

# **Council identifies funding to cover cuts to school budgets**

**'One-off' funding has been identified to prevent a cut of up to £8.2million being made in the budget for devolved school management (DSM) funds in Edinburgh schools.**

These funds are for head teachers to spend on wages for additional staff or pens and paper and classroom supplies – anything needed for their school.

Officials who put forward the cut for approval were told to take another look at the proposals, following claims that finance convener Cllr Mandy Watt had given assurances the money could be found without impacting other services.

The savings, proposed to help close a £20million budget gap ahead of the new financial year in April, would have caused reductions in the number of pupil support assistants and other staff and less funds for head teachers to spend on such classroom essentials.

As this proposal was discussed at the education committee members of teaching union EIS said many teachers were already “picking up the consequence of cuts elsewhere in the council”.



Education Committee meeting at City Chambers 23 January 2024  
Cllr Katrina Faccenda and EIS Edinburgh branch secretary  
Alison Murphy PHOTO ©2024 The Edinburgh Reporter

Edinburgh branch secretary Alison Murphy said many head teachers were already facing “incredible pressures” and being forced to make “frankly impossible choices” as a result of over a decade of cuts. Deputations from several parent councils also urged councillors to reject the plans.

However the cost-cutting measures were described as the “least worst options” by the council’s education director Amanda Hatton.

“We do have to make the budget balanced,” she told the committee on Tuesday, January 23, adding it was a “tight financial situation”.

The authority’s new finance director Richard Lloyd-Bithell said all departments were “sharing the burden and responsibility” to bridge the gap.

He said “one-off” options included using up reserve funds

and “re-profiling some payments we make for loan debt” but warned if the proposed education cuts were not approved as recommended this would “exacerbate the medium-term financial position and the budget gap”.

He said: “If these cuts are taken off the table they will exacerbate the medium-term picture and we will have to find alternative savings within the education budget or we would exhaust other resources that could be spent on other services across the council.”

Lib Dem councillor Louise Young asked for reassurances that dipping into reserves “wouldn’t have a knock on impact on other key services”.

Convener Cllr Joan Griffiths said: “I have been given assurance by the convener of finance and resources that that is the case.”

She added: “I asked the convener of finance and resources if there was funding and I was given assurances there was funding – that they could find the funding for the gap.”

Ms Hatton said she was unsure whether the full £8.2million cut could be mitigated with the ‘alternative’ funding identified. “We’d probably have to go away and have a look at that.”

The committee unanimously agreed a motion stating they were “unhappy recommending options that reduce education budgets” and to refer the final decision to the budget setting meeting on February 22.

In the meantime officials have been asked to ‘look to mitigate the cuts with one-off funding options as identified by the convener of finance and resources’.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

