

Council will discuss draft Business Plan on Thursday

The administration which runs The City of Edinburgh Council bases its policies on the [Edinburgh Labour manifesto](#) published at the beginning of the year.

In addition however the minority Labour administration is refreshing the council's business plan, and all other political groups have been invited to contribute to the draft which councillors will discuss this week with a view to signing off on a final version in December before the new budget is set in February next year.

The business plan, along with the new Medium Term Financial Plan, will be centred on three basics – to create good places to live and work, to end poverty in Edinburgh and to become a net zero city.

There is to be a shift in priorities responding to what residents have said during recent council consultations. (And

the draft plan will continue using consultations as a way of engaging with residents, but will ensure that they have a real impact. There have been 300 public consultations in the last five years with more than 140,000 responses.)

The new Business Plan will focus on what residents think of as the basics, rather than catering only for visitors. For example the council will now prioritise doing business with local firms in connection with the festivals, and appointing Unique Assembly, two Edinburgh-based firms is regarded as evidence of them doing just that. All policies in the business plan have been costed out by council officers and any which are included may be considered to be currently affordable.

The city is expected to grow by 50,000 in the next 20 years. While this is a true sign of growth and success, it also puts added pressure on the city's infrastructure. To achieve the climate targets which have already been set, the draft plan states that Edinburgh needs to move "at least twice as fast as we did in the past decade". There is also the question of finance, in the face of an estimated £160 million shortfall in council funding just to break even in the next four years.



Cllr Cammy Day Council Leader PHOTO © 2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

Cllr Cammy Day, the Council Leader, said: “We want the city to be for the people who live here and to welcome international tourism on top of that. I think we have got to a position in the last few years where the balance has not been great.”

He confirmed that the public’s view came out in almost all of the council’s own satisfaction surveys, and was evident also in the campaigning ahead of last May’s council elections.

Cllr Day said the plan recognises his “new progressive, dynamic administration” and the need to do things differently.

He explained that leading an administration of 13 councillors, there is no single political group which can get things agreed, and instead there is a need to bring other political groups along with them.

The draft plan reflects “the cross party objectives alongside officer assessment of the approaches needed to meet budgetary and other pressures facing the council”.

Cllr Day said: “I was keen to get a refresh of the Business Plan, to shift the focus on Climate or Poverty – and in fact we need to enhance these policy areas.

“Over the last few months officers have been meeting with political parties, or most of them, and have an open frank discussion of what we all agree on, and try to agree that that will be the core – around 80% of the business plan, primarily around climate, poverty and a refocus on getting basic services right.

“During Operation Unicorn we saw the work done to make the city look its best, and I want to ensure that we can continue at that level right across the city. Basic services will keep the streets clean and tidy, fix the potholes and get bins collected. Most people are affected by these and we just want to do these better.”

The council spends £100 million on outside contractors and Cllr Day said that his group was committed to bringing that work in-house where they can, and where it is best value for the council.

He said: "That £100 million could be spent on creating council jobs with good terms and conditions. Primarily it is about making sure that we concentrate on matters such as climate, poverty and getting basic services right."

The administration has an ideal that Edinburgh will become a better place to live and work and this programme will focus more on the people who live here, in preference to people who come to visit.

All political groups invited to contribute to the plan

We were advised that the SNP group chose not to contribute to any discussion about the plan. (The 2017-2022 administration was a coalition formed between SNP and Labour under the leadership of SNP councillor Adam McVey. The SNP group now has the largest number of elected representatives in Edinburgh, but failed in any attempt to return to power. Instead the Labour group formed a minority administration.)

The council leader said he thinks it is "just a bit silly" that the SNP would not engage. He said: "I think it is important that every political party sits round the table and takes part in the development of the business plan. I am disappointed that not every party took part in discussion with council officers as it just means that in the chamber there will have to be more political discussion. It is disappointing that not everyone thought it important enough to take part in the discussion of what we will do in the city in the next five years."

The SNP Group was asked about this claim. Cllr McVey said: "The SNP will set out alternative plans to help address the city's housing crisis, tackle climate change and improve council services. It's for Labour and the LibDems to explain to residents why they are working with the Tories in Administration. The Labour, Tory, LibDem Administration are entitled to bring forward a business plan but the SNP group have been working with officers to set out a more competent and progressive alternative. Despite continual attempts, we won't be bullied into working with the Tories by anyone. Our residents deserve better and we will try and deliver on the vision that so many in the City voted for in May while in opposition."

The [Policy and Sustainability Committee](#) meets on Thursday at 10am.



Loading...



Taking too long?

 Reload document

|  [Open in new tab](#)

