

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 77-80 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answers listed below:

(a) Councillor Turton

“How many staff currently employed by the City Council are (a) casual/temporary staff; (b) what percentage of the Council's total workforce are casual/temporary staff; (c) what is the average length of time the Council employs a casual/temporary member of staff for; (d) what is the longest period of time a current casual/temporary member of staff has been employed for?”

Reply from Councillor Kitcat, Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services.

“The terms ‘casual’ and ‘temporary’ are often mixed, but they do have a more formal definition that it may be useful to understand:

A casual worker does not have an employment contract with the council and is not obliged to work and the council is also not obliged to offer work (non mutuality of obligation).

A temporary employee has a contract of employment with the council for a minimum of three months and is obliged to work the contracted hours that the contract states.

Casual workers provide a valuable service to the city council providing a wide variety of skilled workers who have been recruited and are available for work in a great many service areas. There are currently 1140 casual workers on our books, excluding schools where there are similar number including directly employed supply teachers. The length of time a casual worker remains on our books varies greatly. If a casual does not work for twelve weeks they are removed from payroll and made a leaver as the relevant checks including Criminal Records Bureau checks are not valid beyond this time.

Overall, just over 16% of the total number of people who work for the council are casual workers. However, their length of service varies considerably so the full-time-equivalent percentage is much lower. The casual worker with the longest work history with the council started at the Brighton Centre in 1983.

There are also 612 individuals that are employed through temporary, fixed term and secondment contracts across the council excluding schools.

The non-mutuality of obligation makes the arrangement attractive to individuals who have other commitments which include study and child care responsibilities. The majority of our casual workforce, approximately 80%, work

regularly supporting services across the council. Human Resources are continuing to review the casual workforce as part of our workforce planning including contractual requirements and this will be a key element of our evolving People Strategy.

The council also appoints casual workers to its staff pools as a route-way into employment. This includes both Care and Administration workers who are appointed through assessment centres.

Overall the flexibility of our workforce coupled with the skills they have is a valuable asset to the council”

(b) Councillor Turton

“How many call centres serving the public does the Council have?”

Reply from Councillor Kitcat, Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services.

“The Council is committed to improving the public telephone service within its customer access strategy. Our objective is to improve the whole customer experience, as underlined in the Customer Promise (we will be easy to reach; we will be clear and treat you with respect; we listen and act to get things done). This means enhancing customer service across all access channels (telephones, face to face and digital) and improving how those channels inter-relate.

On the telephones, we need to strike a balance between timely and efficient call answering and ensuring customer’s speak to the correct officer who can fully resolve the query. We are developing our front and back office processes to get the right mix of processes, technology and officer skills.

The council delivers a vast amount of services across the city; the majority of which have a telephone line for external customers to contact them. There are 16 services that are considered to have high volume telephone use. They all employ call centre technology to different degrees depending on their customer base and the proportion of calls that need to be handled by specialists. However, they are not call centres as the public perception might imagine them, in that they are not each cubicle farms of people with headsets dealing with nothing but calls. They are staffed by council officers going about their daily duties, which include responding to public enquiries.

We are currently upgrading our telephony systems and, as part of the recently agreed ICT strategy, will be reducing the number of different IT systems used to handle customer information. We are also developing the next stage in our customer access plan focusing on ensuring we are providing the most appropriate access be that face-to-face, post, telephone or internet. This includes looking at options to drive more calls through a single number. The plan will also link even more closely to other major initiatives (such as workstyles).”

(c) Councillor Turton

“Since May 2010 to date, have any individuals who are not either councillors or employees of the Council been provided with a Council email account and, if so, for what reason?”

Reply from Councillor Kitcat, Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services.

“The creation of email accounts is administered through the new starters process and is applicable to all Council employees, officers of the council employed by partner organisations, casual/agency workers and contractors.

Since May 2010 the following individuals, who are not councillors or employees of the Council, have been set up with an email account:

1 x agency worker	Temporary arrangement contracted by the council to process caseload. Now ceased.
1 x South Downs Health Officer	Joint working with South Downs Health.
1 x Sussex Police Officer	Joint working with Sussex Police.
3 x employees of FutureGov	Contracted on behalf of the council to engage in development of Patchwork initiative 24/10/11 – 27/04/12.

All users of council provided email are subject to the controls outlined in:

- a. BHCC Acceptable use of ICT Policy which defines the acceptable use of ICT services for all Elected Members, employees and contractors of the council
- b. BHCC Email Use Policy covering the use of all Council email systems on any computer system including any access to the Councils email via the internet.”

(d) Councillor G Theobald

“Will the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety please give me an update on progress with the Council’s bid for the March 2012 round of Government Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant funding?”

Reply from Councillor Duncan, Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety

“The Communities & Equality Team has started work on ensuring the inclusion of the armed forces community as part of the council’s wider work to tackle inequality.

We are waiting for the results of the Veteran’s Health needs analysis to provide data on the number and needs of local veterans. This will be released in May 2012. In the meantime we are working with local armed forces organisations and our commissioned community development workers to identify issues and possible activities to support local people.

In developing the Community Covenant Partnership our intention is to build on the existing Armed Forces network to include community and voluntary sector representatives. This will support broader community activity which can be funded from our existing discretionary grants. We are unsure at this stage whether the people involved would prefer a Brighton & Hove only approach, or one that covers the whole of Sussex.

Although there are no national resources still available this financial year there will be an opportunity to access government funding in 2012/13 – with quarterly decision-making panels.

In Brighton & Hove we are also planning to re-launch the Heroes Welcome campaign. We are also working with Armed Forces representatives to build a larger presence at People’s Day in June. We are also mindful that it is the WW1 centenary in 2014 and we’re already actively looking to resource an event to mark this.”

(e) Councillor G Theobald

“Will the Leader of the Council list the meetings he has had with other local authority Leaders and heads of other organisations in the city about the possibility of sharing central services such as Human Resources and what was the result of these meetings?”

Reply from Councillor Randall, Leader of the Council.

“I have continued the previous administration’s commitment to working alongside other local authorities in the region through the South East 7 partnership. This comprises Kent, Hampshire, East Sussex, West Sussex, Surrey and Medway alongside Brighton & Hove. This group has focused on areas where we consider we could achieve financial savings through better procurement and we are collaborating on a whole range of policy initiatives and are getting excellent support from many government departments. Brighton & Hove, through the Director of Finance, are leading work on ICT across the region and great progress has been made in improving our ICT infrastructure through a project known as the “network of networks”.

All the councils have been jointly funding some ICT category management expertise to make sure we get the best available deals from ICT suppliers across the region. There is also work on property asset management and commodities procurement through the SE7 partnership.

The Strategic Director Resources is also discussing with East Sussex possible areas for sharing support services and it has been agreed to consider a few areas in more detail. One specific area that is showing great promise is the combined development of a local Public Service Network (called LINK). This initiative, started as part of SE7 work, is a joint procurement on behalf of various partners that will initially deliver cheaper, secure connections to each organisation. In the future, there will be additional benefits such as shared applications (e.g. telephony and video-conferencing) and a platform for shared services and processes. The OJEU notice for this procurement was published on 26 October 2011, with an estimated value of between £10 million and £100 million

We are also pleased to be working alongside the South Downs National Park Authority as their provider of financial services, including payroll, and Chief Finance Officer support over the last two years. We have recently tendered for a 3-5 year contract for this service through a full OJEU procurement exercise and I am delighted to be able to announce that our bid has been successful.

Within the City, the Public Service Board has asked us, through the Strategic Director Resources, to lead a steering group to look at sharing support services across all public sector organisations. Partners have indicated a wish to look in detail at several possibilities including customer access, property, HR, ICT, learning and development, communications and others. The development of the Clinical commissioning Group opens up specific opportunities for sharing and several areas have been identified for further review. A City property group meets to specifically look at opportunities in sharing accommodation and discussions with the Police on their use of rooms in Hove Town Hall are ongoing.

We strongly believe that shared service arrangements are a positive way to distribute the costs of our support services and save money. We recognise that strong leadership and good planning is required to ensure success.”

(f) Councillor Brown

“How many applications has the Council so far received for Diamond Jubilee street parties and what is the Administration doing to encourage community events over the weekend of 2nd-4th June?”

Reply from Councillor Bowden, Cabinet member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

“To date we have had one completed application for a street party to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee and around 20 calls and enquiries on the subject.

However in the run-up to the Royal Wedding, we had a large number of late applications for street parties, and we expect this to happen this year also.

We are not charging fees for road closures for the Diamond Jubilee, making it easier and cheaper for groups to run street parties. We will be advertising small-scale funding to support community groups wanting to put on celebratory events during the summer, now that we have confirmation of community funding budgets for 2012/13.”

(g) Councillor C Theobald

“What is the Council doing to take advantage of the Government’s new £24 million Coastal Communities Fund, either by submitting a bid directly, or by helping other organisations in the city to bid?”

Reply from Councillor Randall, Leader of the Council.

“We received notification of the launch prospectus in mid February and the expressions of interest must be complete by the end of March.

Whilst these deadlines are tight, I can confirm that we, as the local authority, will be making a formal expression of interest to the Fund. I am also pleased to say that officers from across the Council have supported awareness of the Fund among local partners as well as considering where we can match existing priorities to the Fund objectives.

Given the extremely tight deadlines, the expression of interest from the authority will focus on two key areas:

- Two bids related to training and skills development will be worked up jointly with partners involved in the City Employment and Skills Training Group. The group includes City College, Brighton & Hove Chamber of Commerce, Albion in the Community, the Economic Partnership, the LEP, CVSF, Job Centre Plus and others.
- o One funding application will be submitted for the Build Green project which aims to raise awareness of new technologies and develop the skills of local residents and businesses in sustainable construction methods through training.
- o The second bid is looking to research, develop and implement training programmes and develop business employment strategies and activities in order to equip and encourage young people to work in the Shoreham Port Regeneration area.
- A bid related to the seafront, specifically Madeira Drive, to support economic growth and wider regeneration in the area. This focus on Madeira Drive partly arises from cross-party work into the seafront strategy at a Culture Scrutiny meeting.

If successful in the shortlisting phase, the authority will be required to submit a full application and business plan by September with a decision due in December.

DCLG has also indicated that it expects to run two further rounds of funding in 2013 and 2014 and we will be looking to apply in future rounds to both of these to ensure that local community organisations, charities and others can make the most of the funds available to enhance our City and promote employment and jobs.”

(h) Councillor Cox

“What steps are being taken to ensure that the Olympic Torch parade and other planned Olympic events in the city, are not disrupted following recent threats to do so by prominent Trade Union leaders?”

Reply from Councillor Randall, Leader of the Council.

“We have heard of no planned action from the local Trade Union leadership during the Olympic Torch Parade.

In terms of our general plans for the Torch parade and other associated events, a full Event Management Team (EMT) has been convened and has already met twice. This group consists of the police, fire, ambulance service, civil contingencies, the council's health, safety and licensing department and others. We are working closely with both Sussex and the Metropolitan Police.

These plans are reviewed by the city-wide Safety Advisory Group, comprising of senior officers from the emergency services, healthcare providers and council personnel, including civil contingencies (emergency planning).

The council is also employing both volunteers and paid traffic management stewards to assist the police with the torch relay route.

Finally, we have every faith in our excellent local police and if Cllr Cox has any information, perhaps he can share it with Chief Superintendent Graham Bartlett.”

(i) Councillor Cox

“Overall, communal bins have been widely welcomed as a success when sited in suitable locations, with less rubbish spoiling the street scene. What plans does the Administration have for extending the use of communal bins to other suitable neighbourhoods?”

Reply from Councillor West, Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability.

“Communal bins have indeed been widely welcomed and resulted in cleaner streets in areas of high density housing.

This week we have begun a communal recycling trial with 3200 households in Brunswick and Adelaide ward to see if this makes recycling easier for residents. When we consulted these residents 87% of them were willing to give the trial a go, which is very encouraging.

If it is successful, and results in increased recycling rates, we will consult residents on rolling this service out more widely in the communal bin area.

Officers are also working with ward councillors in Hanover to see whether communal refuse could be introduced here. The streets in Hanover are very narrow and refuse containment is a problem. A trial in a few streets has been successful but further assessment and consultation with residents is needed before a decision is made.

No other areas are currently being considered for communal refuse. However officers are happy to discuss any particular suggestions for streets to be included in the scheme”

(j) Councillor Wealls

“Will the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People please identify the total value of services for children and young people that were commissioned ‘intelligently’ with an open tendering process in the year 2011/12, and those that will undergo a similar process in 2012/13?”

Reply from Councillor Shanks, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

“Details of services for children and young people commissioned during 2011/12 and plans for 2012/13 are set out in the City Commissioning Work Plan agreed by Cabinet.

This includes services to address child poverty, to support families in multiple disadvantage and to improve outcomes for young people. A significant proportion of services are jointly commissioned with health including services for children with a disability, child and adolescent mental health services and provision for vulnerable teenagers.

Collaboration and co-production underpins intelligent commissioning - fully engaging service users, communities and partners to understand need and existing services, to define outcomes and design care pathways and to prioritise efficiency and value for money.

In this context Intelligent commissioning may include an open tendering process if there is evidence this is the best option to develop the market, reduce costs and sustain the local economy.

That has not been the case during 2011/12. The approach taken with youth work provision, for example, has been to give established local providers the opportunity to work together to meet the challenges set out in the joint commissioning strategy. This approach has received considerable national attention and last week praise from Tim Loughton.

However, during 2012/13 the council, in partnership with West Sussex Council, will re-tender the framework for accredited and preferred providers of children's residential and fostering services which has been in place since 2008. The total value for these services in 2011/12 was £13.3m out of a children, youth and families commissioning budget of £17.127m."

