

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH, 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 1 from Councillor Dave Dempsey

At the session of Holyrood's Finance and Public Administration Committee on 24/5/22, the Fife Council officer present said (page 13 of <https://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=13775>)

The accountability question is difficult. It is important that we are accountable to our communities and the public by being clear and honest about what we have and have not achieved. At times in the whole industry of performance reporting and performance frameworks, there is more of an emphasis on reassurance than on challenge.

When reports are taken to committees such as this one—particularly service committees—there is a sense that we are throwing lots of numbers at you and showing that we are measuring things, and if the figures are going down, there may be a good reason for that. However, who is asking the difficult questions about whether we are making a difference and making things better? That is where accountability comes in. There has to be internal challenge as well as external challenge.

Given that Fife Council recognises this issue, what is Fife Council doing to address it?

Answer

The statement should be viewed in the context of the session of the Holyrood Committee which concerned the National Performance Framework – full details of which are on the Scottish Parliament website – and councils are accountable to their communities not directly to the Scottish Government, so ring fencing and under funding of local government by central government creates a problem. The Council's Scrutiny Committees have been established to improve internal assurance and monitoring and I would be happy to discuss this with Cllr Dempsey outwith the Council meeting.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH, 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 2 from Councillor James Calder

How many flytipping reports were received last year in Fife and how many fixed penalty notices were issued?

Answer

There were 3274 reported cases of flytipping and 95 fixed penalty notices issued in 2022.

Supplementary

Will you be monitoring the impact on lifting the bulky uplift charge on flytipping?

Answer

Yes this will be a priority.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH, 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 3 from Councillor Dave Dempsey

In a number of ways, including the newly announced Green Freeport, Fife Council is part of the just transition to net zero emissions. Is the Council aware of transitions to net zero that are not just and, if so, what steps is the Council taking to ensure that its measures are just?

Answer

A Just Transition being one where we end our contribution to climate change in a way that is fair and leaves no one behind. This however is a broad concept, and as such we would be unable to describe a specific example of “transitions to net zero that are not just”. However there are activities to deliver net zero that if not done in consideration of their socio-economic impact would be considered “not just”. An example would be if a government banned the particular mode of transport (powered by fossil fuels), leaving only expensive low carbon options available, and without making provisions to support affordable alternatives, this could be determined as “not just” as it would be limiting travel options for those with limited incomes or most in need.

Regarding your specific questions “.. what steps is the Council taking to ensure that its measures are just?” We look to identify the socio-economic impact of our actions, projects and programmes, normally through a benefits mapping. We also use our Local Strategic Assessments to inform our strategy on both what and where we undertake activity, and use tools such as Equality Impact Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessment to inform programme and policy decisions.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH, 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 4 from Councillor Dempsey

What costs are the Council expecting to incur as a consequence of the introduction of the Scottish Government's Deposit Return Scheme and how are these costs distributed between

- the effect on kerbside collection
- provision of infrastructure such as machines to receive recycled containers
- handling and storage costs
- other costs

Answer

The Deposit and Return Scheme will affect Fife Council in two broad ways:

- In our capacity as a retailer of in-scheme containers
- In our capacity as a provider of waste collection and disposal services

Regarding the costs associated with

- *provision of infrastructure such as machines to receive recycled containers*
- *handling and storage costs*

As a retailer of in-scheme containers (via our schools, cafes etc 25 venues in total.) we are legally required to operate a Return Point where the deposit can be reclaimed when the material is returned (unless an exemption is applicable).

This requires some changes to our collection, handling and storage infrastructure at these locations. This is likely to take the form of Reverse Vending Machines (RVM) – a machine that collects the material and returns the deposit to the individual.

The cost associated with this is currently undetermined as we are both investigating the market for Reverse Vending Machines for purchase, and there will be a Management Fee payable to all Return Point operators. This Management Fee will be based on the amount of material collected, which we are unable to determine the value until the scheme is operational. The Management Fee will offset some of the costs for the

RVMs, but the total costs cannot be determined until both a procurement exercise has been undertaken and the amount of material coming through has been determined.

In response to this, an internal DRS Project Group has been established, led by Facilities Management. That group is preparing a project plan that includes:

- Assessing our retail premises to determine those that will become Return Points, and those that may be exempt.
- Organising the procurement and installation of suitable reverse vending machines for Fife Council locations.
- Identifying a source of capital funding for reverse vending machines.
- Developing communications plan for the launch.

Regarding the impact

- *the effect on kerbside collection*
- *other costs*

The scheme will impact Fife Council waste and recycling services in the following ways: **Household waste & recycling collection services**, including both kerbside collection and wider recycling infrastructure. The kerbside “Green Bin” will see a reduction of around 20% of material. Recycling Points in particular are likely to see a significant drop in glass collected (an estimated 80% reduction in volume and weight)

Whilst there is likely to be an impact to kerbside material collected, we do not believe this will have a significant operational impact. As noted above, the Green Bin will likely be less full, and therefore likely to have positive benefits to reducing excess waste normally deposited at recycling points and freeing up additional space for other plastics (films etc.) we recently added to the material collected. As such we do not anticipate any immediate changes at kerbside (or associated cost), but we will be monitoring for a period after DRS goes live to inform any future options for operational changes.

Income from recycled material. Our most recent estimate is that there will be a negative financial impact of circa £1.6m per annum, directly on Cireco (Fife Council’s arms-length resource management company), indirectly impacting Fife Council as this critical income stream allows Cireco to maintain the c£5.5m of subsidy to Council activities.

This figure is based on:

- removing current income streams from sale of recycled material and the current market value,
- partially offset by expected reduced expenditure, including landfill avoidance, and
- information available to us at present, and a number of estimates applied, such as a 90% uptake

FIFE COUNCIL

16TH MARCH, 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 5 from Councillor Browne

To ask the Labour administration if it will make a statement on the completion of the new industrial units at the Hillend and Donibristle Industrial Estate in Dalgety Bay and their expected contribution to economic development and growth in south and west Fife?

Answer

The development of the new units at West Way, located in the Hillend and Donibristle Industrial Estate is the latest of a number of regeneration projects that have taken place within Hillend and Donibristle Industrial Estate and marks a significant milestone in Fife Council's long-term commitment to the regeneration of the Estate - in addition to acting as a catalyst for future business investment and jobs growth locally. The project is funded by the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and forms part of the Fife Industrial Innovation Investment (Fi3P) programme.

The new units ensures that Fife's industrial estates provide a flexible space and attract innovative industries to the area, they have also contributed to revitalising the local area. The units are supporting 7 innovative companies from a variety of sectors who have ambition to develop and grow their businesses. The companies have created or sustained over 20 local jobs . A requirement for tenants taking leases in the units is for them to have fair work policies in place and commit to paying the real living wage, helping to support local economic growth. Tenants must also meet criteria around innovation capability.

Hillend and Donibristle Industrial Estate is one of Fife's most important and successful industrial estates and is home to over 200 companies. These companies range in scale and sector. Regeneration of industrial estates is a priority for Fife Council to address the ongoing concern that a lack of modern business property and effective employment land is having a detrimental impact on the Fife economy and the region's ability to attract investment. This is one of three projects which will be delivered under the Fife Industrial Innovation Investment Programme in the area, Site servicing projects at Ridge Way and Beech Way are scheduled to start in Tranche 2 of the Fi3P programme.

There has been strong tenant demand for the units which are fully let. The next units that will be completed in the South West Fife area will be located at Fife Interchange

North , which will provide a further 10 units. These are scheduled for completion in Summer 2024.

The Fi3P programme participates in the City Region benefits realisation programme, which forms part of annual reporting to the UK and Scottish Governments.

Supplementary

Can I ask for assurance that West Way development will be completed?

Answer

Yes

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 6 from Councillor Browne

To ask the Labour administration if it will make a statement about progress in delivering the long awaited £85 million pounds replacement for Inverkeithing High School?

Answer

In line with our usual processes, we have raised a New Project Request (NPR) with Hub East Central to progress the design of the new campus. The design team and main contractor were appointed in December 2022. The team has extensive experience in delivering previous schools for Fife Council.

A formal consultation under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is required to be undertaken, as the proposal is that the school would be relocated to a different site. It is currently anticipated that a report seeking approval to commence this statutory consultation process will be brought to Cabinet Committee in April 2023.

It is intended that the new building will open to pupils in August 2026.

Supplementary

Can I seek assurance that whilst waiting for the new school the council will maintain the current Inverkeithing High School?

Answer

Yes

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 7 from Councillor Dempsey

What is the typical cost of filling a single pothole and what is the additional cost of filling a second pothole adjacent to the first?

Answer

The Fife Council policy for road defect repairs is based on a Risk Based Assessment where road defects are classified as:

P1 (repair in 24 hrs)

P2 (repair in 5 days)

P3 (repair in 3 months)

P4 (repair in 12 months)

P1 and P2 pothole repairs are very much an emergency repair and hence by their nature are more expensive.

P3 and P4 repairs by their timescales allow repairs to be planned and can therefore be undertaken in a more coordinated cost-effective manner.

I should highlight that the cost of individual pothole repairs can vary considerably as the actual cost depends on the specific location and the extent of traffic management required to undertake the work safely.

In terms of costs, the average cost per m² for the four categories of repair (based on April 2022 to January 2023 data) are:

P1 £202

P2 £190

P3 £70

P4 £59

In terms of costs for undertaking a second pothole adjacent to the first it would be a similar cost.

Roads & Transportation Services are currently in the process of introducing a new digital management system for this area of work with a view to better coordinate works and associated costs. The data emerging from this work has allowed additional internal resources to be allocated to help address the level of road defect repairs and will look to further improve this going forward.

Supplementary

Does the administration share my concerns about the reputation of the Council and public perception?

Answer

Not helpful to denigrate the service provided. No I don't accept this describes the situation we are in.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 8 from Councillor O'Brien

How many fife council employees have signed up to the Cycle to work scheme since the start of the Scottish government initiative?

Answer

The salary sacrifice cycle to work scheme operated in Fife Council is part of the Department for Transport scheme (guidance available here: [Cycle to Work Scheme guidance for employers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/cycle-to-work-scheme-guidance-for-employers)).

The Scottish Government have several initiatives around increasing accessibility to cycling but the cycle to work scheme for the employer salary sacrifice is the Department for Transport scheme and, since 2015, there have been 1106 applications from employees across the council. Some employees may have applied more than once so this figure is not a direct count of employees.

Supplementary

What is this coalition administration doing to promote the scheme?

Answer

It is a Department of Transport Scheme, however the Council does encourage employees to use alternative forms of transport for health and the environment. There is no coalition.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 9 from Councillor O'Brien

How many cycle spaces/lockers has Fife Council provided for employees at workplaces?

Answer

Shelters can hold 6 bikes.

Building	Bike locker	Shelter
Kirkcaldy Townhouse	6	0
Carberry House	0	1
New City House	0	1
Dunfermline City Chambers	2	0
Fife House	5	2
County Buildings	0	1
Bankhead	18	2

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 10 from Councillor Goodall

What is the current waiting time for a Housing Functional Needs Assessment across Fife?

Answer

We currently have forms dating back to October awaiting assessment. The Housing Occupational Therapy team who assess the Housing Functional Needs Assessments are currently experiencing high levels of absence, this coupled with an increase in demand for assessment has led to a significant back log.

We have streamlined the process and ensured the waiting times have stabilised regardless of the area of Fife you currently reside or have applied to be housed in. We are focusing on making our service accessible to all, increasing quality of assessments and triaging where necessary those in most need; whether that be through homelessness or hospital discharge. Their priority for assessment is those with the most critical need and risk therefore due to the volume of referrals they receive, they do have to operate a waiting list and therefore applicants may have to wait for assessment. Whilst applicants are waiting their housing application is live and available for offers of housing.

Supplementary

Can you give a rough estimation of when this backlog can be cleared?

Answer

Cannot provide a date for backlog to be cleared but the service is committed to clearing as soon as possible.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 11 from Councillor Dempsey

What additional resources have been or will be deployed to deal with the considerable volume of work required in advance of implementing the ban on Pavement Parking?

Answer

Roads and Transportation staff resources have been working on the outline assessment of locations across Fife.

Fife Council has also been awarded £185,400 from The Scottish Government to help fund the assessment process.

Roads & Transportation Services are planning to utilise external resources to help with the delivery of the parking ban. It should be highlighted that identification and treatment of locations which will be exempt from the parking ban will require a considerable work focus.

In terms of timescale for implementation, Transport Scotland is still working on the secondary legislation which is required to provide local authorities with the necessary tools to enforce the pavement parking prohibitions. Transport Scotland has intimated that it is their intention to have this guidance available from late 2023 onwards. However, it should be noted that the development of all stages of the parking ban have taken longer than initially intimated.

Supplementary

The area roads programme that came to South and West Fife Area Committee contained no proposals in traffic management as behind schedule. Is what is being done adequate?

Answer

Secondary legislation is not yet in place so won't be on area roads programme. Happy to ask officers to work through the process with you.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 12 from Councillor Ballantyne-Wardlaw

Can officers confirm if Thornton Greyhound Stadium comes under Fife Council regulatory and licencing framework in any way.

Answer

Fife Licensing Board has granted a premises licence under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 to allow the sale of alcohol at Thornton Greyhound Stadium and also a betting track licence under the Gambling Act 2005. By law Licensing Boards must only make their decisions based on the criteria in the relevant Act.

Supplementary

Can the council have closer control over welfare of dogs at the stadium?

Answer

Refer to previous answer. Decisions are based on the criteria in the relevant act.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 13 from Councillor Lawson

When will Fife Council start charging traders and hospitality venues for use of pavement and road space in St Andrews? The town is losing income from parking suspension in the “Spaces for People” extensions which were built out during Covid. Establishment of a clear charging structure for use of public spaces, and proper enforcement to remove unofficial obstructions on pavements is almost 6 months overdue, and would bring in much needed revenue.

Answer

Roads & Transportation staff are in the process of developing an approach to this. Unfortunately, through the extended absence of the Service Manager leading on this aspect, progress is not as advanced at this time as was initially hoped.

However, discussions with Fife Council Legal Services have highlighted that the issue of charging rent for the occupation of the public road is complex and depends on who is the owner of the solum of the road. So there is some complexity on the detail of any scheme to be developed. Roads & Transportation Services will continue to progress this matter and update members on any potential charging scheme for consideration.

Supplementary

Would it not be a good idea whilst legal check position to reintroduce the parking spaces to bring in the much needed revenue?

Answer

Not convinced that the outcome you are looking for is what the people of St Andrews are looking for but consultation will be undertaken.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 14 from Councillor Lawson

When will transportation Department respond to repeated requests for an estimate of the costs to make St Andrews town entirely covered by a 20mph limit? A complete townwide 20mph limit is promoted by all four Ward Councillors and has the unanimous support of The Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council. This is an Active Travel issue which will make cycling and walking much safer and more pleasant for residents, students and tourists.

Answer

As context, I should like to highlight that approximately 95% of St Andrews is already covered by a 20 mph speed limit.

The roads not yet covered by a 20 mph speed limit are mainly the arterial routes in the town.

Roads & Transportation staff are currently undertaking work to determine the cost of introducing the 20 mph speed limit for these remaining areas and this is programmed to be complete by the end of April 2023.

Supplementary

There is a difference between a 20mph limit and 20mph zone – town should have signage advising that the speed limit is 20mph. Can there be a review of the signage in St Andrews?

Answer

Yes, officers will review the signage.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 15 from Councillor Lawson

What has the cost been of energy, maintenance, and security on the empty Rothesay House over the last 12 months? What plans does the Council have for its future use or disposal?

Answer

Costs for the year from 1 April 2022 to 10 March 2023 (note just short of 12 months).

Energy (electricity, gas and heating) £34,900

Maintenance £5,270

Security £43,462

Whilst Rothesay House is largely empty, it is still in 24/7 use by the Community Alarms team. We were unable to transfer this team when the remainder of the building was mothballed, because of difficulties in relocating the system that supports their activity. These challenges have now been overcome and this team are due to relocate to Bankhead imminently, when the new cloud-based community alarm system becomes operational.

Future Plans

Market testing has identified no interest in the current building and so the intent is that, subject to approval, the property will be demolished. It is envisaged that redevelopment of the site of Rothesay House could offer a significant contribution to the regeneration of Glenrothes town centre, and any work that will be undertaken will be done as part of the Glenrothes Town centre masterplan.

Supplementary

Can the council undertake a review of all their empty buildings advise councillors of the plans for them going forward?

Answer

A review of empty council properties currently underway following the implementation of flexible working for staff.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 16 from Councillor Dempsey

Does the Council consider trees to be an unmitigated good?

Answer

We do try and maintain trees as best we can with available resources and consider them a vital part of our greenspace. However sometimes the greater good for the community can only be served by the removal of healthy trees in certain situations therefore trees cannot always be considered to be an unmitigated good.

Supplementary

Can the council commit to a closer examination of dealing with complaints about trees?

Answer

Yes we will commit to looking at it but perceptions of the public may not agree with the outcomes.

FIFE COUNCIL
16TH MARCH 2023

QUESTION TIME

Question 17 from Councillor Wilson

What discussions has the Council, both officers and Spokesperson(s) had with Network Rail in relation to the retention of the right-of-way at Doubledykes by Thornton?

Answer

Discussions are in process with the relevant officers of the Council and those in Network Rail regarding the Levenmouth Rail Link project. Included in these discussions are how best the network of paths in the area can be accommodated. The route known as Doubledykes is amongst the routes being discussed. The discussions are ongoing and as such, no confirmed position may be provided at this time.

Supplementary

Council officers have not come along to public meetings to explain the position so far, would you change this?

Answer

Yes