

But almost half of councillors claimed nothing

By **ANDY NEWPORT**

RENFREWSHIRE councillors topped up their salaries last year with thousands of pounds worth of expenses claims.

Of the 40 politicians who represent Buddies and other voters from around Renfrewshire, 22 made claims to the local authority for things like fuel mileage, food and phone bills.

However, 18 councillors claimed NO expenses at all.

Labour boss Iain McMillan was the highest claimer – for the second year in a row.

The Johnstone South, Elderslie and Howwood councillor already receives £19,400 a year for his role as the official leader of the opposition but he claimed an additional £2,321.

But unlike the greedy Westminster MPs who have hit the headlines recently after claiming for everything from nonexistent mortgages to floating duck houses, Mr McMillan insists

every penny he has claimed is justified.

“The bottom line is that we can claim 40p a mile when we are out on council business and I claim for most journeys, but not for all,” said the former Spateston councillor.

“When I hand in my expenses receipts I also hand in all the details. It’s all there in black and white. You can’t just claim what you want as the details are checked.

“The new ward I represent stretches from Paisley to North Ayrshire and it’s one of the biggest on Renfrewshire Council.

“I do a lot of getting about and in my old ward of Spateston I could walk from one end to the other in 15 minutes. But it would take me considerably longer to walk across the new, bigger ward.

“This ward is huge and also pretty busy and I go to a number of school boards, community groups and action meetings and my expenses claims reflect the work I do.”

Second on the list was SNP

councillor Allan Noon, who claimed just over £1,800, while his Nationalist colleague David Arthur claimed £1,484.

And two SNP members, Carol Puthuachery and Bill Perrie, successfully appealed for £1,450 and £1,378 respectively.

In sixth place on the expenses chart was Eileen McCartin, convener of Renfrewshire Council’s Community and Family Care Policy Board, who claimed £1,307 – mostly for mileage.

And completing the top ten are SNP man Ian Nicolson (£1,098), Labour’s Neil Bibby (£771) and John Hood £714 and Brian Lawson of the SNP (£655).

The list of councillors expenses were revealed just as a report by More4 News discovered that Renfrewshire Council spent £4,350 on plane tickets last year.

As well as sending staff on trips to Germany and Belgium, the council also splashed out just under £4,000 to send two officers from the Planning and

Transport Services department to attend a transport conference in San Francisco, USA, two years ago.

A Council spokesman said “Renfrewshire Council has an enviable reputation for innovative and forward thinking approaches to transport issues.

“We were invited to send representatives to a top international transport conference to discuss Renfrewshire Council’s success in promoting road safety and sustainable transport programmes.

“The World Transport Conference is held every three years.

“It brings together transport professionals and policy advisers from all over the world to share best practice and ideas.

“The conference was held in America in 2007, the year we were invited to attend.

“The invitation was an accolade for Renfrewshire, an opportunity to showcase the area and to promote the positive work done by the council on a worldwide stage.”

Dogs will stay cosy after psychic day

A PAISLEY lecturer has cleaned out a pet shop after raising a total of £1,700 for undernourished dogs by staging a psychic day.

Jackie Jones-Hunt organised the fundraising event in a bid to buy as many warm coats as possible for needy pooches.

The animal lover coined in enough cash to buy 100 coats – and then headed to the pet shop to snap up their stock.

Jackie, who is a lecturer in Psychical Research – which deals with the likes of near-death and out-of-body experiences – at the University of the West of Scotland, said: “There was lots of stuff going on at the psychic day, with demonstrations, holistic treatments and folk getting personal readings.

“We then had an evening show with four top mediums taking centre stage and that also proved a smash hit.

“Dogs and cats are constantly taken to the likes of Cardonald Cat and Dog Home suffering from all types of injuries and malnutrition.

“It can get pretty cold for the dogs and I thought it would be a good idea to try to raise enough money to buy them warm and protective coats.

“I have a dog of my own, who was discovered wandering the streets of Paisley, so I know how they can suffer.

“That’s why I’m delighted we raised so much cash. I went to a wholesale pet shop and cleaned them out of coats.

“As soon as they re-stock, I’ll be



FUNDRAISING QUEEN: Jackie collected £1,700 for charity

straight back down there and will fill up the car again.

“I will be taking the coats to different animal shelters. I have already given two coats and blankets to a young man

who sleeps under a bridge at night. He and his dog climb into his sleeping bag together.”

The psychic day was so successful that Jackie is thinking about organising

a similar fundraising event in future.

She added: “Next time though, I may urge people to buy a homeless dog or cat a bed and blanket for the Christmas period.”