

# Edinburgh Green Group protect libraries and swimming pools in their draft budget



Later today at the City Chambers, Edinburgh's Green Group will claim that their budget proposals would reverse cuts in spending on libraries, special schools and swimming pools which they say the council's current administration plans.

Among the [Green proposals](#) are rejection of a £1.8m cut to libraries which would mean opening hours slashed and mobile library services reduced; rejection of a £400k cut to Edinburgh Leisure; rejection of a £300k cut to support staff in special schools; and knocking back cuts to homelessness and welfare advice services.

[As recently as November](#) the council leader Labour councillor Andrew Burns confirmed that the libraries would be protected from any cuts.

At the same time the Greens propose in their draft plans extra money for safe and clean streets: £200k for environmental wardens to take action on fly-tipping, dog-fouling and anti-social behaviour; and £300k for frontline street cleaning. And they have pledged to plough up to £3 million extra into catch-up repairs at schools.

Other eye-catching measures include a rent freeze for council house tenants, recognising that incomes for the 20% of residents on the lowest incomes have fallen by almost a third since 2008; and the fact that Edinburgh council rents are 40% higher than the Scottish average.

On tenement stair lighting, Green councillors are seeking to reverse what they call a disastrous decision by the council to stop repairs to 10,000 stairs last summer and have put forward £1 million for a scheme of upgrading to LED lights, halving energy costs and repair bills.

Only last week the Greens at Holyrood managed to secure a deal with the SNP whereby more money was handed down to local councils.



Patrick Harvie MSP the Finance spokesman for the Scottish Greens said: “I’m pleased to see SPICe confirm their analysis of the budget concession won by the Greens, in which an additional £160m will be added to the local government settlement.

“When we add in the changes to the upper bands of Council Tax, it’s clear there is a small real terms increase in funding for councils to spend on local priorities. We know that local councils around the country are now able to shelve a great many of the cuts they had been planning, and Green activists will be able to show the voters how we’ve protected local services in every single community.”

Finally, the Greens say that it is vital to use extra money this year to reduce pressures in future years so they have developed a “Save for the Future” programme which seeks to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy and waste prevention to reduce the council’s £23m combined energy and landfill bill.

Green Finance spokesperson Cllr Gavin Corbett said: “Over the last five years of dealing with budgets I have tried to expand the terms of debate: for example, by showing how additional income from new sources like tourist or private parking levies could raise money for services; or looking at new ways of raising funds, such as issuing of bonds. So it is possible to

both criticise the budget bind that councils are in and, at the same time, seek to improve it with what we have on the table.

“Our proposals this week seek to do just that. We can and should head off some of the worst cuts to services which people in Edinburgh hold dear. However, we should also spend wisely just now to create extra savings in the future.

“The Green [budget motion](#) tackles pressure on community services like libraries, swimming pools and schools. It seeks to protect the interests of our lowest income citizens. And it invests in services which build for the future.

“I hope that other parties will follow our lead.”

Other headline Green ideas include:

- A self-funding dedicated empty homes post
- Investment in public toilets
- Looking ahead to new powers which the council will secure at the end of 2017 to cap private rents
- Installing more disabled-friendly play equipment in public play parks
- Inviting Edinburgh Leisure to develop a scheme to target disadvantaged groups not currently using leisure facilities.