

**1 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR JOHNSON TO COUNCILLOR HAMILTON-COX**

Have the photo voltaic cells on Council property been signed off by the installers?

Councillor Hamilton Cox replied that they hadn't been formally handed over yet. There was a problem at Salt Ayre which was being addressed but the warranty period did not start until the installations were formally signed off.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Johnson asked if all Councillors could be informed with the installations were signed off. Councillor Hamilton-Cox agreed to this request and informed Councillor Johnson that he was continuing a watching brief over progress and, indeed, was able to follow amounts generated day by day in pounds and pence using the Orsis metering system.

**2 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SCOTT TO COUNCILLOR NEWMAN-THOMPSON**

Please can we have an agreement that Mobiles are switched off unless Councillors are expecting an emergency call from the family and a definite ban to texting during council proceedings, as it looks unprofessional.

Councillor Newman-Thompson answered that, in order to enforce such a protocol, there would need to be provision within the Council Procedure Rules. Currently, the Rules did not refer to the use of mobile phones during Council meetings, but he would be happy for the Council Business Committee to consider an appropriate provision.

**3 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SCOTT TO COUNCILLOR BLAMIRE**

Is there a policy for Council in terms of how the telephone is answered? For example: when I call, sometimes the switch board say their name only, other times they say Lancaster City Council and named person, sometimes they say, switch board. It also applies to officers when put through or when using a direct number.

Can we have a generic way of answering the telephone which is more professional in its tone. For example, "Lancaster City Council, name of service, name of person speaking".

Councillor Blamire replied:

"The telephone answering protocol is set out in the Customer Service Policy for staff which is available on the City Council's intranet. The policy, which covers all council staff, states that all callers should be greeted as follows:

"Good Morning"/"Good Afternoon"

"Lancaster City Council (if an external caller) Service Name, Your Name, "How can I help you?"

When someone calls the main council number or one of the services for which Customer Services are the first port of call, customers receive a recorded message first which says: Welcome to Lancaster City Council." Then, depending on whether they have rung the 582000 number or a direct line number, customer services will either say 'Switchboard, X speaking, how can I help' or "Good morning, customer services, X speaking, how can I help"

All staff outside of Customer Services are required to use the same standard and are reminded from time to time via the staff team briefing process."

As her supplementary question, Councillor Scott asked if staff could be reminded.

Councillor Blamire agreed to this suggestion.

#### **4 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR WHITAKER TO COUNCILLOR HANSON**

In view of the need to address the poor state of the disused properties within the areas of Chatsworth Gardens and the fact we have been awarded the funding of £1.9 million pounds from the Government with the condition that we match fund it - how likely is it that we can obtain this match funding in order to address the issues of unkempt empty properties within the area of Chatsworth Gardens?

Councillor Hanson replied:

“In general terms, the likelihood comes down to priorities and whether the Council wants to direct resources into tackling this issue - potentially at the expense of other services. Even though the Council has many statutory responsibilities that it has to put money into, it still provides a lot of discretionary services and one way of finding match funding could be to redirect funds from other services.

The way that the Council makes these decisions is usually through its budget process. It's known that the Council has quite a lot of financial pressures to tackle and Chatsworth Gardens is one of these. (Others include Lancaster Market, the Storey and a capital programme severely hindered by the ongoing legal proceedings relating to land at Scotforth).

That said, it isn't simply an issue of finding match funding in this difficult financial climate. As well as match funding, the delivery of a refurbishment scheme requires a complex assessment, including assumptions about private investment. It needs to show value for money.

Having devised a potential scheme, Regeneration and Resources Officers are working through the practicalities, cost assumptions and risks associated with a potential project.

There will no doubt be many other councils who will be grateful that Ministers have made the potential of this funding available to them, but equally find that the biggest hurdle is generating the match funds in similar circumstances. We are writing to the Homes and Communities Agency and David Morris MP to ask if the match funding requirement can be relaxed.”

Councillor Whitaker asked a supplementary question about what was being done to find the match funding?

Councillor Hanson re-iterated that finding match funding was extremely difficult in the current economic climate and that was why she would be writing to the MP to see if he would ask for the match funding requirement to be relaxed.

#### **5 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ROLLINS TO COUNCILLOR SANDS**

Will the Cabinet Member investigate the possibility of introducing Segway personal electric transportation on Morecambe Promenade as these 'vehicles' are both environmentally friendly and would provide an additional tourist attraction.

Councillor Sands responded:

“Segway Personal Transporters are permitted for use on Morecambe Promenade by general public as they are not classed as a motorised vehicle. Currently use of such

transporters is minimal and as such does not cause any safety issues for management of the promenade.

There are various models available and, on initial research, prices range from £4,330 for a Segway i2 : to £4, 610 for a Segway x2. If the Council were to consider actively encouraging use of Segway Personal Transporters then the following issues (amongst others) would need to be further explored :

- Increased use on promenade and associated safety issues
- Cost of purchase
- Hire charges
- Management / staffing resources / supervision of children and young people

Grizedale Forest offers use of Segways with qualified leaders and charges £25 per hour for adults and same price for children (aged 10 - 17) who must be accompanied by an adult on a one-to-one basis. It would seem at this stage that any Council promoted use of Segways, including increased use by the public, would need to be carefully managed and associated resources allocated to ensure safety and a positive image is maintained.”

Councillor Rollins asked a supplementary question, saying that he hadn't anticipated the Council itself running a Segway Hire scheme, he had been thinking more about a licensed operator being allowed to run a hire scheme?

Councillor Sands replied that he would ask officers to look into this.

## **6 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR WHITAKER TO COUNCILLOR DAVID SMITH**

In view of the ongoing concerns from the public and visitors to Morecambe in regard to the lack of toilet facilities on the prom - what options are there for a future usage for the disused toilet block on Marine Road West?

Councillor David Smith replied that simply re-opening the existing West End toilets wouldn't be in line with the policy for public toilet provision that the City Council had in place.

If the Council could find the money to reopen them as free toilets, as they were before, it would then create two tiers of toilet provision in Morecambe. There would be the new 'pay as you go' ones which the City Council had spent a significant amount of money on and the reopening of some toilets that had been closed because they were no longer fit for purpose, were expensive to run and subject to vandalism and misuse.

The money the Council would need to find to reopen the old toilets, bearing in mind that one of the reasons they were closed was because of the amount of complaints received about the state they were in, would be considerable to get them to a decent standard. Then, ongoing monies would have to be found to run the toilets which were, prior to closure, inefficient in terms of water and electricity usage. The Council would also have to find monies to deal with vandalism and so forth. Back in 2004 the estimated annual running costs of the toilets was £25,000.

Having 2 tiers of toilet provision would also potentially impact on the income Lancaster City Council generated from its toilets which, in turn, made a contribution to the provision of modern, fit for purpose facilities.

The Council would also need to be convinced there was actually under-provision of toilets and there was no real evidence to support that. Morecambe had toilets at West End Gardens, Stone Jetty, Festival Market (including changing place facility for people with profound disabilities), Clock Tower, Library Car Park and Happy Mount Park.

To avoid having two tiers of toilet provision the building could be converted into a pay as you go, modern, improved facility like the Clock Tower. Again, evidence would be required that the toilet was needed and also about £120-150K to carry out the conversion.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Whitaker asked what other options there might be for the empty building?

Councillor David Smith said he thought the cost of demolition might be prohibitive, but he would talk to the Head of Environmental Services about options and inform Councillor Whitaker of the outcome.