

# **Edinburgh residents facing another £30 million in cuts with schools and leisure centres set to be hit**

**Edinburgh residents are facing another £30 million in cuts as preparations for next year's budget get underway.**

The capital's public services are set to be slashed further as council chiefs attempt to balance the books once again – with schools and leisure centres set to be hit.

The looming financial black hole, which was revealed in a “sobering” report to councillors this week, is forecast to grow to an eye-watering £109m by 2028.

Approval was given to officials to explore “savings and efficiency initiatives, strategic investment opportunities and service transformation” to achieve £29.9m of cuts to the city's 2025-26 budget at the finance and resources committee on Tuesday, June 25.

However trade union Unite said there was “no amount of jiggery-pokery that can be done with the finances” as the council had already been “cut to the ribbons”.

The report said councillors would have to take “difficult decisions, such as prioritising statutory essential services which provide the greatest outcomes for the most vulnerable in our community” and “reducing levels of service where there is

a lower impact on the groups in greatest need”.

Neil Ross, Lib Dems, said it made for “sobering” reading.

He added: “And that hasn’t even given us all the detail that’s going to come forward in detailed proposals, so it’s going to be even more sobering in future.

“Clearly we’re facing a situation where over the next few years we have to realistically assess where we are and where we’re going.”

Finance chief Richard Lloyd-Bithell told councillors at the meeting doing nothing was “not an option”.

He said an increasing number of asylum seekers being placed in temporary accommodation due to UK-wide dispersal policy changes have resulted in additional pressure on homelessness services of over £6m.

“Demand has exponentially risen over the previous three years,” he said.

“This is a real, significant financial risk for the council that we need to take corrective action and investment and other mitigating actions to make sure this doesn’t become out of control.”

The funding shortfall does not include cuts of £5.2m to the city’s cash-strapped schools and £4.2m to leisure centres which were pencilled in for 2025-26 at this year’s budget meeting in February.

Mr Lloyd-Bithell said: “I think the approach we are outlining in the recommended option is the right one; taking a targeted risk and outcomes-based approach to how we deliver our services, either looking at best value and immediate, tactical plans to maintain service delivery to the best possible and provide the best outcomes that we can in the short-term is absolutely right.”

However Unite's City of Edinburgh Council Branch, which represents 1,500 local authority workers, said the actions proposed were "simply euphemisms for cuts".

Branch convener Graeme Smith said: "There is no amount of jiggery-pokery that can be done with the finances, there's no amount of redesign that can be done.

"We're at the point where any cut is going to harm workers and communities and the only way around that is by Holyrood properly funding local government."

He called on all councillors to "put as much pressure as they can on Holyrood for proper funding".

He added: "The reality is there perhaps are several savings that can be made, to which we have called for a workers' forum where we can take ideas from the shop floor to have these investigated.

"These include things like the council purchasing resources that aren't even used, the council purchasing incorrect resources.

"So there are very minuscule savings that can be made and the only way they're going to be made properly is through hearing the voices from the shop floor.

"However they're going to be a drop in the ocean compared to the amount of money that needs to be put into the council which has to come through Holyrood."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter