

Council income reduced most by loss of parking charges during the pandemic

The City of Edinburgh Council has lost £8 million of income in parking charges during the pandemic, it has emerged.

The fact that there have been fewer car drivers paying for parking on Edinburgh streets since the first lockdown was imposed in March 2020 has led to a significant reduction in income from parking tickets, permits, impound costs and bus lane penalties.

Lost parking revenue makes up £8 million of a total £39 million financial hit experienced by the council during the Covid-19 crisis, which was accounted for in last year's budget.

Figures published by the council show that in 2020/21, in the first year of the pandemic, there were 92,758 fewer parking tickets issued in Edinburgh than the previous year, resulting in a loss of over £3 million.

In addition, 18,094 fewer bus lane camera notices were issued – a third less than in 2019/2020 – leading to losses of £280,613.

Meanwhile, on-street parking income dropped by more than £11 million, permit income by £5,000 and impound income by £10,640.

A report prepared ahead of the Finance and Resources Committee on Thursday shows lost parking income has had the single greatest impact on the local authority's income over the last two years.



A reduction in council tenants' rent accounted for a reduction in income of £5 million, the absence of a dividend from Lothian Buses amounted to £6 million and an additional £5 million was spent tackling homelessness.

Edinburgh Leisure, which has recorded losses of around £20 million during the pandemic, received £6m, whilst £1 million was spent supporting the council's other external organisations, £1 million on procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) and £7 million on other areas of increased expenditure, or reduced income linked to the pandemic such as support payments for businesses and additional waste and cleaning staff.

The report notes parking income has "levelled off in recent weeks", with weekly revenue over the past two months on average now only £0.085m lower than pre-pandemic.

Last week's Transport and Environment Committee heard that there are "signs of recovery" in the council's parking income which will be "closely monitored".

Since April 2021, the council has made £23,986,114 from parking charges, with the majority of this sum – £15,441,540 – from the purchase of pay and display tickets.

A Council spokesperson said: "As has been experienced by all local authorities, Covid has had a significant impact in terms of income loss. As a result the revised 2021/22 budget makes provisions for these impacts, including a reduction in parking revenue.

"While there have been some signs of recovery with regard to parking income over the last year, we do not expect an immediate return to pre-Covid levels. Therefore we will continue monitoring the situation closely in order to address future years' savings requirements and maintain the stability of the budget framework."

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter

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