

# **Administration budget will help poor and homeless – and the roads**

**The Labour Group's starting points in their 2022 manifesto of eradicating poverty and dealing with homelessness are priorities in their 2024/25 budget proposals. But more money will also be allocated to roads, paths and pavements.**

Council Leader, Cammy Day, is clear that the Labour Party which runs the council wants to discuss and talk with all of the other parties to use the budget in the best way possible, but there will have to be some cuts to services.

According to Cllr Day the reason for this is clear – The Scottish Government only funds Edinburgh to the extent of around £1800 per capita whereas other councils receive a rate which is around £500 higher.

Following discussions with finance staff at the council and his colleagues in the Labour group, the Council Leader explained his position to The Edinburgh Reporter.

He said: "My context as you know is that Edinburgh is the lowest funded council in Scotland.

"The national average per capita is around £2,500 and Edinburgh sits at just over £1800. So from the start of that

whole process we are an underfunded capital city. So we're accepting the council tax freeze at five per cent reluctantly, because we don't think it's fair to have an additional percentage added on and that the public suffer financially as a result of the SNP and Green government being unable to properly fund the council tax rise.

"It does however, mean we will be looking at some cuts in services and to make investments where we need to. We will save £16 million from pension contributions this year, which has no impact on recipients past or present. It's just that contributions can be reduced for one year only.

"We will reduce our use of contractors and agency staff to try and save some resource there. And we will of course, as always, not fill vacancies and take longer to recruit them to save some money along the way as well."

Associated to the freezing of council tax rates at five per cent the council will receive compensation from The Scottish Government of a similar sum – £16.1 million. But that may come with strings attached on what it can be spent on.

Cllr Day said: "Of course, I would rather have had the £16 million compensation we are to get from freezing the council tax, and I would much rather have had the ability to take the £16 million and use a small council tax rise on improving and delivering public services.

"I think the public expect to pay a bit more for council tax if we want to be able to provide continued investment in schools, in care for older people and investing in roads and footpaths and cycleways and investment in community services across the city."



Cllr Cammy Day Council Leader in Edinburgh

One of the biggest outcries over recent weeks has been from Willy Barr at the Citadel Youth Project which had its funding cut from £175,000 to just £50,000 without any transition whatsoever. Many other projects were not awarded the funding they asked for either, and the various charities and bodies were dismayed that at first all of the information was not laid out in the open. Even now the information which has been published does not tell the whole story. You can read the details of the Connected Communities Awards here.

The council finally shared details on Wednesday 30 January of their decisions made on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. You can read this here: [\(Public Pack\)Connected Communities Edinburgh Grant Programme – Appendix 4 – Recommended Awards Agenda Supplement for Education, Children and Families Committee, 18/12/2023 10:00](#)

The Labour Group want to try and put some of that right – but with a relatively small pool of money.

Cllr Day continued: "I think we've got a robust budget that also gives us a bit of capacity to invest £100,000 into the support projects who weren't successful in their bids to the Connected Community grants to see if there any projects who are in real trouble that we need to support.

"We will also excitingly put £25,000 or so into seed funding for the Big Hoose project in Edinburgh. We've had meetings with Gordon Brown and the people who run the Big Hoose in Fife to bring that model here to Edinburgh with Edinburgh Community Food Initiative. And so we're really excited about that."

The Big Hoose is a scheme to ensure that all households have vital household goods and it is supported by former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

Cllr Day said: "And we will of course, consider the [Regenerative Future Funds](#) approach in the north of the city when the report comes back to Policy and Sustainability in the next cycle.

"We had record spending last year, I think we nearly doubled in terms of our investment in roads and pavements and cycleways etc. And we are putting £12.5 million into that in each of the next three years investing nearly £50 million in improving the roads, footpaths, cycle routes, etc. in the city. Again I am quite excited with that. We're increasing the money we've got to put into homelessness services to support those who find themselves having to deal with that situation, and we are investing in a whole team of climate change net zero officers to ensure they can work with us to work towards an ambitious target of net zero by 2030."

This is perhaps offered as a concession to the Green Group who criticised Labour in 2023 for not addressing any climate or green measures in their spending plans at all. Labour also plan to spend around £750,000 on public toilets.

But it is poverty which concerns Day most. He said: "And some

of these measures I have spoken of before investing £100,000 into the community services, and the Big Hoose Project are initiatives we're using in responding to poverty in the city. And I still remain committed to eradication of poverty, net zero and getting our basic services right and I hope our budget reflects most of that.

"But again, the context that it's set in is us being the lowest funded Council in Scotland, a council tax freeze – people will have seen in the media that it is now in dispute between COSLA and The Scottish Government. And our call is of course that the Scottish Government should give the money to councils with freedom to allocate it and allow councils to increase council tax even if there is a cap on that potentially.

"So alongside that, we'll make the usual increases to fees and charges to try and bring in revenues to balance the budget again this year.

"I hope that we can, on that basis, garner the support of the other parties in the chambers. We will be negotiating with them over the next few days to see if we can get support for an administration budget, and of course accepting some key elements of other parties' budgets as well."

[The City of Edinburgh Council meets on 22 February](#) to set the budget for spending for the next year. The council budget is around £1 billion which it spends on trying to provide the 700 or so services which they are responsible for in Edinburgh.

[All of the parties have put forward their spending proposals a week ahead of the meeting and you can read them here.](#)