

## Notice of Meeting

### Wellbeing and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Tullett (Chairman),  
Councillor Mrs Mattick (Vice-Chairman),  
Councillors Allen, Atkinson, Bhandari, Brossard, Finch,  
Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, McLean, Skinner and Temperton

Thursday 29 April 2021, 6.30 - 8.00 pm

Online only



### Agenda

Item	Description	Page
1.	<b>Apologies for absence</b>	
	To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute Members.	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest and Party Whip</b>	
	<p>Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests and the nature of that interest, including the existence and nature of the party whip, in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an Affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p>	
3.	<b>Good practice review</b>	
	<p>To carry out a desktop review of evidence from other local authorities regarding their blue badge processes, with the aim of identifying good practice.</p> <p>Officers contacted 200 scrutiny contacts across local authorities to request details of any recent scrutiny activity on blue badges or any information about their council's approach. The information received is included in the evidence pack below.</p>	

### Evidence pack

The following items are additions to the evidence pack for this review which is part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme: [Overview and scrutiny work programme | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#) .

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The initial evidence pack can be found [here](#).

The review will take place over a series of meetings. Some meetings will be open to the public and others will be closed. This will be determined by the nature of the session and the sensitivity of the information being shared. The priority will always be the effectiveness of the review. The Panel may produce interim reports as well as a final report capturing good practice, learning points and recommendations.

4.	<b>Scrutiny documents from City of Wolverhampton Council</b>	1 - 22
	<p>Wolverhampton's Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel requested briefings on the performance of their Blue Badge service in March 2019 and January 2020. The briefing notes and accompanying minutes are attached.</p> <p><b>Observations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process sits within Customer Services, supported by Independent Living Services for assessments.</li> <li>• The papers mention a number of activities to assist applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- application surgeries run by the Community Support Team</li> <li>- a 'check and send' service offered by Libraries</li> <li>- the opportunity to book appointment to check the form.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improvements were made to communications with applicants about the reasons for a refusal, which reduced the number of appeals.</li> <li>• The focus of improvements seems to have been on reducing processing times.</li> </ul>	
5.	<b>Scrutiny review from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council</b>	23 - 38
	<p>Stockton-on-Tees' Place Select Committee carried out a scrutiny review of disabled parking in March 2018. The report is attached.</p> <p><b>Observation</b></p> <p>The focus of the review was provision of parking bays, abuse and enforcement. However, it is notable that the first contact for an applicant is via Customer Services, who use a questionnaire that has been developed by occupational therapists.</p>	
6.	<b>Scrutiny report from Haringey Council</b>	
	<p>Haringey's Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel carried out a review into blue badges and supporting better access to parking for disabled people in 2019. A link to the report is below (and was included in the previous evidence pack):</p> <p><a href="https://www.haringey.gov.uk/recommendations">RECOMMENDATIONS (haringey.gov.uk)</a></p> <p><b>Observations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Badge applications are done through a government website as the</li> </ul>	

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	<p>Department for Transport system provides greater functionality. Residents who contact the council are signposted to the gov.uk website to fill out an online application. However, this caused some delays in taking payment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haringey Customer Services provide digital support for completing online applications, and paper application forms are also available.</li> <li>• Applications are assessed by Customer Services staff.</li> <li>• Discretionary applications are assessed through the Integrated Community Therapy Team at a local health centre. Improvements to paperwork bundles and the management of appointment times were proposed.</li> <li>• The report recommends that the council explore virtual blue badges to improve processing speed and reduce abuse. These are already in use in other boroughs, e.g. the London Borough of Bromley.</li> </ul>	
7.	<b>Policy documents from Hampshire County Council</b>	39 - 58
	<p>This is the Blue Badge policy for Hampshire County Council (HCC). Pages 2 – 9 are the most relevant to this review.</p> <p><b>Observations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For non-visible disabilities, HCC will consider issuing a badge for a three-year term where there is compelling evidence that both the carers and the applicant are going through a transition period where they have not yet developed coping strategies due to the newness of awareness of the condition, and the likely impact of a ‘grieving’ period following awareness. Psychological distress and risk of harm are likely to be significant at that time. In these cases, carers are made aware that due to the likely future developments there is a strong possibility that the applicant may not qualify when the badge expires (page 6).</li> <li>• When a blue badge panel decision on a non-visible application is deadlocked, the decision should lean towards offering a badge with an explanation to the parents/guardians of the complexity of the situation, the exceptional circumstances and that the applicant is unlikely to qualify in three years’ time as development is expected. This is described as the ‘lifeline’ principle (page 9).</li> <li>• Occupational Therapists should apply the ‘lifeline’ principle if they find themselves ‘on the fence’ regarding a decision following both a telephone and face to face assessment (page 9).</li> </ul> <p>The HCC policy support document for applications from organisations is also attached but is not directly relevant to this review.</p>	
8.	<b>Details from Hartlepool Borough Council</b>	59 - 64
	Hartlepool Borough Council provided the following overview of their approach to non-visible criteria:	

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<p><i>The processes for visible and non-visible applications are carried out by two separate teams.</i></p> <p><i>For non-visible criteria, a brief overview of the application is received through Firmstep (software used by Hartlepool's Contact Centre for a wide range of council services). Depending on the evidence the applicant has supplied, a desktop assessment may be carried out to determine if they are to be awarded a badge. If not enough information is provided, a pro-forma needs to be completed by a health professional, answering specific questions in relation to how the applicant's condition affects them on journeys (attached).</i></p> <p><i>If further information is required, the Council are not permitted to use an applicant's GP in this process so would need to obtain the information from another medical expert / professional in their field.</i></p> <p><i>Once the pro-forma is returned, a decision is made to whether the applicant qualifies for a blue badge.</i></p>	
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