

Conservatives set out their stall for council spending in the next year

Cllr Graham Hutchison is the Conservative Group spokesperson on Finance and Resources. Here he explains the Conservative group's priorities on spending in the next year.

The way it works is that the council administration sets out its [own plan](#), and the other political groups then set out theirs, hoping that at least some of their ideas might be adopted into what the council then does. You can read what the coalition of SNP and Labour councillors propose [here](#).



Cllr Graham Hutchison PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter
Cllr Hutchison explained where the Conservative priorities lie. He said: “When I rose in the Council Chamber to deliver the last Conservative budget motion one year ago the threat of the Coronavirus was only just entering the public consciousness. Few could have imagined the impending disruption to every aspect of our daily lives or the tragic loss of life on a scale not seen in living memory.

“This year’s budget meeting will take place virtually, with Councillors participating from their own homes rather than gathering in the Council Chamber, a change which will surely detract from the spectacle of what is traditionally one of the

livelier meetings in the Council calendar. A change however which is replicated in workplaces across the city and beyond, and is just one of the many adaptations which have rendered our city a very different place from what it was 12 months ago.

“The citizens and business community of Edinburgh have shown incredible resilience in responding to the pandemic and the associated restrictions as have the Council’s workforce, many of whom have been on the frontline of the fight against Covid-19.

“As Councillors therefore we owe it to our city, to deliver a budget which will build back better and ensure a sustainable recovery supporting individuals, communities and businesses.

“A failure of basic service delivery has been a hallmark of this SNP led administration and with our roads and pavements crumbling, and a woefully inadequate response to the recent weather, residents feel they are not receiving value for money for their council tax while at the same time struggling with financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic. That is why the Conservative group budget will freeze council tax across all bands for 2021/22.

“The neglect of our road network by successive administrations also extends to the city’s council housing stock with many tenants living in squalid conditions and waiting for an unacceptable time for basic repairs, an issue which pre-dates the current pandemic. The budget I present will increase and re-prioritise spending on council housing to focus on improving living conditions for our council housing tenants as well as freezing rents for 2021/22.

“Edinburgh is a capital city with a global profile and we should be leading the way in the fight against homelessness. We will make a strategic investment of £1m to address homelessness, including immediate action to progress a feasibility study to assess the practicality of developing

high quality, energy efficient and economical modular accommodation.

“While small business have been vulnerable due to Covid-19 restrictions the administration have added to their burden with their aggressive pursuit of the Spaces for People programme leaving many business cut off and difficult to access, particularly for elderly and disabled customers. Our budget recognises that our business community will be key to our city’s recovery and establishes a £1m business recovery fund as well as dedicating £850,000 to support Edinburgh’s outdoor economy.

“Education will also be key to Edinburgh’s recovery and the Conservative budget will support digital learning to the tune of £11m while also continue to resist damaging cuts to nursery-school teachers and music education.

“Despite the many challenges that Covid-19 has presented, it has also given us the chance to reflect and to re-evaluate. The current SNP led administration should take this opportunity to ponder almost four years of failure, vanity projects and meaningless vision documents and to re-assess its priorities. The Conservative group will once again show that there is a better way to do things and to deliver value for money to our citizens for their council tax.”

The meeting will take place from 10am online on Thursday. The council papers are [here](#).