



Members' Questions to Council.

Questions from Councillor Stephen Davies

To the Leader of Council

1. Following our inclusion of Unite Construction Charter into our Procurement Policy has there been any visit from Unite to any Stroud District Council Construction site?

Reply

Officers have been consulted and the Head of Contract Services and the New Homes and Regeneration Manager, as officers responsible for any recently procured Council construction sites, have confirmed that no visits have taken place from Unite in the time since the inclusion of the Unite Charter into our Procurement Policy.

It is usual practice for trade unions not to turn up at any work place without either being invited or by prior arrangement. Where Unite the union has members on site and collective bargaining arrangements with shop stewards, we would expect the Charter to be monitored and adhered to. On sites where Unite has members but no representation, if the Charter was not being observed, union members could contact their local Unite office and union officers would contact Stroud District council to make sure that the charter is being followed and implemented. As this has not occurred, it would show that at this point no concerns are being raised and we have good working practices and health and safety on construction sites.

To the Chair of Housing Committee

2. What are the lease conditions on the diesel vehicles acquired when repairs were taken in house? Is there a minimum lease term and how does this compare with normal depreciation of purchased vehicles?

Reply

The vehicles are initially leased for a period of 48 months., after which we can extend the term if we so wish. The cost of early termination in any year are as follows:

- 10% of all vehicles can be handed back in each year at no cost
- Month 0-12 = 6 months lease payments
- Month 13-24 = 4 months lease payments
- Month 25-36 = 2 months lease payments
- Month 37-48 = 1 month lease payment

The 48 month period is in line with depreciation periods used on vehicles purchased outright, as per the Council's accounting policies.

Lease agreements include additional services, such as road tax, servicing and maintenance including a replacement van, tyre replacement and breakdown cover.

Questions from Councillor Steve Lydon to the chair of housing committee

To the Chair of Housing Committee

1. Can you please clarify why the council chose to procure diesel vans rather than electric ones? What criteria was used to consider this option, what opportunities / engagement was there in the decision making process by elected members?

Reply

A fully costed options appraisal was undertaken prior to any decision being made to lease the current fleet of vehicles being used by Property Care.

The range of options considered included:

- Petrol
- Diesel
- Electric and
- Hybrid (Electric/Petrol)

The light commercial sector has a vast array of vehicles with a variety of size, body type, fuel types, payload, load volumes etc. The decision on which types of vehicle to choose was based upon the type of travel (generally small multiple journeys) and the area vehicles would be driven in. Stroud is a rural district with naturally steep terrain that differs from the test conditions vehicles have been subject to, which will have an impact on the fuel consumption and range compared to the figures quoted on the specifications.

Consideration was also given to the quantity of emissions produced by vehicles, the infrastructure needed to support the fleet, lead-in times for vehicle delivery, known reliability issues, the service's needs, and an analysis of the mileage of the incumbent contractors. The needs and the make-up of the service, in terms of the numbers of operatives, supervisors, and managers, were also considered.

Although electric vehicles scored well in terms of low emissions, they currently have operational limitations in terms of weight capacity, the range they can travel, particularly in steep terrain, and are limited by the current lack of infrastructure across the district.

A decision was made to lease diesel vans for operatives and engineers, and for supervisors and managers to have the use of a hybrid 4x4 and two full electric vehicles. The diesel vehicles are all Euro 6 compliant, making them the lowest emission diesel models available today.

Costings and supplementary reports relating to the vehicles were agreed by both Housing Committee and Council respectively on 9 April 2019 and 25 April 2019.

In addition to the Housing Committee and Council reports, opportunities for engagement in the decision-making process by elected Members included:

- Two workshops with a wide range of Council Officers, tenants and Members, in which all Members of the Housing Committee were invited to participate (19/12/2018 and 24/01/2019)
- A presentation with Q&A at the cross-party Housing Review Panel (12/03/2019)
- Mobilisation Governance Meetings comprising members of the Housing Committee and officers, including the Chief Executive and S151 Officer (that held on 05/02 2019 particularly focused on the proposed procurement of vehicles). The Chair of the Housing Committee invited members of all political parties to attend the scheduled monthly Mobilisation Governance meetings.