

**Committee and Date**

Audit Committee
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Item

Public



Blue Badge Audit Recommendations

Responsible Officer:

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):

Councillor Chris Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Planning and
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1. Synopsis

This report provides an update for the Committee on the April 2024 Audit follow up review to the 2022/23 Blue Badge Audit and monitoring details of the volume of applications received.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Shropshire Plan recognises the importance of tackling inequalities including rural inequalities which reduces risk and enables children, young people, adults and families to achieve their full potential and enjoy life. The fundamental purpose of the Blue Badge service is to support individuals and businesses in a way which allows them to thrive whilst protecting the safety and welfare of the public who live, and work in Shropshire; together this will help to achieve a Healthy People.
- 2.2. An Audit of the Blue Badge service was undertaken between October 2022 and April 2023. There were 10 recommendations identified 1 was categorised as 'significant' and 9 were categorised as 'required attention'. This resulted in an overall 'limited' level of assurance.

2.3. In April 2024 a follow up Audit was undertaken to review the previous recommendations which resulted in 2 recommendations categorised as 'requiring attention'. This resulted in an overall 'good' level of assurance.

2.3 This report provides information on the action taken by the Blue Badge service in response to the 2 recommendations.

2.4 This report provides monitoring details of the volume of applications received and the time it is taking the Blue Badge Team to process the applications.

3. Recommendations

3.1. That members note the position as set out in the report.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. This is an information report providing the Committee with details of the work undertaken by the Blue Badge Service and therefore a risk assessment and opportunities appraisal has not been carried out.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. The fee of £10.00 charged for a Blue Badge is a statutory fee and the Council does not have the ability to increase this fee. It costs the Council £5.01 for each Blue Badge ordered, this cost covers the printing and posting of each Blue Badge. The statutory fee is insufficient to cover the cost of the work associated with the administration of the Blue Badge scheme, this results in the additional administration costs being borne by the local taxpayer.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. There are no anticipated climate change or environmental impacts associated with the recommendations in this report.

7. Audit recommendations

7.1 There were 2 recommendations in total at the end of the Blue Badge Audit review, 1 of those recommendations required ongoing monitoring of the volume of applications which continues to be reviewed and monitored. The other required the introduction of a disaster recovery exercise which is currently being worked through and programmed into the Business and Consumer Protection's Information Technology Teams work programme. A summary of the recommendations can be found at **Appendix 1**.

8. Monitoring

8.1 The chart below shows the volume of applications received by month, the average number of applications received by the Blue Badge Team each week and from February 2024 the average processing time.

Month	Applications received	Average per week	Average process time
April 2023	730	170	No report to show
May 2023	763	172	No report to show
June 2023	739	172	No report to show
July 2023	851	192	No report to show
August 2023	772	174	No report to show
September 2023	755	176	No report to show
October 2023	706	159	No report to show
November 2023	634	147	No report to show
December 2023	421	95	No report to show
January 2024	813	183	No report to show
February 2024	799	192	9 weeks 2 days
March 2024	780	176	7 weeks 7 days

Month	Applications received	Average per week	Average process time
April 2024	841	196	8 weeks 6 days
May 2024	709	160	8 weeks 5 days

9. Background

9.1. The Blue Badge scheme is a central government scheme operated by Local Council's on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT). The Council acts as the DfT's agent and is required to administer the scheme in line with the Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance (England)ⁱ.

- 9.2. Post the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a recognition that Blue Badge application numbers were increasing and for that reason there was an internal redesign (together with the parking enforcement appeals and challenge's function) to improve resilience and marginally increase capacity to process Blue Badge applications.
- 9.3. Included below to demonstrate the increase in applications is a chart showing the total number of Blue Badge applications received by financial year.

Financial Year	Total Blue Badge Applications Received
01/04/2019 to 31/03/2020	6991
01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021	5587
01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022	7186
01/04/2022 to 31/03/2023	8604
01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024	8763
01/04/2024 to 31/05/2024	1550 (part year)

- 9.4. The number of officers involved in processing Blue Badge applications has increased from 2 to 4; however, the full-time equivalent has only increased marginally from 1.4 to 2.3. Nevertheless, we do have increased resilience as we now have the flexibility to move 4 rather than 2 officers into Blue Badge processing. We are doing this to address the increased volume, but it will take time.
- 9.5. A new professional officer role has been created within the Blue Badge, parking enforcement, appeals and challenge's function. This officer is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of Blue Badge processing times, decision review requests, policy and procedures (this officer has responsibilities for similar functions in the parking enforcement appeals and challenge's service area).
- 9.6. There is a requirement for ongoing training for all officers and this will have an impact on Blue Badge processing times. However, the redesign of the service will support the successful delivery of the Blue Badge scheme and ensure that all the Audit requirements are met.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Department for Transport, Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance (England)
[Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance \(England\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Blue Badge Audit Recommendations Report, Item 54, 23 November 2023
[Agenda for Audit Committee on Thursday, 23rd November, 2023, 10.00 am — Shropshire Council](#)

Local Member: This report covers all areas of Shropshire.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – April 2024 Audit follow up review recommendations to the 2022/23 Blue Badge Audit

ⁱ Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance (England) - [Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance \(England\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)