

Five things you need to know today

Windy Weather

Today the weather has improved a little over the last couple of days but look out for Storm Dennis which is on its way this weekend... It is to rain most of Saturday so perhaps time to batten down the hatches in anticipation of a what could be a drier day on Sunday. (but don't take out word for it – check with the Met Office!)



Finance Convener Alasdair Rankin is stopped by one of the EIS members on his way to the City Chambers this morning. PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

Budget for a city

Today the Finance and Resources Committee met to consider the proposals for spending money on council services over the next three years. In the council report it is clear that this will be a difficult budget to set, although the council has already met savings of around £30million. All of the reports considered today were referred to the full council meeting next Thursday. The Finance Convener also side-stepped a question from Conservative councillor Andrew Johnston about raising council tax by saying this would be considered next week by all 63 councillors.

There were two deputations one from EIS who were protesting outside, and another from UNISON. Gerry Stovin of UNISON encouraged all councillors to keep up pressure on The Scottish Government for fair funding for councils. He also mentioned the proposed cuts to library opening hours, possibly offering a saving of £300,000, would be a major concern.

Mr Harrold from UNISON said that morale is at rock bottom throughout the council and at all levels. He said : "We have a high level of absenteeism and that is because nothing is done to address understaffing."

Alison Murphy of EIS declared that teachers cannot do everything demanded of them when they don't even have the money to buy jotters.

The Chief Executive suggested that the council is looking at connecting revenue and capital budgets and one suggestion is to share assets with police, NHS and the University.

The financial reality of the cumulative effect of increasing demand and reducing resource availability will require increasingly difficult decisions to be taken by councils across Scotland, with a heightened focus on prioritisation, prevention and radical reconsideration of service delivery

required to secure financial sustainability. This will inevitably lead to a cut in some services currently provided by the Council, along with reductions in associated staffing.

Council Report for the Finance and Resources Committee 14 February 2020

The council has to make savings of £87.975 million in the next three years. This is a reduction on what was originally thought as the draft Local Government Finance Settlement announced by The Scottish Government last week has been around £5.1million more than anticipated.

All that the council can presume is that the overall amount which they will receive will not be reduced, but as The Scottish Government permits increasing the council tax to 4.79% that is definitely on the cards.

Most discretionary fees and charges imposed by the council on their various services will increase by around 5%.

One idea included in the report is that all parking machines could be removed in the city moving to a fully cashless system. This alone would save £200,000. That may not seem much in the scheme of a budget of almost £1 billion, but every little helps and it is only a part of an estimated saving of £3.34 million in digital delivery of more services.

There are six programmes of work outlined in the next phase of the council's Change Strategy which shape the administration's financial proposals. All of this will be subject to final approval after the new Chancellor of the Exchequer delivers the UK budget on 11 March 2020. The timing of all of the financial settlements was affected by the General Election held in December 2019. The final settlement is not likely to be agreed until the end of February when the Stage 1 Parliamentary Debate is conducted. Everything has been thrown

into unknown territory due to timing changes. The Finance Convener did tell us however after the meeting that on every previous occasion their presumptions as to what they would receive from Westminster and Holyrood have been pretty accurate.

Any member of the public can attend the meeting of the council next week 20 February 2020 at the City Chambers or you can watch the webcast online. Politicking over what to spend the money on really begins next week.



Love is in the air

It's Valentine's Day. If that fills you with horror and dread then look away now. Or do something nice just for yourself. Go for that walk, take time for that nice cup of tea.

Edinburgh tea company eteaket have launched a limited edition tea blend, Berry Bliss. Made with love, the fruity blend is the perfect gift for that extra special tea lover in your life. The blend is the perfect love potion of black tea, orange peel, strawberry, raspberry, blackberries, sunflower blossoms, mallow blossoms, marigold blossoms and safflowers. This Valentine's Day, eteaket encourage everyone to connect over a cup of tea. They say : "Mindful sipping is a great way to form a stronger connection not just to your cup but to the important people in your life whether that is a friend, loved one or yourself."

The tea, while making a lovely gift all by itself, can be paired with an infuser mug and tea candle (Blooming Marvellous Candle or Isle of Harris Gin Candle) making it the perfect way to say I love you. The gift set is available in eteaket's Concept Store, Tea Room and Online.

Edinburgh's leaf tea experts have been busy experimenting with Berry Bliss. For a limited time, you can try a shimmering Berry Bliss Tea Latte in their Tea Room or a Berry Bliss Tea Cocktail (with a hint of fizz). The perfect side to a slice of cake or scone.

This Valentine's day take a moment to pause and connect while you fall head over heels with the joy of Berry Bliss – www.eteaket.co.uk

And we have a few other ideas for Valentine's Day [here](#).

Summer Sessions



Sir Tom Jones will be in Edinburgh for two nights in Princes Street Gardens

Tom Jones will play a second date on 10 August 2020 as tickets

for his first night sell out. Tickets on sale this morning.

TOM JONES' SECOND DATE ON SALE today FRIDAY 14TH FEBRUARY
VIA WWW.SMMRSESSIONS.COM

Westminster reshuffle

Ian Murray MP, Labour deputy leadership candidate, commented on yesterday's cabinet reshuffle at Westminster which resulted in an unscheduled departure by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid. He said : "This extraordinary reshuffle has revealed who is really in charge of this government: Dominic Cummings.

"Sajid Javid has shown a loyalty to his team that is all too rare in politics, standing up to the Trump-style politics on display from Number Ten.

"The reshuffle demonstrates that we need a Labour Party at full strength to stand up to Johnson and his puppet master, because the country deserves better than this shambles. That's why Labour must choose change, not continuity."

Have a great weekend and if you are organising something then do let us know about it – you can add your news [here](#)