

FIFE COUNCIL
8TH DECEMBER, 2022

ITEM 7 QUESTION TIME

QUESTION 1 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP -

How many new bus shelters have been requested, and where, since the budget for new shelters was discontinued, and how much would it cost to provide each of these new bus shelters?

How many locations, and where, are currently awaiting a replacement bus shelter? Are there any budget difficulties in providing replacement shelters at the moment?

Answer

There have been no recorded requests for new bus shelters in the past 3 years.

Recently, three orders have been issued for shelter replacements in Ceres Road, Craigrothie; High Street, Newport and Caskieberran Drive, Glenrothes. A further, timber shelter will be replaced in Balmerino, once discussions with elected members are concluded. The average cost to replace a shelter is £6000

In terms of accident damage to shelters, two have recently been damaged, one in Buckhaven Road, Methil and one in Kinghorn Road, Kirkcaldy. Roads & Transportation Services are pursuing the recharge costs for these.

There is a budget for bus shelter maintenance which includes the potential for replacement (Annual budget is £40k p.a.). The level of budget is under review within the wider roads network maintenance budget with a view to potentially increasing.

Supplementary

Please can you bring back the budget for new bus shelters?

Answer

This can be looked at as part of the 2023 budget process.

QUESTION 2 FROM COUNCILLOR AUDE BOUBAKER-CALDER

What is the average wait for blue badge applications including renewal ones?

Answer

The Council received 8600 Blue Badge applications in 2021/22 and in 2022/23, 9500 are expected. The applications fall into two categories, Automatic and those requiring Further Assessment (approx 60% & 40% split respectively).

Automatic approvals are based on specific government benefits a person may receive such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) etc. and currently these take 3-4 weeks to process.

Further Assessment approvals are required where not enough detail is provided at the application stage and contact with the applicant is required with possible follow ups with their GP or hospital consultant etc. The Council follows the national process of assessing and issuing Blue Badges which are normally issued for a period of 3 years and holders need to reapply after this period. These assessments currently take 12-14 weeks to process.

Recently, part of the time in dealing with Further Assessment approvals was due to the pandemic when it was not possible to hold in person assessments. However, the Council has taken steps to reduce this waiting time by employing additional staff in the Blue Badge team.

Supplementary

Can additional staff be resourced to reduce the backlog?

Answer

Yes additional staff have been allocated to the team to reduce the backlog.

QUESTION 3 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

What action is being taken to identify the additional funding needed to replace the footbridge on the Coastal Path at Aberdour, which was washed away over two years ago, without having to add the further delay of waiting for the full budget process to play out in the new year?

Answer

"A value management assessment for this project was presented to the South West Fife Area Committee on 23rd November 2022 and that identified that an additional £135k is needed to deliver the replacement footbridge, increasing the budget to £540k.

Feedback from potential contractors highlighted that this project is high risk with low profit margin, due to the location of the site and initially proposed autumn construction date. Hence, to ensure a more competitive tender can be achieved, a construction start date of Springtime is now targeted to make best use of low river levels, longer nights, and higher temperatures.

Roads and Transportation Services has identified the need for the additional budget within the capital programme with a view to obtaining funding from the Inflation budget which will be confirmed in February 2023. This is the Council process for securing such funds.

As a means to help timely progress, RTS will look to issue the contract documents for the project early in 2023 with a view to formally awarding the contract once the budget is confirmed. This is with a view of achieving a Spring start date.

Supplementary

With no capital budget coming forward in February 2023, can I have assurance that this project won't be held up by this delay?

Answer

Yes you can be assured.

QUESTION 4 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

Given that flooding occurs when water arrives at a location faster than it can leave, what additional measures can be taken to improve drainage in flood-prone locations, including lobbying for the easing of any regulations that hinder the flow of water away from such locations?

Answer

This is a very general question and difficult to answer specifically because every catchment area is different and needs to be considered on its own merit.

In terms of the various flood and development management regulations, the best practice approach looks to retain flood waters through bodies of water such as ponds and detention basins, soft landscaping, soakaways, and protection measures, etc. This is the basis of managing flow rates and protecting communities and properties further downstream. This approach is detailed within the Sustainable Drainage Systems approach promoted through flood risk management practitioners around Scotland. These measures can be seen throughout new developments in Fife and are required under Planning Policy.

In relation to existing flood locations, the challenge is to attenuate/divert the flood waters to help mitigate the effects of flooding. There are a range of measures which can be adopted but are dependent on specific site conditions.

In general, improving the drainage in flood prone locations cannot/should not be undertaken in isolation. The entire drainage system for an area needs to be considered which is in keeping with the requirements of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and also Section 256 of Scottish Planning Policy. These are legislative instruments and Fife Council would not seek to 'ease' any application of them.

Supplementary

Can we be assured that gully cleaning is prioritised?

Answer

Yes as far as possible.

QUESTION 5 FROM COUNCILLOR KATHLEEN LESLIE

How many job vacancies is Fife Council looking to fill as of the last week of November 2022?

Answer

At the time of responding, there are 147 open jobs on our [external careers site](#) and there are a further 4 jobs advertised internal only . 238 job adverts have closed and are at the stage of short-listing / invite to interview .

QUESTION 6 FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY-LEE ROBB

To ask the Leader of the Council if he can outline what work is actively underway across Fife Council to ensure children and young people can have their voices heard on issues that concern them under Article 12 of the UNCRC, embedded in law under the Children and Young People's (Scotland) (Act) 2014?

Answer

Children and young people are supported to have their voice heard through pupil leadership groups in schools. This is demonstrated through schools' standards and quality reports shared annually with their communities. This work is enhanced through UNICEF's Rights Respecting School Award. 90schools across Fife are engaged with this programme with almost half having achieved silver or gold accreditation. This award ensures children and young people are aware of their rights (Silver) and are having them respected (Gold). We have plans to support 15 more schools to achieve silver status over the next 2 years.

The Children's Rights group are currently working with a group of senior pupils across Fife to co construct a pupil empowerment panel. This panel will not only design the structure to support this panel they will also create a child friendly version of the Fife Children's Rights report due in May 2023.

Older teenagers can represent Fife in the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) which is a youth led democratic organisation aiming to represent the young people of Scotland. Elections were held in November 2021 and eight young people were elected to represent Fife. Member of the SYP are provided a contact support worker from CLD for each constituency and the MSYPs initially meet and work with them. All MSYPs are actively supported and encouraged to engage with youth groups in their areas. This is a

voluntary role and all MSYPs have college, school, or University commitments in addition to this voluntary role.

There are currently three active groups for people with lived experience in Fife; Kirkcaldy, Leven and Glenrothes. With plans for new groups in Dunfermline and Cupar in the New Year. The philosophy of the groups is to create a space for care experienced people of all ages to come together for support. Embrace Fife is supporting the work of The Promise in creating a community for people with lived experience, to reduce isolation, celebrate achievements and share their voice with others to effect change.

The Corporate Parenting and Development Workers are involved in participation and engagement work with children and young people attending Children Hearings. They are offering all children and young people the opportunity to meet with them prior to a Children Hearing and following the Hearing. The purpose is to hear if there are any barriers for them in engaging in their meetings, if they feel their voice is heard and to hear what is working well. The feedback will be collated and shared with SCRA and Social Work to ensure we do more of what is working well and address any barriers for children and young people's participation.

In Fife children and young people can share their views, wishes and feelings using Mind Of My Own, which was introduced in March. This is an app children and young people have on their own device and is used to send statements to their social worker. It is being used in local authorities across Scotland and provides increased opportunities for engagement with children and young people using a platform they are comfortable with.

Supplementary

Do you believe it was right to proceed with a consultation on Lochore Meadows that excluded young people?

Answer

Young people are being consulted through other routes.

QUESTION 7 FROM COUNCILLOR NICOLA PATRICK

How many third-party claims have been made for damages to vehicles as a result of damage by potholes on adopted roads in fife in each of the 12 months to 08.12.22?

Answer

During the period 1 December 2021 to 30 November 2022, 216 claims were received for damage to vehicles as a result of damage by potholes on adopted roads in Fife. Almost 70% of these claims were received during the winter months, with 135 claims received between December 2021 and April 2022 and 13 in November 2022.

Liability was denied for 161 of these claims, 7 were paid and 48 are still being assessed.

QUESTION 8 FROM COUNCILLOR NICOLA PATRICK

How many pay outs have been made in respect of third-party claims for damages to vehicles as a result of damage by potholes on adopted roads in Fife in each of the 12 months to 08.12.22.

Answer

During the period 1 December 2021 to 30 November 2022, 38 claims for damage to vehicles as a result of damage by potholes on adopted roads in Fife were paid. These payments relate to claims received during the period 1 January 2020 to 30 August 2022 for incidents that occurred between December 2019 and August 2022.

Supplementary

What additional resources have been provided to address the issues on the roads?

Answer

Additional resources were provided which has cleared the backlog of potholes and brought the roads up to a better standard.

QUESTION 9 FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN LAWSON -

The National Grid has intimated that there is a possibility of electricity rationing leading to blackouts during periods of calm cold weather when wind power is much reduced. What contingency plans does Fife Council have in place to cover such emergencies, and in particular how will elderly people living alone or in care homes be looked after.

Answer

The Council has its generic Incident Management Plan which is activated in response to emergencies across Fife, which can be found on www.fife.gov.uk. This plan is supplemented with Care for People Arrangements which consider how the Council and its partners will provide the necessary support to members of the community. Business Continuity Plans are also in place which would be activated to ensure that critical services, such as caring for the elderly at home or in care homes, continue to be provided.

Supplementary

St Andrews has a large population of elderly residents who live alone. Is there a service to help residents reset boilers/heating systems after powers cuts?

Answer

Unsure of services available but will check and respond directly to Councillor.

QUESTION 10 FROM COUNCILLOR ROBIN LAWSON

St Andrews has been allocated funds for additional public Electric Vehicle Charge Points which cannot be installed due to the lack of capacity in the Electricity Grid. The University cannot deliver to the grid solar power which it generates in Guardbridge, nor can it build much needed student accommodation until 2026 owing to "grid constraints". What steps can Fife Council take to put pressure on Scottish Power to accelerate the delivery of the planned upgrade of the grid connection from Cupar to St Andrews which is not expected until 2025?

Answer

SPEN have prioritised the north east area of Fife over the last few years, in both the Cupar and St Andrews areas, spending over £10m on the Cupar upgrade project, with a new grid supply point and Primary substation completed in 2020. Going forward Ofgem have given SPEN the go ahead to spend a further £11M on the St Andrews upgrade project installing a new Primary Sub Station in Guardbridge and associated reinforcement works in and around St Andrew. This is the single largest project approved by Ofgem for SPEN's 2023-28 investment programme and its approval is a clear signpost of the importance of North East Fife in both SPEN and UK government thinking.

Officers will work with SPEN to engage with the communities in North East Fife as the project progresses to explain the network investment and its benefits. In the meantime, SPEN advise that they can accommodate a number of EV chargers in St Andrews and the surrounding areas and are happy to work with the University to determine the best approach for their location, size, cost and installation timescales.

Supplementary

Is there any pressure that the Council can put on Scottish Power for delivery?

Answer

The Council has limited powers and are unaware of specific issues.

QUESTION 11 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BARRATT

The Environment and Protective Services Sub Committee agreed on the 10th of February 2022 that work be undertaken to provide pedestrian/cyclist access at Dalgety Bay, Lochgelly and Kirkcaldy Recycling Centres, subject to identifying funding, with the works estimated to cost £32k. What progress has been made since May 2022?

Answer

The works are planned for being progressed in early 2023. Materials are being sought and surveys of the underground services are being undertaken to ensure the areas for

external cycle parking and the footway can be safely constructed. It is anticipated that the works will be completed before the end of March 2023. All members will be contacted prior to access being available and the public will also be notified via the website and Fife Council's social media.

QUESTION 12 FROM COUNCILLOR BRIAN GOODALL

On Friday 18th of November 2022 the Brankholm Burn at Park Road in Rosyth, once again burst its banks, flooding homes, garages, gardens and the playground of Park Road Primary School and Nursery. Roads were closed and emergency supplies of sandbags were provided to vulnerable properties. At its meeting on the 23rd of Nov 2022, South & West Fife Area Committee called for increased urgency from Scottish Water, SEPA and Fife Council on the delivery of flood prevention measures.

How will Fife Council respond to this latest flooding in Rosyth and the local calls for urgent action?

How will the £250K in the 2023/24 Capital Budget for Park Road Flood prevention be used to help prevent further flooding incidents in Rosyth?

Answer

During the significant flooding of 17-18 November 2022, Fife Council delivered additional sandbags to the community within the Park Road area of Rosyth. These additional sandbags supplemented the FloodPods which had already been positioned in the area with a view to quickly helping to mitigate the effects of flooding to the community. Going forward, we look to work closer with the community to ensure such emergency measures are put to best use by residents to allow them to protect properties.

Strategically, this area of Fife has complex flooding issues and measures are being progressed through a number of agencies including Scottish Water, SEPA and Fife Council. Fife Council meets with these agencies on a monthly basis with a view to helping to progress measures for the area. Currently, the activities include:

- A Scottish Water led project to divert some flood water away from Park Road area via alternative routing to the west of Dunfermline. The detail and programme for this project have yet to be confirmed by Scottish Water but we continue to push for a resolution.
- Equally, SEPA are developing a habitat and flood mitigation project for the Brankholme Burn, which again will help mitigate flooding.
- Fife Council are also in the process of developing a work programme to manage surface water flooding in the Park Road area. This will include agreeing with the local community a preferred approach before developing funding applications for the required measures.

As a collective, these projects hold the potential to help mitigate flooding in this area of Rosyth. However, there are many such flood locations across Fife which are competing for priority and funding. To help promote improvements to this area Fife Council will continue to meet with Scottish Water, SEPA and the Scottish Flood Forum to discuss progress and agree a joined-up approach going forward.

QUESTION 13 FROM COUNCILLOR BRIAN GOODALL

What is Fife Council doing to support, and bring forward, access to upgraded internet services for the communities of Crombie, Charlestown and Limekilns?

Answer

Fife Council is working with the Scottish Government to support the delivery of superfast broadband through their R100 programme. The Scottish Government has committed to providing superfast broadband access - speeds of at least 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) - to every home and business in Scotland. This policy commitment is being met through the three strands of R100 activity – the R100 contracts, R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) and ongoing commercial coverage. Contracts were awarded to the delivery partner, BT in three geographical areas, or 'lots' – North, Central and South. Fife is included in the Central Lot. Given the ongoing global supply chain issues that are currently being experienced, the engineering works will take time and connections will be delivered on a rolling basis. Timescales for individual premises can be checked at [Check my address | Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband](#) Fife Council also supports increase in the commercial coverage with any necessary consents and wayleaves.

QUESTION 14 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BARRATT

The Westminster Government announced the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) in April of this year, with support starting for most in October. It was announced in November that the Alternative Fund (EBSS-AF) would provide £400 to the approximately 900,000 households without a direct relationship with energy providers so far missed by the scheme. The Government have stated applications will open in January with local authorities being responsible for processing and verifying applications. What steps are the council taking to prepare for the launch of this scheme?

Answer

As a Council we will work closely with COSLA as to how this will be administered through Scottish local authorities.

What we know to date

BEIS (Dept of Business of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) will create and manage the digital portal, including the online eligibility checker and application form, which will be the gateway for applications, and which will aim to reduce to a minimum the amount of discretion that local authorities are required to exercise in processing applications.

BEIS will determine the policy and approach for the scheme and will support local authorities with complex cases.

The guidance for local authorities will include the eligibility criteria. e.g. the dwelling for which support is being claimed is the main or sole residential address of the applicant making the claim.

Local authorities will need to continue to ensure the safe administration of grants and that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate against the increased risks of both fraud and payment error.

It is expected grant allocations will be agreed via grant determination letters between BEIS and local authorities prior to funding being issued. The allocations will be determined by modelling the number of households in scope in each local authority area, based on the eligibility criteria.

This will have an impact on the Customer & Online Services team so having appropriate funding arrangements to meet administration and IT costs associated with the scheme's delivery is vital. It is also important that the process is clear and deliverable.

We will continue to work closely with COSLA to see how this is taken forward. This additional support was discussed at the recent Council leaders' meeting and broad support was given.

In ensuring the scheme is delivered effectively COSLA officers will work with UK Government officials and Local Government officers to support the co-design of the delivery approach for the Alternative Funding Scheme and emphasise the urgency at which this should be progressed in order to assist households affected as quickly as possible.

They will also challenge the UK Government to provide detail and clarity on how the one-off Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) will be made.

To this end Fife Council are part of a webinar (Tuesday 6th Dec) with the Department to explain in more what the ask of Local Government will be in respect of delivering the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Supplementary

Do you agree the Government has been too slow to react?

Answer

All help is urgently needed.

QUESTION 15 FROM COUNCILLOR ANN VERNER

What progress has been made since May to provide equitable opening hours for the Fife Sports and Leisure Trust venues in NEF compared to their other venues across Fife?

Answer

Fife Sports and Leisure Trust and Fife Council agreed reopening hours based on the demand and usage of sports and leisure centres following the relaxation of restrictions brought about by the COVID pandemic. Fife Sports and Leisure Trust is working with the council to reinstate further opening hours in North East Fife and other venues. The Trust is planning for additional hours at Cupar and East Sands and is making the necessary preparations in recruiting and training staff and promoting physical activity and sport activities jointly with the council and other partners in North East Fife.