

Our City Our Future programme

Edinburgh residents will today be encouraged to participate in an unprecedented engagement programme to help shape Council services in the future.

At best, the Council says it has to make £90 million of savings in the next three years. This could even be more, depending on decisions made by Westminster and The Scottish Government (following the UK Spending Review announcement on 20 October).

The Council claims there are tough choices ahead. Significant efficiency savings have already been made, but a real-terms reduction in funding now requires cuts to services.

Currently, elected members have a raft of cost saving proposals to consider – proposed by officers in the various departments of the Council. The Administration now wants to listen to communities and determine priorities as they make decisions.

The OUR CITY ...OUR FUTURE ...HELP US DECIDE engagement programme includes six interactive local summits in September and early October culminating in an overarching city wide summit on 15 October. A cross section of communities has been invited to attend and there will be at least 20 places available for general members of the public for each summit (dependent on venue capacity).

At the local summit meetings, voting pads will be used to record the views and priorities of the audience under eight topic themes.

These local results will be relayed to the final event – the city summit – when community and city leaders will discuss the shared consequences of budget cuts and debate a future of doing things differently.

People need to register for a place at local summits, to get an information toolkit or to request updates at key stages of the process.

The Council is also encouraging groups to hold their own summits using the toolkit material or by simply feeding back their priorities as individuals by post or online.

For registration or a budget toolkit email councilbudget@edinburgh.gov.uk or write to: Freepost RSJC-SLXC-YTJY, Budget, Council Leader, City Chambers, Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ.

Council Leader, Jenny Dawe, said: "Working with the people of Edinburgh to address the stark economic situation we face, will help us make better decisions. It will not be possible to take on board all views expressed during the process. The Administration, will however, listen and learn throughout the process to make sure that we identify the right Council priorities at this time.

"We have no option but to do things differently, to trim services down to the minimum where it is possible and achieve significant savings if we are to protect those frontline services that really matter and the vulnerable people who need our help most.

"The engagement will greatly assist us in the budget decision making process and although the end result may be a change to some services, having a dialogue with people in Edinburgh on this scale will give us a far great understanding of the wider priorities of the city's residents."