

Council urged to scrap cycle lane projects and low traffic neighbourhoods to save money

Scrapping cycle lane projects and low traffic neighbourhoods has topped the list of ways Edinburgh Council has been urged to cut back on costs.

The public were asked to suggest money-saving ideas in the face of £110m of cuts to the capital's services in the next five years.

An [online survey](#) and in-person engagement sessions gathered 2,849 responses – half of which raised concerns about the condition of the city's roads.

The council said it was the largest-ever response to a budget engagement process and the feedback has been “shared with services”.

However it added it was not a “representative sample of residents” and it was not possible to “extrapolate from this response what the views of all Edinburgh residents would be”.

Locals were asked several questions in relation to what the council's priorities should be when deciding the budget, including ‘where can we improve?’, ‘what ideas do you have for how the Council could save money?’ and ‘what service that you use or receive could the Council reduce or stop providing?’.

The most popular proposal to reduce costs, backed by 712

respondents, was to 'stop' controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) which are measures aimed at reducing through-traffic in some neighbourhoods, as well as Spaces for People, the council's active travel programme which has increased the number of cycle lanes and widened pavements in recent years.

'Reduce active travel' was in second place with 588 mentions, followed by 'cut managers / salaries' (255), 'stop Tram extension' (250), 'tourist tax' (243) and 'general efficiencies' (227).

A report said: "Most participants suggested that the council could and should save money by reducing spending on various activities intended to encourage active travel, discourage private car travel, extend the tram, or reduce the presence of polluting vehicles in the city centre.

"There was support for increasing council tax and parking charges for those who could afford to pay them instead of reducing services, which were already felt to be "cut to the bone".

"Participants called for a reduction in management at the Council, as well as generally making the organisation more efficient."

It added while many individual ideas were suggested, these were "often out-of-scope of council powers, or did not show a clear path to cost reduction or revenue increases".

Participants "strongly rejected the notion that any service could be stopped or reduced," the report continued. "Although participants had different priorities, and different perspectives on what basic services were, there was consensus that services had been under-funded and that more investment was needed."

Phase two of budget engagement will be themed around

“improving your neighbourhood” and entail focus groups with a range of age groups.

<https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/cg/budget-engagement-2024>

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter