

Petition calling for a recycling centre in East Lothian to be reopened has been rejected.

A petition calling for a recycling centre in East Lothian to be reopened has been rejected.

More than 2,000 people signed the petition calling on the council to open the Macmerry centre, which has been mothballed since October 2023.

The council took the decision to keep it closed this year as part of its budget cuts – saving around £75,000.

Local Conservative MSP Craig Hoy launched the petition, calling for the decision to be reversed. He said residents had reported more incidents of fly-tipping and faced almost twice the length of journey to take rubbish to the remaining centres.

And presenting his case to the council's petitions committee, he said: "I launched this petition not off my own back but because people came to me to directly share their concerns."

Mr Hoy said his petition, which gathered 2,168 signatures, gathered a third of its support from the Haddington area, where council headquarters are based. With around 22 per cent from the Tranent and Macmerry area.

And he urged the committee to take the decision back to full council to overturn it.

However council leader Norman Hampshire (Labour)accused the former councillor who stepped down after being elected to the Scottish Parliament of bringing the petition for 'political purposes' asking where the money would come from to reopen the centre.

Mr Hoy told the meeting that the Conservative councillors had offered alternative solutions to the budget which would have freed up money for Macmerry.

He said: "There was the option to restructure the planning service with a saving of £200,000, there was also a proposal from the Conservative group to streamline management saving another £100,000.

"I greatly respect the work of everyone who works for the council but I think if you ask residents struggling to get to the recycling centres whether they would opt for Macmerry reopening or keeping two middle managers they would opt for greater access to recycling."

The council currently has three centres in the county at North Berwick, Dunbar and Wallyford.

Councillor Hampshire told the meeting that he was on record as saying the county needs another recycling site but said: "The reason we can't proceed with that is the financial situation.

"The Conservative group did propose alternatives to our budget which would have allowed Macmerry to open but they were proposing taking £1million from Enjoy Leisure. That would have resulted in the closure of two swimming pools.

"Do you think people in Haddington, Tranent and North Berwick would be happy if their swimming pool closed so Macmerry could remain open? I don't think so, you have to get real.

"I cannot support this petition, I think it has been purely done for political purposes rather than community benefit."

Councillor Jeremy Findlay, Conservative, raised a point of order on the council leader's comments saying "there has been no evidence that this petition is political".

Councillor John McMillan , Labour, told the meeting he was sorry when he heard about Macmerry being mothballed saying: "Although I was disappointed I think it was the right decision. There has been inconvenience, but purely inconvenience."

The petition was rejected by three votes to one with Councillor Findlay supporter it and councillors McMillan, Hampshire and Lee-Anne Menzie rejecting it.