

Bowing out in the manner to which we have become accustomed – Cllr Gordon Munro

Cllr Gordon Munro is resigning as Leith councillor at the May elections following almost two decades as an elected member.

He has entertained as well as hit home during his career at the City Chambers with speech after speech peppered with interesting facts and direct lines.

He has also in recent times gained a certain notoriety in breaking ranks with the rest of the SNP/Labour coalition administration, by not supporting the financial arrangements which the administration proposes. He was suspended for a time last year by his own political group after his failure to support the administration budget.

Oops he did it again. On Thursday during the debate on the budget for the coming year, Cllr Munro set his stall out about what he believes is the real situation in Edinburgh, and why he cannot stand with his colleagues to support the outlined spending, saying this will mean a cut in council services

across the board.



Councillor Gordon Munro. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam

www.martinmcadam.com

This is what he said:

Lord Provost, Fellow Councillors, Citizens,

“And now the end is near and so I face the final curtain ...”

In the style of Sid Vicious not Sinatra my last budget speech will be done ‘My Way’.

In power since 2007 the SNP were elected on a promise to end the ‘unfair Council Tax’. A promise still to be kept.

The top band is for properties over £212,000 of which there are only 4,065.

In a city where the ESPC reports an average house price of £273,587 – a city which leads Scotland in the number of houses sold for over £1 million.

The city does not get its fair share of Non Domestic rates. A floor of 85% is set, and supposedly guaranteed, but Edinburgh is short changed on this with 79% of this returned. This is now the main source of income for the city and one that Covid will have impacted upon.

The last source is the Government Grant which is once again the lowest of all Scotland’s major cities . This method of allocation is unfair and was recognised as such by The Scottish Government/Cosla report of December 2015 ‘Just Change’ which reported that local government funding as constituted was ‘unsustainable’ and right up front was the conclusion that “The present Council Tax system must end”.

The change it expected was ‘an opportunity not to be missed’.

That is why I regularly ask the Leader what action he has taken to change this set of circumstances that means we have a budget before us that makes cuts of £143m to 2026/27.

We have ‘unfunded aspirations’ as reported to the Finance

Committee. A good example of this is the city's most pressing issue – Housing. To realise the aims of the Housing Investment Plan we need a 58% increase in funding.

And the money is there. Once again the SNP Scottish Government reported an underspend of £639 million in 20/21.

This – in the year of Covid.

Cosla is right – this is a budget that is bad for communities. But the capital also needs a Leadership that stands up for the city and demands the change promised by the SNP in 2007 and by its 'Just Change Commission' report of 2015 .

To date this has not happened. We have before us a budget that makes cuts. There is no budget in this chamber today that I can support. That is why I will abstain in the vote.

This city is deliberately underfunded by an SNP Scottish Government that puts more effort into grudge and grievance than governance. Councils were promised 'parity of esteem' in 2007 by the incoming SNP Scottish Government. There is none.

"Regrets I've had a few" but easily the biggest regret is that this Council does not have the resources this city needs and its citizens deserve .

In conclusion

We need funding for a new wave of Council homes.

We need funding to tackle poverty.

We need funding for our 'unfunded aspirations'.

We need a Council that confronts Holyrood to govern not girn, to fulfill the promises it made for a 'Just Change' for its councils.

That would be real parity of esteem."