

Report of the Cabinet Member for Organisational Development and Digital Transformation

1. Introduction

I have been asked to report to Council by Councillor Hannaford as follows:

- on the current national campaign to automatically exempt those with non-changing or deteriorating disabilities and health conditions from the current blue badge rules. These require applicants to renew their permits every three years. It highlights the widespread experience of stress from unnecessary form filing, and the ensuing wait for approval of the application, although there has been no actual change in their original circumstances or indeed a worsening.

Specifically, do we know how many of our blue badge holders in the Devon County Council area have non changing or deteriorating circumstances?

Could we seek permission to consider a pilot to assess the effectiveness of such a change?

2. Blue Badge Holders

The Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for the legislation that sets out the framework for the Blue Badge Scheme.

The regulations currently in force state that badges must be issued for a maximum three-year period to allow local authorities to confirm their continued eligibility (for example that they remain in receipt of qualifying benefits, and/or their mobility has not improved).

The DfT acknowledges that where a badge holder has a permanent disability, which will not change (for example, where there has been a loss of limbs), the need for reassessment should not be necessary but also acknowledges in the Scheme guidance that the application for a badge provides a valuable opportunity for the local authority to ensure that the applicant's personal details, are up to date (name and address for example), that the information on the badge remains legible and that an up-to-date photograph is obtained.

The DfT is prioritising the development of digital services to make the process of applying for badges easier and as part of this work, in June 2019 a new enhancement was introduced to enable local authorities to identify a badge holder as 'not for reassessment' when applying for a badge. At present the applicant will still be required to reapply for the purpose of confirming their

personal details and to provide an up-to-date photograph where relevant but they will not be subject to complete a full application/assessment process.

At 1st February 2021 40,872 individuals held badges issued by Devon County Council and of these 14,541 were issued under Automatic eligibility (with no reassessment).

With the introduction of the 'not for reassessment' flag which has already been introduced and implemented, the work between the DfT and local authorities to streamline and digitise the application process continues. Devon County Council has also developed digital improvements to the application process thereby making routine applications via the digital route very quick.

Considering the “not for reassessment flag” and the on-going digital developments both locally and nationally to improve the process for all, it is not considered that a specific pilot as suggested is required.

Councillor Barry Parsons
Cabinet Member for Organisational Development and Digital Transformation