POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD

15TH 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 17th 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

Blue Badge Scheme in Wales – Welsh Government Guidance to Local Authorities January 2015 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