

VIDEO – Council agree their budget for 2014/15



Protecting investment in frontline services in Edinburgh for young, old and vulnerable residents was a priority at the Council budget meeting today which lasted till after 4pm and [which you can read as it happened here on our Liveblog.](#)

Major investment in roads and pavements, supporting young people into employment, and protecting grants for the voluntary sector were other key investment areas. The Edinburgh Reporter got an exclusive interview with Councillor Alasdair Rankin Finance Convener after the meeting.

Cllr Rankin continued: “Given the financial challenges all local authorities are facing over the next few years, we want to invest in the areas that are essential to Edinburgh and so it is important that the public continue to tell us what is important to them.

“Last year we published the draft budget in November ahead of finalising it in February – a new approach designed to ensure we listen to what is important to the public when it comes to allocating money.

“This year we published the draft budget even earlier doubling the length of time available to residents, local and other interest groups to have their say.”

Cllr Bill Cook, Vice-Convener of the Finance and Budget Committee, said: “We used the feedback received during the consultation process to help us make many key decisions, such as rejecting proposals to cut funding for people with additional needs and to amend proposals affecting school

librarians and new kinship carers.

“Savings, meanwhile, have been made in areas such as procurement, property rationalisation and improved partnership working, ensuring that we can maintain investment in services for those that need them most.”

The seventh successive freeze in Council Tax maintains Edinburgh’s band D rate as the lowest of Scotland’s four major cities.

The council tax band levels for Edinburgh in 2014/15 will be:

- A: £779.33
- B: £909.22
- C: £1,039.11
- D: £1,169.00
- E: £1,428.78
- F: £1,688.56
- G: £1,948.33
- H: £2,338.00

Total budget

The total revenue budget is £945.3m for 2014/15. Council Tax makes up £232.6m of this with £712.7m coming from Government grants and business. The total capital budget (including the HRA, but excluding trams) is £238.117m

Key budget provisions

Ensuring every child in Edinburgh has the best start in life

- Investing a further £1.164million in the Early Years Change Fund in 2014-15 bringing the total annual funding level to £4.038 million
- Providing further revenue funding of £1.131 million in 2014-15 for increasing overall pupil numbers across Primary, Secondary and Early Years
- Investing to increase the number of nursery hours for 3 and

4 year old children from 475 hours to 600 hours per year in 2014/15

Ensuring Edinburgh, and its residents, are well cared-for

- Investing £8 million in a new 60 bed care home for older people to replace an existing home
- Investing £8.7 million in Change Fund monies in new preventative services for older people and to increase the number of people able to live in their own home
- Investing £5.1 million in new services for increasing numbers of older people, adults with learning of physical disabilities and increased need for assessment and mental health services

Providing for Edinburgh's economic growth and prosperity

- £1m to continue supporting the Edinburgh Guarantee, helping improve job opportunities for young people
- Continuing to deliver the Council's Strategy for Jobs, which is working to create 20,000 new jobs, support £1.3 billion of infrastructure investment and help 10,000 people into work or learning by 2017

Strengthening and supporting our communities and keeping them safe

- Investing £1.2 million of Older People's Change Fund money to reduce social isolation in communities
- Continuing to invest in community policing

Investing in roads, pavements and cycling infrastructure

- £16m investment in roads and pavements
- Commit 7% of the transport revenue and capital budgets for creation and maintenance of cycle infrastructure

Becoming more efficient

- Delivery of procurement transformational efficiencies
- Implementing internal improvement plans
- Reducing the head count of the organisation by developing existing staff, revising roles and responsibilities and

preparing for a structural review of the organisation

- Reducing sickness absence to 4% across the organisation
- Maximising savings through the rationalisation of the Council's property estate
- Reducing carbon footprint and generating income through strategic energy projects

Links to the [Coalition budget motion](#) and to the [convener and vice-convener's speeches](#).

The Green Group is pleased that Edinburgh City Council has backed Green proposals over tackling empty homes and fuel poverty.

In the Council Budget debate today the Greens put forward an package of new investment in schools, footways and tackling fuel poverty. The party also sought support for new projects for school playgrounds, empty homes and community food.

As part of his speech Finance Convenor, Alasdair Rankin, indicated that he accepted, in principle, the proposals on fuel poverty and empty homes.

Green Finance Spokesperson, Cllr Gavin Corbett, said:- "I'm pleased that the Coalition has accepted, in principle, two of the Green proposals to tackle empty homes and fuel poverty. We'll look forward to discussing those in detail so that they make a real difference on the ground.

"I also welcome commitments to look further at how the Living Wage can be rolled out to third sector organisations and at energy savings and renewables at the council's two outdoor centres in Argyll and Speyside.

"However, there remains a real need to gear up our investment in buildings like schools and in transport. That was the clear warning from officers going into the budget process; to stand still is to go backwards. Our capital city needs capital investment."

