

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

MEETING 3

19 AUGUST 2004

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION NO. 1

By Councillor Gilchrist to be answered by the Executive Member for Transport and Public Realm at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

Question (1) What is the current target turnaround time for responses (a) to letters and (b) e-mails from (1) Elected Members and (2) Members of the Public?

Answer (1) The target response time for all correspondence is 10 working days from the date the item is received. No distinction is made between letters or e-mails nor between Elected Members or members of the public.

Question (2) If these target times are not being met, what is the actual experience?

Answer (2) Elected Members have, from 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2004, been provided with 1573 responses. 947 (60.2%) of the responses were provided within 10 working days.

Members of the public have, from 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2004, been provided with 4029 responses. 2927 (72.7%) of the responses were provided within 10 working days. It should be noted that many of these required information from a number of sources or visits to site.

The bulk of City Development's correspondence is transport related. The Transport Function's own Service Planning targets for 2004/05 are to respond to 60% of VIP correspondence and 75% of all inquiries within 10 working days.

QUESTION NO. 2

By Councillor Gilchrist to be answered by the Executive Member for Transport and Public Realm at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

On 6 July 2004 parking spaces for the City Car Club were created in Cockburn Street.

Question (1) How many City Cars will the spaces accommodate?

Answer (1) Six City Car Club cars can be accommodated in the designated parking spaces created in Cockburn Street.

Question (2) How many pay and display spaces have been removed as a result of this development?

Answer (2) Five public parking spaces and a short section of yellow line in Cockburn Street were removed and replaced with the Car Club spaces.

Question (3) Have the pay and display places been relocated elsewhere and (a) if so where and (b) if not why not?

Answer (3) Two public parking spaces have been provided in Market Street replacing two City Car Club spaces transferred to Cockburn Street. A survey of the public parking in Market Street and Cockburn Street noted that at no time was the entire public parking space fully occupied. Therefore it is considered that the introduction of the Car Club parking spaces has not resulted in any significant loss of public parking. In any case the purpose of the City Car Club is to assist in reducing the pressure on parking spaces by encouraging shared use.

QUESTION NO. 3

By Councillor Gilchrist to be answered by the Executive Member for Human and Corporate Resources at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

Question

Council Mobile Phones

I would be grateful if you could complete the undernoted table in respect of expenditure for mobile phones allocated to Councillors for each of the last five years.

The Councillors should be ranked in descending order of costs ie Councillor 1 should be the highest level of expenditure.

Year	Total Cost	Councillor				
		1	2	3	4	5
2003/04						
2002/03						
2001/02						
2000/01						
1999/00						

Answer

See attached appendix.

Appendix

YEAR	TOTAL COST	COUNCILLOR RANKING							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	£								
2003/04	3,725.96	Cardownie	Anderson	Perry	Attridge	Burns	Fallon	Aitken	Cairns
2002/03	5,075.97	Cardownie	Anderson	Perry	Fallon	Burns	Attridge	Kennedy	Aitken
2001/02	4,080.78	Cardownie	Anderson	Attridge	Perry	Fallon	Kennedy	Fitzpatrick	Morton
2000/01	3,070.19	Cardownie	Attridge	Anderson	Fitzpatrick	Williamson	Perry	Fallon	Kennedy
1999/00	3,435.59	Cardownie	Fallon	Perry	Attridge	Williamson	Russell	Allan	Fitzpatrick

YEAR	TOTAL COST	COUNCILLOR RANKING							
		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	£								
2003/04	As above	Russell	Thomas	Kerr	Houston	Wilson	Morton	Kennedy	
2002/03	As above	Morton	Russell	Thomas	Cairns	Houston	Fitzpatrick	Wilson	
2001/02	As above	Burns	Williamson	Russell	Thomas	Aitken	Houston	Wilson	
2000/01	As above	Russell	Morton	Thomas	Burns	Lazarowicz	Cameron		
1999/00	As above	Lazarowicz	Thomas	Burns	Morton	Cameron	Anderson	Weddell	Harrold

These are the total costs to the Council of mobile phones after the declared personal calls have been deducted from the Member's allowance

QUESTION NO. 4

By Councillor Jackson to be answered by the Executive Member for Transport and Public Realm at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

Question

Assuming you intend to hold it before the next local government elections, which month/year do you now think it likely that the referendum on the congestion charge will be held?

Answer

No final decision on the specific timing of a referendum will be made until after receipt of the Public Inquiry report later this year. The content of that Public Inquiry report, and any final decision on a referendum date, will be reported to Full Council in November.

QUESTION NO. 5

By Councillor Tritton to be answered by the Executive Member for Children and Families at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

Question (1) How many copies of Go4It and Play4It were produced in 2004?

Question (2) How many were distributed to the following:
Primary Schools
Secondary Schools
Community Centres
Libraries
Playgroups

Question (3) Please give the number of institutions involved in each category?

Question (4) Please list other places to which leaflets were distributed?

Answers

The Number of Brochures Distributed

- 30,000 copies of Easter Go4It
- 30,000 copies of Summer Go4It
- 30,000 copies of Summer Play4It
- 30,000 copies of October Play4It

Schools

Approximately 20,000 Go4It brochures and 20,000 Play4It brochures went to:

- 101 Primary Schools
- 24 Secondary Schools
- 16 Special Education Schools
- 7 Pupil Support Centres

Other Establishments

The remaining 10,000 Go4It brochures and 10,000 Play4It brochures were circulated as follows:-

- 55 Community Education Centres and establishments received 100 of each (5,500)
- 1,000 copies distributed between 23 Libraries
- 15 Edinburgh Leisure Centres received 100 each (1,500)
- Social Work Headquarters received 1000 to be distributed to Social Work Centres
- Remaining 1000 distributed between the Housing Department, Royal Edinburgh Young People's Unit, Education HQ, Royal Blind School.

QUESTION NO. 6

By Councillor Dawe to be answered by the Executive Member for Sustainability and Finance at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

Question

To ask the Executive Member for Sustainability and Finance to provide quarterly figures for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 indicating:

- (a) The average number of days taken to process new housing benefit claims; and
- (b) The percentage claims processed within the Government's 14 day target?

Answer

- (a) The average number of days to process new Housing Benefit claims:

Year		No. of days
2002/03	Quarter 1	58.64
	Quarter 2	58.05
	Quarter 3	56.64
	Quarter 4	64.81
2003/04	Quarter 1	70.74
	Quarter 2	58.49
	Quarter 3	57.03
	Quarter 4	44.23

Note:

Despite increasingly unreliable mainframe computer systems steady progress was made in reducing the number of days to process claims in Quarters 1 – 3 of 2002/03. Quarter 4 of 2002/03 and Quarter 1 of 2003/04 reflect the fact that the benefit system was unavailable for processing for a 6 week period over March/April 2003.

2003/04 was the migration year and the benefit system was down for a planned 6 week period between 25 July and beginning of September. The annual service plan target was set to reflect this, being set at 60 days. Actual annual performance for 2003/04 was 56 days.

There is currently an inconsistency in the data being produced by the iWorld system. The above information reflects the monthly management information being produced by the system. However the quarterly information produced for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) produces a figure in excess of 80 days for Quarter 4 of 2003/04.

This inconsistency is being urgently investigated with our software suppliers and it is understood that other Councils are experiencing problems with the information produced for DWP.

Manual information tends to support the management information as only 1 of the 5 Public Sector Teams has had any mail over 14 days since the start of the current financial year and this only amounts to 100 items of mail.

On the Private Sector side Registered Social Landlords (RSL) indicated at a recent meeting that the bulk of their claims were being processed timeously. Each RSL has a hard core of problem cases, which are being progressed through one to one meetings.

(b) Percentage of new claims determined within 14 days of receiving all relevant information:

Year		%
2002/03	Quarter 1	48.66
	Quarter 2	57.04
	Quarter 3	56.11
	Quarter 4	42.89
2003/04	Quarter 1	36.72
	Quarter 2	36.28
	Quarter 3	31.67
	Quarter 4	46.41

As for (a) above progress was being made in 2002/03 until Quarter 4 when the system was down for 6 weeks. 2003/04 was the year of system migration and as mentioned in (a) above the system was down for a further 6 weeks for migration of data. This meant that in calendar year 2003 the benefit system was unavailable for processing for 12 weeks.

Rapid progress in recovering from the migration is being made as indicated in the Public Sector and RSL information provided in (a) above, which indicates that there is an underlying issue with the system data with performance information currently being incorrectly recorded. Urgent action is being undertaken to improve the position.

QUESTION NO. 7

By Councillor Tritton to be answered by the Executive Member for Sustainability and Finance at a meeting of the Council to be held on 19 August 2004

Question (1) How many claims have been made by individuals against the Council in relation to accidents or damage caused by the condition of roads or pavements in the years 1999/2000, 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03, 2003/04?

Answer (1)

Year	Claims relating to conditions of Roads/Pavements
1999/2000	680
2000/2001	747
2001/2002	809
2002/2003	726
2003/2004	603

Question (2) How many claims were successful, rejected or not yet resolved for each year?

Answer (2)

Year	Claims Settled	Claims Rejected	Claims Outstanding
1999/2000	119	549	12
2000/2001	162	565	20
2001/2002	206	566	37
2002/2003	150	541	35
2003/2004	92	232	279

Question (3) What was the total cost of payments to claimants?

Answer (3) Total cost of payments to date:

Year	Total Cost of Payments to Claimants to date
1999/2000	£248,943
2000/2001	£262,018
2001/2002	£234,445
2002/2003	£154,850
2003/2004	£58,056

Question (4) What were the total administration costs relating to these claims? Please detail separately the department's costs and the costs paid to the loss adjuster.

Answer (4) The fees paid to the claims handling agents in respect of claims are as detailed below:

Year	Paid to Loss Adjuster
1999/2000	£54,400
2000/2001	£62,748
2001/2002	£71,192
2002/2003	£66,792
2003/2004	£60,300

It has not been possible to assess the Council's overall administration costs as these may cover more than one Department.

Question (5) What was the average administrative and legal cost for each claim settled?

Answer (5) See Answer (4). The fees paid to the Loss Adjuster include an element of legal charges that may arise.

Question (6) What was the average compensation payment paid out for each claim settled?

Answer (6)

Year	Average Payment per claim to date
1999/2000	£2,092
2000/2001	£1,617
2001/2002	£1,138
2002/2003	£1,032
2003/2004	£631

QUESTION NO. 8

**By Councillor Mackintosh to
be answered by the Executive
Member for Sustainability and
Finance at a meeting of the
Council to be held on
19 August 2004**

Question (1) How many vehicles were operated by the Council for the use of the Lord Provost during each financial year from 1999 to date, and were they owned or leased by the Council?

Answer (1) Three, leased by the Council.

Question (2) What was the cost of providing and operating those vehicles?

Answer (2) The leasing charge for 2003/04 was £32,808. With other charges for fuel, garaging etc, the full cost of providing and operating the vehicles, excluding staff costs, was £37,051.

Question (3) How many miles did each vehicle travel during financial year 2003/04?

Answer (3)

Vehicle No SO	–	8187
Vehicle No S10	–	3594
Vehicle No SS10	–	1079

Question (4) On how many days during financial year 2003/04 were:

- (a) Two vehicles used simultaneously, and
- (b) Three or more vehicles used simultaneously?

Answer

- (4) Records of the use of the vehicles have not been kept systematically throughout 2003/04. Examination of a sample of recent engagements suggests that two vehicles are in use simultaneously on average 4-5 times per month. It is rare for the three vehicles to be used simultaneously. However, the choice of vehicle varies with the nature of the engagement and the number of persons to be transported.