

Finance and Resources Department

Human Resources Section

Our reference: JM/ED

Being dealt with by: Emma Dorman (Ext: 3221)

Date: 4 May 2011

Lesley-Anne Henry
c/o Newsroom
Belfast Telegraph
124 Royal Avenue
Belfast
BT1 1EB

BY EMAIL

Dear Ms Henry,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

I refer to your email dated 31 March 2011, requesting information about overtime to council staff over the past three financial years, as well as during the current year to date.

I can confirm that the council holds some of the information you have requested. The council has decided that it can disclose all the information it holds, and this is outlined below. Please note that if this information is to be published it should be attributed to being Belfast City Council's response to an FOI query.

1. The total amount of overtime paid to staff for each council department separately

Department	Overtime Costs 2007/08	Overtime Costs 2008/09	Overtime Costs 2009/10	Overtime Costs 2010/11
Chief Executive's	£80,411.83	£71,868.16	£61,892.01	£58,380.71
Finance and Resources	£154,522.12	£137,514.57	£72,951.21	£92,587.05
Health & Environmental Services	£1,937,163.52	£2,046,054.0	£2,082,326.17	£2,016,330.32
Parks and Leisure	£1,589,341.82	£1,673,469.81	£1,643,125.86	£1,672,479.90
Development Department	£278,927.75	£337,457.09	£327,663.62	£327,544.79
Property and Projects	£489,180.19	£554,722.17	£526,701.48	£515,553.09

It should be noted that the names and composition of the Departments referred to within this response may have been subject to change during the period of time referred to within this request.

Jill Minne

Head of Human Resources

Belfast City Council, Finance and Resources Department
The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BP

Tel: 028 9032 0202 or 028 9027 0405 **Fax:** 028 9027 0534

Jobline: 028 9027 0640 **Email:** hr@belfastcity.gov.uk **Email:** jobs@belfastcity.gov.uk

2. An explanation of how overtime is allocated.

Belfast City Council is the significantly largest council in Northern Ireland, responsible for delivering an extensive range of services which help to make Belfast a better place to live in, work in, invest in and visit. To meet our responsibilities we directly employ approximately 2400 employees. We have staff at over a hundred locations, including community centres, leisure centres and recycling centres across the city, the Ulster and Waterfront Halls, Belfast Castle, Malone House and Belfast Zoo. We provide a diverse range of services ranging from registering births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships, planning events across the city, environmental health protection, building licensing waste collection and dog and pest control.

The council does not currently operate a centralised policy on the allocation of overtime, as operational working practices vary in accordance with the individual demands of the service which each unit or section provides.

Dependent on the nature of the work required, overtime will be allocated to staff in one of the following ways:

- by volunteer,
- by rota,
- by overtime ladder
- by allocation to specific employees dependant on the area of specialist work for which O/T is required

3. An explanation of why overtime is allocated.

As highlighted above, the allocation of overtime is dependent on the individual demands of the service provided. Belfast City Council has a large number of frontline staff providing essential services that often require staff to work outside of normal hours to meet the needs of our citizens. We also have to respond to emergency situations outside of normal working hours, such as during the recent water crisis, flooding problems or during security incidents when people have to evacuate their homes. During these events, the council takes the lead in co-ordinating the city-wide response while also opening our facilities and supporting communities to ease hardships they may face, day and night.

Overtime arrangements can be classified in one of three categories:

a) Contractual Overtime

Limited contractual overtime may occur if, for operational and service delivery reasons, employees are required to work a specified amount of overtime as part of their normal working hours.

b) Planned Overtime

Planned overtime includes out of hours payments to cover specific work that takes place outside normal working hours (as Belfast City Council has to provide a number of services at night and respond to incidents as required). This type of work includes events in the city and for particular out of hours services such as maintaining the council's computer services or carrying out building control inspections at entertainment premises, on- street alcohol enforcement carried out at weekends, cleansing streets after major events etc. Further reasons for planned overtime duties are as follows:

- To meet general operational requirements
- To complete scheduled out of hours work
- To carry out special duties
- To cover regular scheduled events

- To meet additional service requirements from the community
- To meet Service Level Agreements, from which additional income is received or to comply with legal requirements
- To complete work with external bodies, e.g. PSNI
- To meet exceptional work demands
- To cover Bank Holidays
- To cover for the planned absence of key staff

c) Ad Hoc Overtime

Ad hoc overtime arises where additional cover is required to ensure that normal day to day activity continues. Such overtime may be used:

- To meet general operational requirements
- To cover special events
- For emergency call outs for example to deal with dangerous structures etc
- To provide response services to the community
- To respond to peak service times
- For weekend cover
- To respond to major emergencies in the city such as flooding, recent water shortages, security alerts where people are evacuated to community centres etc.
- To cover short term absence of key staff
- Evening meetings

If you are dissatisfied with how the council handled your request for information, you have the right to request that the Council formally review this decision. If you wish to do so, please write to the Records Manager, Belfast City Council, City Hall, Belfast, BT1 5GS.

Should you remain dissatisfied following the Council's internal review, you can seek an independent review from the Information Commissioner. Requests for an independent review should be made in writing to: The Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. However I would advise you that the Information Commissioner has indicated that a review will not be undertaken unless the Council has first had an opportunity to re-consider its decision.

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Dorman
Senior Specialist, Employee Relations
Human Resources