

Blue badge fraud costing council an estimated £202,000 in lost revenue

Hundreds of blue badges in Midlothian were registered with dead people, it has been discovered, costing the council an estimated £202,000 in lost revenue.

A report on fraud investigations carried out in the county has revealed 311 badges were discovered to have not been cancelled following the death of its holder.

It said each badge cancelled was equal to £650 in lost parking and potential congestion charge revenue – totalling £202,150.

The report revealed the results of Midlothian using the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to review services last year where its data is compared to national lists to compare and flag up any inconsistencies.

As well as identifying the dead blue badge holders the results also uncovered 45 ‘errors’ on the housing waiting list which saw names taken off it at an estimated saving of £192,000.

A report due to go before the council’s audit and governance committee next week revealed that as well as the savings through using the NFI to review 2022/23 services, a further £837,000 in estimated saving had been identified as a result

of the council's own counter fraud activity in the last financial year.

It said a review of 46 allegations of potential tenancy fraud saw five houses returned to council stock and made available to those "in genuine need" of social housing.

And it revealed an investigation into people receiving council tax discounts and referrals saw the removal of one single person discount.

The report said: "In conclusion, the corporate fraud team in collaboration with other services has been successful in delivering the range of activity set out in the Counter Fraud Annual Plan. Tackling fraud is an ongoing process."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter