

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
25 JANUARY 2018
APPENDIX I
OPEN QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

Question from Councillor Laing

Ullapool's primary school children are to be commended for their successful and inspirational "Nae Straw at Aw" campaign to stop the use of plastic straws which have been found in abundance polluting their local beaches. Can the Executive Member tell us if there are any plans to emulate this campaign of awareness-raising with the pubs, restaurants and shops within the Scottish Borders?

Answer from Councillor Aitchison

The BBC's 'Blue Planet II' programmes have brought much-needed public prominence to the issue of discarded non-biodegradable plastics and their impact on our environment, especially our oceans and coastlines. The 'Nae Straw At Aw' initiative is a commendable response to such pollution. It highlights two matters: first, how should individuals and organisations respond to the problem of plastics and, second, what should they do to further promote that agenda with others?

Applauded by the Marine Conservation Society, pupils from Ullapool Primary School and Sunnyside Primary in Glasgow have set an example in eliminating plastic straws from their schools and in promoting a campaign for others to reduce their use of plastics. I share their ambition. For the last 6 years, the Council's Catering Team has been engaged in a strategy to reduce the use of plastics in our catering and especially our schools. As a result, all coffee cups are bio-degradable and the plastic cutlery we use is compostable. The particular issues of plastic straws has been picked up nationally by Scotland Excel which has asked all suppliers of food and drinks cartons to Schools in Scotland, including Scottish Borders Council, to consider how the issue can be addressed. In addition, the Council's Waste Services team continues to monitor closely all of the waste streams entering the system, with a view to improving our recycling rates and making improvements that support the circular economy. Councillor Aitchison added that there will be a debate within schools in the near future.

Questions from Councillor Paterson

To the Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

1. I seem to have had more complaints this year compared to other years with regards Winter Maintenance, with one elderly lady having to pay someone to get her area cleared of snow Can I ask the Executive Member please tell me if there has been a financial reduction in the Winter Maintenance Budget?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

Included within the current agreed financial revenue plan 17/18 is a saving of £100k arising from changes to the way in which the winter service is delivered, however the service remains unaffected and the savings are being delivered through other efficiencies

2. How much of a reduction has there been in the number of Winter Maintenance Staff in the last 5 years as I seem to have had more complaints this year than previous bad Winters about pavements and roads not getting gritted.

Answer from Councillor Edgar

There has been no reduction in the numbers of winter maintenance staff. All Rotas remain at the same level as previous years and are fully resourced. The Council publishes its Winter Service plan annually and details of this, or further information on the treatment of roads and footpaths, can be provided on request.

3. Can the Executive Member please tell me why during this bad spell of weather this Council have failed consistently to replenish salt/grit bins in areas that I represent causing a lot of real hardship to people that I represent, was this just a Hawick problem or was it all over the Borders?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

The provision of salt bins to support community resilience is a valuable resource and it is refreshing to know that the people of Hawick have utilised them positively to supplement the efforts of the Council. The Council maintains 1105 grit bins, an increase of 33% over years. Hawick has 105, an increase of 38% over the same period.

Given the prevailing severe snow events of recent days/weeks the Council's resources had been prioritised to focus on the agreed strategic approach to winter service. Therefore resources were deployed on primary/secondary and tertiary routes in that order.

The logistics associated with recovery, including the restocking of salt bins for ongoing community resilience, is being undertaken as resources allow. Whilst the snow melt is now causing flood issues, the winter teams are also engaged in that capacity at present. If Members are aware of isolated issues where salt bins are not replenished within a reasonable period, they can request via the relevant Neighbourhood manager for them to be restocked.

Supplementary

Councillor Paterson advised that while he appreciated the number of salt bins provided and that they had been risk assessed was this not a failure when they were not refilled. Councillor Edgar reiterated that bins were refilled as resources allowed and that staff had been busy keeping roads open. He was pleased that people were using the bins.

Question from Councillor Marshall

To the Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

Can the Executive Member responsible for roads and infrastructure provide the following information concerning the roads network across the Scottish Borders:-

- a) How many claims have been made against the council with regard to damage caused to vehicles as a result of pot-holes or similar road defects during the past 12 months and has the figure increased from the previous year?
- b) How many applicants were successful?
- c) How long on average is it taking for each claim to be processed end to end?
- d) How many claims have been made against the council in respect of pedestrians falling into pot holes or injuring themselves on defective footpaths/ bridges etc., and has the figure increased from the previous year?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

- a) There have been 173 claims for vehicle damage in the Scottish Borders as a result of potholes/carriageway defects in the 12 Month period since 22 January 2017 – this is a decrease on the previous 12 months when the comparable figure was 355 claims.
- b) At present 54 of these claims have been settled, this figure may eventually change as not all claims received in the last 12 months have been closed.
- c) I cannot provide this information as yet, due to the systems SBC currently have in place to record claims – officers have however requested this information from the Council's insurers.
- d) There were 17 claims received in the last 12 months in regards to injury to pedestrians from trips related to carriageway/footway defects – this is a decrease on the previous 12 months when the figure was 24 claims.

For Info only costs of pot hole claims

Year of Payment	Sum of Payment
2014	£8,092

2015	£10,430
2016	£21,597
2017	£12,928

Supplementary

Councillor Marshall requested that the information also include the number of cyclists involved in accidents from alleged defective roads and potholes and Councillor Edgar undertook to provide this information.

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