

Edinburgh Leisure – the game is still very much on

In the Edinburgh Evening News today is the usual kind of article ahead of the council setting its budget, signposting areas where they believe the axe might fall.

Today they have suggested that Edinburgh Leisure will have to shut venues which are ‘operating at a loss’ and names several of the venues which Edinburgh Leisure runs as potentially in danger of closing.

Nothing has yet been agreed by either Edinburgh Leisure or The City of Edinburgh Council.



Soft play with Edinburgh Leisure

There will have to be changes to the pricing structure to make up for any loss of council funding – and the level of proposed reduction to funding was set out last year at budget time – and so any price changes are still very much under discussion.

The council hold their budget meeting in February and yes, they are looking for considerable savings to enable them to balance their 2020/21 budget. There is nothing new in that –

this has been the case for the last number of years, in view of decreasing funding from The Scottish and UK Governments.

At present Edinburgh Leisure gets £6.9 million of funding from The City of Edinburgh Council and is run as an arms length body.

In last year's budget – which is really the only thing we can be certain of at this stage – the council did cut funding to Edinburgh Leisure. It wanted to reduce funding by £1million over the next three year period but in the event the council did not set a three year budget.

It now looks as though the funding to Edinburgh Leisure could be cut by £500,000 in 2020/21 when the council sets its revenue budget next month.

Edinburgh Leisure runs over 30 venues in the city. It is likely that they require various levels of subsidy based in the nature of the activities on offer, and the make up of customers. The leisure body offers a range of concessionary prices and many of the health and inclusion projects it operates are free or attract a minimal charge.

As a charity they are not in the business of making a profit, but work to support people to be active and are committed to providing services to as much of the population of the city as they possibly can. Closures would be the last option they say they would choose.

An Edinburgh Leisure spokeswoman said: “There's no doubt that like many organisations, we are facing budget challenges. However, any discussion at this point about venue closures is pure speculation and scaremongering.

“The budget challenges mean that we have to continuously review what we do and how we do it to avoid closures and service reductions. Price increases will be one way to address budget challenges and prices for services in 2020/21

and will be finalised as part of our budget setting process.

“Edinburgh Leisure is in the business of providing opportunities for the people of Edinburgh to be active and plays an important role in the health and wellbeing of citizens.

“We recognise the financial challenges the council has and their aspirations around well-being and poverty, and we’re committed to working with them to help address these.”

The Edinburgh Evening News did of course contact Edinburgh Leisure yesterday for comment before penning the article, but it is now confirmed that there are no immediate plans to close facilities.

Whilst there will be a price increase (details to be confirmed), any references to venue closures are at this stage speculation. Edinburgh Leisure has informed the Edinburgh Reporter that they will keep customers and staff updated on the current position as required.

If you have concerns about impact on services, you could always write to your local [Councillor](#) and voice your support of your local Edinburgh Leisure venue and all that they do to support an active and healthy city.

We know they do lots of good work with people of all ages across Edinburgh, so if you are one of them then now would be as good a time as any to have your say.

Let’s hope Edinburgh Leisure can continue to keep making a positive difference!



PHOTO Phil Wilkinson