

# Time to quiz the council – at 7pm tonight!



Later today you will have the chance to quiz the council about how they are going to spend the money we all pay to them in council tax. (At least that is where some of their annual £1bn budget comes from.)

There is a Budget Question Time event taking place at the City Chambers tonight at 7:00pm. Frank O'Donnell the editor of The Edinburgh Evening News is in the chair and will direct proceedings on the floor of the chamber and you can watch the proceedings live through the council's webcast service [here](#).

The Edinburgh Reporter will also have our own live event running over [here](#) which will collate any tweets or Instagram photos sent using the hashtag #edinbudget.

On the panel will be:

Councillor Alasdair Rankin (SNP) is the council's Finance Convener and has set out the draft budget for consultation. You have another couple of weeks to add your comments to the draft which you can do [here](#). Councillor Rankin is keen to stress that the council really can listen to you and that last year changes were made to certain areas of spending following public comment.

A number of more operational budget proposals for 2015/16 were agreed at the Council meeting on Thursday, 23 October 2014. The rest of the budget will be agreed on Thursday, 12 February 2015.

Cllr Rankin said: "Agreeing [these proposals](#) now will allow officers to press ahead and ensure that these savings are

achieved in 2015/16. However, we also agreed at the meeting to add four of the proposals to our public engagement document on the budget. This year we are asking residents to take [Edinburgh's budget challenge](#) and see how they would balance our books. I would encourage anyone who hasn't already done this to have a go."

Councillor Steve Cardownie (SNP) the Deputy Leader and Festivals Champion. The SNP government has imposed a council tax freeze, but we suppose this is counter-balanced by the success of all the festivals which take place in the city year-round, and the income these generate for the council and businesses across Edinburgh.

Holyrood held [a one-day event](#) to examine the economic impact of the festivals on the capital in August this year. Councillor Cardownie writes [here](#) about his thoughts on the draft budget for festivals.



Convener of  
Education – Paul  
Godzik

Councillor Paul Godzik (Labour) who is in charge of the Education budget has been pleased to attend the sod cutting ceremonies at two new schools this year. The new buildings will provide state of the art facilities for pupils and local residents when the new Portobello High School and Boroughmuir High School open in August 2016.

Councillor Frank Ross (SNP) who is the city's Economy Convener and who has masterminded the council funded development of the Atria office building next to the EICC. Councillor Ross writes [here](#) about the city's economy.

Cllr Ross commented on Edinburgh being ranked third in the UK for economic performance and quality of life by the 2014 Good

Growth for Cities index, from PwC and think tank Demos.

[Their report](#) measures the performance of the UK's largest cities against 10 categories defined by the public and business as key to economic success and personal and family wellbeing.

The measures include jobs, health, income, skills, work-life balance, house-prices, travel-to-work times and pollution.

Cllr Ross said: "This is more great news for the city. Edinburgh is the most prosperous UK city outside London, according to the Office for National Statistics. It is very encouraging to see that PwC also have concluded that this growth is also balanced and sustainable."



Convener of  
Health, Social  
Care & Housing –  
Ricky Henderson

Councillor Ricky Henderson (Labour) looks after spending in the areas of Health Social Care and Housing and has the unenviable task of trying to balance the books in his department while UK government measures such as the Bedroom Tax and Universal Credit have been introduced which affect many aspects of these policies.

Councillor Adam McVey (SNP) is the Vice-Convener of Transport and Environment with an eye on matters about active travel. He is the Chair of the Cycling Forum and the Walking Forum which have recently been set up.

(We think he may be the youngest councillor, but are not entirely sure of that!) Councillor McVey lives in Leith and represents the interests of the people in the Leith Ward.

Councillor Norma Austin Hart (Labour) is the Vice-Convener of Culture and Sport where many people have thought there might

be sweeping cuts to services. Councillor Austin Hart is about to announce her candidacy for election to Alistair Darling's seat in Edinburgh South West at next year's General Election.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council clarified the council position regarding the future of Edinburgh Leisure venues, describing discussions around potential closures as 'entirely premature'.

Their comments followed recent media coverage around the council's budget proposals for the next financial year, 2015/16.



Cllr Andrew Burns Council  
Leader of the City of  
Edinburgh Council

Council leader, Andrew Burns, said: "I want to be entirely clear that there are no proposals to close any council-owned leisure facilities and any discussion around this is entirely premature.

"As a local authority, we are facing significant challenges, most notably increasing demand on front line services and financial constraints, and Edinburgh Leisure must jointly play their part in facing up to these challenges.

"Since becoming a Trust in 1998, Edinburgh Leisure has done much to improve the delivery of sport and leisure in the city – consistently improving their annual turnover and, with that, reducing their reliance on council grant funding – and we recognise the enormous value the venues and services bring to communities across the city.

"We believe this model can continue to be successful and would expect their Board to imaginatively explore and exhaust all possibilities around improving efficiency and reducing costs

in the years ahead – while maintaining their level of service as far as possible.”

☒ Deputy Leader, Steve Cardownie, added: “Despite these obvious challenges, the council’s commitment to sport remains undiminished and we will continue to work closely with Edinburgh Leisure, sportScotland, and others to find the necessary funding to ensure our facilities are fit for a 21stcentury capital city.

“The recent refurbishment of the Royal Commonwealth Pool and successful bid for the National Performance Centre for Sport are testament to this fact, as is our continuing work on developing a sustainable and affordable replacement for Meadowbank Stadium and Sports Centre.”

The full budget proposals, the budget planner and short film can all be accessed at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget).

You can have your say by:

- completing the [online budget planner](#) to have your say on what services you would spend or save money on in 2015 to 2018
- commenting on the [2015/16 proposals](#)