

## County Council Meeting

### Motion for Time Limited Debate – Improving KCC’s Blue Badge System

**Proposer:** Mr Antony Hook

**Seconder:** Mr Richard Streatfeild, MBE

#### **Background Information Provided by the Liberal Democrat Group:**

1. The council issues Blue Badges, a form of disabled parking permit, recognised by local authorities across the UK.
2. There are many disabled people in Kent. According to the 2021 Census, 281,423 people in Kent are disabled within the definition in the Equality Act.
3. Kent residents aged 16-65 with a disability are currently less likely to be in work than those without a disability (54.7% compared to 82.7%).<sup>1</sup> Disabled residents’ participation in non-work activities, such as activities of an educational, recreational or cultural nature may also be affected.
4. A barrier that many disabled people must overcome is transport, whether by car (as either a driver or passenger) or by public transport. A Blue Badge makes life easier for some disabled people by enabling them to park nearer to shops, services, or their place of work or education.
5. Blue Badge holders may, in England & Wales, park for free:
  - a. In allocated disabled bays on the road.
  - b. On single or double yellow line for up to three hours.
  - c. In car parks for the maximum stay, subject to displayed terms and conditions.<sup>2</sup>
6. Many applicants such as those in receipt of certain benefits are automatically entitled to a Blue Badge. In other cases, applications are individually assessed by the council which determines whether to issue a badge.
7. The council has refused to issue Blue Badges to some residents with cancer or other life-altering conditions on the basis that the council could not determine if their condition would last for three years. People refused a Blue Badge include patients suffering serious fatigue, breathlessness or severe limitation on their mobility, which may significantly reduce their quality of life and access to services.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/8181/Disability-in-Kent.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/8181/Disability-in-Kent.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [Disabled parking - Blue Badge - Kent County Council](#)

8. The council is required to follow DfT guidance<sup>3</sup> and relevant legislation<sup>4</sup> which contains the “three-year rule”.
9. There is an inconsistency between the definition of disability in the Equality Act, which requires an impairment to be long-term (12 months or more) and the Blue Badge rules which require it to be enduring (three years or more). This means that, for example, that a disabled person accessing the council’s services might be entitled to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act but not be entitled to the assistance with parking afforded by a Blue Badge.
10. Residents have complained to Members of long waits for their Blue Badge application to be determined and refusals which they consider appear to be unduly harsh. Some refusals have been overturned on appeal.

**Council resolves to:**

- a) Express its appreciation for the busy, hardworking team who deal with Blue Badge applications.
- b) Request that the application of the Blue Badge rules and the determination of Blue Badge applications should be as generous as possible to residents making Blue Badge applications, so far as the law permits.
- c) Request that a comprehensive report on the waiting times for Blue Badge applications and how this can be improved be provided to the appropriate Committee.
- d) Request that the Executive write on behalf of the Council to government asking for necessary changes to be made to legislation governing Blue Badges so that the three-year rule is abolished and, in particular, that cancer patients and other residents suffering from short-term compromised mobility may be supported with a Blue Badge.

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<sup>3</sup> [Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance \(England\) - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Blue Badge Scheme Local Authority Guidance \(England\) - appendices](#)