

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

MEETING 6

18 NOVEMBER 2010

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION NO 1

By Councillor Balfour for answer by the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee at a meeting of the Council on 18 November 2010

Question

Will the Administration release full details for its proposed budget for 2011/12 ahead of the February budget meeting in sufficient time that the opposition groups have the choice whether or not to produce their own full budget or table amendments to the Administration's proposals?

Answer

Given the severity of the financial situation confronting this Council, I am attracted to the idea of releasing the Administration's proposed Budget to opposition groups to reduce the costs of duplicated finance officer activity across the political groups. I am happy to have further discussions with Group Leaders in due course. However, at this stage, I am not in a position to give a definitive answer.

QUESTION NO 2

**By Councillor Buchan for answer
by the Convener of the Education,
Children and Families Committee at
a meeting of the Council on
18 November 2010**

Question

Please advise how many Special Educational Needs Tribunal decisions the Council has contested versus those it has accepted without qualification in the following years:

2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 (to present)

How many of the above cases has the Council won for the following years?

2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 (to present)

Please explain why the Council lodges appeals at the very end of the appeal deadlines in these cases?

Answer

It is important to note that between 200 and 300 referrals for specialist provision are made each year; in 2010 it was 283 and, of these, less than 1% (2 cases) were appealed to the Tribunal.

(The detailed figures for 2005 – 2010 appear in the accompanying table in the appendix to this answer.)

It is not Council policy to lodge appeals to the Court of Session at the very end of the deadline. The Council makes decisions on whether or not to appeal as quickly as possible whilst taking the necessary time to consider all of the circumstances and obtain legal advice. The decision whether or not to appeal has to be taken with great care, having regard, amongst other things, to the cost of appealing and to the possible stress to the parents involved and the disruption to the work of school staff and other practitioners. Once a decision is made there is the delay that arises whilst the formal court procedures are engaged. The period allowed in the regulations applies equally to both parties and recognises that this is a complex and time consuming undertaking.

The authority can only appeal where there are grounds to suggest that the Tribunal has erred in law. Of the cases heard by the Court following appeal by the Council, to date all have been found in the Council's favour. This suggests that the Council is receiving sound advice and that we are making decisions prudently.

Appendix

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total Cases brought to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal	0	3	7	6	3	2
Decisions of the Additional Support Needs Tribunal which went for the Council/against the appellant (numbers)	0	2	4	5	1	1
Decisions of the Additional Support Needs Tribunal which went against the Council/for the appellant (numbers)	0	1	3	1	2	1
Decisions of the Additional Support Needs Tribunal which the Council has contested/ appealed to the Court of Session (numbers)	0	1	1	1	1	1
Decisions contested which the Council has won at the Court of Session (numbers)	0	1	1	1	1	1 pending

QUESTION NO 3

**By Councillor Johnstone for
answer by the Convener of the
Education, Children and Families
Committee at a meeting of the
Council on 18 November 2010**

Question

Please provide a full update on actual savings made compared to potential savings listed in the reports to full Council on school closures since May 2007.

Answer

The closure of Bonnington, Lismore and Westburn primary schools has delivered recurrent revenue savings of £0.909m per annum as noted in the Council report of 20 November 2008.

The closure of Burdiehouse, Fort, Royston and Drumbrae has delivered revenue savings of £1.089m against the required part year gross target of £0.845m set out in the committee report of 17 December 2009. In a full year net recurrent revenue savings of £1.10m per annum, as approved by Council, are on track to be delivered.

The additional savings delivered in 2010/11 have been used, in part, to fund additional support to receiving schools to assist in the transition.

QUESTION NO 4

**By Councillor Johnstone for
answer by the Convener of the
Transport, Infrastructure and
Environment Committee at a
meeting of the Council on
18 November 2010**

Question

Please provide an update on progress in the city towards meeting the target set by the Brussels Charter.

Answer

The Active Travel Action Plan (ATAP) has set ambitious targets for increasing cycle use in the city. The targets are that, by 2020, 15% of all trips to work by Edinburgh residents, and 10% of all their journeys, will be made by bike. The plan also sets out a range of actions aimed at moving the city towards the target.

At present the most up-to-date information on cycle use remains as set out on the introduction to the ATAP. This is that in the period 2005 to 2008, 4.9% of journeys to work and 1.8% of all trips made by Edinburgh residents were by bike.

Updates on the level of usage will be available every two years. However it is intended to improve monitoring of cycle flows in the city using automatic cycle counters. This will enable more regular updates on changes in the level of cycling across the city and in specific areas.

There are several projects that have either been completed or will be implemented in the current financial year that will help to achieve the target. The Union Canal towpath has now been surfaced as far as Heriot-Watt University. The junction at Fountainbridge/Gardner's Crescent will be signalised, which will greatly enhance the connection for cyclists at the Union Canal. The A90 cycle route at the B924 is to be upgraded by widening the footpath. A section of the Seafield to Lochend cycle/pedestrian path and also the final unsurfaced section of the path from 5-ways junction at Trinity are both to be surfaced with street lighting provided.

Longer term projects include the George IV Bridge to King's Buildings Quality Bike Corridor and the South Central Edinburgh 20mph pilot scheme. These are currently out to consultation.

QUESTION NO 5

By Councillor Child for answer by the Convener of the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee at a meeting of the Council on 18 November 2010

Question (1) In the six months since 1 April 2010, compared to the same six month period the previous year, what have been the number of reports of:

- (a) fly tipping; and
- (b) fire brigade call outs to 'rubbish fires'

in each of the local Neighbourhood Partnership areas?

Answer (1) (a) This information is only available for each neighbourhood area, rather than broken down into Neighbourhood Partnerships:

	April-Sept 09	April-Sept 10
City Centre	479	310
East	402	297
North	885	697
South	769	486
South West	1074	694
West	228	172
Total	3837	2656

- (b) Information about the number of rubbish fires for the period you specify is not held by the Council. Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service (LBFRS) has been asked to provide further information and officers will share this with you when it becomes available.

The Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership receives regular reports from LBFRS. At its last meeting (10 November 2010), LBFRS reported that deliberate secondary fires within the city, which would include rubbish fires, dropped 9% to 1,908 in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09. This trend continued into the 1st quarter of 2010/11 where there were 503 deliberate secondary fires reported compared to 564 for the same quarter in 2009/10, a drop of 10%. Figures for the 2nd quarter have yet to be published.

Question (2) What are the arrangements for householders arranging a special uplift in each of the local neighbourhood areas?

Answer (2) Householders can book a Special Uplift by telephoning the Contact Centre on 0131 529 3030. Payment for the uplift by credit or debit card will be taken; a date for uplift and guidelines on presentation will be given.

Alternatively, householders can go into their local Neighbourhood Office where cash payments can be taken; the same booking process as the Contact Centre takes place.

Question (3) What are the arrangements for special uplift payments for those without bank accounts in each of the local neighbourhood areas?

Answer (3) Cash payments can be made at local Neighbourhood Offices.

QUESTION NO 6

**By Councillor Perry for answer by
the Convener of the Health, Social
Care and Housing Committee at a
meeting of the Council on
18 November 2010**

Question (1) Can you clarify the current status of the Edinburgh Stair Partnership?

Answer (1) The Edinburgh Stair Partnership (ESP) is operating normally at present. However, the officers' savings proposals for Service Prioritisation Package 2 include a proposal to close the service.

Question (2) How many Stair Partnerships have registered an interest but not been processed?

Answer (2) No complete Stair Partnerships have registered but not been processed.

We are continuing to work with tenements where the majority of owners have returned contracts to achieve the unanimity required.

Question (3) Has a decision been taken to close the Partnership or to discontinue registering any new Stair Partnerships?

Answer (3) No decision has been taken in either respect. However, ending ESP was proposed under Package 2 Officer savings. People enquiring about the service have been advised it is under review and may not continue or the price may increase. To enter into contracts would involve a commitment of 2 years and it is considered reasonable to advise potential customers of possible changes to the scheme.

Question (4) If the Council is not registering any new partnerships who took that decision?

Answer (4) See above.

QUESTION NO 7

**By Councillor Blacklock for answer
by the Convener of the Health,
Social Care and Housing
Committee at a meeting of the
Council on 18 November 2010**

Question

As the Convener will be aware the impending Scottish Government cuts will mean that Women's Aid services risk losing two key funding streams namely the Violence Against Women Fund and the Children's Services Fund and also the Rape Crisis Specific Fund.

What measures has the Convener taken to address these gaps and can he please provide information on the perceived increased burden on the Council?

Answer

The value of services provided to violence against women projects by the Scottish Government is unquestionable. These funds are due to expire in March 2011. The Scottish Government intend to announce their future plans for this funding in December.

In response to your question, I have written to Fergus Ewing, MSP and Minister of Community Safety to ensure he is aware of the importance of giving this area of work special consideration.

QUESTION NO 8

**By Councillor Blacklock for answer
by the Leader of the Council at a
meeting of the Council on
18 November 2010**

Question

The racist English and Scottish Defence Leagues are developing a new 'flash mob' strategy for continuing their campaign of hatred against the Muslim Community, as was seen in Glasgow near the beginning of October. Can you tell me what steps have been taken in Edinburgh to deal with this type of protest should it occur?

Answer

The Council is committed to tackling discrimination, prejudice and harassment in all its forms. Much of this work takes place with Lothian and Borders Police and there are excellent working relationships between the two organisations to promote concerted efforts to tackle any threats to good community relations.

This was exemplified by the recent approach to the SDL demonstration on 20 February 2010 in Edinburgh. Robust information sharing, strategic planning and joint operational activity took place in the run up to this event through a GOLD Command Group. These efforts successfully managed to avert any major negative impact on community relations or disorder in the city. Similar arrangements would be deployed if the SDL were to plan to demonstrate in Edinburgh again. In addition, the Council's partnership work with Scotland Unite was very well received by anti racist organisations involved in the counter demonstration on this date.

In respect of the broader matters of engagement within the Muslim community, the Council, again in partnership with the Police, will continue to strengthen its relationship with these communities, often the target of SDL activities, to offer support and advice.

In addition, through its wide range of internal and external equalities and diversity work, particularly in the arena of education, community and youth work, the Council remains committed to promoting an anti racist culture and fostering good relations between all communities in the city.

QUESTION NO 9

**By Councillor Burgess for answer
by the Convener of the Transport,
Infrastructure and Environment
Committee at a meeting of the
Council on 18 November 2010**

Question

What recycling rates will be achieved in Edinburgh?

Answer

2010/11 YTD (Sep 10 - Period 6) - 35.3%
2010/11 Forecast - 32.3%

This issue is the subject of a report on the Waste and Recycling Strategy to Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee on 23 November 2010.