A crackdown on the misuse of Blue Badges has seen the city’s new SaferPeterborough Prevention and Enforcement Service encounter 46 incidents of badges potentially being used fraudulently.

Operation Forager was launched in April to help put a stop to the misuse of Blue Badges.

Prevention and Enforcement Service officers have the power to seize a badge if they believe it to be misused under the Disabled Person’s Parking Badges Act 2013.

As a result of investigations into the 46 cases, one prosecution file has been prepared and passed to legal services, ten warning letters have been issued and one Blue Badge has been retained. Some cases are in various stages of investigation.

The Blue Badge scheme provides a national range of parking concessions for disabled people with severe mobility problems who have difficulty using public transport.

It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle displaying a Blue Badge unless the badge holder is in the vehicle, or unless the vehicle is being driven by someone other than the badge holder to pick up or drop off the holder from an area accessible only to vehicles displaying a Blue Badge.

A badge can be withdrawn if it is misused or allowed to be misused by others. It is a criminal offence for people who are not disabled to use a Blue Badge and they could be fined up to £1,000.

Councillor Irene Walsh, the city council’s cabinet member for communities and environment capital, said: “Motorists who use Blue Badges fraudulently take parking spaces away from people who genuinely need them and are avoiding paying parking charges like the rest of us.

*Operation Forager has resulted in a number of badges suspected of misuse being reported to us, many of which are under investigation. We will use court prosecutions as a last resort and in cases where we are able to gather sizeable evidence of misuse.

*Our new Prevention and Enforcement Service gives us greater resource to be able to tackle issues such as Blue Badge misuse, so my message to those who think it is acceptable is that it’s not worth risking a fine of up to £1,000 when you could pay significantly less to park your car legally.”

The Prevention and Enforcement Service combines council, police, fire service and prison staff into a single managed service. The service officers have the power to seize Blue Badges if they believe they are being used illegally.