

Conservatives suggest 4% increase in council tax

The Conservative group have put forward their suggestions for the council's budget in a paper published online. The group agrees that Edinburgh is underfunded, but disagree on the reason why.

Their reasoning is that it is a failure on the part of this and previous administrations along with COSLA to convince the Scottish Government of the need for "adequate and equitable" funding for the capital. They also criticise this and the previous SNP/Labour administrations for failing to act on the 2016 and 2020 Best Value audit findings.

The Conservatives are embarrassed by the state of the city's roads and council housing, saying it is a direct result of neglect by the last administration.

A couple of things stand out:

The Tories REJECT the council ring fencing 10% of the transport budget for cycling.

And the group suggests the council resigns from COSLA saving £255,000 each year.

They would like to spend £200,000 on supporting bus services to Willowbrae/Lady Nairne Road and Dumbiedykes, and £90,000 on "Enhanced City Centre Waste Operations" and £250,000 but £500,000 after that on tackling graffiti.

The headlines of their proposals are:

- An increase of 4% in Council Tax taking Band D to £1433.90
- Wants full review of speech and language therapy services to maximise benefits for those who get the therapy
- Criticising quality of council services, the group want to review all methods of service delivery (In the past Tories have always advocated outsourcing services)
- Criticises administration for imposing political restrictions and wants to empower council officers to develop a Value for Money programme
- Council agrees to make cross-party representations on the way Homelessness prevention is funded by The Scottish Government leaving additional costs to the council of £33.7 million to be found
- Additional £3.7 million for environmental initiatives like addressing graffiti, fly tipping and cleaning communal bins and a means tested special uplift service
- Higher rate for parking tickets of £100 with default of £50 is suggested which means additional income of £2.4 million to be ringfenced for roads
- Parking and parking permit charges only to increase by 5% and not 12% as they suggest the administration wants to do
- Wants to retain Lothian Buses in public ownership
- Rejects workplace parking levy (Payable in the first place by employers but possible for them to hand that liability to their staff – if there are more than a certain number of spaces. This levy raises tens of thousands in Nottingham but costs each individual around £1 a day.)
- Wants Scottish Government to pay for under 22s to travel

free on the trams

- Suggests investment of £200,000 for bus services to Willowbrae/Lady Nairne and Dumbiedykes
- Prioritises the City of Edinburgh Music School (a previous administration suggested slashing their budget)
- Prioritises music tuition at schools
- Suggests expanding community programmes such as the Craggs and Queensferry Sports Centres
- Suggest removing the council from COSLA at a saving of £255,000
- Criticises the previous administration for writing off £2.4 million in failing to deliver the Asset Management Strategy
- Wants to review staff organisation and ensure value for money by redeploying staff as appropriate
- Supports a proposal to replace the Council's HR and payroll system
- Criticises the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership for failing to develop a strategy for financial planning with the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (EIJB) and that both have failed to transform service delivery
- Criticises EIJB for failing to progress to a sustainable budget position and agrees to reprioritise £2.5 million of funding for the EIJB
- Proposals for an additional £16 million of capital investment
- Criticises the administration for the Tram to Newhaven extension which the Conservatives believe will lead to a future call of up to £93 million – £7 million in the next year and an annual allowance of £9.25 million in the following years.
- Rejects a orioisak ti reduce the budget for roads and footways on North Bridge
- Agrees £3 million for the King's Theatre if match funding is available

The Conservative papers for the budget meeting on Thursday are here:



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