

# **Drama at the City Chambers as Labour budget fails to pass**

**The Labour administration proposed a budget today which was not adopted by the council, leaving the council leader facing calls from the SNP Group leader for his resignation, and few at the City Chambers really knowing what is happening.**

**After a full day of deputations and councillors debating where money should be spent and what the priorities should be, most in the room (except the Greens who were instrumental in what they called the “shenanigans”) believed the voting was going to go in favour of the party in administration, the Labour Party.**

**Instead, following several rounds of voting it was the Liberal Democrat budget which was passed by the 61 councillors in the**

room or joining the meeting virtually.

It was most unusual, and having asked several people with long memories, it does not seem to have a precedent.

There are several headlines in the Liberal Democrat motion – they want to reverse the council's policy of no compulsory redundancies, they want to spend £11 million on roads and pavements which is admittedly much more than the £700,000 set out in the SNP/Greens budget. Council tax will rise by 5%.

This is the culmination of a year since the SNP were elected in 19 wards, but failed to come to an agreement with any other party to take the reins of the administration. The Labour group were prohibited from entering any formal coalition arrangements by leader Anas Sarwar, but managed to form a minority administration with the help of LibDem and Conservative councillors' votes cast in their favour at the first meeting in May last year.

After the meeting we spoke to several of the councillors involved in the debate today.

Council Leader, Cammy Day, said: "I was disappointed to see Greens and a Labour Councillor with the Conservative party to effectively make the Labour administration budget fall, and that was unexpected. The parties – the Greens and my labour colleague – who have consistently said they're anti Tory, who then voted for the Tories to allow our budget to be lost today. And that was really disappointing. So we'll be having discussions with other parties, over the next few days to see what they want to do going forward.

"We sat with the Greens just the other day and asked if there was any arrangement we could come to with them and there wasn't at that time. Had there been a request to put that one thing about the climate team in the budget then we would have had that discussion."

Either Cllr Day or Cllr Mandy Watt the Finance Convener have met in recent weeks and days with the other parties – except for the SNP who Cllr Day said “have failed to engage with us”.

Cllr Kevin Lang who is the leader of the Liberal Democrat group on the council said: “We put forward a Liberal Democrat budget, and I’m delighted that a majority of councillors on Edinburgh Council voted to support it.”

When asked if he is about to take over the running of the council the answer was emphatically no.

Cllr Lang said: “No, we’re not doing that. Last year, we were very clear. In supporting the liberal minority administration, we said that where we agreed with them, we’d vote with them, where we didn’t, we would not vote with them. And that’s exactly what we’ve done over the course of the last nine months. I don’t think today’s budget changes that.”

He continued: “The Liberal Democrats have always been consistent in that where roles are no longer required it was ridiculous for the council to still be paying people to be undertaking these roles. That’s a position that my group has taken for – as long as I have been a councillor. We’ve not changed our position today.”

Cllr Iain Whyte who is leader of the Conservative Group said: “The big bit we’ve missed is a couple of bus services. As a ward councillor, I’m very upset that the opportunity to return the 69 bus to will it be made to fields has not happened today. And that’s simply because as far as I can see it in the long run. That’s down to individuals playing politics.”

Cllr Whyte also explained that the council must now make some roles compulsorily redundant to save £600,000.

*And [@CllrWhyte](#) confirming that the lack of support for the administration budget today was without precedent. He also explains why he has no difficulty with the compulsory*

*redundancies which the adopted budget will introduce*  
[pic.twitter.com/kk1lWXqvNf](https://pic.twitter.com/kk1lWXqvNf)

– *Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter)* [February 23, 2023](#)

Cllr Adam McVey whose party was in coalition with the Labour group in the last administration said in a written statement: “Labour have had a disaster today. They’ve lost their budget, lost a councillor and effectively ended the council house building programme.

“The city will lose a lot in this budget and housing problems will get worse. Labour voted to go down the road of privatising waste and cleansing services, and to end the council’s long-established no compulsory redundancy policy.

“Labour could have instead supported the budget proposed by progressive parties. Fundamentally, if Labour can’t pass a budget they can’t run the city. I really hope the Council Leader can show the integrity that’s now required and resign.”

The Greens Finance spokesperson, Alys Mumford, said that her reaction was a happy one. She said: “We obviously did some shenanigans, tactical voting, to ensure that the Labour budget didn’t pass. That’s because it said absolutely nothing about what we need to do to save the climate. They mentioned climate change twice and then moved on to talk about roads. It really is not good enough. The Liberal Democrats on the other hand had money in there for the climate initiative that we know we need.

“We are pleased that the Labour motion fell. That’s not how we like to do business and it’s obviously surprised quite a few people in the chamber but what we know we will now have is that Edinburgh will have a Climate Team and the resourcing to deal with the climate crisis. We clearly need some leadership and I am not calling on Cammy to resign but if I was in that

position I would be seriously considering what to do tonight, and be feeling a little bit foolish I think. What has been clear today has been that it was chaotic. Leadership has been absent throughout this entire process. We've been calling out for it and it hasn't been there. So something needs to change.

"We had confirmation that the climate team which was 11 strong has been decimated down to 3 people. We did some work and they need 8 staff. That is all it is to enable our 2030 climate obligations."

As we left the City Chambers most groups were having discussions among themselves about the consequences of today's decision.