

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
25 FEBRUARY 2016
APPENDIX I

Question from Councillor Marshall

To Executive Member for Environmental Services

Can the Executive Member for Environmental Services advise how many kerbside food collection bins have been issued in Hawick and can he report on the percentage level of how many are actually being used in the area on a weekly basis?

Reply from Councillor Paterson

The Council has a statutory obligation to provide food waste collections to all households in Hawick and that totals 7,422 properties. The Council monitored the performance of the service in all areas for a number of weeks immediately following the introduction of the service.

The bins presented for collection in Hawick on a weekly basis during that period averaged 24%. However, this does not represent participation in the service as some householders may not present their food waste bin every week.

The main measure of performance, recognised across Scotland, is the number of kilograms collected per household per week.

The average for Scotland is 0.97 kilos

The average for the Scottish Borders is 0.91 kilos

The average for Hawick is 0.73 kilos

The performance of the service in Hawick is obviously disappointing and is clearly impacting on the overall performance of the service in the Scottish Borders. The Waste Services Team are currently considering the delivery of a recycling monitoring and intervention exercise. Attention will be given to low performing areas to identify barriers to recycling and to improve participation

Supplementary

Councillor Marshall asked if this could be considered a cost effective service and a good use of Council money. Councillor Paterson advised that this was a statutory service and that the negativity in Hawick needed to be overcome.

Questions from Councillor Logan

To The Executive Member for Economic Development

1. Why was the Council not informed at the Council meeting on 11 February 2016, when debating the amendment to the Capital programme, that the Scottish Culture Secretary was demanding a fully revised business plan and the associated designs for the Great Tapestry of Scotland before releasing the Scottish Government's share of £2.5m to the project?

Reply from Councillor Bell

The Cabinet Secretary requested further information regarding the Tapestry project in early January; the nature and format of this information was still the subject of discussion between Civil Servants and Council Officers at the time of the last Council meeting.

There had been, and remains, no commitment to producing a further, fully revised business case. However, given that there have been significant developments since the business case was produced, specifically the opening of the Borders Railway, it is not unreasonable for the Council to be asked to provide additional information on how this may impact on the original business case. This information has been provided.

Finally, the letter from the Cabinet Secretary which refers to a fully revised business case was not sent to me until 7.32 in the evening of the Council meeting. I understand that a similar letter was sent to the Council Leader at 7:09 on the same evening, 6 hours after the Council meeting concluded.

Supplementary

Councillor Logan requested a yes or no response as to whether or not Councillor Bell was aware of the Cabinet Secretary's position on a revised business case in advance of the Council meeting. Councillor Bell responded he had had a number of exchanges with the Cabinet Secretary before the Council meeting, but the answer was no.

2. It is now clear that the Scottish Government had not carried out the due diligence process on the Great Tapestry of Scotland Project. Can you tell us why Councillors were given assurances that the process had been carried out?

Reply from Councillor Bell

I do not recall this assurance being given at the Council meeting. The due diligence process was certainly underway, but I do not believe any assertion was made that it was complete.

The process for funding approval is through the blueprint leadership group and this group considered the draft approval paper in December 2015. Discussions were underway between senior Civil Servants and our Officers regarding further information which the Cabinet Secretary would like to consider before approving any funding grant. Further information was provided and was being considered.

Given that the blueprint leadership group has not yet met this year it would not have been able to receive or respond to any request for a revised business case. As I have also already said, no commitment has been given to the Scottish Government to produce a revised business case.

However, following a very constructive meeting with the Cabinet Secretary yesterday evening, I can confirm that we have agreed a way forward in respect of the Tapestry project. The Cabinet Secretary has confirmed that she is committed to delivering a successful project in the Borders and we have now agreed a due diligence process which will enable us to give the appropriate level of assurance to allow the funding from Scottish Government to be released. Work is already underway and we expect to be able to complete this process in the coming weeks.

Supplementary

Councillor Logan asked if he could be given an assurance that no construction work would commence until a revised business case had been debated by Council. Councillor Bell advised that he could give no such assurance as there was no commitment to provide a revised business case and it depended on the outcome of the due diligence process.

Question from Councillor Turnbull

To the Executive Member for Economic Development

In the event of the Scottish Government not supporting the construction of a building in Tweedbank costing £2.5m does this mean the project will be aborted?

Reply from Councillor Bell

That is likely to be the outcome. However it would continue to be crucial to consider what we would do to address the need for tourist and visitor facilities at Tweedbank

If we are to maximise the full potential economic benefits of the Railway as set out in the Railway Blueprint to which we are co-signatories then we urgently need facilities at Tweedbank which celebrate and signpost what we have to offer throughout the Region.