

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 9 APRIL 2002

DISABLED PERSONS PARKING BADGE SCHEME (BLUE BADGE SCHEME)

Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the officer response to the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions consultation on to the future arrangements for the Blue Badge parking scheme for disabled people, submitted on 15 March 2002 in order to meet the deadline set for responses.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Disabled Persons' Parking Badge Scheme, introduced in 1971, was formerly referred to as the Orange Badge Scheme.
- 2.2 There have been a number of changes to the scheme over the years, with the most recent being in April 2000, when a new design of the disabled parking badge was introduced in line with EU recommendations to harmonise design across member states. The scheme was amended to Blue Badge Scheme as part of that process.
- 2.3 No changes were made at that time to the eligibility criteria or parking concessions available, with the new blue design being phased in over the next two years

3. THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE REGIONS REVIEW

- 3.1 The consultation paper circulated by the Secretary of State summarises issues raised by focus groups towards the end of last year, based on a report submitted by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.
- 3.2 The Secretary of State has asked the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee to consider responses to the consultation paper and to produce recommendations for improving the Blue Badge Scheme.

It is intended that the Secretary of State will announce his decision on the future shape of the scheme in summer 2002.

4. MAIN ISSUES ON WHICH RESPONSES WERE INVITED

4.1 Eligibility

4.1.1 This includes automatic and discretionary criteria, assessment procedures and children under two with need to travel with specific medical equipment.

4.2 Administration

4.2.1 This includes responsibility for administration, fees, period of issue, whether there should be an appeals system and renewal process and issue of duplicate badges.

4.3 Concessions

4.3.1 This looks at concessions available to badge holders, local parking schemes and time limits on yellow lines.

4.4 Enforcement

4.4.1 This considers tackling abuse, powers to inspect badges and provision of advice and information.

5. MAIN POINTS ADDRESSED IN RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION PAPER

5.1 A copy of the Discussion paper circulated by the DTLR, together with the Head of Social Work's response, is available in the Members Information Point. The following paragraphs summarise the comments submitted in response to the main issues set out in the consultation paper.

5.2 Eligibility

Discretionary criteria should be retained for all age groups in order to provide a safety net for those who clearly need a badge, but fail to satisfy the automatic criteria for an award. The automatic criteria should be extended to children under 2, whose physical needs are such that the transportation of medical or other support equipment is required at all times.

5.3 Assessment

The involvement of GPs in verifying that discretionary applicants meet the criteria for a badge should be reviewed and consideration given to increased involvement in this process of local authority staff trained in mobility issues.

5.4 Administration.

Responsibility for administration should remain with Social Work rather than transferring to Highways, as they have more extensive responsibility for and broader experience of meeting the needs of disabled people in terms of the statutory responsibilities carried by Social Work authorities for disabled adults in the round, as persons in need for which social inclusion feature prominently..

5.5 Fees

The current permitted maximum charge (£2) for a badge is widely regarded as being out of date and uneconomic to collect and this therefore requires to be reviewed and increased to a more realistic level. (Elected Members should note that no charge is made by this Council at the present time)

5.6 Appeal

Although appeal to an independent authority exists in situations where badges are withdrawn by local authorities, a similar right does not exist regarding other aspects of the scheme.

Ability to progress further with this however will be determined largely by the detail of revised criteria and availability of resources at local authority level to develop, inform and sustain such a system.

5.7 Temporary Badges.

Although there should be no need to adjust the current award period of three years, it must be recognised that there may be some situations where the facility to issue a badge with duration of a lesser period may be appropriate.

5.8 Enforcement

Increased involvement of traffic wardens may be of assistance with regard to identifying use of out of date badges and to enforcement of penalties against those who make inappropriate use of parking bays designated for disabled people.

There is a need to ensure that good quality public information on the scheme is widely available in a variety of formats. This would promote appropriate take up of the Scheme and may also be helpful in reducing potential for abuse.

5.9 Miscellaneous

A number of issues relative to the responsibilities of Development Services as roads authority have been reported separately to Development Services Committee on 13 March 2002 included in the consultation response.

In addition to the production of public information materials, there would be merit in active campaigning to raise public awareness of concessionary parking scheme and the eligibility criteria which apply.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 NIL

8.. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Committee is requested to;

- a) note the officer response to the consultation on the blue Badge parking scheme submitted by the Head of Social Work, and
- b) invite the Director of Educational and Social Services to bring forward a further report to Committee when the final scheme is published.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational & Social Services

15 March 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Disabled Persons Parking Badge Scheme (The Blue Badge Scheme) Discussion Document.
2. Response by Head of Social Work to the Discussion Document.

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AGENDA