

# Education cuts of up to £40m unveiled

Cuts of up to £40m to Edinburgh's education system are set to go before councillors, with schools set to have their budgets slashed further and vacancies left unfilled.

It comes as Edinburgh Council wrestles with a £110m deficit in the next five years, which bosses say requires difficult spending decisions to be taken in education – which makes up half of the authority's annual budget.

Proposals which could cut costs in the department by £6m in the current year and as much as £34m in the following two years up to March 2027 have been unveiled in a bid to balance the books.

They include introducing strict caps on how much schools can spend on printing, copying and stationery, reducing the number of staff responsible for monitoring and improving the quality of education, and slashing the budget available for providing transport to school for pupils with additional needs.

In an attempt to close this year's funding gap – which officials have blamed on a £7.9m cut to the city's early learning and childcare services by the Scottish Government – eligibility criteria for self-directed support payments is being reviewed and it is possible support will need to be prioritised for “those with substantial and critical need”.

And all education managers have been “asked to compile a list of posts where they can safely delay recruitment and maintain statutory service requirements” to save £1.5m in the next six months, a report said.

In addition bosses will seek to reduce the rate of staff sickness, which the council said cost the department £1.3m last month alone. Those responsible for teams with over 10 per cent sickness will be asked to develop a “wellness plan” to drive down absences and approval of supply workers and overtime will require sign off from more senior staff member than currently.

An £8.2 million cut to the funding allocated directly to headteachers for school improvement, which was postponed this year, will be reconsidered by councillors in February during the budget setting for 2025/26.

The council said savings could also be made by bringing more children in residential care placements outside the local authority back to Edinburgh, while allowing parents to purchase extra hours for their children in nurseries could bring in £400k this year with “potential for a significant increase in income generation in future years”.

Joan Griffiths, education convener, said: “We are where we are because of the lack of funding coming from the Scottish Government, that’s the situation we’re in.

“Education, children and families have been protected for a lot of years.

“Last year the savings that came forward, we didn’t take them. What officers have done here is given us as elected members the least worst options.

“But if we don’t take them, if when we do our budgets we decide not to, we have to think where else is it coming from? Because it has to come from somewhere because of the

devastation in local government funding.

“It’s up to us as elected members – there’s also a list that we could ask for more information on, and if we think we don’t want what’s in the reports we can have a look at other items.

“Whatever we do, there will be a lot of unhappy people. But the thing we want to do, whatever roads we decide to take we will always try to do what is best for our children and young people.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter