

Council's finance committee listen to the public outcry over music school



The City of Edinburgh Council has removed doubt about the immediate future of the City of Edinburgh Music School (COEMS) by agreeing to remove any close look at the school's management and finances from its budget consultation.

The proposal was to save £363,000 from the council's revenue budget by closing the school, a Scottish Centre of Excellence, and moving music tuition to four localities across the city.

A fiercely fought campaign by the Parent Council at Broughton High School where the music school has its home has been led by Lindsay Law who spoke to the council's Finance and Resources meeting this morning. Ms Law explained this is a national service and 'an amazing one to have here in Edinburgh'. She asked for an assurance that the council would undertake not to revisit the finances of the music school during the term of this administration, which ultimately was not given, though Cllr Rankin said he thought it extremely unlikely.

Likewise Councillor Graham Hutchison asked for an apology from the Finance Convener to the children and parents involved with the Music School for their distress, and that was not tendered either.

Isla Ratcliff is a former pupil of the school and recently graduated from Oxford with a first class honours degree in Music. She explained that the increased tuition time and the community in the school result in the excellence displayed by the instrumentalists who had played outside and within the

City Chambers before the meeting.

Ms Ratcliff also said: "The council should be proud of the education that is offered at COEMS. Students come from all over the world and they have a strong presence as a diaspora across the globe"

There still appears to be a fear among music school parents that the specialist music tuition at Flora Stevenson's may still be under threat as Lindsay Law concluded: "We must maintain the community across Flora's and COEMS as young people need tuition from an early age.

"The school would welcome a discussion about music tuition in the city. Academic research shows the importance of music tuition in children's development."

Finance Convener Alasdair Rankin said he hopes that Councillor Iain Whyte's suggestion at the last F&R meeting might prove true and the UK Government settlement might be better than expected.

But, he explained that the administration had drawn up its draft revenue plans with prudent estimates. Cllr Rankin was pressed by Cllr Johnston about the apparent U-turn by the administration, and the fact that there are clearly other matters which the administration has considered and already discounted.

Councillor Rankin denied this and said : "We are consulting in good faith with the information we have available now. This is an administration consultation and these are the matters on which we wish to consult."

But although he was dismissive of any claims of lack of transparency, he did admit that the timetable within the confines of the UK and Scottish Government budgets was not wholly within the council's control.

There will be some changes in the way that the council leads into these budget consultations in future as the Chief Executive has been asked by the SNP/Labour coalition, Greens and the Conservatives to review the way this works.

The Green group asked for clarification that the list of measures on the table are not agreed routes towards savings. They are only headlines which can be discussed by the public and elected members in the next month or so.

You are encouraged to have your say on the consultation. You will see it [here](#) later today.