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Budget Engagement Question Time 2017

Questions & Answers

PREPARED BY STRATEGY AND INSIGHT



QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES MADE

Housing and Economy Committee

Questions regarding the Transient Visitor Levy: How could we maximise more the income that could be generated from the large number of tourists visiting Edinburgh? Can the city impose a tourist tax and why is it not doing so. Is there a legal impediment? A relatively modest tax could raise a substantial amount of money to finance the very services that tourists benefit from... good roads, public toilets, clean streets

Response:

- The transient visitor levy, also known as bed, city tax or tourism tax, is a charge levied on users of paid visitor accommodation. This could for example, raise funds ring-fenced for investment in the visitor economy.
- Tourism levies operate in many European cities including Paris, Rome, Budapest, Lisbon, Prague and Berlin, as well as global cities like New York.
- The main obstacle to an Edinburgh tourism levy is that this would require new primary legislation. There are no statutory Tourism levies in the UK, although there are several “opt out” voluntary schemes, such as Gleneagles’ “Big Tree Country scheme.’
- The City of Edinburgh Council agreed, as part of their 52 commitments, to continue to make a case to the Scottish Government for the introduction of an Edinburgh transient visitor levy. This commitment featured in the Council Programme for the Capital.
- Edinburgh is a major tourist destination for those domestically and overseas. Edinburgh draws in more overseas visitors per year than any other UK city outside of London. Edinburgh also hosts major cultural festivals every year, a recent economic impact study concluded that Edinburgh’s 12 festivals generated £280m to the economy in 2015.

Question: The Council needs to raise money to pay for services etc. Why not offer Rosewood Hotels the City Chambers for their luxury hotel rather than the Royal High - this would satisfy everyone and bring in significant money to the Council. Then redeploy staff in the City Chambers to modern offices outwith the City Centre where a deal could be done on rent etc.

Response: In the last ten years the Council has closed several buildings in the City Chambers complex such as Anchor Close, 6 Cockburn Street, Advocates Close, 329 High Street and Lothian Chambers. The original Chambers building is deemed common good. The effect of this is that any return (revenue or capital) would be ring fenced for common good and would not make any impact of the Council’s wider revenue/budget position.

Question: Do you believe it's right to begin designing a new Economic Strategy for the city with its first concrete principle being "the department that delivers this will be cut by £500,000?"

Response: The review of the economy strategy will set out priorities for the Council and its partners to work together more effectively to ensure everyone benefits from the growth of the city economy. The proposed reduction in the budget represents less than 5% of the direct costs of the economic development service. Given the range of council priorities and the relative health of the city economy this is a reasonable approach to take. Working with partners the council will prioritise resources to maximise the impact of its approach to support innovation and tackle inclusion.

Planning Committee

Question: With never ending projects such as student flats, trams for tourists, Christmas markets, foreign property developers when will the council invest in the people who actually live here?

Response: Planning's remit is supportive in respect of the Council's investment in the City's residents. The five core aims of the Local Development Plan (LDP) help outline how the Council's Planning Service indirectly manages private sector investment in new development for the benefit of the City's residents through the planning process.

The five core aims of LDP promote:

1. support the growth of the city economy
2. help increase the number and improve the quality of new homes being built:
3. help ensure that the citizens of Edinburgh can get around easily by sustainable transport modes to access jobs and services
4. look after and improve our environment for future generations in a changing climate; and
5. help create strong, sustainable and healthier communities, enabling all residents to enjoy a high quality of life.

Furthermore, the increasing use of the Local Development Plan Action Programme will help to secure direct investment in schools, roads and other transport requirements, green space and primary healthcare infrastructure through developer contributions in association with individual developments.

Question: In light of the award-winning extension to Dunfermline Carnegie Library, recently voted the best building in Scotland, what vision does the Council have for the future development of Edinburgh Central Library?

Response: The Council commissioned a feasibility study to look at future transformation of the Carnegie Central Library building, to reflect the changing role of libraries in the 21st century and to meet changing customer needs and expectations. The study suggested a cost for the transformation. Currently the cost of this project is an 'unfunded budget pressure' for the Council. The feasibility report is a public document and if the person wishes to have a copy it could be supplied.

Transport and Environment Committee

Question:

- 1) **Why are you going to charge £25 per garden waste bin when you cannot offer a reliable service at present? The 3-week system has been very unreliable and there have been many delayed and missed collections. People give up reporting missed bins because it's all online and people give up.**
- 2) **If you charge for garden waste surely there is an increased risk of pollution across the city as many people will burn their waste. If you have 2 bins it will cost £50! and no guarantee of reliable service.**
- 3) **How can the council possibly justify moving to a 4-day week for waste collections when they cannot provide a reliable service over 5 days?**

Response:

1. Garden waste is seasonal and heavily influenced by the weather, unlike all other services, so the number of bins presented for collection can vary. With a commercial service there is increased clarity as to the numbers of households using the service and the number of bins being presented at each household. This makes service delivery planning much more effective. For those households that opt to pay the frequency of service would increase to a fortnightly collection and we believe will be much more reliable. Garden waste is one of the few waste types for which a charge can be permitted and a number of neighbouring authorities are also consulting on similar proposals.
2. Within the charging proposal it is recognised not every resident will sign up to pay for the service and alternative methods of disposal of garden waste will be used however it is unlikely that burning of garden waste will be a widespread issue.
3. One of the key factors in providing a reliable service is vehicle availability. Currently vehicles are employed collecting bins five days per week from 0600 to 2230, Monday to Friday. If vehicles suffer breakdown or other mechanical issues then collection routes, and customers, suffer. Scheduled vehicle servicing also impacts on completion of bin collections. Moving to a 4-day week and changing the shift pattern (to 0630 – 1700) allows for vehicle servicing and inspections to be carried out on the day no collections are due. In addition, and particularly over the winter months, collections carry on late into dark evenings to reduce the number of evening collections to improve reliability and safety.

Question:

1. **Why when we need to make savings on services it's always the ground/frontline staff that are cut or have their wages slashed? I don't understand that while Edinburgh's population is increasing our services are continually being axed. If you want to save money do it from the top heavy senior management and leave our workforce alone. If you really want to decrease sickness levels stop putting more and more work on these staff for less money or support, it's now so bad that person working in frontline services are doing the work of four! Surely for a capital city infrastructure the services most important are in waste management after all it's intended to reduce any adverse effects of all waste on health, environment or aesthetics. The staff within these sectors are the most important, without them cleaning up the city or manning the recycling centres then the waste would impact on all other areas.**

2. **Will you be replacing the agency staff with a full-time workforce or just removing these people all together leaving any full-time staff to take the brunt yet again?**
3. **If you change the shift pattern of these staff, will they be losing more money but again be doing more because the agency staff have now gone? Like I said it's the frontline staff that always face these cuts but the top heavy senior management that make all the wrong decision, but get pay increases. Please remember all these workers have families. Stop treating them as pawns in a political game.**

Response:

1. The Transformation Programme aimed to deliver a lean and agile Council, centred on customers, services and communities. The savings targets that Directors were asked to deliver were based on an assumed saving of 27% of management and 15% of frontline staff costs. The Council is currently implementing an improvement plan for Waste and Cleansing Services – regular update reports are considered by Transport & Environment Committee. The Council also supports its lowest paid staff through paying the Living Wage, which we adopted in 2013 because it aligns with our values and aspirations as an employer. Our living wage salary for full time employees is £15,986, from 1 April 2017. All employees earning below this threshold receive a top-up to this amount. For our lowest paid this means an extra £2,950 per year in addition to their basic salary.
2. It is intended to recruit permanent employees, reducing the use of agency staff who have historically been used to fill vacancies within the service as well as to cover for sickness and holidays across depots. The resource plan for the service will allow for holiday and sickness cover and will therefore create a more stable, sustainable workforce.
3. We recognise the important work that our Waste and Recycling staff do, and also value our staff having a positive work/life balance. The proposals to alter shift patterns for some refuse collection staff is designed to provide a better, more consistent service to customers at the same time as creating a rota which will benefit our staff by creating a fixed shift pattern. Waste and Recycling collection staff affected by the four-day week proposals will not see a pay reduction and will benefit from the change of shift pattern which will not fluctuate from week to week.

Question: Cycling in Edinburgh can often feel precarious with major pot holes along all the main roads, inadequately maintained cycle lanes plus dealing with aggressive bus and cab drivers along Haymarket and Princes Street. Are there plans within the budget to improve road safety for the city's cycling community and make Edinburgh a cycle friendly city in the future?

Response: The Council has committed 10% of its net transport budget will be spent on cycling each year over the course of this administration. This commitment was made to improve conditions for cyclists across the city, in line with the Active Travel Action Plan, which sets out a series of actions aimed at increasing the levels of walking and cycling in Edinburgh. In addition, the Council is to invest £100m in roads and pavements over the next 5 years. This will include road and pavement maintenance, installing more pedestrian crossings, increasing the number of dropped kerbs and dedicate safer foot and cycle paths as well as introducing more pedestrian zones. Last year the Council adopted a new, preventative approach to planned maintenance, aimed increasingly at roads that are starting to deteriorate. Investment on these roads requires less expensive treatments (e.g. surface dressing, slurry sealing), which improve the condition of the carriageway or footway and delay the need for more expensive resurfacing

or strengthening treatments. This allows more roads to be treated each year. An additional £2.5m has also been allocated this year for reactive maintenance such as emergency repairs, permanent patching and renewing road markings.

Question: From reading documents, I do not see a thorough review of transport projects that are on the go ie Roseburn to Leith cycle path link up. Is this needed? Can these transport projects not be reviewed and stopped? They will cost a lot and local residents don't want them. I am a cyclist and a motorist. The provision with 20 speed limit and cycle lanes and paths is already really good. Make savings by not introducing road changes that are not required with lengthy consultation process. How many people will benefit Vs the cost? If the cycle path is for health reasons would it not benefit more people to keep this money and invest it into Edinburgh leisure rather than pulling back on their funds?

Response: The Council is investing £100m in roads and pavements over the next 5 years to improve road and pavement conditions, installing more pedestrian crossings, increasing the number of dropped kerbs and dedicate safer foot and cycle paths as well as introducing more pedestrian zones. In addition the Council guarantees to spend 10% of the transport budget on improving cycling in the city.

The Local Transport Strategy 2014-19 sets out the transport policies and actions that will contribute to the Council's vision of Edinburgh as a thriving, successful and sustainable capital city. In developing and reviewing this strategy (the next review is due in 2018) Elected Members, Stakeholders and members of the public have the opportunity to comment on the plans and to feed in their own ideas on spending priorities.

There are also a number of action plans e.g. Road Safety Plan for Edinburgh to 2020, Active Travel Action Plan, Public and Accessible Transport Action Plan and Parking Action Plan which will subsequently be reviewed.

Question: How can Edinburgh Council tackle energy wastage and economising with regards its own utility bill?

Response: The Council has a number of targeted programmes focused on reducing energy consumption across its estate. This includes projects such as the Council's £2.6m RE:FIT programme, where energy efficiency works are being installed across 9 key Council properties. The project will deliver financial savings in excess of £300k and reduce CO2 emission by over 1,100 tonnes a year. The Council is also investing in the control and management of heating and ventilation plant within buildings to introduce demand based energy strategies and bring existing up to current best practice.

Question: How can the council justify spending millions on the tram extension, which no one wants and when the enquiry into the previous debacle has not reported, yet expect the public to have these cuts imposed upon us.

Response: The Council approved an outline business case in September 2017 to progress to procurement of contractors and the results of this process will be reported to Council in the last quarter of 2018. It will be at this stage that any decision to progress with an extension to the existing tram provision would be made.

Question: If you are serious about car pollution, especially diesel vehicles, why aren't you looking at a congestion charging zone, instead of using diesel concerns as an excuse to raise a new tax on local residents? It's people bringing cars into the city that are the problem, not locals whose cars are parked on the street most of the time.

Response: The Council considered congestion charging in 2004 and, following a referendum, the proposal was rejected and there has been no decision to re-look at the issue again. The Transport and Environment Committee approved commencement of a piece of work to discuss with citizens what the city centre should look like in the future and transport will form an important part of these discussions.

The Council is currently considering how it can tackle pollution, enhance air quality and improve the health of people living and working in the city. With an estimated 8,000 diesel permit holders' vehicles in Edinburgh, one option being considered is the introduction of a diesel surcharge which may encourage some residents to consider alternative vehicle choices when they come to purchase their next vehicle. A consultation is currently underway on the Council's website and all of the feedback will be presented to a future meeting of the Transport and Environment Committee for approval.

The consultation questionnaire is available online at: <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/parking-permit-diesel-surcharge/>.

Question: When will this anti-car Council stop seeing the motorist as a cash cow? What pollution does a parked vehicle, be it diesel or petrol, cause?

Response: The Council's transport policies are to encourage active travel and public transport while at the same time keeping the city moving. The Council has a responsibility to improve air quality in the city and has put in a progressive residents' permit parking regime to encourage people to purchase less polluting vehicles in the city. The current consultation on creating a diesel surcharge is predicated on the potential to improve air quality by encouraging car owners to consider alternative vehicle choices in future.

Question: Why are the Council not outsourcing the bin collections?

Response: The Council Commitment (50) is to continue the policy of no compulsory redundancy and to keep a presumption in favour of in-house service provision. Investment in the waste service is ongoing and improvements continue to be made. Continuing to deliver the service in-house allows for more flexibility in making changes to services which might not be possible if the service is contracted out to the private sector. The Council looks to other local authorities and the private sector to share best practice to ensure improvements are being made.

Question: Will the council offer more than its current offering of service contracts for private and commercial premises, preventing problems with pests, namely herring gulls which are growing annual scourge in Edinburgh and suburbs.

Response: The Council does offer a comprehensive, commercial pest control service, available to private and commercial premises and includes a gull de-nesting service.

Question: Why are pedestrians and motorists being ignored, and why is all the money being spent on cycle lanes when there are other services (i.e. care and disability) that need money invested in them?

Response: The Council has committed £100m maintenance of carriageways and footways over the next 5 years. The Active Travel Action Plan sets out actions for both cyclists and pedestrians. Starting from a very low base the Council has though set an ambitious target for cycling in the city of 10% of all trips by 2020 and has set aside 10% of its net transport budget to achieve this. Details, including specific actions for pedestrians, can be found in the Active Travel Action Plan.

Question: I would like to know about the plans of making Edinburgh a cycle friendly city. There is a lot of good work already set in place for bike paths, however, there are many cyclists that have no access to one on their commute to work. Road maintenance and cooperation with drivers is pivotal in ensuring everyone's safety. I have recently had an accident because I fell in a pothole after a driver didn't give me space. I would very much like to be part of a constructive conversation. I am sure that there are many that would like to help.

Response: The Council's Active Travel Plan includes targets and improvements for cycling in the city and 10% of the net Transport budget for the city is dedicated to cycling.

Question: Proposal 26 should be reviewed or dropped as almost all people in the city see that the picking up of garden waste as part of their council tax bill. Keeping this bill will have major impact in some key area's and probably cost the council more to fix. 1: More fly tipping and more obvious to locals as it would come into the centres 2: Local streets becoming untidy as residents do less to look after gardens, especially if there is no car or van belonging to a household member. 3: Traffic congestion as garden waste drop off. Instead of a truck bringing in a streets worth it would be more cars or vans. What will the council do to make sure that none of the above issues will affect the local community if they go ahead with this change to Garden refuse collection?

Response: There are over 240,000 households in Edinburgh, but only approximately 150,000 are able to use the garden waste service. Research from other councils that already charge for garden waste collections has shown that there is no significant increase in fly-tipping and the total tonnage of garden waste does not decrease significantly. Community Recycling Centres already collect several thousand tonnes of garden waste and will be able to accommodate increased tonnages.

Culture and Communities Committee

Question: Are you in favour of the method used to create Localities?

Response: Yes. Localities and what feeds into them will provide the opportunity to enliven and encourage local people to make their voices heard. The localities model of service delivery is an important priority for the Council, providing improved opportunities for partnership working and achieving more responsive services based on citizen/community needs.

Question: Edinburgh has lagged behind other cities such as Manchester and Glasgow as a city without a large-scale music venue. What proposals are on the table to attract the best musical culture to the city over and above the current festival offering.

Response: The infrastructure for live music in the city is generally considered weak in comparison to other comparator cities, this can be as a result of changes in provision in the private sector as well as the public sector. For example, with the closure of The Picture House on Lothian Road at the end of 2013, the city was deprived of a mid-scale rock and pop venue resulting in a negative cultural and economic impact for Edinburgh. Mid-scale (c1,000-1,500) now do travel to other Scottish cities, and the Queen's Hall and Liquid Rooms pick up sub 1000 level artists. However, the scene is not all negative. There is a range of venues from small scale (Sneaky Pete's) to larger ones (Usher Hall, Corn Exchange and most recently Leith Theatre coming back in to temporary use) so there are positives.

There have been regular attempts to bring a large-scale venue of the Hydro/Arena size to Edinburgh but these have not materialised into a firm proposition. Edinburgh is not a big city and its drive time reach for larger audiences quickly gravitates towards Glasgow from a geographical reach - the question arises as to whether the central belt can sustain 2 arenas. There are examples around the world of arenas existing in close proximity but it would require private equity/investment to make happen.

IMPACT Scotland has been successful in raising funding for the development of a new year-round mid-scale venue for chamber music and a new home for Edinburgh's only national performing arts company, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. With a proposed capacity of 1,000 this will provide a world class home for classical chamber and other styles of music as well as community engagement. With the re-opening of St Cecilia's Hall and the potential music school development at the old Royal High School, further venue opportunities exist going forward.

There are also major outdoor music events (Castle Concerts, Ross Bandstand) and the potential of the new Ross Pavilion to play a key role in delivering high profile concerts in future.

Question: How can the council benefit from the wealth generated by the festival and other events in the city?

Response: While the Council doesn't directly benefit financially, there is strong evidence that the economic and social fabric of the city does. To highlight the proven benefits of the festivals, the most recent Edinburgh Festival Impact Study reported in 2015 included the following key findings:
The Festivals

- act as economic powerhouses generating impact of £280m in Edinburgh and £313m in Scotland, representing an increase of 19% and 24% respectively on the previous 2010 study, and primarily benefiting businesses in the tourism sector
- serve as tourism gateways, with more nights spent elsewhere in Scotland by festival audiences than in the 2010 study
- position the city region as a leading international destination with 94% of respondents stating that the Festivals are part of what makes Edinburgh special as a city
- present unique cultural experiences with 92% of respondents stating that the Festivals were 'must see' events that gave them the chance to see things they would not otherwise see
- create a sense of civic pride with 89% of local festival goers agreeing that the Festivals increased their pride in Edinburgh as a city, reinforcing the findings of the recent Edinburgh People Survey

And the 2016 Edinburgh People Survey findings included:

- 62% of respondents attended a festival in the city in the last 2 years
- 80% of respondents believe the festivals make Edinburgh a better place to live
- 71% of respondents have attended a cultural event or venue in the last year

A proposal for what is known as a Transient Visitor Levy has been regularly discussed. This mechanism has been applied in many other major destination cities across the world. It involves a minor additional charge to visitors on departing from their tourist accommodation. This directly benefits the relevant Council's, or equivalent body's, ability to directly improve quality of the city's public realm, city promotion and cultural investment and activity throughout these cities. The introduction of such a levy would require agreement and process approvals from the Scottish Government as well as the Council. Examples of cities which have introduced a levy include New York, Barcelona, Florence, Paris and Berlin.

Question: How can you justify cuts to the proposed budgets of Edinburgh Leisure and yet throw money away at the extension of the tram down Leith Walk?

Response: The Council is having to make some difficult decisions across all service areas but also to invest in major projects that will bring benefit to the city.

Question: I am physically disabled and would like to ask firstly, if the new proposals are passed, how I'm expected to pay for my bin collection when I'm on ESA/Income Support, and secondly are you going to change Ainslie Park opening times? I am a student who works very hard, but I like to go to the gym in the evening after a long day's work. My ideal is to leave for the gym round about 8pm/8:30pm, so why should the gym close earlier than 10pm when many active people wish to exercise late? It's not my fault if I can't get my work done quicker because I am a slow typer due to my disability. If I have an equal right alongside everyone else to use the gym, then I should get to use it after 8:30pm or 9pm.

Response: Decisions relating to charging structures, and any relevant discounts will be considered within the implementation plans currently being developed. Any decision to change opening hours of Edinburgh Leisure facilities will be made by them and communicated to service users.

Question: I want to know how the Council will continue to provide Edinburgh Leisure facilities at the current level or better (there is very high demand) and what other services might be sacrificed if that is necessary.

Response: The Council will continue to prioritise access to sports facilities within the resources available and is looking to invest in new facilities eg Meadowbank and in the new schools

Question: I would like the panel to reassure the sports clubs in Edinburgh that they will not have to pay additional costs to hire Edinburgh Leisure facilities because of proposed cuts to the Edinburgh Leisure budget.

Response: The costs of accessing Edinburgh Leisure facilities will be determined by Edinburgh Leisure and any changes will be communicated by them to their customers.

Question: What does the council think would be the impact of their budget cuts to Edinburgh Leisure in terms of the cost of accessing Edinburgh Leisure services by the paying public and do they not think that reducing access to leisure facilities at a time of rising inactivity and obesity will inevitably lead to increased overall costs in the long term to the council.

Response: The proposed reduction in service payment to Edinburgh Leisure should not result in reductions in participation in sport and physical activity but the need to ensure maximum use of the existing and newly built facilities.

Question: What steps are you taking to ensure the local communities are being consulted and provided with resources which are priorities for them?

Response: Involving communities in identifying their priorities to achieve better outcomes for their area is core to the localities approach and community planning. A wide variety of ways are provided to enable communities to participate, whether as part of ongoing dialogue on issues that matter to them or as part of dedicated engagement exercises. A recent example would be the development of the Locality Improvement Plans which is a key element of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. Across the city a wide variety of methods were used to engage as many citizens as possible in identifying their priorities and outcomes. This included specific work to target citizens and communities that don't traditionally engage. The new system which will include Localities Committees and a network of participative structures which will feed local knowledge and priorities into them. The principle is to devolve as much decision making to as local a level as possible.

Question: When will the council improve the service for non-English communities in Edinburgh, as for now it is really difficult for them to have access to those services, via the website. Increasing the website access will give Non-English speakers more access to services like Environmental, Housing and social. The community's representatives like Embassies and Consulates are willing to work closely with the council on this issue. At the moment to have access to other languages on the council website is very difficult and it takes a lot of time.

Response: The Council is committed to improving access to essential services and as part of our ongoing improvement programme we are planning to review website access for Non-English-speaking citizens. In the meantime, the Council has a dedicated interpretation & translation service that supports non-English-speaking Communities in Edinburgh.

Question: Events such as the Stockbridge Market require vendors to travel in from other parts of Edinburgh with their goods. Thus, these events require people to be able to park nearby with their goods. These events are good for local people and local businesses, with increased access to

bespoke goods and increased footfall in the area. With your recent changes in the parking rules for Sunday, what steps are you taking to ensure that these events continue operate as they do?

Response: With seven-day trading, traffic conditions on a Sunday are generally similar to those on any other day of the week. It is necessary to ensure a safe and efficient operation and therefore waiting restrictions and parking charges are introduced from lunchtime until early evening on Sundays. Vehicles associated with these events will need to comply with the restrictions in place and find suitable parking locations. Council officers are engaging with local businesses in affected areas to discuss the proposed changes and potential impacts.

Question: Why are Edinburgh Leisure facilities not as affordable and profitable as its local private competitors? Is there room to have more collaboration between the health and leisure sectors? For example, prescribing exercise which has enormous mental and physical health benefits?

Response: There is a wide range of providers across the city and private competitors will do just that i.e. compete for customers. There are opportunities to explore social prescribing and these will be progressed.

Question: What steps will the council take, in partnership with Edinburgh Leisure, to ensure that if there is a reduction in facilities availability as a result of the proposed maintenance charge that this reduction does not impact the communities which are already worst served in terms of leisure facilities? Similarly, if Edinburgh Leisure seeks to pass on the additional cost to service users, what will the Council do to ensure communities which are least able to afford an additional cost are not priced out of public facilities?

Response: We will work with Edinburgh Leisure to agree any changes to the scope of the facilities that they manage on behalf of the Council and will look to prioritise the needs of those who could most benefit from access.

Finance and Resources Committee

Question: Essential social and educational services have already been cut to the bone. How are your constituents' needs going to be met with the enormous cuts you are planning?

Response: It is clear that the Council faces a significant challenge as a result of rising demand for services and reductions in funding. Through a range of measures including re-designing services to make them more efficient, managing our contracts and increasing income we aim to reduce our spending and maintain services for the city. In the current financial year, £227m is being spent on schools, over £70m on children's social work and £170m on care services for older people and those with physical and/or learning disabilities. Over the past five years, we asked residents and our partner organisations about what matters most – which services we should be prioritising and how we can deliver services in different ways. This means that we can address our budget challenges with a good understanding of what is important to constituents.

Question: How is it even remotely credible that Edinburgh can cut so many millions from its budget and still maintain decent services? At what point will Edinburgh look at serious revenue raising measures, especially a tourist tax, to help protect services? For SNP and Labour councillors: how can you claim to be anti-austerity and put forward a budget like this?

Response: It is clear that the Council faces a significant challenge as a result of rising demand for services and reductions in funding. Through a range of measures including re-designing services to make them more efficient, managing our contracts and increasing income we aim to reduce our spending and maintain services for the city. We are committed to exploring, with the Scottish Government, the potential to introduce a transient visitor levy – which would require legislation.

Question: How much of the annual budget is spent on external consultants/contractors? If a % of this was spent on hiring these specialists/bringing teams back in house full time on competitive salaries, would there be a saving?

Response: Revenue expenditure of £6.847m and capital expenditure of £2.877m was incurred on consultants for the year ended 31 March 2017. This equates to less than 1% of the revenue budget and just under 1.5% of the capital budget. The figures are reported to the Finance & Resources Committee each year in September. The Council contracts services from professional service providers, reducing the requirement to employ permanent staff for short-term specialised activities and to mitigate the Council's exposure to potential liabilities. Some of the one-off revenue costs on external professional support incurred in 2016/17 helped to achieve delivery of major Council projects, including the Commercial Excellence and Transformation Programme projects, which have been progressed to achieve significant future years' savings.

Question: Over the years, seen steady fall in services of Library, parks and other services in Edinburgh need additional funding to maintain services. This in main can only be provided by central government. What representation have been made to Scottish Government.

Response: The local government settlement is negotiated with the Scottish Government via COSLA rather than directly by the Council. However, Councillors do meet MSPs from time to time and will use the opportunity to raise particular concerns as appropriate. The Council also supports wider moves to empower local government and its communities, including considering means of increasing fiscal autonomy and introducing additional local taxes where these can be demonstrated to benefit citizens, visitors and those who live and invest in our cities.

Question:

- 1. The budget details that the council will review home-to-school travel arrangements. What about the vast number of students across the city who cannot receive the required preparation for their positive destination, their subject choices, at their own school and have to travel to schools, perhaps on the other side of the city?**
- 2. Is the council at all worried about possible negative externalities regarding imposing charges on the responsible disposal of waste?**
- 3. What evidence does the council have to detail the price elasticity of demand of tickets for entry to the Scott Monument and justify this increase?**
- 4. How will the expertise of the external consultants shed from the budget be replaced by the council's own staff?**
- 5. Where does school expansion to deal with exceedingly high S1 intakes to come, with schools, their buildings and staffing already strained by their high pupil roll, and buildings being unfit for purpose, come into the council's plans?**
- 6. In increasing all council tax bands by 3%, citing inflationary pressures as a cause, how will homeowners see the benefit of further strain on their incomes at a rate above the rate of inflation?**

Response:

1. The costs of travel to an alternative venue for a young person's core curriculum would be covered by the school's budget.
2. Based on the experience of other local authorities, the Council has assumed that a significant number of residents (50% - 70%) will not sign up to the proposed charges and those who don't will dispose of their garden waste in other ways (e.g. home compost, using the community recycling centres, landfill).
3. Competitor analysis has shown that a price of £5.00 significantly undervalues the experience offered at the Scott Monument. Prices for other city centre paid attractions range from a low of £5.00 at John Knox House to a high of £18.50 at Edinburgh Zoo, with most standard admission rates at significantly over £10.00 (e.g. at Camera Obscura, Royal Yacht Britannia, Real Mary Kings Close, Our Dynamic Earth, Scotch Whisky Experience and Edinburgh Castle). Even smaller attractions such as Gladstone's Land, The Georgian House, Craigmillar Castle, Gilmerton Cove and the Glasshouse at the Royal Botanic Garden all charge 20-30% more than the current standard rate at The Scott Monument. A new Scott Monument experience has been piloted in November 2018, providing visitors with the opportunity to experience a guided tour from level one, including a history of the Monument and a visual tour of the sights that can be seen as the visitor climbs towards the top. Concessionary rates for students, families, children and the elderly will also be offered for the first time – previously a flat rate of £5.00 for all visitor's groups applied, ensuring that the Scott Monument will continue to offer an high quality, value for money experience for all visitors. The proposal is for Adults £8, Concessions £6, Children £5.
4. There is no specific proposal to reduce expenditure on consultants. However, we always aim to ensure that expenditure on external consultants is kept to a minimum and an annual report is considered by Finance & Resources Committee with the details of the expenditure. Under established governance arrangements, consultants should only be used where: there is no suitable internal resource; the cost can be met from within the budget assigned to a service or specific project; and required tasks and associated outcomes can be clearly defined and measured with payment staged accordingly.

5. A strategic review of the school estate is in progress which has an overarching aim of ensuring there is enough capacity in primary, secondary and special school to deal with the rising number of pupils expected across Edinburgh during the next ten years. The staffing numbers allocated to schools is based on the school roll and if a school roll rises then the number of teachers and support staff will also rise proportionately.
6. Although we are clear that the Council faces significant financial challenges, we also have an ambitious programme to deliver for the city. This includes building two new secondary and ten new primary schools, investing £100m in roads and pavements over the next five years, building a new sports centre at Meadowbank by 2021 and increasing the number of classroom assistants and support staff to increase attainment.

Question: We go through a budget shortfall exercise on a regular basis, so Edinburgh Council clearly isn't taking long-term sustainable actions on this. Instead of tinkering along the edges, why doesn't the council anticipate future needs to create entirely new revenue streams or stop doing low value activities or those that don't directly benefit at least 50% of Edinburgh altogether?

Response: Whilst the current budget proposals are only for a single year, these are seen as a first step on longer journey of service transformation. Identifying and implementing proposals to a value of £21m will go a significant way towards retaining financial stability across the next five years. It is clear, however, that much more fundamental transformation will be required, including taking opportunities to maximise income, enhance commercial excellence and contract management, review workforce management, asset optimisation (including fleet and staff and client transport), share services, improve demand management and investing in preventative services and, ultimately, service prioritisation will be required if the Council is to address its longer-term financial challenges. Work to progress this is already underway.

In response to the point about new revenue streams, we are exploring new revenue streams including Transient Visitor Levy and a workplace parking levy.

Integration Joint Board

Questions with similar themes:

- **How can further cuts to Health and Social Care services be justified when 1) the system in Edinburgh is already in crisis and 2) urgent investment in Social Care in particular is needed to support increasingly stretched health services?**
- **There is evidently a social care crisis happening here in Edinburgh. How do council members propose they will ensure vital services are still provided alongside being transparent with the public around the issues the Health and social care Partnership face?**

Response: The Council must set a balanced budget and is consulting on proposals to achieve this. The range and complexity of services for which the Council is responsible mean that there will always be difficult decisions to make and different interests to consider. Our plans take account of the additional funding (£357m across Scotland between 2016/17 and 2017/18)) to address social care pressures. Whilst this is to be welcomed, we continue to face considerable challenges, many of which have significant financial consequences.

A strategic focus on early intervention, prevention and recovery is essential if the Integration Joint Board is to work within the total annual budget of just over £600 million and this can only be achieved through close partnership working between the IJB as a service commissioner and the Council and NHS Lothian as service providers.

The work of the IJB is underpinned by a Health and Social Care Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan has six key themes: Tackling inequalities; prevention and early intervention; person-centred care; the right care in the right place at the right time; managing resources effectively; and making the best use of capacity.

Our priorities for the coming year include:

- Embedding the locality model by ensuring that citizens receive the right care in the right place at the right time. This involves providing assessment, treatment and support services in communities and developing strategies that increase community capacity.
- Enabling transformation through service redesign, increasing the availability of choice for individuals, and planning for and developing an integrated workforce. This includes maximising the potential of technology, improving ICT, delivering a strategy for effective implementation of Self-Directed Support and shaping the market for the provision of care.
- Shifting the balance of care to support more people at home and in their communities.
- Responding to national and local requirements, for example the Carers' Act and the production of a new carers' strategy.

Outline strategic commissioning plans for older people's services, primary care, disabilities and mental health are currently under development. These high-level plans will be available January 2018 with further development taking place during 2018 to set out how the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board intends to sustain services over the next 3 years and ensure they are as efficient as possible. In respect of transparency of decision making, the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board meetings are held in public and papers are published on the Council's website in advance of meetings.

Question: Services for members of the community with disabilities are under tremendous strain with limits to recruiting and retaining well-trained staff, as well as facing a steady outflow of experienced workers through volunteer redundancies to be replaced by expensive and inexperienced agency workers. How does the council plan to maintain and improve the quality of these services that are growing in demand?

Response: There is no intention in the Integration Joint Board's strategic plan or the Health and Social Care Partnership's operational arrangements to replace experienced staff with agency workers. One of our great strengths is the dedication of our workforce who are committed to providing to best services possible to keep citizens safe and healthy.

Our progress towards better implementation of self-directed support, enhancing choice and flexibility for people who need support, will mean changes in staffing models for the Council as resources are directed away from traditional services to fund individual budgets over which people have more control. A consequence of this transformation is that the need for some directly provided Council services will reduce, while the provision of different types of support from the voluntary and independent sectors will grow.

Question: What action will the council take to secure additional funding from the Scottish Government to mitigate the cuts in services to vulnerable people?

Response: Like other public sector organisations, we face significant financial challenges and because of the continuing difficult national economic outlook and increasing demand for services, we will need to operate within tight fiscal constraints for the foreseeable future. These constraints include the fact that costs (for example pay awards and inflation) are rising, and financial settlements for local authorities are reducing. Pressures on public sector expenditure are likely to continue, both at a UK and Scottish level, meaning NHS Lothian and the City of Edinburgh Council will face continued funding pressures for the foreseeable future. This in turn will impact on our ability to resource the functions delegated to the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board.

We need to work with our partners to provide well researched and evidence-based information about the impact of the current funding restraints and about the effectiveness and efficiency of our services. We want to develop and deliver the best possible services – those which are responsive, person-centred, and deliver positive outcomes.

The Council continues to articulate the need for additional resources through our involvement in COSLA, while seeking to meet the savings targets imposed by the financial settlement.

Question: How do the Council plan to meet the needs of social care and supported living with increasing numbers of providers no longer able to give a service on the budget available from them?

Response: The Health and Social Care Partnership is working on a range of related developments, which will see more focus on prevention and self-directed support, and a resilient range of contracts that are sustainable and aligned with the needs and aspirations of people who need support.

The Partnership will develop a 'market shaping' strategy to set out for providers the type and range of services that will be required. Paying a sustainable rate through the contract will be an important part of the Partnership's capacity planning, and managing this within the total allocated budget is one of the challenges that needs to be addressed.

Education, Children and Families Committee

Question: Can any extra money be spent keeping the 6-week provision of disabled children's playscheme rather than cutting provision to 4 weeks? Cuts to this valuable service are detrimental to the wellbeing of disabled children and their families and do little to back up the UN article 31 of a child's right to play.

Response: We aim to offer a service to 450 children over the school holiday periods. Year 1 and 2 in the last three-year contract showed less families using the offer of up to 6 weeks of playscheme. In year three there was a noted shift in demand to more families accessing 6 weeks. This resulted in a waiting list of 80 + families who received no service. We discussed how places should be allocated during our consultation with families but found no agreement to certain schools being offered more weeks than others. We therefore decided to continue with the first come, first served philosophy and to offer everyone up to 4 weeks in the hope that this would spread the service which is unregulated and not based on assessment equitably to all families who have a child with a significant disability. If there was additional funding available I believe it would be difficult to attract the numbers of staff required in an even larger holiday provision. Recruitment into the care sector is very challenging in Edinburgh and this is reflected nationally. The numbers involved already are very high and involve diverse disability care needs. To increase this further would involve considerable funding and probably another contract going out to the market. Fabb are already dealing with a very high number of children and they feel they are at capacity. What we can do is look at working with third sector providers to see if more opportunities can be offered during school holiday breaks to families who have children with a disability. We are keen to try and make space within the private school lets for access to Special School swimming pools and for other leisure/play activities. I am meeting with third sector providers next week to make them aware of the gaps families express to us for their children in Edinburgh. I will highlight the need for opportunities in school holiday periods.

Question: I use the IT services in the library. It's embarrassing how 3rd rate the service is. When, or will the council update these services?

Response: The library Public Computing and Internet service was upgraded in 2015 with improved software, functionality and hardware. We have had some recent issues with this service and these are being resolved with our supplier and the Council IT Solutions Team. Looking ahead to 2018/19 lifelong learning staff will be working with the Council IT partners to consider how to further develop this service and will be consulting with customers to inform potential improvements.

Question: Our children with disabilities and additional needs were treated in an appalling manner at the council run playscheme in October this year. Was this due to cuts in funding to this service and if so, what is the future for this service?

Response: In October this year, a new provider took (FABB) took over from the previous consortium provider. The process involved in giving FABB the authorisation to begin their work was delayed due to the Council Elections and they only had 6 weeks to prepare for the first provision which

was in October this year. Fabb experienced difficulty in accessing records of children's care needs from the previous provider due to data protection issues and were then informed 2 weeks before the October Playscheme that they could not access 2 of the Special Schools due to urgent maintenance. This presented FABB with many problems as the alternative school lets offered were far from ideal. We discussed cancelling the October playscheme but felt we did not want to let families down. We therefore decided to go ahead on a limited basis.

There were difficulties as the children were in either their own school which was being run in a different way or they were in an unfamiliar school. The staff employed for the playscheme are predominantly untrained staff with some of our own pupil support assistants who work in schools. Some children found this new experience difficult to cope with and their behaviour became unsafe towards themselves and others. The Managers of the venues involved risk assessed the individual situations and phoned some families and asked for their child to be picked up. The aim for February is that a much fuller care plan will be drawn up and with support/information from CAMHS, families, schools and other involved services. This will help FABB plan more fully for individual children's needs.

There is no cut to the holiday activity programme but we have to stay within budget and there are rising costs in transport and in janitorial costs. We asked families to transport their own children if they could and this was responded to favourably by the involved families. We were able to help with transport for a small number of families who had significant reasons for not being able to transport their own children.

The current contract with FABB will run for three years with the possibility of an additional two years at the end of the contract.

Question: Was moving secondary schools to a faculty format a cost cutting measure? If so would you accept it doesn't work, as promotional steps for teaching staff are too large and the additional hours work to allow faculties just to operate are Not part of the WTA & therefore unpaid & creating huge animosity among teaching staff.

Response: It is the case that management restructuring in secondary schools which took place in 2011-12 was part of a Council budget saving exercise to the tune of £2.4 million. It does not necessarily follow, as the question format implies, that its being linked to a cost-cutting measure means that it isn't working. There are faculty structures in secondary schools in many local authorities across Scotland and, indeed, the faculty structure was not unknown in Edinburgh pre-2011 where its planned introduction in at least one school was a conscious strategic decision not linked to financial demands but rather to improving learning & teaching, attainment and quality assurance. Attainment in secondary education in Edinburgh continues to be above the national average. There are certainly fewer promoted posts available within a faculty structure and promotional steps can be very large. However, the direction of travel in introducing a flattened management structure began in 2001 with the McCrone Report which did away with the posts of senior teacher, assistant principal teacher and assistant headteacher and the gap in promotional steps was increased then. The remit of a classroom teacher was also extended. While recognising workload on teachers and the increasing demands placed upon them, it is too simplistic to say that additional, unpaid work is solely the result of the introduction of a faculty structure. National demands such as curriculum change, the implementation of GIRFEC, and the ongoing development of National Qualifications, overseen by the SQA, all have a part to play in the position in which teachers may now find themselves. This combination of pressures will undoubtedly have had an effect on morale and might well have led, in some cases, to animosity. More strategic approaches will be required to address what is a national issue, not unique to Edinburgh.

Question: With a rise in childhood obesity does the council think it wise to reduce recreational services, playing fields, gyms and fitness class and football pitches, which are heavily used by organisations such as Leith athletics? Edinburgh is a forward thinking city, and as such should be proactive in investing in our future fitness.

Response: The Council is fully committed to providing access to opportunities for people to live active and healthy lives. Numbers of people participating and using Edinburgh Leisure facilities has increased as has the number of pupil accessing Active Schools programmes. The is a commitment to create new sports facilities in the new schools and we are going to deliver on the new Meadowbank Sports Centre.

Question: I am the parent of a child with additional needs. The last few years has seen a steady series of cuts into the services that we rely on and which are vitally important to my child. (For example, cuts to Speech & Language Therapist provision, cuts to Occupational Therapy provision, proposed cuts to holiday playscheme and proposed cuts to drop-in services).

Response:

1. The Council's funding for Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy for Additional support for Learning have not been cut and there are no proposals to cut funding for these services.
2. The Council is not planning any reductions in services for children with additional support needs
3. An answer at question 1 in relation to playscheme provision

All Committees and Elected Members

Questions:

I feel that there are too many Councillors, costing too much money and too high expenses, the number needs to be reduced and costs reduced. Is it justifiable to have so many elected councillors in Edinburgh, with the associated cost (including expenses) and staff required when larger cities in other western countries have a fraction of the number of elected councillors and function as well?

Response: The Council does not control the number of Councillors for the city. Legislation stipulates that there must be 3 or 4 councillors per ward and the Local Government Boundary Commission makes recommendations to Ministers on whether the number should be 3 or 4 for each individual ward. The Commission also reviews and makes recommendations for local authority boundaries for Scotland.

The remuneration for Councillors is also regulated by legislation – it is set out in the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2017. The Regulations place each Council into one of four bands, based on various factors including the size of the council budget. The Band determines the level of pay for senior posts within the council, namely the Leader of the Council, Civic Head and senior councillors (those with additional responsibilities such as chairing a committee), and the number of senior councillors on each council.

Councillors did not get any pay rises from 2009/10 until 2013/14, when a 1% pay rise applied, and for every year after until 2016/17.

Question: My question is one of accountability and acknowledgement of pressure to deliver. We are being asked as citizens and council workers to deliver on some extremely challenging cost reductions and efficiencies which as employees, we must do so in a politically neutral and appreciative manner. What assurances can be given from coalition Councillors that party politics will not restrict timely and proportionate decisions on fruitful proposals or remedial action being taken when certain cuts reveal a real risk of harm at service or individual level? Can councillors reassert commitment to fully respect the efforts of those who have had to deliver or call out the above.

Response: Councillors fully appreciate the efforts of our committed staff and are aware that the Transformation Programme has had an impact on our workforce. Councillors receive update reports through the Committee system on areas of the Council which are undergoing review to ensure that they are fully aware of the implications and potential impact of any changes.