

## I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Council understands that dealing with terminal illness can be extremely difficult, both for the individual and the wider family. This report puts forward proposals to aimed at providing greater support to people with terminal illness.
- 1.2. This report sets out proposed amendments to the Councils Disabled Driver Parking Spaces (DDPS) policy, sets out how Plymouth City Council prioritise applications for Blue Badges and proposals to raise greater awareness that persons with a terminal illness may be able to obtain a Blue Badge.
- 1.3. The proposals within this report support the Council in achieving our vision to be 'One of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life can be enjoyed by everyone' and supports the Councils priorities as a **Caring for People and Communities** through providing additional support to blue badge holders who are dealing with terminal illness.
- 1.4. The proposals within this report support our values as a **Responsible** Council, ensuring we take responsibility to seek to support people dealing with terminal illness, to seek to support ease difficulties with access to and from their dwellings.
- 1.5. The proposals within this report support our values as a **Fair** Council, adopting an inclusive and considerate approach to supporting the wider needs of blue badge holders dealing with terminal illness.
- 1.6. The proposals within this report support the delivery of the administration pledge to fast-track applications for Blue Badges and disabled parking spaces for those with terminal illness.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Blue Badge Scheme

- 2.1. Plymouth City Council administer applications for Blue Badges in Plymouth, on behalf of the Department for Transport. Plymouth City Council issue over 4,000 blue badges per year.
- 2.2. Plymouth City Council do not set the qualifying criterions for a Blue Badge, this is set by the Department for Transport. Plymouth City Council apply these criteria's when determining applications.
- 2.3. Applications for Blue Badges are made online, using the Department for Transport application portal, via the Government GOV.UK website. Applications are then provided to Plymouth City Council.
- 2.4. The Department for Transport advises applicants to allow up to 12 weeks to receive their Blue Badge, which allows for any further medical assessments, however, applicants who automatically qualify and have provided completed applications can normally expect to receive their badges within 4 weeks.
- 2.5. The Department for Transport has outsourced the production and postage of Blue Badges to APS Group as part of a national contract. Plymouth City Council does not produce or post Badges.

- 2.6. The Council applies the Department for Transport assessment criteria to determine whether an application is declined, approved or whether an application requires further assessment. In accordance with Department for Transport guidance, Plymouth City Council uses Expert Assessors, who are independent health care professionals to determine the outcome of applications requiring further assessment.

### **Disabled Driver Parking Spaces**

- 2.7. Plymouth City Council provides a service whereby blue badge holders meeting criteria defined by the Council, can apply for a disabled driver parking space (DDPS), a disabled bay which placed near their home to support access to and from the home.
- 2.8. The provision of a DDPS bays is not a statutory service, but one which Plymouth City Council has offered since 1998, to provide additional support to persons with severe mobility impairment. Over this period, Plymouth has supported over 2,500 blue badge holders, across over 800 streets in Plymouth, to better access their homes.
- 2.9. The DDPS policy was last reviewed in January 2017, where an application fee of £40 was introduced. The administration fee was to contribute to the administrative costs of the service and due to the number of people applying, who openly expressed they knew they did not meet the criteria for a disabled space, however still applied as there was no cost. There is currently no fee for the marking or ongoing maintenance of a DDPS.
- 2.10. A DDPS bay is 'linked' to an individual's Blue Badge. This means that the need and eligibility for a bay is reviewed every 3 years, where a blue badge must be renewed every 3 years. The DDPS will be provided for as long as the person continues to meet the qualifying criteria (see 3.4) for a DDPS, which includes holding a valid blue badge.
- 2.11. Whilst every endeavour is made to support applicants, it is regrettably possible that an applicant meeting all the criteria may have their application declined due to the presence of traffic restrictions or where the introduction of a bay may present a safety issue to other road users.
- 2.12. Upon a successful application a works order to mark the bay is issued to our Highways contractor, Southwest Highways. Bays are usually installed within 30 days of an application being approved.

## **3. CURRENT POSITION**

### **Blue Badges – Terminal Illness**

- 3.1. A person with a terminal illness can apply to the Department for Transport for a Blue Badge where they are unable to walk or find walking difficult. The Department for Transport requires that an application made under terminal illness is accompanied by DSI500, a government form completed by a doctor or other healthcare professional, or another form of proof of how someone's terminal illness affects their walking.
- 3.2. When applications are passed to the Council, the Council can identify applications that have been made under terminal illness. These applications are processed by the Council within one working day.

### **Disabled Driver Parking Spaces – Terminal Illness**

3.3. The current DDPS policy does not specifically cover terminal illness.

3.4. The current DDPS policy requires that the applicant: -

- Have a valid blue badge due to a permanent and substantial disability, which means being unable to walk, or have considerable difficulty in walking any distance.
- Be the driver of the vehicle that will use the disabled space.
- Have a consistent difficulty locating a parking space near to home.
- Not have any form of off-street parking.

3.5. The current policy sets out that a DDPS bay will not be provided to: -

- Husbands, wives, parents, relatives, or any named nominated driver of the applicant even if they live at the address and/or provide transport to the blue badge holder.
- To resolve driveway/garage access problems.
- To act as 'keep clear' areas for visiting vehicles such as taxis or in other cases, where the space would only be used for part of the time.

## **4. PROPOSALS**

4.1. The central principal in our approach is to ensure that terminally ill individuals are provided with the support they need, when they most need it. Considering this, with the Councils commitment to provide further support for people with a terminal illness, it is proposed to:

### **Blue Badges**

4.2. Whilst the Council does prioritise applications for Blue Badges made under terminal illness, there is an opportunity to raise greater awareness that individuals with a terminal illness may be able to apply for a Blue Badge and how to go about this.

4.3. It is therefore proposed to: -

- 4.3.1. Review the information made available through the Council, such as our Blue Badge webpages, to raise greater awareness that someone with terminal illness may be able to apply for a Blue Badge;
- 4.3.2. To explore further opportunities to work with our Social Care Services, Mustard Tree Macmillan Cancer and Information Support Centre to raise greater awareness that someone with terminal illness may be able to apply for a Blue Badge.

### **Disabled Driver Parking Spaces**

4.4. It is proposed to amend the current DDPS policy, adding in section 4 to the current policy, to include Blue Badge holders with a terminal illness as qualifying for a DDPS.

4.5. In consideration of difficulties faced by blue badge holders coming to terms with terminal illness it is also proposed to reduce the qualifying criteria. It is proposed to define the criteria as:

- Applicant must hold a valid Blue Badge.
  - Applicant must drive a vehicle that is registered and kept at their address or, if the terminal applicant does not drive, the driver of the vehicle must permanently reside at the same address.
  - Must not have any accessible alternative off-street parking facilities (owned or rented) e.g., garage, driveway or hard standing.
- 4.6. Removing the requirement for the applicant to demonstrate difficulty parking will make applications easier and faster to submit. Furthermore, it is proposed that the determination of applications received under terminal illness will be fast tracked, processed by an officer within 1 working day, and expedited orders raised to our Highways contractor, Southwest Highways, to have bays installed within 7 days.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. There are no financial implications associated with implementing changes to the Blue Badges webpages or engaging with other support services to raise greater awareness to the ability for persons with terminal illness to apply for a Blue Badge.
- 5.2. In 2019/20, (20/21 service was disrupted due to Covid) the cost to Highways to deliver disabled driver parking spaces was £18,050, where £2,760 was received through application fees; a net cost of £15,290.
- 5.3. It is not possible to accurately determine the financial implications of changing the disabled driver parking policy as this would require an understanding of the numbers of Blue Badge holders whom, regrettably, have a terminal illness and apply for a bay. The additional cost of this policy amendment is associated with the fees to install a disabled driver parking space.
- 5.4. The current average cost to install a disabled parking space is £160, based on a 30 day installation. This would however increase by a further £50, per bay, based on an expedited works order of 7 days.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1. It is recommended to implement all the proposals as set out within this report to deliver the Council's commitment to fast-track applications for Blue Badges and disabled driver parking spaces, providing further support to individuals coming to terms with terminal illness.