

# Lothians MSP wants councils' views heard on local policing

## **ASSURANCES SOUGHT OVER COMMUNITY POLICE NUMBERS**

Lothian Labour MSP Sarah Boyack has called on the Scottish Government to ensure councils' views are taken into account on local policing priorities.

Speaking during Question Time in the Scottish Parliament earlier this week, Ms Boyack raised the City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to withdraw £2m funding over the next four years due to concerns that the money it provides is not being used to benefit local communities. The move, if passed, will result in the loss of 12 local police officers.

Under the law brought in to create the single police force, Police Scotland is required to involve local authorities in setting local priorities and Ms Boyack called on the Cabinet Secretary to investigate the situation in Edinburgh to ensure this was happening.

**✖ Speaking following Question Time, Sarah Boyack MSP said:**

"I supported the introduction of a single police force with assurances that local accountability to communities would be protected.

"However, the situation in Edinburgh raises questions over the extent to which elected councillors have a say on local policing priorities especially where it relates to council funded officers. The Cabinet Secretary ducked the issue of centralisation by saying that Stephen House would be visiting Edinburgh's City Council to discuss the issue.

"I am disappointed that the Cabinet Secretary chose to pass the buck. Given the Scottish Government's pledge on police numbers, we need to know if they'll step in to fund additional officers if Edinburgh, or any other council for that matter, decides to withdraw funding.

"The news this week of proposals that police stations across the Lothians are to be closed to the public further erodes confidence that local accountability is being paid more than lip service.

"Senior police have already issued warnings that Police Scotland is facing a financial tipping point and that their

hands are being tied by Government policy. It is clear that the closure proposals are not about policing but about saving money.”

The [draft budget](#) which is currently published for consultation spelled out about £500,000 of proposed cuts in the funds being available for Police Scotland. You can comment on the draft budget until 20 December on the council website, and it will be approved in its final form at the council meeting in February.

The Finance Convenor Alasdair Rankin wants you to take the time to do so:-

*“Since the election in May 2012, we have demonstrated sound financial management, producing a balanced budget in the Council’s major service areas and across the Council as a whole. We are implementing our plans to achieve major savings in the Council’s buying of goods and services, property rationalisation and improved partnership working. We aim to ensure that we can maintain, and wherever possible, increase investment in frontline services.*

*The Edinburgh Guarantee has been a successful Council initiative to help young people in particular into employment through apprenticeships and work experience and we will continue to do that despite our financial pressures. We also support the voluntary sector and continue to buy services directly from a range of third sector organisations.*

*We do really want to know people’s views on how the Council spends its money. We are here to listen as well as to make decisions – decisions for which we are accountable to the people of the city. That is why we are consulting on our draft budget with residents, the voluntary sector, the business community and community organisations from this month through to 20th December. We will then analyse the responses we receive and take them into account in formulating our final budget proposals for consideration at a meeting of the full Council on 13th February next year. I encourage everyone to let us know their views. Every comment raised will be considered.*

*This is exactly what happened following our budget consultation last year. Some of our major budget decisions for this year, such as doubling spending on roads and substantially increasing our investment in education, were influenced by responses we received from the public. So I encourage people to speak to Councillors, email or use the feedback form at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget) and let us know your views."*