

Greens question millions spent on staff mileage claims

It will not surprise you to know that the Edinburgh Green Group are concerned about the environment, but the question tabled for yesterday's full Council meeting also has a financial implication.



Cllr Steve Burgess asked for details of staff mileage claims. These are miles driven in their own vehicles on council business for which they are compensated as in any business setting. But he probably did not expect the result to be in the millions on both counts.

Last year Edinburgh council staff claimed almost £1 million for over 2 million miles travelled.

Cllr Steve Burgess, Greens environment spokesperson said : "I have to say I was gobsmacked to find out that more than 2 million miles are being driven by council staff in their own vehicles every year and that this costs the council around £1m pounds every year. This also means that about 9 kilo tonnes of climate changing pollution, more than 6% of the council's total carbon pollution, is being generated by this travel.

"Whilst going by vehicle will be required for certain council work, surely many more journeys could be done by bus, bike or on foot. Could staff who need to travel routinely be offered bus passes. Could there be a pool of council bikes and greater use of the city car club.

"In answer to the second part of my question at full council,

it seems that approval of milage claims is done after the milage is done, rather than approving the travel in the first place. I'd be concerned if claiming milage allowance has become routine and automatic. It seems there could be greater oversight and also encouragement to use other transport options.

"My other questions today revealed most of the council's pool vehicles are diesel and that the council has over 200 car parking spaces so there is clearly some action required in these areas as well. The council has an ambition to reduce traffic and its impacts, so it should be getting it's own house in order as a priority."

Councillor Burgess' Question & Answer by the Finance Convener is reproduced here :

QUESTION NO 34

By Councillor Burgess for answer by the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee at a meeting of the Council on 1 February 2018

Vehicle Mileage Allowance

Question

(1) Please provide a breakdown of the total number of miles and total cost of claims for each of the last 5 years?

Answer (1)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Mileage Claimed</i>	<i>Amount Claimed</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>3,232,685</i>	<i>£1,271,260.83</i>
<i>2014</i>	<i>3,094,133</i>	<i>£1,256,953.11</i>
<i>2015</i>	<i>2,923,734</i>	<i>£1,220,207.64</i>
<i>2016</i>	<i>2,571,350</i>	<i>£1,126,395.75</i>

2017	2,172,176	£978,363.50
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Question (2)

What is the procedure for approval of claims for vehicle mileage allowance?

Answer (2)

If the employee has direct access to the Council's HR and Payroll system, then the claim can be submitted electronically for line manager approval, which enables this to be processed directly for payroll purposes. If the employee does not have direct access to the system, they submit a manually completed expenses claim form and submit this to the manager for approval. These manual claims are then input to the system via the Council's payroll staff.

QUESTION NO 35

Question By Councillor Burgess for answer by the Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee at a meeting of the Council on 1 February 2018

(1) How many pool vehicles of each fuel type (electric, hybrid, petrol, diesel) does the council have?

Answer (1)

There are nine pool vehicles – three electric vehicles and six diesel vehicles. All other Council vehicles are allocated to Council service activities.

As part of the ongoing fleet review, officers are investigating alternative approaches to providing the car and van fleet. This includes potential for improved usage of the Enterprise Car Club, more appropriate use of public transport and opportunities to introduce more electric and hybrid vehicles into our fleet.

(2) What was the total mileage done by pool vehicles for each

of the last five years?

(2) The pool vehicles were replaced in 2015 so we only hold data from this point for all nine vehicles:

In 2015 – 16 the total mileage was 33,164 miles.

In 2016 – 17 the total mileage was 45,094 miles.

In 2017 – 18 the total mileage was 33,396 miles.

We do hold mileage for one pool vehicle which was not replaced in 2015 and this completed 6,919 miles in year 2013 -14 and 7,995 miles in year 2014 – 15.

The Council is also due to implement a fleet telematics system which will allow us to gather more accurate management information relating to all of the Council's fleet vehicles.