

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh!



Council's budget day – fwith Decides – Fire Service consultation – Turandot – Market Open Day

The council meet this morning at 10am to decide on the budget for the next year. They are likely to be met with a barrage of protest from anti-cuts groups outside the City Chambers this morning.

Edinburgh Trade Union Council has applied to the Council for a deputation to be heard. The deputation will be led by Des Loughney, Secretary of Edinburgh TUC. Other trade union deputations will also address the Council, including one from the Council's Staff Side Committee representing UNISON, UNITE and EIS members, and one from the UNITE Edinburgh Not For Profit Branch. A separate delegation from the Reference Group for Homelessness might also be heard.

The deputations say they will be supported by trade union members and the public who will gather outside the City Chambers in the High Street between 8.30 am and 10 am.

The Edinburgh TUC deputation will tell the Council that an austerity budget for 2014/2015 is a breach of the City Council Coalition's policy of reducing poverty, inequality and deprivation in Edinburgh. These will all get worse over the next year if the council's budget plans are adopted. It is alarming that similar budgets are planned for each year until 2018.

Edinburgh TUC considers that if there was the political will from Labour and the SNP much could be done to safeguard services. As Des Loughney will say:- " The City Council needs to campaign against austerity. It needs to stand up for vital services in Edinburgh. It needs to find the resources to tackle poverty, inequality and deprivation. The income gap between the rich and poor in Edinburgh is widening. We urge

the City Council to lobby the Scottish Parliament to drop the outdated Council Tax freeze, to levy a tourist tax and to raise a higher Scottish income tax. It is our calculation that if the Scottish Parliament levied an extra tax of 1p in the pound, combined with the other measures, no cuts would be necessary over the next four years. Instead the Council will have an additional £250 million to invest in Council services and jobs.”

The administration motion is set out in the council papers which [you will find online here.](#)

The coalition between SNP and Labour have been in power since they were elected in 2012 and decided to form an alliance. They say in their budget motion that they are committed to openness and accountability, something which the Tory Group questioned on several occasions last week at the full council meeting, and which we fully expect will be continued later today. The meeting should be an interesting one as two of the opposition groups also have budget motions on the table. Only the LibDems have failed as yet to supply an alternative budget motion, but there are only three councillors in the group.

[The Greens have lodged a motion](#) which commends the administration in its reform of the budget process and they claim to look forward to working in partnership with the Labour/SNP groups who run the council. The administration have changed the way the budget is brought to the city and the councillors by publishing their draft in September of last year and then allowing public consultation on it until just before Christmas. Under the previous LibDem administration the budget motion was generally presented on the morning of the council meeting, which the Labour Group leader (and Council Leader) Andrew Burns was always angered at. The Greens comment that they especially welcome the increased spending on cycling and ways of saving money by cutting down on energy use in council buildings. The council are keen to install as many solar panels as they can on council buildings which is one of their cooperative schemes. Solar panels will be installed on

schools and community centres outwith the city centre which is a World Heritage Centre.

The six Green Group councillors [have set out their proposals in full](#) which concentrate on three main strands:- Investing in the city, protecting future budgets and valuing frontline services, but they reject the administration's plan to raise rents by 6%. Unfortunately this rise was agreed to in the last administration and is only being implemented now. Whether or not the rent increase can be reversed is questionable, although the Green Group tell us that it can be.

[The Conservatives are taking a more robust line](#) by stating in effect that they could do better. Their line is that the council need to be more efficient to ensure that any savings required can be achieved.

There are 58 councillors in total elected to run the council in a variety of departments. The total spend by the council in each year is around £1bn and of that, what is called a pressure of £120m has to be relieved over the next few years. Vice Convener of Finance Bill Cook explained that council funding is pretty static but the pressures are brought about by demographics; more people are living longer and require care towards the end of their lives. At the other end of the scale there are more children at school and the council wants to accommodate all of them without cutting services, but it is clear that priorities have to be made. Councillor Cook said:- "This year may be reasonably easy compared to the years ahead, but we have a team now who are looking to the future. We do not use the word cuts. We feel that a better term is to say we are creating headspace by ensuring that we have enough money to invest in future years. Our general message is to look to the future and this budget has to sit in a five year framework."

The council has approximately £13m in reserves but does not want to call upon that either, as it is more than a rainy day

fund. The council used these cash deposits to reduce outside borrowing.

At a recent Housing Committee meeting the council heard that rent arrears have increased and that there may be less rental income available to the council. at the Finance and Resources Committee on 3 February the council were advised:-

“It is estimated that changes as a result of increasing rent arrears and welfare reform could potentially lead to a reduction of between £48.000m and £52.000m (dependent on the United Kingdom Government implementation timetable) in available capital resources over the next five years. ” The report from the Finance and Resources Committee is to be approved by today’s meeting.

We will be reporting live from the meeting [and you can follow our Live Blog here.](#)



No there is no typo in the header. The project in Leith is really called Leith Decides... The 2014 neighbourhood grants from Leith Neighbourhood Partnership for Leith Decides means local money for local projects by local people.

There are 43 projects to vote for and a total of £22,110 on offer to support projects voted for by everyone 8 years or older, who lives, works, volunteers or studies in the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area who can score projects.

Applicants have created some wonderfully inventive and

informative posters about their projects. These can now be seen in McDonald Road Library and Leith Library, where postal voting forms are available for those who can't come along to the voting event on 15 February at Leith Community Centre, 12A New Kirkgate from 1pm to 3pm.

Get voting and support your chosen Leith projects. Extra postal voting forms have already been reprinted so don't miss out. Final voting day on Saturday 15 February 2014.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's most senior fire officer in the east is urging those who have not already had their say on the nine draft local plans for the service delivery area to get involved before Friday's deadline.

With just two days left until the cut-off date, SFRS Assistant Chief Officer and Director of Service Delivery in the east, Peter Murray, is encouraging those people to get involved and help shape the future priorities for the service.

The east service delivery area covers the City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, Stirling and West Lothian.

Towards the end of last year the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) published its draft local plans and has been encouraging the public, partners and key stakeholders to have their say as part of the public consultation process.

These plans are the mechanism through which the aims of the service's Strategic Plan for 2013 – 2017 are delivered to meet the agreed needs of local communities and to ensure the most efficient use of resources to achieve safer communities.

The plans set out the priorities and objectives for the service within each local authority area and allow our local authority partners to scrutinise performance outcomes. The

service will continue to work closely with our stakeholders, including community planning partners and local communities to ensure that we are “Working together for a safer Scotland” through targeting risks at a local level.

Each local plan, and its associated action plans, is aligned to the community planning partnership structures within each local authority area. Through partnership working we will deliver continuous improvement in our performance and effective service delivery in our area of operations.

To see our plans and priorities for where you live, visit the [local plan section](#) on our website and download a pdf copy.

Assistant Chief Officer Peter Murray, said:-“Our local plans for each of the East Service Delivery area’s local authority areas have been out for public consultation for some time now and we have been very pleased with the positive response thus far.

“I would like to remind communities that there is still time to get involved and we want to hear your views. All the consultation responses will be considered and then the final draft local plan (including any amendments thought appropriate to reflect views garnered from the consultation) will be submitted to the Local Authority for their agreement.

“To give us your comments, visit the [public consultation page](#) and click on the on the local authority area that you want to talk to us about. We look forward to receiving your comments. Remember the consultation period ends on 14 February 2014.”

At the Usher Hall on 30 March 2014, Scottish Opera are in concert with Puccini’s Turandot.

“Puccini’s final opera is a fitting finale to an astonishing

career – epic, exciting, full of drama and packed with melodic ingenuity. Written for a cast and orchestra of over 160, this huge work performed here in a one-off concert performance features some of the most thrilling music in Italian opera, including ‘the’ tenor aria made so famous by Luciano Pavarotti: ‘Nessun dorma’.”

[Tickets available here.](#)

In a time of convenience shopping, with self-service checkouts and online purchasing, you could be forgiven for wondering why street markets are suddenly thriving.

One local market in Edinburgh says it knows the secret: innovation.

It might seem counter-intuitive that traditional street markets are a hot bed of new ideas but Scotland’s capital has lots of people who are passionate about making great food at honest prices, and St Mary’s Market, on the corner of Leith Street and York Place, is providing a platform for the authentic street food experience with its Street Food Open Day on Saturday 8th March.

St Mary’s Market, tucked behind the entrance to John Lewis opposite the Omni Centre, launched in 2011 as a mixed food and crafts market. However, in response to customer and trader feedback, in 2014 it took the plunge and decided to relaunch as a food only market.

The Open Days first started in February to give quirky new and small businesses in the food and drink industry a chance to showcase their menus on the second Saturday of every month.

As part of this, the market has welcomed applications from a number of purpose-built food trucks including Auld Black’s

converted 3-wheeled Piaggio, The Big Blu's beautiful vintage Citroen H van with wood-fired pizza oven and Nusou's noodle van.

Entrepreneur and E-Spark Chiclet, John Reynolds, has teamed up with award-winning chef, Derek Muircroft to take street food to a new level with their healthy noodle business, Nusou:-

"Having been part of Michelin-winning teams, I know it takes talent, passion, and commitment to perfection to make great food. Why does street food have to be greasy? There's no reason why top quality healthy food can't be produced on a food truck and we're going to prove it at St Mary's Market" says Derek.

Find them at St Mary's Market near John Lewis, on the corner of Leith Street and York Place Saturday 8th March 2014 from 11am to 5pm.

For further information please visit www.edinburghmarkets.co.uk or find Edinburgh Markets on Facebook or Twitter.