seconds.</p>		<p>While identification of the abuse can be done by CEOs, dedicated resources are required in the back office to deal with all follow up actions which can be quite complex. The new operating model being implemented as part of the parking transformation programme will increase capacity across the service and support increased enforcement in this area.</p>
<p>Consideration should be given to how the Council, working with police and partners, could support the rollout of theft prevention devices for Blue Badges.</p>	Ongoing	<p>The service is raising awareness of the availability of theft prevention devices and how they may be purchased, as part of an overall campaign to raise awareness of the scheme, as well as reducing abuse and its associated crime.</p>
<p>The Panel received evidence that these were particularly effective and cost between £30 & £40. Cabinet should consider whether providing these was cheaper than the administration costs associated with replacing a stolen Blue Badge.</p>	Not agreed	<p>An analysis of costs of providing those devices was undertaken and it would exceed available service budgets. The Blue Badge service is not a means-tested service and, as a consequence, many badge holders will have the resources required to purchase those devices themselves if required.</p>

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<p>That the Council works closely with the police to reduce proliferation of Blue Badge related crime. The Panel received evidence that Blue Badge theft from vehicles has risen over 600% in the last three years. It is suggested that the Community Safety Partnership could examine this issue as part of its work programme for 2020/21.</p>	<p>Not agreed</p>	<p>The Council already works with the police on misuse of Blue Badges, and this is done in the context of many priorities. Investigating Blue Badge theft does not connect with the terms of reference of the Community Safety Partnership as its role is mainly strategic. However, there is the intention to establish a quarterly strategic partnership forum that will include police representatives would also serve to ensure that the impact of Blue Badge-related crime is continually raised.</p>
<p>That the Council explores the feasibility of issuing virtual permits instead of Companion Badges. Cabinet should also ensure that provision of paper applications is retained on some level in order to ensure residents without access to IT are not unduly disadvantaged.</p>	<p>In place</p>	<p>The new parking IT system offers Resident Blue Badge Holder Permits – a free virtual permit for Haringey Blue Badge holders to park in their home Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). Online and paper applications are available. Online applications automatically validate a customer’s residency and Blue Badge status – where they are automatically validated, their free permit will be issued instantly. Paper applications will be available to those who may have problems with digital access – with virtual permits issued and the customer notified by letter.</p> <p>There have been complaints from existing Companion Badge holders that limiting this new concession to the individual’s home CPZ does not grant the protections required – the Companion Badge could be used borough-wide. Those concerns are being considered through formal processes with a view to extending concessions, but with the necessary checks and balances ensure the integrity of the scheme.</p>
<p>The Cabinet Member should engage with other Boroughs that have</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Council is represented at the London Councils Transport Executive Committee (TEC). The TEC also provides the opportunity to seek consistency in transport issues.</p>

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<p>implemented virtual permits to see what lessons can be learnt. Engagement should also be sought with the Mayor's Office and London Councils to encourage adoption at a pan-London level and explore the feasibility of having a more integrated system across London.</p>		<p>The parking service also collaborates and shares experience with other boroughs and this is reflected in the approach to delivery of the new parking IT system. In particular, the new Resident Blue Badge Holder Permit was based on arrangements successfully implemented in two neighbouring boroughs, who limit the virtual concessions to the individual's home CPZ.</p>
<p><u>Correspondence and Communication</u> That a commitment is given that the Council will carry out a review of the letters and communications that it sends to residents to ensure that they are clear, courteous and without the use of intimidating language</p>	Complete	<p>Following the outcomes of the Scrutiny report, all correspondence to Blue Badge residents were immediately reviewed and tweaked. Additional letters were introduced to explain the assessment process and why it is required. The service also kept applicants waiting for assessments updated through the pandemic.</p> <p>All communications to customers sent as part of the Blue Badge or permits applications process have been reviewed and updated as part of the implementation of the new parking management system.</p>
<p>That the Council implement provision for residents to report disabled bays that were no longer in use and that processes are put in place for adequate</p>	Processes in place	<p>The removal of unused disabled parking bays is subject to statutory consultation and therefore carried out as part of a managed process. In many cases, the statutory consultation can identify issues, which need to be resolved or overcome in some manner, before proceeding. This makes it quite difficult to give clear timelines for resolution.</p>

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<p>monitoring of disabled bays and whether they were being used. Once a bay is identified as being unused there should be a clear timeline for its removal. A campaign should be launched through Haringey People and our website to 'report an unused disabled bay'.</p>		<p>However, to bring existing infrastructure up to date, an analysis of disabled parking bay provision and Blue Badge issue by street has been concluded. This analysis was conducted using the new map-based order system. This has identified disabled parking bays in residential streets with no current registered Blue Badge holders, suggesting that those bays are no longer required. Removal of those bays will be sought, subject to the outcome of statutory consultation, which gives any resident the opportunity to object if necessary.</p>
<p>That the Council should send out a booklet of key information to residents as soon as they are assessed as needing a Blue Badge.</p>	Complete	<p>The national Blue Badge information booklet is provided to each new applicant to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the scheme. Local concessions are set out in the letter that agrees qualification for the scheme.</p>
<p>That the Council explore ways in which an automatic reminder could be issued, along with the existing information given to the next of kin, to cancel a Blue Badge when a death is registered</p>	Complete	<p>The Council does not hold next of kin data on Blue Badge holders. The Council does however subscribe to the Government's 'Tell Us Once' service, which allows relatives registering a death to notify several services at that one point of contact. Those notifications are also used to cancel Blue Badges. It may also be helpful to note that the maximum number of years that badges are valid is three years.</p>
<p>A communications campaign should be implemented across the Blue Badge agenda</p>	Ongoing	<p>This is included as part of the wider Highways and Parking service communications plan.</p>

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<p>which clearly sets out the Council's enforcement message. It is suggested that disability access representatives and the Council's Equalities Steering Group should be involved in developing this campaign and that consideration should be given to highlighting awareness around the fact that not all disabilities are visible.</p>		
<p><u>Health Assessments for Blue Badges</u> That consideration should be given on to how to minimise delays within the assessment process, including ensuring that assessment bundles can be transferred to Stuart Crescent electronically.</p>	Complete.	Those files are now transferred electronically.
<p>That the Council should work with Stuart Crescent Health Centre to ensure that the current 5-minute deadline for late arrivals was</p>	Complete	<p>The appointment letter issued by the Whittington Health Trust has been reviewed and fundamentally changed. Applicants arriving slightly late are not refused their assessment. Like all Whittington Trust services, appointments are scheduled according to available resources. There may be occasions where appointments need to be rescheduled due to lateness, where seeing that applicant will impact on all other scheduled appointments. In saying that, there are very few occasions where this has occurred. Applicants are also</p>

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extended and a greater degree of flexibility afforded to applicants, given the mobility levels of the people being assessed and the lack of available parking facilities.		able to change and reschedule appointments they unexpectedly find themselves unable to attend at the arranged time.
Cabinet should work with the Whittington Trust to ensure that residents were provided with an alternative date when an appointment was missed.	Complete	A main consideration for the Trust is to reduce missed appointments. This service is being conducted within available Trust resources and missed appointments do present challenges. Blue Badge holders may change and reschedule appointments if required and a missed appointment should therefore only arise in exceptional circumstances. The revised appointment letters do encourage applicants to reschedule when required. Applicants who do miss an appointment are offered an alternative date.
That Cabinet ensures that monitoring of the current 23-day timescale for applications to be processed is undertaken.	Ongoing	We currently aim to process all completed applications within 30 working days. This allows 23 days for face-to-face mobility assessments to be conducted. This exceeds the DfT guidance which allows up to 12 weeks for application handling. We have done much work with the Trust to understand why the current 23-day deadline is missed on some appointments. There are varying factors, which includes applicants arriving without the necessary information, and the assessment needing to be rescheduled and where appointments are missed and need to be rescheduled. The Trust has therefore been worked with to ensure applicants understand the process and come prepared. This will improve the customer experience, as well as avoiding delays where appointments need to be rescheduled.
That Cabinet also explores recommissioning of the current contract to provide assessments for discretionary Blue Badge applications as it was last	Complete	<p>The Council delivers this service through a partnership arrangement with the Whittington Health Trust. This is not a formal tendered arrangement, but a negotiated arrangement with costs borne by the Trust.</p> <p>Market research was conducted to establish the private sector offer. This was established that this would require significant investment with little overall benefit.</p>

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<p>done over 10 years ago. The Panel recommends that consideration is given to commissioning additional providers for the assessment process for greater flexibility and distribution across the borough. The Council should explore ways of ensuring that those residents have a choice of which centre they attend and that there is some provision in the west of the Borough as well as in Tottenham. The Panel suggests that recommissioning this service could potentially provide an opportunity to speed up the assessment process and minimise delays.</p>		<p>The Council is working with the Trust to identify a suitable assessment centre in the east of the borough. There are no suitable sites available at present, but Whittington colleagues remain supportive. If a site becomes available, officers will work with them to offer a choice to Haringey residents. In the meantime, the Stuart Crescent centre is reasonably centrally located and is accessible.</p>