

# **Edinburgh Council urged to pull out of Cosla**

**Edinburgh council should pull out of a partnership with other Scottish councils to get the best settlement from the Scottish Government, it has been suggested.**

At present, Edinburgh's funding from Holyrood is settled through negotiation the government holds with Cosla, a partnership between Scotland's 32 local authorities.

But Edinburgh's Conservative group says in its budget motion that what Edinburgh gets from these negotiations is not enough – and that leaving the body could give the city more flexibility in other areas.

This year, Edinburgh is projected to get the lowest amount of funding per person of any council in Scotland, with the city set to receive £2009.2 per head – just 73.5% of the national average.

Conservative councillor Phil Daggart said: "Edinburgh is not well funded – we do not get what we need. We're also a special case.

"It's not dissimilar to the relationship between London and the rest of England – housing costs are higher, there's a massive centralisation of some professions. You're the centre of law, centre of government, financial services, a lot of it is based in Edinburgh.

"I think if we're not bound by the restrictions that we're

under when it comes to Cosla, then we could probably get a better deal out of this.”

Cosla negotiates with the Scottish Government every year to determine how much each council will receive from Holyrood.

Four Labour-run councils – including Glasgow City Council, Scotland’s biggest – left the body in 2015, but rejoined in 2017.

Doggart says this is proof that departing from Cosla “can be done”, continuing: “I think if we were willing to have confidence in our ability to negotiate with the Scottish Government, then I think that it would give us a different perspective.”

He also said that leaving Cosla, even if it did not lead to increased funding settlements from Holyrood, would have benefits in letting the council pay staff different rates than those that come from agreements with the organisation.

Doggart said: “It would allow us to pay people what we think we need, because at the minute, we’re in competition with all the local authorities around Edinburgh.

“If I were a social worker bringing up a family, I would probably go live in East Lothian or Midlothian, because it’s an awful lot cheaper to live there.

“I would also get a job with that council, because I’m going to get paid the same – so why should I live in the place that’s going to cost me an awful lot more?

“Or why would I travel to the place that’s going to incur traveling costs when I can do the job and have lower living costs, and a higher standard of living, just outside the city?”

By Joseph Sullivan, Edinburgh Local Democracy Reporter