

EICC boss handed £52,000 bonus on top of his salary

The boss of a company owned by Edinburgh City Council has been given a bonus of almost £52,000 while the authority prepares to implement £109m of cuts.

Marshall Dallas, of the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC), was handed the sum on top of his £169,056 salary – which was also raised by £10k.

He was the only chief executive from the council's arms-length companies, which include Edinburgh Trams and Lothian Buses, to enjoy a bonus in 2023-24, annual accounts revealed.

Chas Booth, co-convener of the city's Green councillors group, said: "This is extremely disappointing news.

"At a time when vital services are facing disastrous underfunding from the council and government, it's right to question whether massive bonus payouts like this are acceptable."

The council is set to make £30m of cuts to public services next year – with the budget gap growing to £109m in the next five years, a report to this week's finance committee showed.

On top of this cuts of £5.2m to the city's cash-strapped schools and £4.2m to leisure centres are set to be made.

Dallas was previously criticised after getting a £72k bonus for 2022-23 – the highest awarded by any council in the UK in

that year – and a total remuneration package of £230,991.

EICC – which is owned by the local authority but operates commercially as an arms-length organisation (ALEO) – said this related to the development of its new 350-bed hotel and hotel school being built at Haymarket as well as “the operating performance of the conference centre”.

Documents revealing he enjoyed another substantial £51,904 bonus again last year said: “The bonus received by M Dallas covers both the operational and hotel elements of the EICC.”

An EICC spokesperson said: “The bonus is based on the delivery of key criteria and the operating performance of the business, which had a record year in 2023.”

Mr Dallas said: “We kept our sales team intact throughout the pandemic, which in retrospect was integral to our revenue performance last year because we were able to hit the ground running post-pandemic.”

Responding to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, the company highlighted it reported record revenue of £12.8 million for the year to 31st December 2023, along with record profits of £2.6 million.

It claimed the total economic impact to the city since the conference centre opened in 1995 was around £850 million.

Council leader Cammy Day said previously while pay awards were “a matter for EICC’s board” he did “not agree with bonuses like this in arms’ length companies”.

He added: “As a council we have publicly discussed and strongly urge restraint amongst these companies with regard to bonuses.”

Cllr Booth said: “We’re pleased that the council is undertaking a review of how arms-length organisations like EICC are managed and have pushed for guidance on whether

bonuses should be included in this.

“Greens believe that organisations which are wholly or partly owned by the council should be bound by the council’s own policies on issues like pay, equal opportunities and climate targets, and should exist to best serve the people of Edinburgh, not line the pockets of executives with bumper bonuses.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter