

# **Scottish Labour pressures Scottish Government over Edinburgh's Covid-19 protection levels**

**Richard Leonard, Scottish Labour leader, asked the First Minister about the decision taken on Tuesday to keep Edinburgh in the same category as it was previously.**

Mr Leonard said: "We know that public health officials briefed the council leadership and Chief Executive of Edinburgh, that the city should be moved to Level two. That's not just hearsay. That's what is stated in an emergency motion to be moved by the SNP Leader of the council this afternoon. So why did the First Minister and her cabinet vote to overturn that advice?"

The First Minister replied with a question of her own. She said: "We take advice from the national incident management team, we look at all of the indicators and we apply judgement to that. The Chief Medical officer is part of the cabinet discussions. On Edinburgh in particular I would preface my comments here by just I suppose saying that why on earth would I want to keep Edinburgh or any part of the country in a higher level of protection when I didn't think there was a need to do that?"

Mr Leonard asked: "What is the evidence, the rationale or insight that justifies that decision based on that judgment?"

“And will she publish the advice? Because people in Edinburgh deserve more than the three bullet points that were published on Tuesday.

“This is about more than just the city of Edinburgh. It is about transparency. And it is about public trust and confidence.

“Because the point is this: by overriding recommendations based on the data available and the advice of her own public health experts the First Minister risks losing the trust and confidence of the public.

“The Government too often appears to assume that people will act in an irresponsible way and that assumption is bringing businesses in Edinburgh and across the country to breaking point.

“Decisions like the one this week appear to have been political decisions rather than scientific decisions.”

In response the First Minister set out the statistics which had given the Cabinet cause for concern.

She explained that over the past seven days the number of cases per 100,000 in Edinburgh has gone up by 14%, that test positivity has gone up by 0.5% and that case levels have increased on four of the last seven days.

The health board breakdown for the figures which the First Minister had just announced showed that Lothian accounts for the second biggest number of cases reported today. Public Health Scotland has reported 158 cases in the NHS Lothian health board area and 215 in the Greater Glasgow & Clyde health board area on Thursday.

Ms Sturgeon said: “These are serious decisions to take and have to be taken carefully. Basically if you have a situation where in any area case numbers in any area are rising slightly

or not declining significantly enough then there is a real risk in easing up restrictions. The danger then is that the situation runs very quickly out of control. The judgement that the Cabinet reached was to take Edinburgh down a level at this stage would have posed a significant risk to the overall situation. We will review it again on Tuesday.”

## **EMERGENCY MOTION AT THE CITY CHAMBERS**

At today’s virtual Council meeting the Council Leader, Cllr Adam McVey said: “I simply want to repeat what I’ve said pretty much every time this has come up, which is that the recommendations from public health experts should be acted upon.

“We are asking very, very simply, very straightforwardly for that advice to be followed.

“I very much hope that with the hard work and sacrifices by the people of Edinburgh, by businesses and everyone in our city which has created a position that Edinburgh’s numbers have driven down, I am very hopeful that these will continue to drive down, and keep our communities and residents safe. But it is about following that advice. We know that the National Incident Management Team said there was a case for Edinburgh to move to Level Two.

“I feel that the case has been made.”

The Council will consider an emergency motion on the level of restriction imposed on Edinburgh by The Scottish Government this afternoon. You can watch that meeting [here](#).