

Cuts to services proposed as council faces £76 million gap

Early proposals for Edinburgh council service cuts next year have been revealed amid a deepening financial crisis.

The council now has to find £76.5 million to set a balanced budget in February, an increase of more than £10 million since the start of the year – and rising to £158.6 million in 2024 to 2025.

This is on top of £123 million due to be cut from the council's fund for financing infrastructure projects, which is likely to impact the city's 10 year school building programme.

A report showing proposed savings to the revenue budget, which sets aside funding for council services, reveals education could face further cutbacks with pupil support and speech therapy set to lose hundreds of thousands.

The report said: "These proposals are likely to involve increasingly difficult choices about the council's priorities, including service reductions, across all service areas to maintain expenditure in line with available income."

Under the plans drawn up by officials, which will go before councillors on Thursday, there will also be reduced funding for the Taxicard scheme for helping people with disabilities to get around and a £1 million cut to cultural grants over the next four years.

Along with other financial mitigations proposed – which

include using left over emergency cash set aside during Covid-19 and handing out less money to people struggling though changes to eligibility of no recourse to public funds – the savings would shrink the funding gap to £21.2 million.

Suggested initial cuts to the 2023 to 2024 revenue budget, of which all would be recurring for the next four years, are: promotion of online services (£165,000); council staffing savings (£1.173 million); management savings (£223,000); 'salary sacrifice' savings (£225,000); review and realignment of pupil support (£900,000); speech and Language Therapy (£850,000); multi-system therapy service (£500k); wellington school former monies (£340,000); review of contracted spend (£904k); Taxicard (£120,000) and non-core cultural grants (£250,000).

The report said: "The council continues to face significant financial pressures resulting from increased demand for services, inflation and legislative reform, as well as the ongoing financial impacts of the pandemic.

"These factors are set against a backdrop of core grant funding (accounting for around three quarters of the council's overall income) that is not increasing."

by Donald Turvill

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