

Briefing Note

Title: Blue Badge Update**Date: 24 February 2023****Prepared by: Dee Nichols****Job Title: Section Lead – Customer Services****Intended
Audience:**Internal ☐Partner organisation ☐Public ☒Confidential ☐

1. Purpose

To provide a performance update for the Blue Badge service to Scrutiny Board, as committed to in the meeting of 26 July 2022.

2. Overview

Blue Badge processing times have improved since our last update to Scrutiny on 26 July 2022.

There have been a number of improvements made by reviewing our processes and implementing the improvements from the last report which have had a positive impact on the service performance. One of the improvements was to trial a new structure which included an Occupational Therapist Assistant (OTA) to process applications which fall under the non-automatic eligibility criteria.

In November 2022 we appointed an OTA, followed by the appointment of two additional FTE CSO's to manage enquiries and the processing of Blue Badge applications.

3. Performance

During the period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022, we received **3982** Blue Badge applications.

The table below shows the breakdown of the average application processing time for each quarter. There is a reduction of **12** calendar days in processing time for applications received in Q3 in comparison to Q1. The government guidance is to process within 84 days.

	Number of Blue Badge applications received in quarter	Average processing time of application processed within quarter.	Percentage of applications processed in 10 days or less
Q1	1370	32 days	12%
Q2	1450	29 days	10%
Q3	1162	20 days	35%

We have continued to deliver Blue Badge surgeries to support customers who do not have access to digital technology or are unable to complete their application online. The surgeries have been delivered from the Civic Centre, Wednesfield Library, Bilston Library and more recently from The Institute in Tettenhall. We will continue to review the locations and use data and feedback to ensure that we offer the surgeries where there is a need.

Below is a breakdown of application performance data from the **3982** applications received:

- 90% (3596) were completed online
- 9% (350) via paper
- 1% (36) applicants via our surgeries
- 95% (3760) have been processed with applicants receiving an outcome
- 3% (110) are waiting for Desk Based Assessment or Mobility Assessment by an OT
- 2% (70) awaiting further information from the applicant
- 1% (42) applications are at other various stages including awaiting payment, appeals and waiting for the cheque to clear.

On average the service receives 90 applications, 135 phone calls and 68 emails per week.

4. Benchmarking

We launched a benchmarking group which current consists of four other Councils Solihull, Nottingham City Council, Nottingham County Council and Warwickshire. The meetings are scheduled quarterly and are used to compare and discuss performance, common themes, issues, market trends, processes and improvements.

Outside of the Benchmarking group meetings, we continue to regularly engage with neighbouring Councils (Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall and Sandwell) to identify areas of best and good practice and to compare case management processes and timescales. These Councils have been invited to the Benchmarking group but have not yet attended.

5. Customer Feedback and Councillor enquiries

We review all customer feedback received to ensure that we can monitor, improve and tailor the service we deliver. Feedback received includes:

- 10 Councillor Enquiries relating to Blue Badges were received via the Councillor Enquiry Unit (CEU)
- 19 customer feedback comments on the services were received via our website, which consisted of four positive comments, one neutral with no comment, and eleven negative feedback which related to parking provisions and technical difficulties with downloading the online form and three general questions.
- We have not received any corporate complaints during this period.

6. Improvements underway

The Blue Badge paper and online application forms are owned by DfT however, we continuously look at ways we can continue to support and improve the customer journey. The following service improvements have been implemented:

- Working in partnership with Zebra Access and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team we have created a Blue Badge Video which is now live on our website [Blue Badge Scheme | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#). The video shows a step-by-step guide on how to complete a blue badge application with audio and subtitles.
- We have promoted our support surgery dates and locations with local libraries and GP surgeries. We have also included The Institute in Tettenhall as a surgery location. We have undertaken 104 appointments between 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022. The Civic Centre being the most popular location with 57 appointments followed by Bilston Library with 23, Wednesfield Library with 22 and The Institute with 2 (since go live in November 2022).
- OTA joined the Blue Badge team on 15 November 2022. Since the appointment of this role there has been an improvement to the timescale for processing desk-based assessments. The average processing time prior to having a dedicated OTA was 52 days. These are now being processed within 15 days.
- We are still working closely with the Independent Living Service for our Physical Mobility Assessments as well as the review of our Hidden Disability applications.
- We have appointed two additional Customer Service Officers to the team.
- NEC (supplier for the Blue Badge processing system) are shortly due to release an update which will allow applicants to be able to upload supporting evidence, identification and other documents directly onto the application via a secure link. This should reduce the amount of email traffic the team currently receive.
- Since GovPay went live in February 2022, 74% of applicants have paid for their badge online. We will continue to promote the ability for customers to pay for the badge online to ensure that those who can are able to do so with confidence.

We will continue to support residents in the community with completing applications and work with our residents, partners and suppliers to continuously improve our processes and timescales.