

Fife Council

9th June, 2022

Question Time

QUESTION 1 FROM COUNCILLOR BOUBAKER-CALDER

What is the current formula used to calculate the number of school pupil places that will be required from new build houses in the Dunfermline Area?

Answer

In terms of average pupils from new housing – the average across Fife is 0.354 per new house for primary and 0.207 per new house for secondary. This may differ from one settlement in Fife to another e.g. St Andrews town may differ from the Dunfermline area, but in terms of projecting pupil population across Fife, this average is used.

Supplementary

Are there any plans to review the current formula?

Answer

Formulas being used now have been amended following historic issues in Dunfermline

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QUESTION 2 FROM COUNCILLOR BOUBAKER-CALDER

What support is currently been provided by Fife Council to help businesses after the impact of both the COVID-19 and now the Cost of Living Crisis?

Answer

Following the provision of business grant and relief measures to firms across Fife during the pandemic, Fife Council continues to support companies experiencing trading difficulties in the recovery from the pandemic and the effects of wider economic challenges, including the rising cost of energy, inflationary pressures and a shortage of labour. Some areas of intervention are noted below.

The Council and its partners continue to deliver actions set out in the Leading Economic Recovery Action Plan, adopted by the Fife Partnership, which was designed as a short term approach to support recovery. Officers are developing a Local Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund including under the Supporting Local Business investment priority, to deliver interventions to replace European funding for Business Gateway Fife and Economic Development activity. A revised Fife's Economic Strategy, aligned to UK and Scottish Government strategies, and the Plan 4 Fife, will be developed later this year.

The Council is utilising Scottish Government Local Authority Coronavirus Economic Recovery (LACER) funding for specific interventions including:

- Business grants to support product/process improvement. These will be £3,000 grants for 400 businesses for product/process improvements that lead to net zero transition interventions. This will lead to outcomes including increased turnover for businesses and/or reduced energy costs for businesses to enable businesses to grow and increase economic activity within Fife.

- Rates Hardship Relief – an investment for rate hardship relief. An investment of £240,000 will provide £800,000 in rates hardship relief. The outcome will give financial headroom for struggling businesses affected by the pandemic/increased energy costs.
- Development fund for town centre businesses who are classed within the SME sector to promote staff training and upskilling, digital infrastructure, diversification and provide 88 energy audits/retro fit measures to make premises more energy efficient. The funding will provide small grants of up to £5,000 for projects designed to transform or diversify business operations and/or include environmental sustainability/energy measures. The outcome will be increased Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) business diversity with a reduction in carbon and an increase in sustainability measures. There will also be upskilled staff and the increased use of digital business solutions, including ecommerce packages and digital technology.

In addition to these measures, a Building Improvement Grant to support adaptation of business premises, funded by the Scottish Government Place Based Investment Fund, is in place.

Fife Council has developed new industrial premises through the Fife Industrial Innovation Investment programme (Fi3P), with new more energy efficient units completed at Queenway (Glenrothes) and Dunnikier (Kirkcaldy) business parks, with work underway for further units at Westway, Dalgety Bay.

Officers continue to engage with businesses to monitor the impacts of economic conditions, and support the growth and retention of companies.

Supplementary

Will the Administration devolve more powers to the Area Committees?

Answer

Ongoing review of powers devolved to Area Committees with an increased focus on making a difference locally.

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QUESTION 3 FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES CALDER

After recently well-publicised missed bin collections, can the Council confirm how many bins have been both been completed missed or delayed until the following week since the start of 2022?

Answer

Week ending 07/01/2022 – Disruption in West Fife affecting 4000 properties on compost. Bins were caught up by end of the week. 10 Covid cases on one shift.

Week ending 14/01/2022 – No Disruption

Week ending 21/01/22 – No Disruption

Week ending 28/01/2022 – No Disruption

Week ending 09/02/2022 – No Disruption

Week ending 11/02/2022 – No Disruption

Week ending 18/02/2022 – Disruption affecting 1000 properties in East. This was caught by Wednesday.

Week ending 25/02/22 – Approximately 5-600 properties disrupted in East. Bins were serviced on Saturday morning

Week ending 04/03/2022 – No disruption

Week ending 11/03/2022 – Disruption to 1500 properties in East and 2000 in West. All bins serviced on Saturday morning.

Week ending 18/03/2022 – Disruption to 1000 bins East serviced on Saturday morning. Covid spike in East

Week ending 25/03/2022 – Disruption to 1000 properties East, 1000 properties West and 500 Central. All work complete on Saturday.

Week ending 01/04/2022 – disruption to approximately 500 compost bins in East. Serviced on Saturday morning.

Week ending 08/04/2022 – 22,000 compost bins in West not collected. 500 bins in East collected
Saturday morning

Week ending 15/04/2022 – No disruption

Week ending 22/04/22 – Approximately 500 narrow access properties not serviced. 2000 compost bins in West serviced on Saturday. 4000 compost bins in Central disrupted and caught back through week.

Week ending 29/04/2022 – disruption to 2000 bins in East and 1000 in West all were serviced on Saturday morning.

Week ending 06/05/2022 – Disruption to 2000 compost bins in West serviced on Saturday.

Week ending 13/05/2022 – 5000 plastic bins in West not collected. No volunteers for overtime

Week ending 20/05/2022 – 400 bins in West and 400 bins in Central serviced on Saturday morning.

Over this 20 week period we will have serviced approximately 5 million bins with the disruption shown above.

Supplementary

Re uncollected bins, what work is being done to reduce times between cycles if bins have been missed?

Answer

Priority is given to collect landfill bins however would hope to resolve this in the near future.

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QUESTION 4 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

What steps are being taken in the immediate short term to deal with the high and increasing numbers of missed domestic bin uplifts?

Answer

Background Since the beginning of the Covid pandemic, domestic waste collection routes and cycles have been disrupted by significant staff absence levels. Covid sickness and isolation is no longer an issue, but the disruption remains and is increasing in areas. Staff sickness levels have not improved and new unmanageable variables are compromising the recovery of performance.

Vehicle Breakdowns

With an aging fleet, breakdowns are becoming more frequent. Replacement hire vehicles are taking weeks to source and the supply of new vehicles will take 6 to 9 months from order. Demonstrator vehicles from suppliers are being used to supplement the fleet.

National Supply Chain Issues – Vehicle Parts

Despite procurement arrangements with national supply chains, vehicle parts are becoming harder to source. This is an industry wide problem affecting all waste collection providers.

HGV Driver Shortage

The national HGV driver shortage is making it harder to retain and recruit staff. When RCV drivers are absent, temporary cover through seasonal or agency recruitment is no longer possible. This effectively takes vehicles off the road, regardless of waste collector availability.

Sickness Absence

High sickness levels (post covid) of 20% to 30% and the day-to-day volatility of this unplanned absence is crippling the service because cover cannot be arranged at short notice.

Mitigating Actions

The only action that can be taken by the service is to recruit more waste collectors. The other causes of failure are uncontrollable and without remedy in the short to medium term.

Additional staff will come from job agencies, increasing the in-house Waste Academy training intake and attracting recruits through social media platforms. Human Resources are working with the recruitment team on a fast-track process to reduce lead-in times.

Sustainable Solution

Increasing fleet maintenance, parts supply issues and the national shortage of HGV drivers will mean more service failure in the short to medium term. The recruitment of additional temporary waste collectors will help minimise impacts, as will overtime working, but a sustainable solution is not currently achievable.

Supplementary

What else can be done in the short term to improve the service?

Answer

Recruiting more operators, improving recruitment process, overtime offered. The Council is taking all steps it can to mitigate the situation.

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QUESTION 5 FROM COUNCILLOR GORDON PRYDE

With the latest figures showing that less than 1 in 3 young people in Fife have been able to get their free bus pass, what action is being taken to ensure as many young people in Fife have their free bus pass before the start of the new school term in August? Can Fife Council learn from the support offered to young people in Inverclyde Council where the take up rate exceeds 80%?

Answer

The U 22 free bus pass scheme is operated by Improvement Services on behalf of Transport Scotland. It was unfortunate timing that due to Covid there was only a soft launch (low key) which didn't help to promote the scheme initially. In addition, there were issues, such as address matching, with the application process which complicated matters and contributed to delays and a slower take up nationally.

Fife Council has worked hard to promote this scheme, including work through Education to help promote to pupils and parents. We also developed an offline/paper application process to help those struggling to use the national portal.

Currently in Fife, 28,582 cards have been issued and whilst initially there were problems with applications via the national system, we do not believe there are any significant issues now. It should be remembered that not all those eligible to apply for the scheme will apply, issues such as parent/guardian approval (all U16 require this), access to a vehicle, lack of awareness of the scheme or suitable local bus services etc.

On the issue of School transport in Fife, please be reassured that the Council is continuing to issue travel passes to the 10,800 pupils in Fife who are legally 'entitled' to school transport based on the distance criteria. These passes will arrive in pupils' homes towards the end of July as per normal. Those who aren't in receipt of a Council issued travel pass can still use their U22 pass (or pay a fare) on school buses if capacity exists. It should be noted though that the U22' scheme is not specifically designed for school transport and there isn't the capacity on some of our school buses to accommodate all of those pupils who may now wish to travel on a school bus when they didn't before. The Scottish Government did not provide any new funding for additional buses.'

Supplementary

Inverclyde had an 80% take up rate, can we learn from them?

Answer

Yes we will be speaking to them to discuss best practice.

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QUESTION 6 FROM COUNCILLOR KATHLEEN LESLIE

A commemorative book for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee has been produced and is available to all primary school pupils across the UK.

Can the Administration confirm if this book will be available to pupils in Fife schools?

Answer

Information regarding the availability of the free commemorative Queen Elizabeth - A Platinum Jubilee Celebration book for children was issued to all schools. Schools placed orders directly with the Scottish Government for delivery in late September. We do not hold information on the number of schools who submitted orders for these books.

Supplementary

Do we know why we don't know how many schools have ordered the book?

Answer

Scottish Government decision was to issue to the school not to individual children. Parents can also purchase the book themselves

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QUESTION 7 FROM COUNCILLOR KATHLEEN LESLIE

The second round of bids to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund must be submitted by July 6th. Can the Administration confirm if Fife Council is on target to do so?

Answer

Officers have been working to develop UK Government Levelling Up Fund submissions for the four UK Parliamentary constituencies and a Fife-wide transportation programme in line with the proposed programme themes and process set out in the report to the Council's Policy & Co-ordination Committee in November 2021. All applications will be submitted within this Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund, and these submissions are being finalised ahead of the deadline for submission on 6th July. Fife's MPs have been consulted on the approach ahead of finalising their support for the proposals. It is anticipated that Fife Council will receive notification of successful applications in the Autumn.

Supplementary

Will elected members have sight of the proposals before they are submitted?

Answer

The process is evolving. Officers are trying their best to keep members and the public appraised. Will ensure better consultation for future bids.

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QUESTION 8 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

How effectively does the weedkiller used by the Council kill weeds?

Answer

The Grounds Maintenance Service use several weedkillers, they are 100% effective because they are glyphosate based. The issue is that we have significantly reduced our use of glyphosate because it is carcinogenic and can enter waterways or poison animals.

As yet there is no safe or workable alternative for the volume of weeds we are trying to control across Fife's geography. This is a problem for Councils all over the UK.

Supplementary

Public impression is that the Council is not maintaining streets, If weedkiller works what is the problem?

Answer

Climate change has had an impact. Don't accept that all streets have these issues. Please advise Spokesperson of particular issues.

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QUESTION 9 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP

What KPIs are officers currently tracking for pothole reporting? What are the latest KPIs and where are these available to elected members and the public?

Answer

The KPIs for pothole repairs are presented annually within the Enterprise and Environment Directorate Section/Service Performance Report. They were last presented to the Economy, Tourism, Strategic Planning & Transportation Subcommittee on 9 September 2021 which is available to members and the public.

The KPIs presented are for P1 and P2 Road Safety Defect Repairs which relate to the % repaired within 24 hours and 5 working days, respectively.

The latest figures for the P1 + P2 repairs which relate to the Quarter 4 of 2021 / 22 are shown below:

No. of P1 Repairs	No. Completed on Time (24 hours)	% On Time (Target 99%)
90	72	80

No. of P2 Repairs	No. Completed on Time (5 Working Days)	% On Time (Target 95%)
2421	2058	85

Note this level of performance is typical coming out of the winter period.

Supplementary

Do you agree it is important to make this type of information public? Not enough to have this information buried in reports to committees. Can we explore this?

Answer

On doorstops and across social media, potholes is a big issue. Can provide further scrutiny at the relevant scrutiny committee. Additional funding provided for potholes.

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QUESTION 10 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP

Building-based day care for older people is still not available in some locations.

- How many services existed before March 2020 in North East Fife Area (before Covid hitting)
- How many have reopened at this point
- What plans do we have to restart this service

Answer

- **How many services existed before March 2020 in North East Fife Area (before Covid hitting)**

The following day services for older people were in place pre-March 2020

St David's Day Service	50 places per week
Ladywalk Day Service	50 places per week
Leng Day Service	75 places per week
Northeden Day Service	50 places per week
Age Concern Cupar	175 places per week
Tayport Day Centre for the Elderly	10 (up to) places per week
East Neuk Frail Elderly Project	95 places per week

In addition to building based day support services, weekly lunch clubs take place in Auchtermuchty, Falkland and Strathmiglo.

- **How many have reopened at this point**

Age Concern Cupar	150 places per week
Tayport Day Centre for the Elderly	10 (up to) places per week

The weekly lunch clubs in Auchtermuchty, Falkland and Strathmiglo have all resumed

- **What plans do we have to restart this service?**

East Neuk Frail Elderly Project restarted but closed on 1st April 2022, following the retirement of the Manager. Discussion taking place with Royal Volunteer Society to take over the provision of this service with the same level of service offering, with planned date for restarting in July 2022

- Inhouse day care provision has paused over the pandemic although day service staff have been maintaining regular contact with Service Users by telephone, however, at the present time there are 102 Service Users remaining.
- We will be consulting with our remaining existing Service Users during June/July about the remobilisation of services.
- The findings of the consultation will be reported to the IJB with recommendations for a decision on the future of Day Services

Supplementary

Reassurance that all is being done to restart day care services?

Answer

Fife Council committed to restarting these services and progressing with IJB.

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QUESTION 11 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP

Fife Council is responsible for 45,500 road signs, and 24,000 street name plates. What are the current arrangements for planned maintenance/cleaning of road signs? If a road sign has fallen, or is in a poor state of repair, how long should Fifers expect to wait before it is replaced?

Answer

Road sign defects are assessed in line with the Council's risk-based policy. If the issue is high risk, a temporary sign is erected whilst a permanent one is ordered. In terms of volume, most signing defects fall within the 'medium risk' category, and these have a target repair response time of up to 3 months. It should be noted that the staff resources used to undertake sign repairs are the same resource used to undertake other emergency/high priority works such as road defects, winter maintenance, and flooding/weather related issues. So, target response times can, at times, be impacted. Hence, at present there is an element of backlog of signage repairs which Roads & Transportation is looking to address.

The cleaning of signs can be undertaken very quickly.

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QUESTION 12 FROM COUNCILLOR GRAEME DOWNIE

What action can be taken to improve GP services in Ward 1 after data shows only one Doctor in place at Valleyfield Surgery and less than 15% of phone calls answered?

Answer

See elected member briefing and press statement provided by Nicky Connor.

Supplementary

Can you work with NHS to resolve issues with a particular issue in North East Fife?

Answer

Please advise Spokesperson of specific issues offline.

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QUESTION 13 FROM COUNCILLOR GRAEME DOWNIE

What action can be taken to develop a strategy for the use of the site of the former Longannet Generating Station after it was confirmed Scottish Enterprise's option on the land which would have allowed High Speed trains to be built on the site has expired?

Answer

This site is owned by Scottish Power but Fife Council and SDI continue to liaise with Scottish Power to consider options ahead. Meantime, SDI and InvestFife continue to promote the site as a key strategic inward investment site for Scotland and Fife.

Supplementary

Poor communication with local residents. Can you consider ways to improve this?

Answer

Yes will take this up with officers to improve.

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QUESTION 14 FROM COUNCILLOR ANDREW VERRECCHIA

Since 2014 there has been the prospect of a Lidl store opening in Rosyth.

This has been complicated by the need to re-home Rosyth Football Club, originally at the Rosyth Fleet Grounds, but the decision to choose the Fleet Grounds as the preferred site of the replacement for Inverkeithing High School has further complicated this.

Rosyth FC is in desperate need of a new home & to their credit has found a solution to their situation which is dependent on the Lidl store coming to fruition.

There are currently discussions going on between Fife Council & the property developer (McTaggart & Meikel) regarding the Lidl site but very little information is coming back.

Can my constituents be reassured that the Lidl store that they absolutely need is going to be forthcoming soon, to allow their local football team to be able to continue to thrive?

Answer

We understand that discussions are continuing between Lidl and MacTaggart and Mickel on the terms and conditions relating to the proposed retail development and we understand that there is broad consensus between the parties.

In addition to reaching agreement on the land transaction, before development can commence there is a need to satisfy conditions attached to the retail planning consent. The existing planning approval for the store (17/01554/FULL) includes a condition which requires the provision of a replacement pitch; however it is possible that a variation may be applied for.

Finally with respect to Rosyth FC though there is no statutory or legal obligation to rehome the club, recognising the local support, various council officers continue to work with the club representatives to assist them and to identify a new base. Recently a potentially suitable long-term solution has been identified and it is hoped the club will be able to agree terms with the 3rd party provider in the near future.

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QUESTION 15 FROM COUNCILLOR ALLAN KNOX

Following the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Economy's recent spending review; the situation for future finance of local government looks bleak and unfortunately outside of the control of Fife Council.

Will the Administration be working with other local authorities through Cosla and other means to put pressure on the SNP/ Green Scottish Government to give a proper level of support to local services, that are so necessary for all our local communities, especially the most vulnerable?

Answer

Referred to Leaders report on the agenda for update.

