

ITEM No. 4

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

MEETING 15

23 MARCH 2006

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION NO 1

By Councillor Lowrie to be answered by the Executive Member for Transport and Public Realm at a meeting of the Council on 23 March 2006.

Question (1) Why did carriageway resurfacing at the junction of Pennywell Road and Muirhouse Parkway take 16 weeks to complete – a huge overrun in the predicted timescale?

Answer (1) The Capital Infrastructure renewal programme for 2005/06 included two carriageway resurfacing schemes at Pennywell Road and Pennywell roundabout. Both of these schemes were undertaken together by the same external contractor. The original intention was that the existing bituminous surfaces would be removed and replaced within a period of approximately 6 weeks. When the underlying layers were exposed it was established that they were not suitable for modern day traffic and more substantial construction was required. The materials were tested and it was decided that the most cost-effective form of construction would be a cement bound road base below the bituminous surface. The placing of this material was carried out in four stages over the two schemes and in each case 7 days curing time was required before surfacing on top. The surfacing took a further week at each of the four sections. The end result was a construction period considerably longer than originally expected but necessary to ensure that the final carriageway construction would be suitable for the anticipated traffic loading.

Question (2) What additional costs were incurred by the Council because of the extended temporary traffic management charges required?

Answer

- (2) The Council pays the contractor, for traffic management, on the basis of time and materials used. The cost of the traffic management for Pennywell Road was £9481 for the 80-day construction period. It is envisaged that the resurfacing works originally planned for this location would have taken approximately 40 days thus the traffic management costs would have been half the costs incurred. However the additional works were deemed to be essential and the traffic management costs were increased accordingly.

QUESTION NO 2

By Councillor Gordon Mackenzie to be answered by the Executive Member for Children and Families at a meeting of the Council on 23 March 2006.

In April 2002 it was reported to Council that BT Syntegra was preparing a feasibility study for online booking and payments for the Community Education adult education programme.

Question (1) Which company was chosen to develop this system?

Answer (1) On 17 September 2002 the Community Services Scrutiny Panel approved a report indicating that the costs provided by BT Syntegra in the Rough Order of Magnitude were in excess of the funds available for the development of online booking and agreed that officers should explore other options. The preferred option was to tie the proposal for the development of an online booking and payment system for the Council's adult education classes and the development of a database of community learning opportunities into the software developed by Mercury Tide for Edinburgh Lifelong Learning Partnership's (ELLP) community portal, "myEdinburgh".

Question (2) What was the process by which this company was chosen to undertake the development of the system?

Answer (2) As approved by the Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 17 September 2002, officers discussed options with FE colleges and other learning providers in the city. Advice was provided by colleagues from Management Services and Mercury Tide was asked to submit a proposal for the development of the system on the basis that the company was already working with ELLP and partners on "myEdinburgh" and that this could offer a more achievable solution than the other options. Mercury Tide presented a proposal to Council officers in December 2002. Advice on the proposal was provided by BT Syntegra and Management Services and advice on the procurement process was provided by the Central Purchasing Unit. Mercury Tide agreed to carry out further development work to the point of preparing a working design model for browsing and booking, and to present a proposal for a central data store to replicate the functionality of the OMNIS system and integrate it with the proposed payment system.

Question (3) When was the work awarded to the company identified in answer (1) and what was the price agreed at that time?

Answer (3) The company was asked to provide the proposals described above in November 2002 and submitted an initial specification in December 2002, and more detailed proposals in May 2003. Payments were made from the Modernising Government Fund for the specification in June 2003 (£8,250) and for the initial phase of the database development in September 2003 (£7,000).

Question (4) What was the agreed schedule for payments (what project milestones were put in place to trigger payments) and when was it anticipated that the online booking system would be in place when the work was awarded?

Answer (4) The agreed completion date for the specification was May 2003 and the agreed completion date for the initial phase of the database development was August 2003. The projected date for the establishment of the online booking system was September 2003 but the company was not asked to proceed to that stage. The work completed by Mercury Tide enabled online information about all adult education classes and programmes to be available throughout the city. Discussions within the Council towards the end of 2003 and into 2004 raised issues about the practical viability of operating an online booking system and further development was terminated in March 2004 when it became clear that no further funds were available from the Modernising Government Fund.

Question (5) What is the total value of payments to date, in respect of the online system, to this company?

Answer (5) £15,250.

Question (6) When will the online booking system be fully operational and available for public use?

Answer (6) A report to the Executive of the Council on 21 June 2005 indicated that due to the complexity of the project it had not been possible to complete the work within the timescale of the Modernising Government funding and that consideration was being given to taking it forward as part of the Smart City initiative. This has not been progressed because of financial constraints. Other improvements have been made to enrolment arrangements and there is no current plan to introduce online booking. Students can enrol in person, by post or by telephone. Factors (other than financial) taken into account in the decision not to proceed with online booking at this stage are the value of introducing online booking for such a limited enrolment period, and the importance of an enrolment system which does not exclude potential students. It should be noted that none of the other city authorities provide online booking for this service.

QUESTION NO 3

By Councillor Cunningham to be answered by the Executive Member for Transport and Public Realm at a meeting of the Council on 23 March 2006.

Question

- (1) Could the Executive Member provide detailed information on the number, and monetary value, of parking tickets cancelled as a goodwill gesture to motorists who had not properly displayed a "pay&display" voucher, so as a parking attendant could clearly see it?

Answer

- (1) Between 1 August 2003 and 28 February 2006, 14462 parking tickets were cancelled as a goodwill gesture to motorists who had not properly displayed a valid "pay&display" voucher.

Prior to August 2003, we did not use such a specific cancellation code and we are unable to identify tickets cancelled for this particular reason.

At the discounted amount of £30.00, this amounts to approximately £433,860.00.