

## **Written Questions – Council 21 February 2008**

### **From Councillor Bradnack to the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources**

What information will be in the public domain, in the telephone directory and elsewhere, on individual named officers, when the Customer Access Strategy is in place ? And will the information available to councillors differ from the information available to the public ? If so, how ?

### **Answer from the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources, Councillor Cantrill**

The Council currently does not publish individual officer numbers in the telephone directory or in the majority of publications but publishes numbers of services. This would continue be the approach under the new arrangements.

We would expect the majority of council publicity to promote the numbers of the customer service centre (CSC) to encourage "first" calls to the council to come through that route. But this will, of course, vary from service to service. As services move into the centre we need to decide what number is appropriate. If we send out a leaflet on a specialist issue we probably would not put a CSC number on it, but if it was a more generic leaflet we would.

The council currently publishes in the region of 160 numbers in the phonebook putting the onus on the customer to find their way through to the right place. When customer service centre is fully operational the major benefit from the public's point of view will be a reduction to the numbers we publish, making it easier for them to get to the right place.

The customer service centre is being set up to deal with general and straightforward enquiries. But not all phone contact will come through that route. If, as a member of the public, you are being dealt with by a case worker, then that worker's name and number would go out on correspondence, not that of the CSC.

We will also continue to make sure that key officer names are available for example on the website, so that the public know who are the key senior managers in the organisation. This information would also be available for those who asked for it via the customer service centre.

As part of the general information made available to them, I would expect councillors to have a list of the key officers responsible for individual services as so they could ring direct if they need to. Members needs will be different from those of the public as they will want to discuss broader issues with officers, not just make request for services. But I would also expect and want to encourage members to use the CSC for straightforward service requests or to progress chase on behalf of a constituent. The majority of members will probably find this easier as, like the public, they can ring one number to find the information they want. I would also hope they would promote the service to their constituents as a first point of contact.

## **From Councillor Newbold to the Executive Councillor for Environmental and Waste Services**

What are the usage figures for 2007 for each of the council's public toilets, including for Chesterton Road where large scale capital expenditure is proposed?

### **Answer from the Executive Councillor for Environmental and Waste Services, Councillor C Rosenstiel**

The Council currently provide twenty public conveniences. Nine are adjacent to the street; the other eleven are sited on parks and public open spaces.

There is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide public toilets and the response by many, including Cambridge City, has been to close rather than modernise facilities that have fallen below an acceptable standard. However, Resident Satisfaction Surveys have consistently highlighted the need for the Council to provide good quality public toilets and have in the past prioritised this service for additional spending. In 2000 this Council took the decision not to close any more and instead agreed a capital investment programme to provide high quality public toilets with increased accessibility for people with disabilities and young children.

The benefits of providing this service extend further than the actual number of users. Public conveniences, that people can feel safe and confident to use, are an important factor for the health, social and economic dynamism of the city. They can also have a significant impact on 'first impressions' of a place both for residents and visitors as well as demonstrate the commitment of the Council to provide good quality basic services. In some high profile locations, for example Gonville Place, Midsummer Common and the proposed Chesterton Road facilities, they are also public buildings and add to the rich architectural diversity of the City whilst also complimenting their settings and enhancing their location.

In determining usage, there are a number of factors that need to be considered. The highest consistent usage is at Lion Yard and Drummer Street toilets with both exceeding 300,000 visits per year. The usage at many of the other toilet sites is influenced by a number of different factors, not least time of year, day of the week, weather, school holidays and events. Despite the poor condition of Chesterton Road facilities, usage over the last year has been around 30,000 catering not just for passing road users, but also boat residents and tourists from day coaches, as this is one of the published drop off/pick up locations. This demand is expected to increase with the modernisation. Last but not least, there are some people who find it very difficult to leave home for medical reasons if it were not for a public convenience being available.

In parks and other public open spaces, particularly those providing children's playgrounds, paddling pools and other recreational opportunities for all ages and mobility, it means families and individuals can take advantage of these areas without having to be uncomfortable or resort to using inappropriate places. Some of the larger public spaces are venues for events throughout the year, in the case of Midsummer Common toilets for instance, they also

provide support for the activities on the commons with safe access to services.

Employees that need to travel around the city as part of their work, including Council staff, use many of the toilets adjacent to the road, for example Barnwell Road and Arbury Court.

Anti-social behaviour has been a real factor in the deterioration of many of the 'traditional' style toilets with communal areas and which are not fully attended. Experience has shown that where this has been the case, usage dropped, for example Mill Road, Gonville Place and Midsummer Common toilets before modernisation. By using nationally recognised features to tackle anti-social behaviour, improved cleaning and better management arrangements have all contributed to the public and staff safety and confidence and usage have significantly increased.

The table below sets out the water consumption of the toilets for the last billing year where this is metered. It represents a comparative usage of public toilets. The exception being Midsummer Common toilets where rainwater is captured and used for toilet flushing supplemented by mains water when required.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Water usage over last 12 months</b>
Arbury Court	97m3
Barnwell Road	60m3
Cherry Hinton Hall	375m3
Cherry Hinton High Street	185m3
Chesterton Road	653m3
Drummer Street	2910m3
Gonville Place	382m3
Lion Yard	1585m3 (Estimate)
Mill Road	145m3
Romsey Rec.	199m3
Silver Street	1111m3
Midsummer Common	177m3

## From Councillor Herbert to the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources

How many council staff earned over £30,000 in

a) 2007/8

and, adjusted for inflation, what were the comparable numbers in

b) 2005/6 and

c) 2003/4?

**Answer from the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources, Councillor Cantrill**

### Outline of Employee Salary Data

Salary Range		2007/08		2006/07		2005/06	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
£0	-	49	4.00%	53	4.20%	40	3.23%
£15,000							
£15,001	-	966	78.92%	1029	81.60%	1015	81.92%
£30,000							
£30,001	-	185	15.11%	158	12.53%	157	12.67%
£45,000							
£45,000+		24	1.96%	21	1.67%	27	2.18%
<b>Total</b>		1224		1261		1239	
<b>Employees</b>							
Average Salary		£24,239		£23,695		£23,711	

#### Note:

- All salaries have been compared as whole time equivalent (i.e. part time workers – calculated on full time equivalent salary)
- Salaries pre 2007/08 have been proofed to account for variations due to increases in the NJC cost of living pay award.

#### Caveats:

- The current HR/Payroll system was implemented in 2004/05 therefore comparable salary data is not available for years 2003/04 or 2004/05.

## **From Councillor Herbert to the Leader**

What specific costed items is the Climate Change fund to be spent on?

## **Answer from the Leader, Councillor Nimmo-Smith**

As outlined in items (t) and (u) of the substantive Budget motion, precise details of how the Fund will operate are currently being drawn up by Council officers prior to plans being formally considered by the Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Growth at the Environment Scrutiny Committee in June 2008.

As part of the Council's participation in the DCLG sponsored Performance Improvement Programme there is the opportunity to benefit from some consultancy support from PricewaterhouseCoopers (at nil cost to the authority) to develop the structure and operation of the fund further. This explains the two-stage timetable. It will be an important step in ensuring that the Fund is set up to achieve its objectives in an effective and accountable manner.

The proposed Fund will pay for activities which will contribute to the achievement of the Council's climate change and carbon reduction objectives through energy efficiency other appropriate measures and will be a key part of the Council's continuing effort to ensure that Cambridge is among the greenest and most sustainable authorities in the country.

*Extract from Substantive motion:*

*t) Approve the establishment of a 'Climate Change Fund', with an initial contribution of £250,000 in 2008/09, to be used to provide funding for schemes or activities which will contribute to the achievement of the Council's climate change and carbon reduction Medium Term Objectives (Executive Amendment, 24 January 2008).*

*u) To request officers to develop the overall structure and uses for the Climate Change Fund for consideration by Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in April 2008. Detailed proposals for the Governance, scope and operation of the Climate Change Fund to be developed for consideration by the Environment Scrutiny Committee in June 2008 and decision by the Leader or recommendation to Council (as necessary). The proposals to include arrangements for the administration of the fund and for the appraisal, evaluation, prioritisation and approval of bids made for use of the fund.*

## **From Councillor Newbold to the Leader**

1) How much did the Council spend on consultants in

a) 2007/8

b) 2005/6

c) 2003/4

and what services accounted for the majority of the consultancy expenditure in each year ?