



Derby City Council

**Council Meeting
Wednesday 23 July 2014**

**Public and Member Questions
and Responses**

COUNCIL – 23 July 2014
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questioner	Respondent	Subject
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Public Questions

A	Dorothy Skrytek	Councillor Afzal	Paper and Cardboard Collection
B	Simon Bacon	Councillor Banwait	Public Question Responses
C	Dorothy Skrytek	Councillor Afzal	Environment Agency Information
D	Simon Bacon	Councillor Afzal	Recycling Rates

Councillor Questions

E	Councillor Care	Councillor Russell	Council Grants
F	Councillor Wood	Councillor Martin	Riverside Swimming Pool
G	Councillor Keith	Councillor Afzal	Neighbourhood Board Funding
H	Councillor Ashburner	Councillor Afzal	Grass Cutting
I	Councillor A Holmes	Councillor Afzal	Grass Cutting Schedule

a. Question from Dorothy Skrytek to Councillor Afzal

How much money has the council lost through not collecting paper and cardboard separately, and thus getting a better price previously, because it is now contaminated with glass etc?

The introduction of a fully co-mingled service has reduced our costs by £500k. These service changes have increased our recycling rate for this waste stream by 11%.

The Council now pays a fixed gate fee for the processing of these materials. This removes any financial risks in the resale of materials in volatile commodity markets.

b. Question from Simon Bacon to Councillor Banwait

On 29 January 2014, in relation to a question about brown bin costs, I specifically asked for the increase in residual waste collection costs for the council considering thousands of extra residual waste will take more man power and vehicle hours.

The written response from Councillor Banwait did not answer the question, triggering a complaint to the council from myself. An officer said he would try and get a further answer but no answer was supplied.

As a member of the public taking time to attend these meetings and placing public questions, what route of complaint is open to me when a Cabinet Member does not provide a suitable answer, as failing to answer public questions makes a mockery of the whole process and reflects badly on the council?

Answers to questions are carefully prepared and published, along with the question, in advance of the Council meeting. If the questioner considers the response to be inadequate, or unclear, there is an opportunity to seek further clarification through a supplementary question.

If the answer to the supplementary question is still unclear there is no further opportunity, in our current procedure, to seek clarification, other than to ask another question at the following meeting.

There is a different process though, if the Cabinet member promises a written response to the supplementary question. This is most likely if there is a need for technical information in the supplementary question, which the Cabinet member does not have to hand.

In this case, a transcript of the supplementary question is provided to the Cabinet member and Strategic Director, to enable them to fully absorb any complexity in the question, to prepare the response. It is likely that whichever council officer is the subject expert will be involved at this stage, to prepare the response.

Currently our procedures do not set out a requirement for response times to supplementary questions, for which a written response has been promised, but the transcript is routinely provided by the Monday following a meeting the previous Wednesday. Thereafter it should always be possible for an answer to be prepared and sent to the questioner within a week.

The adequacy of the answer to the supplementary question may be a matter of opinion, but it does open a correspondence between the Cabinet member and questioner, enabling a follow up exchange. An e-mail to a member should be acknowledged, though may not be fully answered, within two working days. There is no compulsion for

the Cabinet member to maintain the thread of correspondence until the questioner declares himself/ herself satisfied with the outcome and it is inevitable that there will often be a failure to reconcile views.

c. Question from Dorothy Skrytek to Councillor Afzal

Have the Environment Agency been informed of the extra pollution from burning resources (especially plastics resulting in extra nitrogen dioxide and dioxin pollution) which were previously recycled and which are now destined to be destroyed in the planned Derbyshire incineration plant (Sinfin Lane) and who has told them?

The plant will operate under a permit issued by the Environment Agency. As part of the permitting process, the plant operator will have provided information to the Environment Agency on the plant's operation. The Environment Agency will use this information and other guidance to produce the permit.

It is not intended that materials that have been previously recycled are now destined for the plant, indeed analysis has shown that the plant has flexibility to accommodate the City and County Council's household waste recycling rates increasing up to 70%.

d. Question from Simon Bacon to Councillor Afzal

Noting the collapse in the city's recycling rate which started a number of years ago, the EU target of 50% recycling by 2020 and the city's target recycling rate of 55% by 2020 agreed with Derbyshire County Council, seem a lost cause. On 2 July 2014 Europe put forward a strong proposal for a 70% recycling rate by 2030.

How will the city meet such a target other than via the recycling of dust, grit and metals that will be extracted before and after burning in the Sinfin incineration plant (as defined under the waste incineration directive)?

The City Council has had to reduce its budgets to meet Government cuts and in doing so has had to review how much is spent on services such as waste management.

As a result of reducing its spend on waste management, it is expected that household recycling rates for the City will initially fall.

The Council is looking at a range of options to increase recycling which will not incur an untenable additional financial burden on its finances, this will involve researching what is not being recycled now and focussing existing resources at additional campaigning to increase recycling and reduce contamination.

The Council will also explore the cost effectiveness of collecting food waste from households however, at present it can only consider these if the proposals are cost neutral or at very low overall cost to the Council.

In addition the Council will take note of any changing legislation which requires it to specifically meet targets in the future and develop a recycling plan that meets those needs. The Council does not consider the current aspirations for 2020 to be a lost cause, but it accepts the financial circumstances that are now prevalent, make the meeting of these targets more challenging.

e. Question from Councillor Care to Councillor Russell

Since April 2012, what grants have been received by the Council from the Government in addition to the main revenue support grant? Please indicate when they were received and which were the result of bids and which were Derby's allocation. Also include funds that originated entirely or largely from the government, but came via other bodies, for example D2N2 or East Midlands Arts Council.

Which were/are earmarked for a particular purpose and which are not ring-fenced?

What are the individual values, and how much of each has been spent or remains unspent? What sums are still expected to be spent for the original purpose?

Has any money had to be returned unspent? If so, what?

Corporate Revenue Grants

23/07/2014

The following tables are excerpts from the 'General Fund Revenue Budget' report taken to cabinet annually. The distinguishing features of Corporate Revenue Grants are that:

- They are not ring-fenced
- They are used to support spending across all services:
 - Spend is therefore not monitored against individual grant streams
 - All the grant is spent in year, except for any General Fund balance at year end.

The exception to this is the Public Health Grant, which is a ring fenced grant introduced in 2013/14, which came with corresponding New Burdens. The full allocation has been spent.

Appendix 3

CHANGES TO GRANT FUNDING 2014/15

	Final Settlement 2013/14 £m	2014/15 STATEMENT Provisional Settlement 2014/15 £m	Difference	
			£m	%
START UP FUNDING				
Revenue Support Grant	75.795	62.080		
Retained Business Rates	37.758	38.493		
Business Rates Top-Up Grant	12.667	12.913		
REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT & BUSINESS RATES	126.220	113.486	(12.733)	(10.1%)
SPECIFIC GRANTS				
- Public Health Grant	13.167	15.784		
- Education Services Grant	3.701	4.076		
- Housing and Council Tax Subsidy Admin Grant	1.878	1.712		
- NHS Social Care and Benefit Health Reform Grant	4.111	5.264		
- New Homes Bonus	2.544	3.310		
- Redistribution of New Homes Bonus Top-Slice	0.432	0.176		
- Lead Local Flood Grant	0.051	0.051		
- Extended Rights to Free Travel	0.304	0.117		
- Social Fund Administration Grant	0.208	0.191		
- Local Reform and Community Voices Grant	0.201	0.207		
- Council Tax Support Grant	0.169	0.151		
- Community Rights Grants	0.017	0.017		
- SFA s31 grant for business rates cap	0.000	0.546		
Total Specific Grants	26.783	31.602	4.819	18.0%
REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT, BUSINESS RATES & SPECIFIC GRANTS	153.003	145.088	(7.915)	(5.2%)
COUNCIL TAX				
Council Tax Requirement	70.535	72.770		
Prior Year Collection Fund Surplus / (Deficit)	-0.473	0.071		
Council Tax	70.062	72.841	2.779	4.0%
Revenue Spending Power	223.065	217.929	(5.136)	(2.3%)

CHANGES TO GRANT FUNDING 2013/14

	Final Settlement 2012/13 £m	2013/14 STATEMENT Provisional Settlement 2013/14 £m	Difference	
			£m	%
FORMULA GRANT				
Revenue Support Grant	103.577	62.324		
Retained Business Rates (from 2013/14)	n/a	37.758		
Business Rates Top-Up Grant (from 2013/14)	n/a	12.667		
Specific Grants Rolled Into Formula:				
- Council Tax Freeze Grant 2011/12	2.037	n/a		
- Early Intervention Grant	12.284	n/a		
- Learning Disability and Health Reform Grant	6.341	n/a		
- Lead Local Flood Grant (partial)	0.124	n/a		
- Preventing Homelessness	0.232	n/a		
Specific Grants (formerly included in RSG):				
- Education Services Grant	n/a	3.701		
REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT & BUSINESS RATES				
	124.595	116.450	-8.145	-6.54%
SPECIFIC GRANTS				
- Council Tax Freeze Grant	2.037	0.000		
- Public Health Grant	11.970	13.167		
- Housing and Council Tax Subsidy Admin Grant	2.031	1.878		
- NHS Social Care and Benefit Health Reform Grant	3.060	4.111		
- Community Safety Fund	0.137	0.000		
- New Homes Bonus	1.939	2.544		
- Redistribution of New Homes Bonus Top-Slice	0.000	0.432		
- Lead Local Flood Grant	0.052	0.051		
- Extended Rights to Free Travel	0.380	0.304		
- Social Fund Administration Grant	0.000	0.208		
- Local Reform and Community Voices Grant	0.000	0.201		
- Council Tax Support Grant	0.000	0.169		
- Community Rights Grants	0.000	0.017		
	2.037	0.000		
Total Specific Grants				
	21.606	23.082	1.476	6.83%
REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT, BUSINESS RATES & SPECIFIC GRANTS				
	146.201	139.532	-6.669	-4.56%
COUNCIL TAX				
Council Tax Requirement	81.978	70.535		
Council Tax Localisation Support Grant (part of RSG)	0.000	13.471		
Prior Year Collection Fund Surplus / (Deficit)	0.000	-0.473		
Council Tax and CTLSS				
	81.978	83.533	1.555	1.90%
Revenue Spending Power				
	228.179	223.065	-5.114	-2.24%

f. Question from Councillor Wood to Councillor Martin

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the plans for a swimming pool on the riverside site are now dead in the water?

A decision was made by Cabinet as part of the last Medium Term Financial Planning process that the swimming pool and fitness facility would be deferred for one year, this is still the case.

There is a review taking place of all capital projects as part of this financial year's budget process.

g. Question from Councillor Keith to Councillor Afzal

When will the current administrations policy of targeted Neighbourhood Board funding, that favours every ward with Labour Councillors at the expense of wards that don't, be reviewed?

The decision to re-allocate neighbourhood board funding was made by full council and subsequently reviewed by the Neighbourhoods OS Board. Neighbourhood Board funding now reflects the needs of our neighbourhoods.

The previous allocation took no account of the differing needs of our neighbourhoods nor the levels of deprivation. The way that the funding has been allocated reflects the approach taken by the current Government in its grant allocation to all local authorities, based upon a range of indicators including health, crime, housing, deprivation and transport.

h. Question from Councillor Ashburner to Councillor Afzal

How many Derby City Council employees were involved in grass cutting at the start of the financial years 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 and the current figure?

In 2012-2013 the Council employed 40 staff and seven agency workers. Due to Government cuts this was reduced to 35 full time staff and six agency workers in 2013-2014.

How much money was raised by selling grass cutting equipment after the Highways cutting frequency was reduced by the then department lead Cllr Banwait?

No plant or equipment was sold, it was utilised at the golf courses and cemeteries.

How much was spent to buy grass cutting equipment when the new Council Leader, Cllr Banwait, decided to increased the Highways grass cutting frequency?

No extra money was spent when grass cutting frequency was recently increased from 6 to 10 cuts per year. We simply used the existing flail deck mowers.

We have a scheduled machinery replacement programme and when the decision was taken to reduce the mowing frequency of highway verges from 12 cuts to 6, we replaced cylinder cutting machinery with flail deck cutting machines.

The cylinder cutting machines were struggling to cut thick, long grass at 12 cuts and would not have been able to cope with the reduction to 6. They were therefore replaced as part of the standard replacement programme at a cost of £54k. These costs were factored into the saving calculations. The flail deck machines are currently being used to do the 10 cuts.

**How many agency or contract staff are being employed to cut grass?
What are the current costs of contracts with outside bodies to cut DCC grass?**

We are currently employing 6 agency staff, who have been used to free up experienced ride on machinery operators to help with grass cutting.

How many Derby City Council staff have been taken from other duties to cut grass? What duties do they no longer carry out?

Currently all staff are involved in grass cutting operations including the following: tractor gang mowing, ride on cutting machinery, pedestrian mowers, strimmers in cemeteries, fine turf, golf courses.

Staff taken from other duties, have been replaced with Agency staff as outlined in the question above. As part of agreed budget savings, we no longer carry out floral features

and we are on a current programme of shrub bed reductions.

i. Question from Councillor A Holmes to Councillor Afzal

In light of the recent announcement made by Cllr Banwait, that the frequency of Derby City's grass cutting regime is to be increased, can the Cabinet Member please supply an indicative schedule/rota for all wards, covering what remains of 2014, through to April 2015?

Grass cuttings have increased from 6 to 10 cuts per year. This takes the number of cuts back to the level prior to the budget in 2013-14.

I am happy to explain the frequencies and how they work should you wish me to do so however due to the detail required, I will provide this in written form. The attachments cover the whole City including Gang mowing of sports recreation, open spaces, Parks, Highway verges.