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**Democratic Services  
Office**

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

**Chief Executive:**  
Stephen Phillips

Dear Councillor

**POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD - THURSDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2015**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 15th January, 2015 meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

**Agenda No    Item**

- a)     Urgent Item - Blue Badge Tool Kit (Pages 1 - 4)

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

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**Distribution**

1. Agenda and reports to all Members of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board for attendance
2. Agenda and reports to Group Director, Director of Legal Services and Director of Finance for attendance.
3. Agenda to all remaining Councillors and Chief Officers for information.

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## **POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD**

**15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2015**

### **URGENT ITEM**

## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – K.JONES**

### **BLUE BADGE TOOLKIT**

#### **Purpose of Report**

To seek the Cabinet Board's endorsement of actions taken by officers to suspend use of the Blue Badge Toolkit in determining eligibility for a Blue Badge and to revert to previous administrative arrangements.

#### **Background**

The Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles Wales Regulations 2000 and the subsequent amendment regulations April 2013) set the eligibility criteria for a Blue Badge. The scheme is devolved to local authorities to administer with Welsh Government requiring councils to adhere to the purpose of the scheme. Although non statutory, a toolkit was prepared by Welsh Government to help manage the application and verification process for a Blue Badge across Wales. It is intended to achieve a more consistent approach in decision outcomes. The local authority verification toolkit is dated July 2014 but was not "signed off" until October 2014 with a commitment given to continue to work with councils to improve consistency.

As reported to the last meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, administrative arrangements in Neath Port Talbot had already been subject of improvement work over a number of years.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December 2014, officers began using the toolkit published by the Welsh Government. Of the 41 cases assessed using the toolkit (discretionary applications), in only 8 cases were sufficient points achieved to confirm eligibility and in those 8 cases none of the applicants were able to produce the required evidence at the time of the assessment. Of the 33 applications refused, most of those applicants were eligible under previous arrangements.

The level of refusals is of great concern and consequently, officers are of the view that the use of the toolkit should be suspended and that urgent discussions should take place with Welsh Government officials to examine and address issues that are presenting a barrier to those who are entitled to a Badge from proving their eligibility.

Additionally, should Members support suspension of the use of the toolkit, it is proposed that all 41 applications processed to date should be re-assessed under previous administrative arrangements.

### **Recommended**

1. That the Cabinet Board endorses the action taken by the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services to suspend use of the Welsh Government toolkit and revert back to previous administrative arrangements for determining eligibility for a Blue Badge.
2. That the Cabinet Board endorses the proposal to re-assess the 41 applications administered against the toolkit, reverting to previous administrative arrangements.
3. That the Cabinet Board notes that the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services has written to officials drawing attention to the problems experienced in using the toolkit, the intention to suspend its use within Neath Port Talbot and offering to work with Welsh Government to improve on the current toolkit.

### **Reason for Proposed Decision**

To ensure those people eligible for a Blue Badge access the scheme.

### **Officer Reporting:**

Mrs Karen Jones, Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services.  
Tel: 01639 768467 e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

### **Background Papers**

Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles Wales Regulations 2000) as amended.

Welsh Government Blue Badge Local Authority Verification Toolkit July 2014 [www.cymru.gov.uk](http://www.cymru.gov.uk)

Blue Badge Scheme in Wales – Welsh Government Guidance to Local Authorities January 2015 [www.cymru.gov.uk](http://www.cymru.gov.uk)

## **COMPLIANCE STATEMENT**

### **BLUE BADGE TOOLKIT – CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

#### **(a) Implementation of Decision**

The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

#### **(b) Sustainability Appraisal**

Economic Prosperity	-	Neutral
Education & Lifelong Learning	-	Neutral
Better Health & Wellbeing	-	Positive
Environment & Transport	-	Neutral
Crime & Disorder	-	Neutral

#### **Other Impacts**

Welsh Language	-	Neutral
Sustainable Development	-	Neutral
Equalities	-	Positive
Social Inclusion	-	Positive

#### **(c) Consultation**

There is no requirement for external consultation