

Council budget – Education Education Education



On the right Cllr Paul Godzik who is the Education Convener and represents Meadows/Morningside Ward

Councillor Paul Godzik is the Education Convener on the council. He is keen to preserve spending for schools and recently he has cut the turf at two new schools being built in the city. The schools in Portobello and Fountainbridge will both be ready for secondary school pupils in August 2016.

The Edinburgh Reporter interviewed Councillor Godzik at the ceremony in Portobello:

Councillor Godzik writes:

Edinburgh schools are performing well, we continue to perform better than comparable cities in Scotland and neighbouring authorities. Early indications from this summer's exam results are set to show this trend will continue.

Add into the equation new statistics showing 91% of young people in Edinburgh achieved a positive destination on leaving school and you really can see that the Capital Coalition's commitment to providing opportunities for our young people to achieve their potential is working.

However, we all know that the Council faces significant financial challenges, our overall funding is being reduced and given the Council Tax freeze there is little opportunity to raise additional revenue. These budget pressures mean we have to make careful choices when prioritising where we spend our money.

It means looking at every area of spending and checking if we can be leaner and deliver more efficiently. It is undoubtedly a difficult task, but I want to reassure everyone we are committed to spending on our schools and delivering a first class education.

We already have a £30m, five year maintenance and repair plan for our schools and other buildings in our Children and Families estate. However we realise this is an area where more money needs be spent to ensure they are all of a good or excellent condition. By realigning our spending I hope we can ensure there is more capital funding for areas like maintaining school buildings and other major projects.

We are already delivering much-needed new schools at James Gillespie's, Boroughmuir and Portobello, we have funding committed for St Crispin's Special School and St John's RC Primary, and no other Council in Scotland has taken such an innovative and collaborative approach to tackling the issue of rising school rolls like we have.

We know that sending your child to school for the first time can be a stressful experience for any family, so despite the unprecedented rise in rolls we've given parents a guarantee that places will be available at their local catchment primary. A £15m investment in our rising rolls project has already seen an extra 46 modern, high quality class spaces delivered in our primary school estate in the first two years and more are on the way.

We will continue to invest in services for the very youngest to provide them with the best start in life – more than £4m has been invested in our Early Years Change Fund. We've set out plans for eight new nurseries and we are also providing free nursery places of up to 600 hours for pre-school age children.

Looking after and protecting the most vulnerable children,

services for children with disabilities, providing additional support for learning, more foster carers and effective youth offending services are all key areas. Our transformation programme, seeking to change the nature of these services, boosting support and reduce long-term demand is ongoing.

While there are undoubted challenges ahead we will face these head on and need the public to be our partners on this journey.

The budget proposals are out for consultation so we want to hear from as many residents as possible on where people want us to invest and where they would recommend savings. For example next week I'm holding a budget engagement meeting with parent council chairs.

Last year we did listen and made changes to our proposals for school librarians, learning assistants and payments to kinship carers. We have also taken on board views about protecting our schools' budget and this is reflected in this year's proposals.

The referendum process saw many young people engage in politics for the first time and we want to build on this successful engagement with them. We now have an [online budget planner](#) where people can try for themselves to set a balanced £950m budget.

We need to ensure the high standard of service we provide for our children is not affected so I would urge everyone to have their say and go to www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget to give us their feedback.

Also you can join in the debate tonight online by watching the live Question Time event [here](#). Join in using the Twitter and Instagram hashtag #edinbudget