

The City of Edinburgh Council
13 March 2008

QUESTION NO 14

**By Councillor Ewan Aitken
answered by the Leader of the
Council**

Question (1) Please can you detail all meetings with the Scottish Government either at political and/or officer level on the issue of developing a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) between the Scottish Government and the City of Edinburgh Council?

Answer (1) The Chief Executive met with Liz Hunter from the Scottish Government on 4th March. She is the appointed lead officer from the Scottish Government, responsible for liaising with the City of Edinburgh Council on the development of the SOA. Each appointed officer has responsibility for liaising with four Councils.

Question (2) Can you please publish all correspondence between the Council (politically or at officer level) with the Scottish Government on the issue of Service Level Agreements (SLAs)?

Answer (2) I think Councillor Aitken is confused. There is no relevant correspondence "on the issue of Service Level Agreement (SLA)".

On the assumption that Councillor Aitken is actually seeking information about the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), I have extended an invitation to Senior Councillors and Opposition Group Leaders to attend seminars organised by COSLA regarding SOAs. If Councillor Aitken would care to clarify his request I would be happy to consider it.

Question (3) Can you outline the timescales expected to reach such agreement?

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Answer (3) The Scottish Government requires all Councils to submit a draft Single Outcome Agreement by 31st March. They have, however, indicated that they will accept an amended version approved by elected members at the end of April. SOAs will be finalised for all Councils by 30 June 2008.

Question (4) Can you indicate how and at what point in the process the following groups will be involved in the process both as contributors to the development of an SOA and be offered the opportunity to scrutinise any proposed SOA?

Can you also indicate the method by which the views of these organisations and groups will be engaged with and whether their views will be recorded in any subsequent proposals:

- The Full Council meeting
- Council Committees
- Voluntary Groups in receipt of grants whose work will help deliver the outcomes agreed
- Organisations with SLAs with the Council whose work will help deliver the outcomes agreed
- EVOC
- Neighbourhood Partnerships
- Neighbouring councils where joint work would be involved in delivering outcomes in the agreement
- Trade Unions
- Community Councils
- The Business Community
- Opposition Groups on the Council
- The Edinburgh Partnership
- NHS Lothian
- Council Companies whose work would deliver some of the outcomes agreed

Answer (4) The development of the Single Outcome Agreement is being approached in two phases. Councils are required to submit an SOA by 31 March 2008 (subject to the variation in timescale described above) covering the agreed national outcomes and indicators. This first SOA submission requires to cover the Council's responsibilities. The Scottish Government has indicated that they wish to see agreements in place for Councils and their

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community planning partners by March 2009. The Council will therefore be developing its joint SOA submission with its community planning partners against this timetable.

The first step in this will be taken with a report to the Edinburgh Partnership Board on the SOA approach on 27th March 2008. Consideration will be given to how to engage with other stakeholders and reflect their views during the development of SOA during the rest of 2008.

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| Question | (5) Can you indicate which strategic documents you intend to use as the basis of your negotiating position? |
| Answer | (5) The Council will follow the joint guidance on Single Outcome Agreements for Scottish Local Government issued on 5 th February 2008 on behalf of Audit Scotland, COSLA, the Scottish Government, SOLACE and the Improvement Service. The Council will utilise all relevant information, such as the Corporate Plan, to inform our discussions with the Scottish Government. |
| Supplementary Question | This is not an occasion when I think certainly the Leader's half of the Administration is trying to be secretive in its approach. In fact, I think you are being put under tremendous pressure for the Single Outcome Agreements. Single Outcome Agreements are seen as the bedrock of the so called new relationship between local and national government but would the Leader agree with me that it is a scandal that the pressure that she has been put under to get something in by the end of April means that this will not be seen by the full Council before it goes in, as the next Council meeting is on 1 May? Even if we do see it by 1 May, the Council will only have that chance to make any amendments should it wish to do so at that point. |
| Supplementary Answer | I agree the timescales are very tight and the information from COSLA in order to guide us in the process which has just started came quite late in the day. We have been allocated, as you will see from the answer, the relevant officer who will be dealing |

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with this Council but I can assure you I will do my best to make sure that other political groups are involved in this process.

Our first internal discussions take place very soon. I appreciate it is a very short timescale but I will be making sure that Group Leaders, at the very minimum, get an opportunity to have some input into what we come up with.

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QUESTION NO 15

**By Councillor Ewan Aitken
answered by the Convener of
the Finance and Resources
Committee**

- Question** (1) Please can you give the Council the figures for the following reserve funds at 1/04/07 ie the end of the last financial year and give the sum total of these three figures:
- General Reserve
Capital Fund
Renewal and Repairs Fund?
- Answer** (1) i) a) General Reserve – Earmarked £20.436m
b) General Reserve – Unallocated £0.373m
ii) Capital Fund – Earmarked £27.116m
iii) Renewal and Repairs Fund – Earmarked £4.061m
- Total of these funds £51.986m
- Question** (2) Can you confirm that these figures appear in several Council documents, including report CEC/157/07-08/F which was presented to Council on 21st February?
- Answer** (2) Yes.
- Question** (3) Can you indicate the figure agreed in that same paper to be transferred from unutilised Revenue Support Grant to the unallocated General Reserve?

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Answer (3) The report stated that, in light of the latest monitoring projections for 2007-08 and the risks surrounding the budget going forward, the planned balance of £5m in the unallocated reserves by 31st March 2009 may not be sufficient. Thus, the Director of Finance strongly recommended that £1.598m of unutilised funds from revenue support grant be transferred to the unallocated general fund.

Question (4) Can you confirm that that was an example of a transfer from an allocated reserve to the unallocated reserve?

Answer (4) Allocated reserves are earmarked for specific purposes. Only where the risks against which these funds were earmarked do not materialise, can transfers be made from an allocated reserve to the unallocated reserve, as in the case described.

**Supplementary
Question**

I have the paper I referred to in my question here and it shows reserves about £216 short of £52m. Paragraph 3.3 in the paper recommends moving money from allocated to unallocated balances and paragraph 3.7 moving Spend to Save climate change money to Scotland Excel; a process similar to the change of use of £3.3m to the Cities Growth Fund. So it would appear, according to this, that allocated monies can be spent on things other than that to which they have been allocated, or transferred to unallocated balances.

Since I have been able to find three examples in this paper, surely the same process of transfer, either between headings or to unallocated balances, can happen to more of the £52m of reserves. We could, in other words we can because we have done so, use that £52m of reserves in whatever way we choose. We can choose to leave them or we can choose to move them. If that is the case, can you explain to me why Councillor MacLaren accused us of lying in her Evening News interview when we said that we left £52m in reserves to be used as we chose? Is she telling the truth or is this document telling the truth?

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**Supplementary
Answer**

I think Councillor Aitken misunderstands what is in the document. In the answer here it makes it quite clear that there has to be a justification for the move of any funds. In the case that is detailed in the question the risk no longer arises; it is a windfall in a sense for the Council and so we have moved it into the unallocated reserve. The £52m that he refers to could cover our risks but on the other hand the cost of modernising pay may well be greater than you provided for. I think, in the spirit of the answer, we do not know if we have enough to cover our liabilities. What we do know is that unallocated reserve is at a level of £373,000 which is nowhere near enough. That is why we have tried to put more into the unallocated reserve for the future.

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QUESTION NO 16

**By Councillor Ewan Aitken
answered by the Convener of
the Finance and Resources
Committee**

Question (1) Please can you indicate the percentage increase on Aggregate External Finance (AEF) in 08/09 from 07/08?

Answer (1) 5.21%.

Question (2) Please can you confirm that this is an increase of approximately £37.5m from the 07/08 total?

Answer (2) Yes.

Successfully freezing Council Tax for Edinburgh, for the first time in the history of the city, whilst protecting services and stabilising the Council's finances necessitated record levels of efficiency savings. The Director of Finance has indicated that the Council could have been facing an overspend of £23.1 million by April 2008 had tough action not been taken. The retention of efficiency savings, removal of ring-fencing and £6.9 million funding from the Scottish Government in terms of their Concordat with COSLA contribute to the AEF headline figure together with changes in Edinburgh's assessed spending need as a result of an above-average increase in general population and changing demographic profiles. These factors provided greater flexibility from which we could deliver a Council Tax freeze whilst providing for excellent public services in Edinburgh.

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QUESTION NO 17

**By Councillor Johnstone
answered by the Convener of
the Transport, Infrastructure
and Environment Committee**

Question

Can the Convener advise of progress in introducing easily accessible recycling facilities in all Council buildings for all recyclable materials?

Answer

Easily accessible recycling facilities have been introduced to Waverley Court and Murrayburn Depot. A programme for rolling out these facilities throughout the corporate property portfolio has begun. A new Council Resource Use Efficiency Policy will be submitted to Committee in May setting out the strategic framework to establishing reuse and recycling infrastructures throughout Council properties.

QUESTION NO 18

**By Councillor Burgess
answered by the Convener of
the Planning Committee**

Question

Whether the Administration supports the aim of ensuring that major sites for development, such as at Leith Docks, are zero carbon developments?

Answer

The Administration is committed to ensuring major developments are zero carbon developments, where technically feasible.

**Supplementary
Question**

I am grateful for this positive answer. I asked this question because at the moment the Planning Committee is being asked to approve applications at major development sites which are adding to the climate pollution that Edinburgh generates. Where there is obviously potential to make new developments zero carbon, can I ask the Convener how the Administration will ensure that zero carbon developments are brought forward? Will the Administration ask the officials to bring forward a report on how zero carbon developments can be achieved?

**Supplementary
Answer**

The Council has had a policy on standards for sustainable buildings since May 2007 and all new developments have to conform to this. By coincidence the Scottish Government this week issued Planning Advice Note 84 on reducing carbon emissions from new developments and the Department will be applying that as well. What I will do is give an undertaking that when the year is up, ie in May 2008, I will ask the Director to report to the June Planning Committee on how we are applying these principles and what effect they are having.

QUESTION NO 19

**By Councillor Blacklock
answered by the Convener of
the Transport, Infrastructure
and Environment Committee**

- Question** (1) How many complaints regarding recycling bins has the Council received in the last 6 months?
- Answer** (1) There have been 26 complaints regarding recycling bins during the period from 1 September 2007 to 29 February 2008.
- Question** (2) What plans are in place to develop plastic recycling?
- Answer** (2) The Council currently offer the collection of plastic bottles through packaging banks sited at recycling points (such as supermarkets), and in high density housing areas through on-street recycling.
- Investigations are underway to establish the cost and feasibility of adding the collection of plastic bottles through the kerbside multi-material (blue and red box) scheme. The current collection contract for the latter service is due to expire in March 2009. The collection of plastics along with existing materials will form part of the new tender.
- Question** (3) What examples are there of publicity provided by the Council to Edinburgh residents with limited mobility and the access available to them to recycling services?
- Answer** (3) When both the garden waste and kerbside box collections were introduced, those residents already receiving an assisted collection for general refuse were automatically offered an assisted collection for recyclables. Should new residents wish to request boxes or a garden waste bin and have limited mobility they can receive an assisted collection. This service can be requested by contacting the Council on 0131 529 3030.

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QUESTION NO 20

**By Councillor Chapman
answered by the Convener of
the Health, Social Care and
Housing Committee**

Question

What moves are in place to formalise the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Pilmeny Development Project?

Answer

Pilmeny Development Project (PDP) is recommended to receive a grant of £85,945 in 2008/9, composed of £50,829 from the Health & Social Care Department and £35,116 from Children and Families. The total sum includes £4,374 which was agreed during 2007 for PDP's additional pension contributions.

Once the Council has approved the organisation's funding for 2008/9, any final adjustments necessary can be made to the SLA and this will be sent to PDP for signature. On its return, the SLA will be considered for final signature by the Director of Health and Social Care.

Supplementary Question (1)

It seems that, according to the reply in front of me, the SLA is well under way with Pilmeny Development Project. This is good news, if indeed this is the case, but it is certainly not the impression that the Pilmeny Development Project have. They feel that they have been continually put on hold and staff changes in the Department of Health and Social Care have meant little if any continuity in the SLA process. They feel that they are constantly pushed back to square one. Can you comment on this or is this perhaps just another example of the poor communication between the Council and its partner organisations?

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- Supplementary Answer** (1) My understanding is that Pilmeny have been receiving a grant from us and that is now being formalised into an SLA. We have to agree today what that level is going to be and that is what is in the papers before us. I have nothing else to add to the answer I have given.
- Supplementary Question** (2) I know that they have been in receipt of a grant but I know that they have also been trying to work out an SLA with the Council for several years now and within the last 10 months have been knocked back time and time again. This is why I asked the question about the SLA and not the grant.
- Supplementary Answer** (2) This is a question that has been put in unusual circumstances and you have given me less than 24 hours notice. I have nothing to add to the answer. There is an SLA that will be approved after we have taken the decision today about the grant levels for all of the organisations. I am not sure there is anything else I can add to that I'm afraid.

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QUESTION NO 21

**By Councillor Chapman
answered by the Conveners of
the Health, Social Care and
Housing Committee and the
Education, Children and
Families Committee**

Question

What are the service delivery impacts of the proposed grant cuts as outlined in the report, in terms of job cuts and loss of services?

Answer

Significant work has been undertaken to protect grants to third party organisations in the light of the challenging financial position inherited. All options for grant funding reductions have been selected using clear criteria in order to assess and minimise any impact on service delivery. The precise level of detail sought is an operational matter for the organisations concerned.

**Supplementary
Question**

I appreciate the work that has gone into working out the grant funding although I am sure it will come as no surprise that I don't agree with what is being done. Can the Convener tell us how we will, or actually if we can at all, measure the complex data required to properly assess the degree to which the Council meets or does not meet the Concordat agreement objectives signed up to with the Scottish Government? Surely, if we do not know the effects of the decisions that we take today to invest or not to invest in third sector organisations, we cannot begin to know how we meet or do not meet the Concordat objectives.

**Supplementary
Answer by the
Convener of
the Health,
Social Care
and Housing
Committee**

With all due respect, I do not have a copy of the Concordat to hand. Could I suggest respectfully that perhaps if you want this information, you pick up the phone and ask for a proper briefing from the Director on this subject.

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Appendix 2
(As referred to in Act of Council No 15 of 13 March 2008)

Revenue Budget 2008-2009
HRA/Non HRA Increase in Charges

	Current Price	Proposed Price	Effective From
<u>HRA</u>			
<u>Communal Heating</u>			
- Maidencraig Court:			
Gas fired heating - per Week	£6.32	£6.57	1-Apr-08
Owner-Occupier's boiler maintenance - per Month	£8.56	£8.90	1-Apr-08
- Westfield Court:			
Gas fired heating and hot water			
1 Apartment - per Week	£5.42	£5.64	1-Apr-08
2 Apartment - per Week	£7.09	£7.37	1-Apr-08
3 Apartment - per Week	£10.00	£10.40	1-Apr-08
Owner occupiers' boiler maintenance			
1 Apartment - per Week	£2.27	£2.36	1-Apr-08
2 Apartment - per Week	£2.87	£2.99	1-Apr-08
3 Apartment - per Week	£4.05	£4.21	1-Apr-08
- Ferniehill Drive (Sheltered) - per Week	£5.43	£5.65	1-Apr-08
- Saughton Mains Terrace (Sheltered) - per Week	£6.58	£6.84	1-Apr-08
<u>Heat -with-Rent Scheme</u>			
1 Apartment - per Fortnight	£7.78	£8.09	1-Apr-08
2 Apartment - per Fortnight	£10.31	£10.73	1-Apr-08
3 Apartment - per Fortnight	£13.52	£14.06	1-Apr-08
<u>Furnished Tenancy</u>			
- 2 Apt (single occupant)	£73.39	£76.33	1-Apr-08
- 3 Apt (single occupant)	£74.54	£77.52	1-Apr-08
- 3 Apt (Shared)	£83.52	£86.96	1-Apr-08
- 4 Apt (Shared)	£88.74	£92.29	1-Apr-08
- 6 Apt (Shared)	£107.53	£111.83	1-Apr-08
<u>Homeless Temporary Accommodation</u>			
- Dispersed flats - per week	£289.71	£301.30	1-Apr-08
- Oxfords - per Week	£272.48	£283.42	1-Apr-08
- Broomhouse - per Week	£305.37	£317.58	1-Apr-08
- Crewe Road - per Week	£308.50	£320.84	1-Apr-08
- West Pilton View - per Week	£477.63	£496.74	1-Apr-08
- West Pilton Park (Single Occupancy) - per Week	£443.18	£460.91	1-Apr-08
- West Pilton Park (Family Occupancy) - per Week	£548.10	£570.02	1-Apr-08
- Bruntsfield - per Week	£347.50	£361.40	1-Apr-08
- Bingham - per Week	£422.82	£439.73	1-Apr-08
- Leith Street - per Week	£422.82	£439.73	1-Apr-08
- Core Furniture - per Week	£8.40	£8.74	1-Apr-08
<u>Staircleaning charge</u>			

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	Current Price	Proposed Price	Effective From
- Tenants and owner-occupiers	£4.00	£4.34	1-Apr-08
<u>Travelling People's Site - per week</u>	£65.77	£68.40	1-Apr-08
<u>Launderette Charges</u>			
Washing machine/dryer (Main)	£2.09	£2.17	1-Apr-08
Washing machine/dryer (Sheltered)	£0.89	£0.92	1-Apr-08
Tumble dryer (Main)	£0.57	£0.60	1-Apr-08
Tumble dryer (Sheltered)	£0.42	£0.43	1-Apr-08
<u>Guest rooms (Sheltered Housing)</u>			
Standard Charge - per night	£6.63	£6.89	1-Apr-08
Persons in receipt of state pension - per night	£3.34	£3.47	1-Apr-08
<u>Community Alarms</u>			
Standard charge per property	£2.19	£2.28	1-Apr-08
<u>Hire of Community Rooms</u>			
Full day hire	£15.45	£16.07	1-Apr-08
Morning hire	£5.53	£5.75	1-Apr-08
Afternoon hire	£5.53	£5.75	1-Apr-08
Evening hire	£5.53	£5.75	1-Apr-08
Lunchtime hire	£7.73	£8.03	1-Apr-08
<u>Garage Rents</u>			
West - per year	£386.00	£401.44	1-Apr-08
Central West - per year	£329.00	£342.16	1-Apr-08
North - per year	£329.00	£342.16	1-Apr-08
City Leith - per year	£501.00	£521.04	1-Apr-08
East - per year	£329.00	£342.16	1-Apr-08
South - per year	£444.00	£461.76	1-Apr-08
<u>Stair Cleaning</u>			
Per week	£2.00	£2.10	1-Apr-08
<u>Supporting People</u>			
Per week	£4.50	£4.70	1-Apr-08
Per week	£5.85	£6.10	1-Apr-08
Per week	£6.50	£6.75	1-Apr-08
1 Hour per week	£8.00	£8.30	1-Apr-08
2-3 Hours per week	£16.00	£16.60	1-Apr-08
4-5 hours per week	£20.00	£20.80	1-Apr-08
5+hours per week	£30.00	£31.20	1-Apr-08