

Deputations

City of Edinburgh Council

10.00 am Thursday, 18th February, 2021

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

Deputations

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CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

18 FEBRUARY 2021

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

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Council Budget	3.1 Another Edinburgh is Possible 3.2 Edinburgh Tenants Federation 3.3 Edinburgh TUC 3.4 Edinburgh EIS 3.5 Unite the Union CEC Branch 3.6 UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch

Deputation from Another Edinburgh is Possible

Another Edinburgh is Possible – Interim report on the results of a survey of how Edinburgh residents experience council services

Since 2012/13, Edinburgh City Council budget cuts have amounted to £320 million. Year on year of so-called ‘savings’ have resulted in a hollowing out of jobs and services to Edinburgh residents.

Over the last 12 months, Covid-19 has been devastating communities across Scotland. It has also shone a light on the destruction to public services brought about by a decade of austerity.

Many people agree that things cannot simply go back to the way they were before. However, *Another Edinburgh is Possible* believes that if we don’t fight for them to be better, it is more than possible they will be worse. We are concerned that the UK and Scottish governments will attempt to use Covid-19 as a pretext for cutting back local government budgets yet further. Edinburgh Council has already identified over £80m of savings and funding in 2020/21 but has to find at least £5.1m more because of the extra costs and lower income resulting from the pandemic. Over the next three years, the Council has already identified £40m of ‘savings’ but needs to find at least a further £47.5m.

Another Edinburgh is Possible not only believes this is unnecessary; it is unsustainable. Year after year of cuts has pushed services to the edge and the people of Edinburgh are paying the price. We also believe more cuts will further weaken local democracy and accelerate the centralisation of power over local issues in the Westminster and Holyrood parliaments.

We believe that the citizens of Edinburgh deserve far better than this. It is in this light that *Another Edinburgh is Possible* decided to carry out a survey amongst Edinburgh residents and service users to ask them directly about their experiences of current Council service provision and the services they would like to see in the future.

This preliminary report summarises the main findings from the first 483 responses and outlines recommendations we are asking the Council to consider. The survey closes on the 21st February. We will then produce a more detailed and comprehensive report based on all the responses that have then been received.

Read the report here: <https://tinyurl.com/1rain9ts>

Key Findings

- 1. Edinburgh residents think services are deteriorating.**

Only four per cent of respondents think that council services are better than three years ago fifty five percent think they are worse.

2. There are high levels of dissatisfaction with many council services.

Of all the services provided by the council public toilets attracted the most adverse comments. Housing, homelessness services, social work, social care, community centres and community education were also considered to be poor. Many respondents backed up their ratings with detailed open comments. Roads and pavements are considered to be poorly maintained and dangerous to users.

3. Some services received high levels of satisfaction.

Museums and galleries, transport and parks rated highly.

4. The council has a serious problem with communication.

Many people reported difficulties in making contact, lack of response and failure to deliver on commitments made.

5. Bins and litter provoked a large number of angry written responses

Thirty six percent ranked refuse services as good, twenty six percent poor. Yet at the same time large numbers provided eloquent and angry testimony to failures in the service. There is a perception that different areas of the city are not served equally.

6. Respondents dissent from the council's policy priorities

Spaces for people attracted a lot of negative comments. On the other hand, cycling is a priority for many. Written comments expressed the view that the council's priorities are tourism, business and the city centre with Edinburgh residents and the periphery of the city coming a poor second.

7. Edinburgh residents think that local services should be publicly provided and democratically controlled.

8. Edinburgh residents believe that public transport should be integrated, publicly owned and free.

Recommendations

On the basis of an analysis of responses to date we make the following recommendations.

1. **The in-housing of Edinburgh's public services:** our survey confirmed a widespread frustration at a perceived lack of accountability from service-providers. One conclusion is that services be delivered in-house. That would immediately clarify lines of responsibility, leaving residents clear on who is accountable for quality of delivery. As things stand, a mosaic of providers means service users are often unsure of who to contact should they have questions or queries regarding any one service. Councilors would also be in a stronger position to make a case for additional funding if they are directly responsible for services that they are democratically accountable for. The

incentive to improve would be re-directed towards elected politicians as opposed to distant corporations with little connection to the city or its people.

2. **Improved Council communications with Edinburgh residents:** Residents expect direct and unmediated contact with Council officials. Internet access should not be a prerequisite for residents looking to speak to those responsible for delivering key amenities. Dedicated phone-lines employing trained advisors familiar with Edinburgh services would make a significant contribution to Council/resident relationships. Mobile advice centres, Council officer as well as Councilors' surgeries and improved public access to Council Chambers might also build confidence in a Council which to many feels remote and unaccountable.

3. **A re-ordering of Council priorities:** the commodification of public space is not referred to in our report. However, this is an issue many residents have repeatedly raised over the years, and it is reasonable to infer that many of the frustrations expressed by respondents imply an expectation that a city as beautiful as Edinburgh should be accessible to all, and not only tourists and the cultures industries which too often price people out of their own streets. For instance, cultural facilities which are accessible – galleries, museums and parks – score highly in satisfaction ratings. In contrast, 36% of respondents are unhappy with the quality of their community centres, and only 20% are content with housing, a perennial and growing concern amplified by Uber and student accommodation which reflect Edinburgh's globally recognized social capital. Consequently, a delegating downwards of cultural centres and activity and the resourcing of local creative initiatives could contribute to a year-long re-imagining of how art and culture can take root outside of the City centre.

4. **Edinburgh transport should be integrated, publicly owned and resourced:** Comments on transport were limited, perhaps reflecting a general contentment with the quality of service provided by Lothian buses. However even here, the survey recorded complaints regarding how busy buses can become, their cost and the quality of Edinburgh's roads. An integrated transport service could knit together the varied concerns that an otherwise popular service still attracts. A joined-up, publicly owned matrix of services would be better equipped to incorporate a sustainable network in one of the busiest cities in Europe, particularly during the Festival.

Pete Cannell

Secretary: Another Edinburgh is Possible



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

EDINBURGH TENANTS FEDERATION

Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

ETF written deputation to City of Edinburgh Council elected members

Thursday 18th February 2021

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is asking Elected Members to consider freezing rather than increasing rents paid by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) tenants in 2021/22. The last year, has been like no other in terms of the financial pressures tenants and other people have endured as a result of the COVID – 19 pandemic. In our day to day contact with tenants in our communities, local tenants' and residents' groups and with our Federation members we have become aware of tenants losing income and jobs, which has meant some have struggled to pay their current rent. In addition, as the furlough scheme is due to close at the end of April, we at ETF are concerned that this will push even more tenants into poverty.

It is our view that many tenants will simply not be able to afford the 2% rent increase and 4.79% Council Tax increase that CEC is proposing.

ETF representatives would like to see CEC try to recoup the rent arrears from tenants which have built up during the pandemic rather than increase the rents. Furthermore, ETF hopes that CEC accepts the 3% offer from the Scottish Government instead of increasing the Council Tax.

Seven delegates, including representatives of five Registered Tenant Organisations participated in a group discussion relating to CEC's Housing Budget Consultation in November. All those attending were in agreement that CEC tenants living in Edinburgh are having to cope in extreme circumstances which has been exacerbated by the current pandemic. Views from those who attended the meeting included:

- Rents should be made affordable as CEC tenants already pay the highest rents in Scotland;
- Many tenants are on low wages and at this time of year have to decide on whether to heat their homes or feed their families as they can't afford to do both;
- Tenants need to be able to afford to live in their homes;

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- Tenants are paying for service charges for facilities they have not been able to receive this year due to the pandemic;
- ETF's response to the budget consultation and individual tenants representatives have spoken to, noted real concern that a rent and council tax increase will continue to push the most vulnerable in our society into severe poverty.

Gas and electricity prices are set to increase for tenants living in Edinburgh. Home schooling has resulted in increased electricity costs for many tenants since lockdown started. In some cases, several children are working on laptops in different rooms in their homes and this only increases the electricity costs. Some tenants are having to cut down on washing their clothes as they cannot afford the added costs.

ETF's Convenor is on the board of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission and below are some very alarming statistics from the report which was published in October 2020:

- *More than 77,000 Edinburgh residents live in poverty – about 15% of the total population, including one in every five children. The housing crisis was a “distinctively Edinburgh challenge because so many families are only dragged below the poverty line by an unaffordable rent”.*
- *Over three quarters of people in poverty live in social or private rented accommodation and housing costs in Edinburgh are a key driver of high poverty rates in the city. The report estimates that 15,600 people in this city would not be living in poverty if Edinburgh's housing costs were closer to the Scottish average.*
- *Poverty rates are anticipated to rise sharply during early 2021, while long term trends suggest a continued steady increase throughout the next decade. Without policy changes it is conservatively estimated that an additional 4,500 Edinburgh citizens could be living in poverty by spring 2021.*

An Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor stated that residents are *“Having to choose between heating a home or eating... being left with very little money after the bills are paid... being made to feel inadequate and unable to provide the basics.”* ETF representatives are aware that this has been happening in Edinburgh for a number of years.

The information above shows the basis for ETF asking you for a rent freeze for CEC tenants. Many CEC tenants across the city are really struggling to make ends meet as a result of rent and council tax increases. They are being pushed into poverty and a rent freeze may give them a little bit of respite to their challenging circumstances. ETF strongly asks that you take on board the Federation's views and concerns.

Betty Stone, ETF Convenor
February 2021

A deputation by Edinburgh Trade Union Council to the City of Edinburgh Council Budget meeting to be held on Thursday 18th February 2021

The need to reduce Child Poverty in Edinburgh Schools during 2021/22

The allocation of more resources in 2021/22

In 2019 Edinburgh Trade Union Council, with the support of the teachers union, the Edinburgh Association of the Educational Institute of Scotland, had two deputations to the City Council on the subject of Child Poverty in Schools in Edinburgh. We considered that the City Council was not doing enough to reduce child poverty in schools. We called for more resources to be allocated to schools and schools related services.

The Council responded to our deputations by commissioning a Report which was going to come before the Education, Children and Families Committee and its March 2020 meeting. The Report would be an update on the ongoing work to reduce child poverty and holiday hunger. The Report was not ready for that meeting and we were informed that it would come before the meeting in May 2020. As we understand the meeting in May did not take place.

As a submission to the Council regarding its Report Edinburgh TUC, with the help of the EIS, published its own Report on Child Poverty in Schools in March 2020 which was circulated to all Councillors at that time. In our report we argued that the Council was basing its service provision, in dealing with child poverty in schools on out of date statistics. The stats underestimated the level of child poverty in Edinburgh being based on stats up to May 2019. All the organisations that published the stats recognised that child poverty in the UK was getting worse due to the growth of a precarious work economy and the impact of Universal Credit. Before the Covid crisis the stats seemed to be saying that by the end of 2020 there would be 3 or 4 thousand more

children living in poverty in Edinburgh. It seemed that all the Council was doing was slowing the rate of increase. More needed to be done.

I am sure that all Councillors will agree that child poverty in Edinburgh has not remained static during the Covid crisis. It will have increased because the disruption to employment will have cut many families income. The drop has not been fully compensated by either UK or Scottish Government policy decisions. Covid has resulted in an economic depression that will last for a couple of years. Air travel, all of transport, higher and further education and the tourist sector will take some time to recover to pre COVID levels of employment. The trade union movement believes that without massive on going state intervention unemployment will go up significantly. That means greater poverty and greater child poverty. I think the Council can assume that over the next year (2021/22) the number of children officially defined as living in poverty in Edinburgh (taking into account housing costs) will probably double from around 23,000 in March 2020 to 46,000 in March 2022.

We understand that the normal process of Council business and policy making has been disrupted by the Covid epidemic. However, now is the time, in deciding the budget for the Council for 2021/22, to consider priorities after the virus has been brought under some sort of control. We are calling on the Council to allocate more resources to dealing with child poverty in schools.

We understand from the papers you have today that £14.2 million remains unallocated. We urge you to devote this money to first commissioning an assessment of the needs of each school in Edinburgh in consultation with staff and parents and then going as far as possible to meeting these needs. The needs are outlined in our Report of March last year:

“Wherever it comes from schools need more money for Breakfast Clubs, after school Soup and Sandwich clubs, clothes, essential household furniture and to ensure that outings and trips are available to all pupils and students. Schools should not have to ration outings and trips that they think are socially and educationally essential because of lack of resources.”

“Schools need access to counselling services, including mental health counsellors, for both parents and children. Some schools employ people with the use of PEF money. Some schools have arrangements with ‘partner ’ organisations. Access to these services is essential and, as the number of people living in poverty with associated health problems grow, the resources for these services must grow.”

More staff are needed in all these categories:

- ***Out of class teachers;***
- ***Homelink Teachers;***
- ***Pupil Support Officers;***
- ***Early Years Practitioners;***
- ***Speech Therapists.***

The Covid crisis has exposed other needs one of which is the association of what we normally understand as poverty with digital poverty. We understand that the lack of resources to alleviate digital poverty has hampered home schooling in recent times.

We hope that the Council will take into consideration the points we are making when it makes its decisions today. Dealing with child poverty in

schools is a top priority of not only the trade union movement in Edinburgh but, we believe, also the people of Edinburgh.

Des Loughney

Secretary, Edinburgh Trade Union Council. 16th February 2021

CEC Budget – the Reality in Schools
Written Deputation Edinburgh EIS

Dear Councillor

The budget situation in Edinburgh's schools is extremely concerning. The cumulative impact of years of cuts means that schools have insufficient funds to meet even basic requirements. Yet they are being asked to deliver on an ever-increasing range of targets, and are frequently finding themselves having to support families where other front-line services have been cut. There has been genuine anger from teachers who have been lectured over the last few months over the need to "support and prioritise disadvantaged pupils" – for years teachers have been putting their hands in their pockets to provide food, stationery, clothing etc for pupils, not to mention giving hours and hours of unpaid overtime to support students in a huge variety of ways, and being told that somehow we don't care enough for vulnerable pupils has only served to reinforce the belief that the only real value politicians have for education is when it can be manipulated to serve their political agenda. Many teachers feel that, if our political leaders genuinely cared about the pupils of Edinburgh, they would never have allowed the budget situation to become as bad as it is.

The following looks at just a few of the issues facing schools. It is a very brief, and broad-brush outline – I am advised that these submissions are best kept short, and I would hope that you are all already fully aware of what is happening in Edinburgh's schools. It would seem to me that one of your chief duties is to ask searching questions about how your decisions are being implemented, to interrogate the consequences of your votes, and to revise decisions when it is clear they are not having the intended outcomes. If you require more information or explanation, I am more than happy to discuss things further.

Devolved School Management Budgets:

Last year's decision to cut the DSM budget was bad enough. Subsequent decisions about how to implement that cut at school level have been devastating. A crude attempt to "poverty-proof" cuts has meant that many schools are now left with a situation where they are attempting to educate children with a budget of less than £1/pupil/day. Surely you are all aware of the flaws inherent in basing all budgetary decisions on SIMD data? Surely no one in Edinburgh is so naive as to believe that there are not pupils living in poverty in every part of this city – and that the impact of Covid-19 is making that even more true? Added to that, there are further decisions, such as billing individual schools for supply teacher job retention payments and claw back of carry-forwards, that are making the situation even more untenable for many schools.

How can any school provide even basic education with the sort of operating budgets in place in Edinburgh? The decisions facing Edinburgh headteachers now include: reducing PSA support (so reducing support for pupils with additional needs); cutting subjects such as CDT; reducing budgets for buying core science equipment; reducing management time (putting further pressure on school leaders, who are already at breaking point, and impacting on schools' ability to do any strategic planning) – the list goes on... Further, Edinburgh's spending on its pupils, compared with Scottish averages, raises serious questions about this council's priorities:

<https://scotland.mylocalcouncil.info/Data.aspx?id=S12000036&cat=14193&data=12486&lang=en-GB>

<https://scotland.mylocalcouncil.info/Data.aspx?id=S12000036&cat=14193&data=12484&lang=en-GB>

<https://scotland.mylocalcouncil.info/Data.aspx?id=S12000036&cat=14193&data=12485&lang=en-GB#data>

Surely it is incumbent on you to look at the reality of the budgets in this city and ensure that there is enough money to fund the core activities you expect every school to deliver?

Nursery Teacher Cuts:

The majority of our highly skilled nursery teachers have already been removed from nursery classes, and the remainder will be moved at the end of this session. So, at a time when everyone is talking about the impact of Covid-19 on pupils, Edinburgh's youngest children are being deprived of help from those with the greatest expertise in how to support their learning.

(As an important aside, if you want a brief summary of many of the flaws in the narrative around "lost learning", I suggest you go to <https://www.tes.com/news/covid-catch-up-why-pressure-lengthen-school-days-relies-myth>).

When you voted for this cut, you were given information about how GTCS-registered teachers were not, in fact, crucial to maintaining high-quality early years provision. Much of the evidence cited looked at how other graduate practitioners were deployed in early years settings. Have you all actually looked at what has happened in the CEC nursery schools and classes in your wards? Are you confident that each teacher has been replaced by a graduate practitioner? Since research is clear that the educational level of the early years workforce is one of the strongest predictors of quality outcomes, how confident are you that Edinburgh is maintaining that level? I trust you can put your hand on your heart and say that people like Early Years Practitioners are not being asked to take on work far beyond their usual remit, because of the removal of nursery teachers? I also assume that you are confident that already overburdened primary school management teams will be properly supported when they take on increased leadership responsibility for nursery classes or, even more significantly, nursery schools? If not, what actions will you be taking about that?

Instrumental music cuts:

CEC will soon be looking at *how* to implement the cut in budget for instrumental music tuition. These links are just some of the things you need to be aware of when thinking about this cut.

<https://theferret.scot/music-lessons-for-children-plummet-due-to-pandemic/>

https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/General%20Documents/Wilson_Hunter_Moscari_dini_2020_Widening_the_gap.pdf

<https://www.eis.org.uk/Edinburgh/CECBudget2021>

Given all this, I hope you will think again about the wisdom of this decision – or, at the least, be honest with the citizens of Edinburgh about its likely consequences...

Covid recovery:

Space does not allow me to go through the many issues related to covid recovery here – and I do appreciate that the budgetary situation related to the pandemic is complex, challenging and fluid. You will all be aware that the EIS is in dispute with CEC over what we see as a failure in duty of care towards staff – there are separate negotiations ongoing regarding this, and I am happy to speak to councillors around this, especially as it relates to matters such as properly utilising our supply teachers to support the recovery; what actions will make a real difference to children as we transition back to “normal”; how to alleviate the intolerable pressures on school staff.

The above are just a few of the core issues facing schools. To properly enunciate all the problems would take a much longer submission. If you genuinely want schools to do some of the things you are requiring of them, rather than it being the case that you are simply mentioning things because they are politically expedient, it is *more* funding that is needed, not less. Just a few of the things that would actually make a difference to schools’ capacity to deliver on the improvement agenda are:

- DSM budgets that are realistic, and where money from that budget is not constantly clawed back
- Properly funding initiatives such as the digital learning strategy
- Ring-fencing some of the money from the Scottish Government covid-recovery fund to properly utilise our supply teachers – and, indeed, other eligible staff, such as supply PSAs and sessional Youth and Children’s Workers
- Keeping the Closing the Gap team running for 2021/22, and making more strategic use of Lifelong Learning Locality Development Officers and others with an appropriate Youth and Children’s work remit
- Providing more support for school leadership teams, including properly funding posts so that there is sufficient management time to actually overtake the work required
- Maintaining, and expanding, the PSA workforce

I hope that, when you make your budget decisions – and, perhaps more importantly, when you continually interrogate the implications and outcomes of those decisions - you will keep these points in mind. If you, as the leaders of our city, are serious about wanting the best for the children of Edinburgh, you *have* to ensure schools have the funding they need to be able to support and educate those children.

Kind regards

Alison Murphy
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PS: Another question for you... Some councillors have been publicly critical of the levels of live learning being offered by schools. I'm curious as to why it is seen as easy for teachers to be able to deliver live lessons for pupils, yet CEC Council cannot offer its citizens the option to make live deputations to its meetings? What does this say about the priority the council gives to democracy, and for the ability for councillors to be able to question those making representations?

Unite CEC Branch deputation to Full Council 18 February 2021

Unite CEC Branch would like to preface this deputation with an objection to the temporary rules that dictate that deputations can only be submitted in writing. The Council has used technology to overcome many challenges this year and we believe digital participation in Council committees from groups submitting deputations is not insurmountable and that barring active participation is contrary to the principle of democracy that the voices of citizens and workers can be heard as part of these proceedings.

The Council has faced unimaginable challenges over the past year. In many areas across, we have been pleased to see a considerate approach toward staff and a strong commitment from leaders to working together with trade unions. In many situations there has been a recognition that the best way to understand and overcome the problems encountered by the workforce is through consultation, co-operation and listening to frontline staff that are facing the—often perilous—situation head-on.

However, on too many occasions, Council decisions and communications have fallen short, placing undue stress on an already beleaguered workforce that is putting in superhuman effort to provide the vital services our citizens need. Over the festive period, there were been incidents with refuse collection workers, school cleaners and early years workers that led to groups of staff who have gone the extra mile over the last year feeling aggrieved. These, and similar, could have been avoided with clear communication and timely engagement with trade unions.

Failing to communicate and make considered decisions have put other workers in detriment, whether that is the failure to inform Facilities Management staff in schools of the school health and safety groups created to respond to concerns around coronavirus or the issues with school staffing and pupil numbers the second lockdown, with some schools with disproportionately high number of staff for the number of pupils—many risking journeys on public transport to come in to find no essential work to be done.

Council leaders have spoken highly of the work carried out over the past year and it is worth repeating again that, throughout the pandemic, under ever changing circumstances and rules, our frontline local authority workers have:

- ensured our city's streets and greenspaces are clean and maintained;
- cleaned and maintained schools, protecting pupils and staff from infection;
- collected citizens' waste and recycling;
- repaired and maintained social housing;
- cared for and supported our most vulnerable citizens;
- protected our communities;
- equipped and adapted the homes of citizens that need it;
- provided communities with learning opportunities;
- supported pupils in their learning and provided care
- and many more essential services carried out.

This is while other groups of staff have converted dining tables to offices, learned new ways of working and upskilled to use new technologies to ensure that citizens can get in touch with the Council, our digital services can respond to increased demand and all of our administrative tasks are handled without pause.

Our workers have been flexible and tenacious and shown immense public spirit throughout these hard times. Words cannot express the work done by our local authority workers—and therein lies the issue. Too often, public service workers have been paid in only lip service—if words and claps were wages, our Council worker philanthropists couldn't fit their purses into the pockets of their ragged trousers.

While this budget acknowledges the Scottish Joint Council's pay proposal for this year it only accounts for an award of 3%. Furthermore, the consolidation of the Scottish Local Government Living Wage offers an opportunity to show the providers of our essential services just how valued they are and must be used as such. The recent Scottish Government announcement of a £500 reward to many public sector workers was welcomed by all but questioned in the context of why only certain workers would receive this gratitude from the Scottish Government. Our council workers are beginning to feel that the goodwill they have shown throughout the pandemic is not being reciprocated even in the smallest of gestures.

The spirit of public sector workers has helped cut through the challenges of this crisis, but as with the edge of a blade, with continued cutting, spirits too can dull. The strain on all of our people has been massive and increased absence due to stress and mental health issues—now accounting for 48% of long-term absence—is not being adequately addressed. This is a pressure that increases exponentially—and with the knock-on impact of staff absence, stress can rip through a workforce like a virus. The business plan discusses the principle of spend to save: the Council needs to look at the impact of staffing cuts and recognise that staff are the most important resource in the Council, thus worth investing in.

Our branch believes that the people who deliver our local government services in Edinburgh are beginning to crack. Situations that might normally be sorted reasonably, or not even occur, are being exacerbated by the strain of increased workloads and lack of a voice. Even the smallest error in judgement risks being inflated out of proportion, putting decision makers under even greater strain. Fair Work is an important part of the recent Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations and 'effective voice' is fundamental to this. As this budget recognises and responds to the extraordinary pressures facing local authorities at this time, we offer a suggestion that costs little yet pays dividends: consult and communicate with the workforce.

Timely and considerate communications with staff can reduce stress, improve morale and empower staff by feeling their contribution is meaningful and their concerns will be addressed. The Council's business plan acknowledges the value of empowering citizens; we must recognise the value of empowering staff and working together to improve our public services, as per the business plan's aspirations. Empowering doesn't only mean allowing them a voice. Improving our services means investing in those that deliver them. The Council must award staff for the essential work that they do and protect staff, as the business plan sets out to do for citizens, from poverty and unemployment. These are our essential workers—let's treat them as such.

Item 3.6

UNISON City of Edinburgh branch welcomes the Scottish Government's previous announcement of "a package of financial flexibilities and extra funding for councils to address the financial pressures caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic over the next two years". And welcomes the proposed extra funding mentioned by the Scottish finance minister, but unfortunately what has been offered will do very little to solve the financial problems for local government.

This council continues to face budget challenges and once again is proposing further cuts to jobs and services. We have seen massive cuts to jobs and services over the past years and witnessed the negative and damaging impact that has had on the staff that remain and the communities that we serve.

If COVID-19 has shown us anything it is that local government and other public sector workers across a variety of organisations have risen to challenge in the most courageous and dedicated ways. Looking after and caring for our most vulnerable adults, young people, and children, emptying our bins and keeping our streets clean, across all the jobs, providing services from the cradle to the grave.

All these workers need to be recognised and rewarded for the contribution that they have made throughout the pandemic and beyond – clapping does not pay the bills. Any threats to cut their pay or benefits would be a disgrace.

Local government and all the services that it provides are an essential component of well-functioning and caring society.

We call on the council and its leadership to call on the Scottish Government and Westminster Governments to increase their funding for local government. We have seen that the money is there, it just needs the political desire and will and the end to the ideological attack on public services.

UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch