

# **Council budget agreed for the next financial year**

**The City of Edinburgh Council has agreed to retain council tax at the same rate in the capital for the next year, ensuring that it will receive in return £16.1 million from The Scottish Government in compensation.**

Band D council tax will be set at £1447.69 from 1 April 2024.

Around £27 million will be set aside for schools and young people and £12.5 million to spend on roads and pavements. £25,000 will be used as seed funding for The Big Hoose to help families in poverty to obtain household items, and around £3 million will be applied to funding to tackle homelessness. This part of the council budget rose to £64.5 million in the last financial year.

Parking charges in the city centre will rise by 22%, and monies will also be spent on climate improvements and coastal flood prevention.

The First Minister, Humza Yousaf, announced the council tax freeze in a surprise move at the SNP conference last autumn which provoked a stern response from councils and COSLA, the body which represents Scottish councils. COSLA said that the announcement made without consulting Council Leaders breached the Verity House Agreement signed between the councils and the government just last summer. The Deputy First Minister and

Finance Minister, Shona Robison [announced additional funding](#) overnight just ahead of the budget meeting.

All 63 councillors met (some of them still working from home) to fix the council's spending for next year, and it was the Labour administration, with amendments made by the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives whose proposals were backed by 34 votes.



Council Leader Cllr Cammy Day told The Edinburgh Reporter what the headlines of the administration budget are this year. He said: "We've reversed the £8 million of education cuts, we accept education is really important. We've put another £3.5 million into Edinburgh Leisure to make sure they can pay the real living wage and protect all our leisure facilities across the city. We've put over £12.5 million into fixing roads, pavements, footpaths, and encouraging active travel models across the city. We've just put an additional piece of money into welcoming The Big Hoose project into Edinburgh to help

deal with poverty and much, much more. Our budget's online, if you want to take a look at that. We've put £100,000 into helping any of the third sector projects who may be genuinely struggling but our budget's online and I would encourage people to have a look at that have not already done so."



Cllr Kevin Lang the Liberal Democrat group leader told us he was most happy about the provisions for bus services included in the budget. He said: "The budgets were published last week, and over the course of the last week, there's been a whole series of discussions between the political parties, and I'm very pleased that the Labour administration accepted the proposal from the Lib Dems to put in an extra £2 million into Edinburgh schools.

"And let me give you a really great example from my own ward. There's been a lot of concern over whether there was enough money in the budget to maintain the network of supported buses that exist across the city. These are buses that serve rural remote disadvantaged communities. But there was real concern that was not enough money to sustain these. Thanks to the Liberal Democrat amendment we've got extra money, hundreds of thousands of pounds more to make sure that not only do we retain those services, but we actually get extra new bus

services starting.”

Cllr Phil Duggart the Conservative Group finance spokesperson said: “I suppose the big one for us is looking at the impact of the service review in the homelessness service. We do waste a huge amount of money on what we provide.

“We’re firmly of the opinion that we would get much more value for money by having a deep review of the service. So that will cost money in the short term. But we think that the gains in the long term will be significant both in financial terms, but more importantly, in actually getting more people into the right type of accommodation rather than having to rely on temporary unsuitable short term solutions.

“The big thing that we can do is increase the number of properties that are available to the homelessness service, making sure that we have a very low void rate. It’s ridiculously high at the moment it should in practice. rather than no more than 3%, which is acceptable for allowing for turnover of people using the service. So we think that there’s huge opportunities afforded by reviewing what we do, how we do it, and making sure that we can provide a service that is appropriate for the people who need it.”



[The motion by the administration here](#) sets out the level of fees which the council will charge for everything from hiring the City Chambers to the charge for hiring a locker in the bus station – which has risen by around one third.