

Marketing Edinburgh board threatens to resign

The entire board of the organisation that promotes Edinburgh to the world has threatened to resign – claiming that funding cuts “will cause lasting damage to our city”.

Marketing Edinburgh will hold a board meeting on Friday when the organisation, which was set up by The City of Edinburgh Council, will discuss its future.

Chairman Gordon Robertson was instructed to send a letter to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Convener, Cllr Kate Campbell and her committee by the Marketing Edinburgh Board – which includes Lord Provost Frank Ross, Cllr Lezley Marion Cameron and Cllr Susan Webber.

The council discussed the future of Marketing Edinburgh behind closed doors on Thursday, after the organisation presented an action plan.

It is not known if the council intends to offer more funding or take all or part of Marketing Edinburgh’s responsibilities in-house.

In the letter, Mr Robertson said: “We are clear that council funding and support is required to meet the needs of the city and all those stakeholders who work in or are impacted by tourism. It is our belief therefore that you should support the plan with funding beyond April 2020.

“If you cannot or will not, the Marketing Edinburgh board would assume that best action would be for it to step aside and allow the council to appoint directors that share the

council's view and plan and immediately put in place what is needed to execute your plan.

"Whilst it may seem attractive in terms of short-term budget concerns, the long-term impacts will cause lasting damage to our city."

But a senior council source warned: "I've heard the councillors on the board have been quite a disruptive influence on the rest of the board who have professional attitudes and just want to get on and do the right thing."

The council's attitude to Marketing Edinburgh has been criticised by opposition councillors.

The Council Conservative group economy spokesperson, Cllr John McLellan, said: "Marketing Edinburgh has been under relentless attack by SNP, Labour and Green councillors who show absolutely no understanding of the key contribution it makes to the city's economy and no consideration for its staff.

"Despite this, its board has worked very hard to produce a strong plan to secure the future of a renewed organisation which meets the council's goals for developing a sustainable, managed tourism industry."

Former chief executive of the organisation, [John Donnelly](#), who earned a £139,200 salary, stood down in April after warning that Edinburgh would be left "vulnerable" to economic decline. In February, councillors agreed to press ahead with a £300,000 cut for this financial year on condition that Marketing Edinburgh becomes "self-sufficient" by 2020.

Cllr Campbell said: "I want to place on record my thanks to Gordon Robertson and the rest of the Marketing Edinburgh board for the significant amount of time and effort they have put into the business and I'm sorry they are considering stepping aside on Friday.

"The board's report contained some useful recommendations for how we, as a city, can manage tourism more sustainably for the benefit of our residents and businesses and we will be looking

