

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 3 February 2025 at 7.00 pm at 160, Tooley Street, SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Suzanne Abachor (Chair)
Councillor Maria Linforth-Hall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Esme Dobson
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Jason Ochere

**OTHER MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Michelle Peake, Head of Specialist Services
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager, Scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Sandra Rhule gave apologies for lateness as she was attending another council meeting.

Councillor Charlie Smith also provided apologies for absence as he was attending another committee meeting.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. BLUE BADGE

The chair welcomed Michelle Peake, Head of Specialist Services, and invited her to present the enclosed briefing. The chair explained that this is a follow up from an item held on 15 November 2023.

Shaidi Khan, Accessible Transport Manager, who took a lead in preparing the briefing for the commission, was unable to attend this evening and the project manager convey apologies on her behalf.

Following the presentation the chair invited questions, and the following points were made:

- The officer confirmed that once the transition over to the new government form is complete it will mean the Blue Badge application will no longer be combined with the Freedom Pass application and residents will need to apply twice.
- There was a discussion on how best to support people who struggle with technology to make an online application. The library service can provide access to a computer, however there is no help to complete a form. It is, however, possible to access support to complete the form through the [MySouthwark service point](#). Appointments can be booked by visiting the ground floor of Peckham Library or online. The service offers telephone and video calls to assist people to complete the Blue Badge application form. Members highlighted that presently the service is described as for council tenants only on the council website. The officer undertook to look into this and clarified that the service is available for all residents who require assistance to complete a form for a Blue Badge.
- The officer explained that there is also the [Local Support](#) team who will go out to peoples home to help, if a resident's disability means they cannot leave the home.
- A member said that constituents had reported problems in scanning documents. The officer said all the above services can assist residents with this.

- There was a discussion on rejection of applications and the appeals process. It was acknowledged that hidden disabilities can be difficult to prove, however the officer said that there is growing awareness that not all eligible disabilities are visible. Southwark do have independent assessors who can conduct assessments.
- A member asked how long it takes to have a parking bay provided. The officer said this is not her area of responsibility, however this information can be provided, by way of follow up.
- Members asked about fraudulent applications. The officer explained that there is a fraud team who do a check of a sample of cases, and this did recently uncover a case. The officers undertook to get back to the commission regarding work to examine patterns.
- Members welcomed the transition to the national system. In particular it was noted that it would be a significant improvement for people making a reoccurring application for one of the recognised lifelong conditions, as they would only take an estimated 10 minutes to apply.
- There was a discussion on sharing information across government departments with Southwark officers, to overcome the issue of disabled people having to prove their disability to different agencies. The officer was asked about accessing information held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) related to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) awards. The officers said there is limited information sharing between government agencies, however this will not cover life-long medical information because of GDPR concerns by government.
- Members spoke of concerns from a national advocacy organisation that disabled people are often getting rejected even though they are meeting the criteria for a Blue Badge. The officer was asked about the successful appeal rate of 52% and if this indicated a difficult to negotiate the application system. The officer said that at the reconsideration stage the person will be linked to an assessor to ensure they get good quality assistance, which is why the appeal outcome success rate is high.
- A member highlighted that disabled residents / carers often need to apply for a Blue Badge, a disabled parking permit, an

AD permit, and a Streetscape exemption. The member commented that it can be easy to miss deadlines and asked if there is a way for these to be combined so that applications are every three years, like the Blue Badge, rather than yearly. The member asked if it is possible to harmonise and join up the system, and pointed out this is virtual in some boroughs and synchronised. The officer explained this is not her area of responsibility, however there are forums that work on this.

- Officers were asked about grace periods, and it was explained that people were asked to apply three months before expiry.
- Members thanked the officer for the detailed report and expressed appreciation for all the steps taken to reduce the administrative burden on residents and improve access.

RESOLVED

Officers to:

- Clarify the position on access to MySouthwark service point and the Local Support service point to ensure it is correctly and clearly publicised for all eligible residents who need assistance to complete a Blue Badge application.
- Provide a briefing on fraudulent applications for Blue Badges addressing patterns and learning from case sampling.
- Clarify what more can be done to synchronise applications for Blue Badges, AD permits, Streetscape exemption and Parking permits, and if there is scope to join this up over similar three-year timescale as the Blue Badge and automate.
- Provide timescales for installing a parking bay.

6. DAMP AND MOULD

This item was deferred to the following meeting.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.

