

Choudhury says enough is enough

In Edinburgh, the closure of The Filmhouse, Gorgie City Farm, The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art's Modern Two, The Prentice Centre and many more communityloved facilities are threatened with closure.

For example, The Muirhouse Millenium Centre, which houses the LIFT project, in North Edinburgh, is facing financial difficulty and they are concerned about the lack of future core funding, which could mean the risk of closure. When community facilities are not funded properly, it is not just the centre which loses out. The families who depend on them for support and help, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis, are left without a lifeline.

The Scottish Government have starved Scotland's councils of funding for years and they show no sign of stopping. Do not just take my word for it.

The recent report from the Accounts Commission also highlighted the impact of Scottish Government austerity on Scotland's councils. William Moyes, Chair of the Accounts Commission, said: "It's clear the financial situation of councils is increasingly fragile. Councils are having to deal with the effects of inflation, the increasingly desperate cost of living impacts and rising demand for services, whilst at

the same time delivering vital day to day services to their communities.”

Councils in Lothian have faced significant financial challenges during 2021/22 and are now entering the most difficult budget setting context seen for many years. Increasingly difficult choices about spending priorities will need to be made. Also, an increasing amount of council funding is either formally ringfenced or provided on the expectation it will be spent on specific services and national policy objectives. This supports the delivery of key Scottish Government policies yet removes local discretion and flexibility over how these funds can be used by councils.

Unsurprisingly, when council budgets are cut, there is an adverse effect on local services, local community centres and culture

Unless the Scottish Government increases funding to local authorities, community, culture, and sport groups will not have the necessary funds to support essential community centres such as the Muirhouse Millenium Centre. I will continue to support and help community groups, culture and sport groups, to highlight their concerns, campaign for extra resources and ensure funding is not cut from local Lothian groups. COSLA, which represents 32 Scottish councils, issued an SOS call to “Save our Services”

Let us all say, “Enough is Enough” and put pressure on the Scottish Government to increase council funding, which will mean they can fund local projects and groups. I will continue to press the government to deliver fair funding for Lothian councils.

Foyso! Choudhury is the Scottish Labour MSP for Lothian.



Foyso! Choudhury, MBE, MSP