

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE - 23RD MAY 2011**

**REPORT ON: IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S REFORM OF THE BLUE BADGE SCHEME**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 249-2011**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to advise elected members of the implications of the forthcoming reforms to the Blue Badge Scheme.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the committee:-

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Instructs the Director of Social Work to implement the proposed eligibility criteria changes with immediate effect.
- 2.3 Instructs the Director of Social Work to report back to Committee further implications of the reform once guidance is issued by the Scottish Government.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The changes in eligibility criteria may lead to a reduction in the number of blue badges issued on an annual basis which would impact on the amount of income collected through charging. At this stage it is difficult to ascertain what the impact of this may be on the budgeted income of approximately £52,000 however this will be carefully monitored throughout the financial year.

### **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

The Scottish Government have published their reform of the Blue Badge system and outlined a number of forthcoming reforms. These changes involve changes to eligibility criteria, assessment processes, administration and security.

#### **4.1 Eligibility Criteria Reforms**

The purpose of these reforms is to provide greater consistency both across different areas and in terms of individual needs. It is also noted by the Scottish Government that there has been an increasing number of people awarded Blue Badges and that this leads to increased pressure on disabled parking spaces and therefore makes it difficult to ensure these are available to those who most need them. As a result they plan to implement the following changes.

- 4.1.1 Children between the ages of two and three may now be eligible. In the past children up to the age of two who require bulky medical equipment such as oxygen to be carried with them have been entitled to a Blue Badge and children from three upwards have been able to apply under existing criteria. This change will mean that where these children have an ongoing need for bulky equipment they will be entitled to a Blue Badge throughout. The

criteria have also been extended and will include children in casts for the correction of hip dysphasia. This change will fill a gap which currently exists where children whose needs have not changed lose their entitlement to a badge for a period of a year and is therefore more consistent. As the numbers of children involved are small this will not have significant resource implications.

4.1.2 The Criteria applied will now be people who are virtually unable to walk rather than have considerable difficulty walking. This change makes the criteria for people who are eligible for a Blue Badge consistent with those applied in the award for Disability Living Allowance High Rate Mobility Allowance and is less ambiguous than that previously used which were people who have considerable difficulty walking. This will make the assessment of eligibility easier and may lead to a reduction in those who are awarded Blue Badges.

4.1.3 The term congenital has been deleted from the criteria involving impairment in both arms. This means that people who have acquired impairment rather than being born with it will now be eligible. This is fairer and more consistent as it broadens the criteria to include people with equally significant impairments. Again the resource implications will be minimal as there are not significant numbers of people involved.

4.1.4 Severely disabled veterans who are compensated under Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and who are unable or virtually unable to walk will have an automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge. This is a group of people that would have been eligible under other criteria and refers only to a change in assessment process. This will now be done by the MOD.

#### 4.2 **Changes to Eligibility Assessments**

The main change to the way in which eligibility is assessed is the recommendation that far more independent mobility assessments will be used whereas previously information was sought from the GP. Guidance will be issued regarding this so it is difficult to determine what the resource implications of this will be. As this is not a task that is currently undertaken by Allied Health Professionals consideration will have to be given to what systems are in place for this and how it is resourced.

#### 4.3 **Changes to the Administration of the Blue Badge Scheme**

##### 4.3.1 **Blue Badge Improvement Scheme**

The Scottish Government plan to establish with Local Authorities a service improvement project which is intended to be self funding and will lead to efficiency savings as well as improvements in enforceability.

##### 4.3.2 **Introduction of a Code of Practice and leaflets**

It is anticipated that this will lead to greater consistency and make the administration of the scheme easier

#### 4.4 **Changes to Badge Security and Design**

These changes involve the addition of anti fraud and anti copy technologies to the badge design. These will be printed and distributed centrally. The addition of these measures will make enforcement of the scheme easier but cost implications will depend on the cost to the Local Authority of buying these badges. It has however been indicated that the cost charged will be per badge.

### 5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equipact/>.

## **6.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Director of Finance have been consulted in preparation of this report.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Scottish Governments Reform of the Blue Badge Scheme Equality Impact Assessment.

Alan G Baird  
**Director of Social Work**

DATE: 12th May 2011