

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on page 39 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answers listed below:

(a) Councillor Cox

“In relation to the new City Clean bin rounds: a) How many refuse/recycling/communal bin vehicle breakdowns have there been since the introduction of the new rounds; b) How are staff deployed when their vehicles do break down; c) does the Council have ‘reserve’ vehicles or other effective contingency measures for when breakdowns do occur?”

Reply from Councillor West, Chair of the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee.

a) How many refuse/recycling/communal bin vehicle breakdowns have there been since the introduction of the new rounds?

“There have been 169 defects on vehicles ranging from 30 minutes to 5 days (approximately) to rectify from 7th October until 29th November. On average over the period this is 4.23 per day. There were 12 with accident damage which is included in the 169 which were longer to rectify. This figure includes spare vehicles used for extra operational requirements.”

b) How are staff deployed when their vehicles do break down?

“Collection Crews either remain with the vehicle or in the depot waiting for a vehicle to be repaired and brought back into service. In the rare event that it looks like there will not be a vehicle available all day the staff are allocated to help out on other collections rounds.”

c) Does the Council have ‘reserve’ vehicles or other effective contingency measures for when breakdowns do occur?

“Yes. There are spare vehicles to cover defects and service inspections. Refuse collection have had 6 spare RCV’s with the addition of 2 from Lewes and 1 vehicle held back from disposal. Recycling has had 6 spare vehicles and an additional 3 vehicles held back from disposal. We held back the vehicles for disposal to help with the bedding in of rounds. There are contingency measures for breakdowns which include the use of Manufacturers service engineers and subcontractors, although most vehicle defects were, and are, rectified in-house. In addition, contingency measures may involve double shifting collection vehicles by sending out the vehicle again usually with an agency crew once it has finished its original round and, if necessary, collecting outstanding work over the weekend.”

(b) Councillor G. Theobald

“Does the Leader of the Council think that it is appropriate in a hung Council, and in the spirit of open government which he espouses, to hold a press briefing on his Budget proposals just before going abroad to represent the Council, and fully three days before the detailed report was released to opposition councillors and members of the public?”

Reply from Councillor J. Kitcat, Leader of the Council.

“In recognition of our desire to be as open and inclusive as possible we have used the cross-party Budget Review Group to brief the group leaders and finance spokespeople on the budget proposals, context as well as to review possible savings ideas. This cross-party working is appropriate as the budget is ultimately a decision for all councillors and this council has no overall control. This inclusive approach has been agreed by all three parties and is modelled on best practice from other councils which have seen long periods of no overall control.

As happened last year, the press were invited for a general briefing with a finance officer to discuss the overall context and shape of the budget. Interviews were also offered with Cllr Littman, as Lead member for Finance, and myself. Because I had to be away on Council business later that week, this was scheduled a few days before the publication of the budget proposals and was done so under embargo, so that the comments could not be used until the budget was published. Opposition groups were informed that this was taking place.

The budget proposals were not shared with the press at this briefing. Nothing which was not already in the public domain was shared and discussed in the briefing.

Opposition group leaders were given copies of the budget proposals the evening before they were published to the press and public on Friday 29th November.

I am confident that this has all been done completely appropriately and in the best interests of the council. As an administration we have pursued the most open and inclusive budget process the city has ever seen, publishing draft proposals three months before the final decision is taken.

Officers will continue to help ensure that opposition councillors receive timely information on the budget and the opportunity to influence the budget setting process.”