COP/06/12

Policy & Scrutiny Committee Community and Older People

Date 8 March 2012

Blue Badge Reforms - Member Briefing Note March 2012

Background

Following the announcement of a programme of Measures in February 2011 to modernise the Blue Badge scheme in England Essex County Council like all other Local Authorities was obliged to comply.

The measures outlined are designed to tackle badge fraud and misuse and to make the scheme fairer and more sustainable in the long term for those disabled people who most rely on it.

The measures allowed us to charge up to £10 towards the costs of administering the new scheme and following discussion at Scrutiny in July of last year we undertook a community consultation exercise including citizens and local planning groups which concluded on 3 February 2012.

Results from the consultation

Total: 178 responses

Question 1:

Do you agree a fee of £10 for Blue Badges for up to 3 years is reasonable?

Response rate: 178

In favour: 133 (**75.14%)** Against: 44 (24.86%)

Question 2

Should we charge for replacement Blue Badges?

Response rate: 178

In favour: 122 (69.71%) Against: 53 (30.29%)

Independent Mobility Assessments

As part of Blue Badge reforms coming into place on 1st April 2012, Local Authorites will be required to organise independent mobility assessments rather than use GP assessents to

determine eligibilty for Blue Badges in around 12,000 discretionary cases per annum. The preferred procurement route is a 12 month pilot in line with Department for Transport guidance. It is proposed to use Essex Cares to provide this service for the Pilot including:

- The provision of independent mobility assessments and appeals process by professionals appropriately trained in the assessment of mobility and registered with the Health Professions Council
- Delivery of the above via independent mobility assessment 'clinics' hosted throughout Essex
- Reporting the result of each assessment to the ECC Blue Badge Team
- Providing a booking process and reporting to the ECC Blue Badge Team a recommendation to either assess the applicant again in three years or not assess the applicant again

MEMBER DECISION

Feedback from the public engagement exercise is giving a very clear steer in favour of reinstating the charging regime for Blue Badges at £10 for a three year badge. It is therefore recommended that the charge be introduced from April 2012 following a 6 week period of notice to key stakeholders and service user groups.

Delivery of independent mobility assessments hosted across Essex using Essex Cares for a pilot period of one year.