

Opposition MSPs call for The Scottish Government to resolve strikes by council staff

Lothians representatives from the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Labour and Scottish Conservatives have today written to the First Minister to warn that ongoing refuse strikes “are a direct result of the steady, year on year erosion by your government of the local government funding settlement” and have called for councils to be equipped with the resources necessary to pay their workers properly.

This afternoon some Lothians MSPs visited the Grassmarket which is an area greatly affected by the ongoing bin strike. The politicians condemned the SNP/Green cuts to local authority budgets.

Daniel Johnson MSP said: “Ultimately the council’s hands are tied by their budget which is set by the SNP government. and

indeed by COSLA. This is part of collective bargaining. So the council is doing everything they can I know Cammy Day is meeting virtually on a daily basis with the unions but ultimately it needs John Swinney to sign off a better fairer pay deal.

“Euphemistic language of “envelopes of five per cent” – well first of all five per cent is not enough and envelopes is just euphemism for we are not giving them all the money. That’s not good enough. It’s not good enough for the city and it is not good enough for Scotland.”

Sue Webber MSP said: “It won’t come as a surprise. It doesn’t take a genius to find out why the unions have selected Edinburgh to start to kick off this bin strike – and also to commence a week ago. just as the festival is at its height. I think the unions on this occasion have to make a point and they are making it – well you can’t say loud and clear – that is the wrong sense. I think it is definitely the smell we are getting in waves. It is distressing to. smell it up so close.

“There is quite a disparity in what their counterparts are being offered south of the border and their pay settlement which is nearly £1,900 per individual compared to what they are being offered here in terms of that percentage increase.

“A percentage pay rise is not always the right solution. A five per cent pay increase for those already on a low wage versus five per cent on some of the salaries paid to senior local government officials isn’t fair. I think it would be much better to have a flat rate.”

Opposition MSPs from [@scotlibdems](#) [@ScottishLabour](#) and [@ScotTories](#) gathered around some rubbish in the Grassmarket on Wednesday demanding that [@scotgov](#) sort out the bin strikes by giving councils more funding. pic.twitter.com/Lso2EuwfIR

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [August 24, 2022](#)

Alex Cole Hamilton MSP said: "We are asking these vital workers to come to work for a pay settlement which isn't going to touch the sides when it comes to the crushing cost of living. That is being felt by the poorest in our society, and they are the ones who are doing the menial jobs, but vital jobs, like refuse collection in our city. It is grinding Edinburgh into the dust.

"We should be proud of our revival after two years of the pandemic performers and venues are finally coming back to profitability, yet they are having to do so in the worst conditions of squalor.

"We want The Scottish Government to open the budget again. There is going to be an Emergency revision to the budget over the cost of living anyway. Let's use that opportunity to properly fund our local authorities so that they have the resources necessary to give that very understandable wage demand to those workers."

Foyso Choudhury MSP said that it is wholly the fault of the Scottish Government that there is rubbish strewn around the city's streets. He said: "I am really frustrated to hear some of the SNP councillors and MSPs trying to blame it on the Labour administration. Labour has only been in administration for a very short time. Who makes the funding decisions? Where is the funding coming from?"

"We are in the prime time of Edinburgh festivals. There are loads of people from all over the world in Edinburgh. What message are we giving them? We have always been known as a fantastic city and a clean city. The government needs to help the council. They need to give them more money."



Miles Briggs MSP and Sue Webber MSP in Grassmarket PHOTO ©2022
The Edinburgh Reporter

The letter, co-ordinated by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP is as follows:

Waste collection strikes in the city of Edinburgh

We write to you as parliamentary representatives for the city of Edinburgh concerning the disgraceful state that our capital city is currently in, as a result of the strike by the city's waste collection workers.

At a time when the eyes of the world are on our festivals, and businesses and performers are finally starting to see a return to profitability after the pandemic, the mountains of refuse left unattended and vermin they attract could not show our city in a less favourable light.

The strikes are a direct result of the steady, year on year

erosion by your government of the local government funding settlement. COSLA is unable to offer workers a meaningful pay increase.

We understand that Scottish ministers are planning a budget revision in light of the cost of living emergency when parliament returns and we ask that you use that opportunity to revisit the local government settlement as well, so that our councils are equipped with the resources necessary to pay their workers properly to do the job we need them to do.

We look forward to your response,

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP

Daniel Johnson MSP

Sarah Boyack MSP

Foyso! Choudhury MSP

Miles Briggs MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Sue Webber MSP

