

# Finance and Resources Committee

2pm, Tuesday, 2 February 2021

## Budget Insights 2020

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.
- 1.2 Committee is recommended to refer this report with associated budget papers to Council.

**Andrew Kerr**

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# Report

## Budget Insights 2020

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report summarises the response to the Council's engagement on budget priorities for 2021/22 and beyond, and includes relevant supporting material from other engagement activity on priorities and life experiences during the covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.2 The Council received 2,267 responses to the budget engagement. All responses have been published on the Council's Consultation Hub.
- 2.3 Edinburgh residents experienced a large decline in overall wellbeing due to the pandemic and associated restrictions. However, there is evidence to suggest that anxiety and happiness levels had, by December, returned to around pre-pandemic levels.
- 2.4 Levels of physical activity, active travel, social contact, visiting parks and reading for pleasure were different from pre-pandemic levels for most residents. A higher percentage of residents felt they were doing more of those things during the pandemic than felt they were doing less.
- 2.5 64% of residents who were working during the pandemic had been working from home "all the time", and 55% of all those had worked from home at any point during the pandemic would prefer to work "mostly" or "always" at home in future. This suggests there will be a long-term structural change in the working environment in Edinburgh in future.
- 2.6 Residents praised the continued delivery of essential services by the Council during the pandemic as well as the swift return of schools and nurseries when that was possible. Praise was also given for the quality of communication from Council services during a period of great uncertainty.
- 2.7 Residents had been badly impacted by the reduction of social opportunities provided by gyms, community centres and libraries. Children with additional support needs and adults with dementia (and their families) were felt to have been especially badly impacted by suspension of services for them.
- 2.8 Residents were supportive of measures to help meet the Council's 2030 Net Zero target, including more microgeneration and a reduction of vehicles in the city.

- 2.9 Residents continue to recognise the benefits provided by collocation of services into local hubs, but felt that there were no opportunities to further reduce core services which had already been reduced due to austerity measures. It was suggested that residents could take more active roles in the maintenance and management of their street through, for example, volunteer parks maintenance and litter picking.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh Council continues to face difficult financial decisions in delivering services the people of Edinburgh need and want while meeting its financial challenges. The Council seeks input from residents to inform its decision-making processes prior to setting its budget.
- 3.2 The Council set out its proposed approach in its report '[Engaging Through Adaptation and Renewal](#)' to Policy and Sustainability Committee on 23 July 2020.. The intention of this was to:
- 3.2.1 Ensure the Adaptation and Renewal Programme makes City Vision real by continuing a conversation about how we deliver the Edinburgh residents want;
  - 3.2.2 Better understand the attitudes and experiences of residents that will inform Adaptation and Renewal delivery;
  - 3.2.3 Ensure people have a voice in any major change programme proposals; and
  - 3.2.4 Gathers local information for Edinburgh which may not be supplied by national sources due to disruption caused by Covid-19.
- 3.3 Due to the essential restrictions to limit the spread of Covid-19, the Council's options for engaging with residents on the budget during 2020 were severely limited. Unlike in previous years, there was no potential for face-to-face engagement or the distribution of written material, therefore all engagement was online.
- 3.4 This approach creates clear problems that a minority of Edinburgh residents who are not on online (generally older people and generally on lower incomes) would be less likely to be able to participate in this engagement. In order to mitigate this impact, this report includes findings and insights from other areas of work including:
- 3.4.1 The Capital Residents Survey – a telephone survey of a representative sample of 1,005 Edinburgh residents performed between October and December 2020. The survey was themed around experiences during the pandemic and views on public services. This survey was jointly-funded by the Council and NHS Lothian. Only partial results are available at this point; final results will be reported to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in April 2021.
  - 3.4.2 The Edinburgh Poverty Commission – the Commission conducted workshops, interviews and visits involving individuals with personal experience of living in poverty in Edinburgh. While these activities did not

take place during the pandemic, where relevant the Commission's findings have been included in this report.

- 3.4.3 The 2019 Budget Engagement – last year the Council conducted workshops using its group engagement activity with a sample of Edinburgh residents who are proportionately similar to the demographic, geographic and income characteristics of Edinburgh residents. The feedback from these workshops is still valid and where relevant has also been referenced.

## **4. Main report**

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### **Response to budget engagement**

- 4.1 The online survey was promoted through Council social media channels and was sent to community councils, tenants and residents associations, Council partners, members of the Equalities and Rights Network, and to parents (through School newsletters).
- 4.2 2,267 residents responded to the online survey. Because of Covid-19 restrictions there are no entirely comparable engagement responses, however in 2018 and early 2019 there were 1,826 online and paper responses to the Council's 2019/20 budget engagement process.
- 4.3 Engagement respondents included proportionately more people aged 45-64, more women, and fewer people aged 16-24 than the Edinburgh population. Those who were selected to take part in the telephone survey were more closely matched to the demographics of the city as a whole. More information on demographics is included in appendix one.
- 4.4 The engagement response had a good geographic spread across the city, with an average of 120 responses per ward. Response by ward is also shown in appendix one.

### **Experiences during Covid-19**

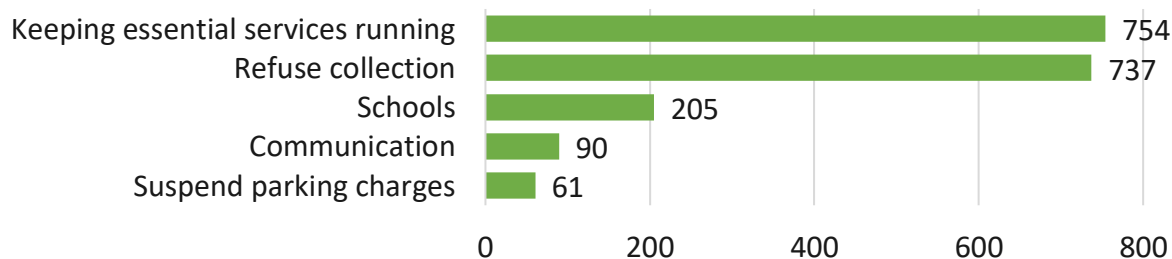
- 4.5 Edinburgh residents likely experienced much lower levels of overall happiness and much higher levels of anxiety during the first pandemic lockdown, compared to the period before the lockdown, but that these levels have likely improved since.
- 4.6 The Office of National Statistics' Annual Population Survey identified that for the year ending March 2020, Edinburgh residents on average rated their happiness 7.4 out of 10 (where 10 is the best) and rated their anxiety 3.6 out of 10 (where 10 is the worst).
- 4.7 A study conducted by YouGov and referenced by Scottish Government identified that by the beginning of April Scottish residents' ratings for these two questions were significantly worse, but have improved over time. (No Edinburgh figure is available from these results).
- 4.8 The Capital Residents Survey identified that Edinburgh residents' rating of happiness was 7.2 out of 10, while anxiety was 3.3 out of 10. This suggests that by

the autumn Edinburgh residents may have overall returned to around pre-pandemic levels of wellbeing.

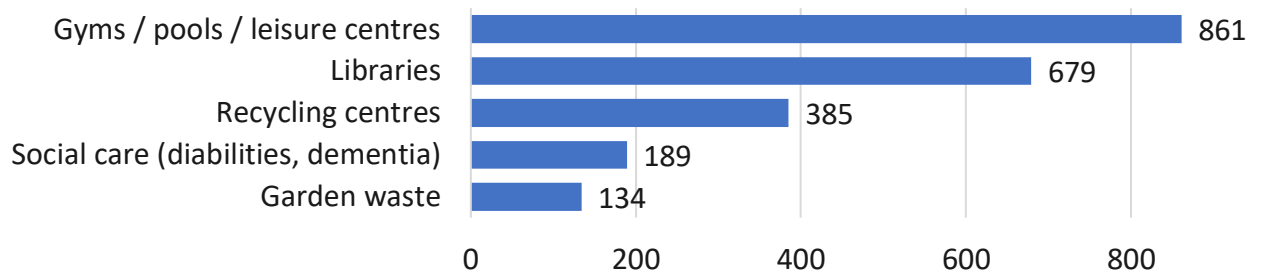
- 4.9 Respondents to the budget engagement reported that they had experienced social isolation during the pandemic and the two main reasons mentioned for this were working from home and the suspension or reduction of Council services that enable social interaction (e.g. community centres, libraries, sports facilities).
- 4.10 However, while working from home has caused anxiety for some, it has been beneficial for others. According to the Capital Residents Survey, of those who had been employed during the pandemic, 64% had been working from home 'all the time'. Of those who had been working from home at any point, 55% would prefer to work always or mostly at home in future.
- 4.11 The Capital Residents Survey also identified that 37% of Edinburgh residents have been talking to their neighbours more than before the pandemic (14% less) and 45% have been talking to their family more (17% less).
- 4.12 Overall, this suggests that issues influencing wellbeing and social isolation are impacting individuals differently, with both positive and negative outcomes, and more work is needed to understand this.
- 4.13 861 respondents to the budget engagement reported that closing gyms, pools and leisure centres meant they had to find alternative ways to exercise in their local areas.
- 4.14 In the Capital Residents Survey, 33% said they took more exercise during the pandemic than before, but 26% said less. The results suggest that people were doing more walking (53%), cycling (18%), and visiting parks (36%) than they were before, but the pandemic has also prevented some from engaging in these activities.

### **Feedback on Council services during pandemic**

- 4.15 As part of the budget engagement, Edinburgh residents were asked what Council services they most appreciated and what services they missed during the pandemic. Figures 1 and 2 below show the top five most frequently mentioned items. These are from 2,267 responses in total, and respondents could mention more than one item.



*Figure 1 – Services praised by residents during the pandemic*



*Figure 2 – Services missed by residents during the pandemic*

- 4.16 **Schools and nurseries** – Much of the pressure parents felt because of the pandemic came from interrupted childcare (school, paid and family care), so the return of schools on schedule in August was especially appreciated by parents as this allowed many aspects of life to be close to normal. Parents also praised schools for going above and beyond the norm to support them, however the essential closure of schools in the spring has left parents with concerns about the long-term impacts on education, social skills and wellbeing especially for very young children.
- 4.17 **Social care** – The suspension of a range of services in this area was felt to have significant implications for users of those services. Parents of children with additional support needs were critical that this support has been withdrawn. Family members of those with dementia highlighted the disproportionate impact on them and service users through the suspension of social contact and wider support. By contrast, the extra resources and efforts made to house homeless people during the pandemic were recognised and praised.
- 4.18 **Libraries and community centres** – The social aspects of libraries and community centres were most frequently mentioned, with residents citing regular activities and visits as the time they saw many of their friends.
- 4.19 The Capital Residents Survey identified that since the pandemic 48% of Edinburgh residents feel they have been reading books and listening to audiobooks more, while 10% feel they have done these less than they normally would.
- 4.20 **Spaces for people** – Residents were divided in their views on the spaces for people changes. There was praise for the general direction of the policy – increasing the space and priority for pedestrians and cyclists – and support for increased pedestrianisation. However, residents were critical of the introduction of the scheme in some areas without consultation, they felt there was no guidance given on how to use it, and it was noted that some temporary measures were replaced with others which seemed to waste resources. There was also opposition to measures in principal, with some residents concerned about the impact of lost parking spaces on local businesses and others opposed to 20mph zones.
- 4.21 **Transport** – In addition to the comments on Spaces for People changes, 389 residents mentioned public transport and the importance of this for keeping the city running. Those who had needed to visit areas of the city where metered parking was in place valued the suspension of this charge. There were 212 comments opposing the tram.

4.22 All feedback received as part of the budget engagement has been published to the Council's Consultation Hub.

### **Meeting our 2030 Net-Zero commitments**

4.23 As part of the budget engagement, residents were asked for suggestions on how the city could continue to work to meet its 2030 sustainability target. In addition to the spaces for people comments mentioned earlier, congestion charging was suggested 91 times as a component of reducing overall car use and encouraging public transport use and active travel. 115 residents opposed green belt construction, in part because it was seen as encouraging private transport use.

4.24 Residents wanted to see more advice and support for homeowners on microgeneration and insulation options, and wanted to see conservation rules reviewed to make these easier. Resident also expressed their support in principal for larger schemes such as district heating.

4.25 Residents expressed uncertainty about what could be recycled and what could not and requested more information about this, and for a general push from the Council to help people make more sustainable purchasing decisions. Some suggested an expansion of options to share items for free in designated spaces, supported by free collections of unwanted items by the Council.

### **Priorities**

4.26 Residents were clear that the highest impact on them during the pandemic had been the closure of schools and nurseries. Keeping those facilities open and consistent enabled families to function more normally. Attempting to combine childcare and homeworking had been extremely difficult for many.

4.27 While everyone had been impacted by the pandemic there was particular appreciation that people in poverty, those living in areas of deprivation, those experiencing homelessness and those who did not have working-from-home options were especially badly affected. The provision of support and services to those individuals and communities was felt to be another top priority, especially making sure people were able to find employment as quickly as possible after the pandemic.

4.28 Residents recognised local businesses has struggled due to radical changes in shopping and leisure habits as well as the absence of tourists in 2020. Helping businesses to recover and helping new businesses to thrive was seen as essential for the city's recovery.

4.29 More positively for some was the recognition of the importance of community in recovering from a crisis. Residents wanted to do more to strengthen and build their community and encourage social mixing once it was safe to do so.

4.30 The Poverty Commission's recommendations included more restrictions on short-term lets to improve housing options, as well as establishing Edinburgh as a Living Wage City. Residents recognised that the profound change forced on Edinburgh in 2020 could also be an opportunity to resolve long-standing issues.

## **Changes to Council services**

- 4.31 In 2019, Edinburgh residents taking part in that year's budget engagement saw significant opportunity for collocation of Council services. Collocation would help to ensure we were making best use of assets, making services accessible and convenient to the largest number of people, and helping services to better work together.
- 4.32 The recommendations of the Poverty Commission included making use of all important points of contact to help deliver income and employability services, including schools and GPs. Respondents to the Capital Residents Survey were also supportive of collocation:
- 61% felt it would be more convenient for them if libraries, community centres and advice services were all available at the same location. 17% disagreed;
  - 70% would be comfortable using sports facilities at schools. 20% would not;
  - 58% felt it made sense for all public services to be available at the same location. 30% disagreed.
- 4.33 The Capital Residents Survey identified that since March 32% of residents had needed to contact the Council for any reason, with most using the web (48%, base 321) and others using telephone (36%) and email (35%). Only 2% had visited a Council building in person. The Contact Centre's performance report for the pandemic period highlights that changes to MyGovScot registration have made using online services easier for individuals and businesses and that despite offices being closed, July to September call volumes in 2020 were lower than the same period in 2019 – 122,214 compared to 178,640, with 95% of calls received being answered. Year-to-year comparisons also show a 5% increase in Twitter contacts, further highlighting changes in preference for digital contact methods.
- 4.34 Feedback from residents on the impact of the pandemic make it clear that what they have lost is not any single narrow function, but welcoming and multipurpose social spaces where information and services are accessible. This is the key offering Council and its partners should pursue in designing future services.
- 4.35 Residents responding to the budget engagement suggested that Council managers should be reduced in number and take pay reductions, but believed that services had already been "cut to the bone" and there was no room for savings in core services.
- 4.36 However residents also suggested that communities should take increased responsibility for some tasks such parks maintenance, street cleaning, and litter picking with people being encouraged to volunteer to take control of their street and local assets such as community centres.



## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Budget proposals have been submitted to Committee and, following approval, will be sent to Council for consideration.
- 5.2 Where appropriate, including where identified by Impact Assessments, the Council will engage or consult on specific changes following the budget setting process.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 All staff resources were met from existing budgets. No additional resources were spent on the budget engagement in 2020.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 Although access to engagement with significantly restricted in 2020, through partner outreach and reference to other engagements conducted prior to the pandemic this report makes use of existing intelligence to reflect broader stakeholder views.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Budget citizens focus group report](#)
- 8.2 [Edinburgh Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan 2020-30](#)
- 8.3 [Engaging through adaptation and renewal](#)
- 8.4 [Annual Population Survey, results April 2019 to March 2020](#)
- 8.5 [Full comments on 2020 budget engagement](#)
- 8.6 [Contact Centre Performance: January – September 2020](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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Demographics of online engagement and telephone survey participants

## Appendix One – Demographics of online engagement and telephone survey participants

*Response to Budget Engagement and participants in Capital Residents Survey by electoral ward*

Electoral Ward	Budget Engagement		Capital Residents Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Almond	103	5%	100	10%
City Centre	100	5%	21	2%
Colinton/Fairmilehead	142	7%	69	7%
Corstorphine/Murrayfield	98	5%	53	5%
Craigtinny/Duddingston	116	6%	72	7%
Drum Brae/Gyle	160	8%	67	7%
Forth	100	5%	66	7%
Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart	110	5%	49	5%
Inverleith	123	6%	60	6%
Leith	78	4%	35	3%
Leith Walk	103	5%	30	3%
Liberton/Gilmerton	124	6%	71	7%
Morningside	213	10%	44	4%
Pentland Hills	97	5%	92	9%
Portobello/Craigmillar	134	7%	79	8%
Sighthill/Gorgie	68	3%	60	6%
Southside/Newington	168	8%	38	4%
Invalid Postcode	25			
No Postcode	170			
Not Edinburgh	35			

*Response to Budget Engagement and participants in Capital Residents Survey by age group*

Age Group	Budget Engagement		Capital Residents Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 16	2	0%		
16-24	39	2%	149	15%
25-44	700	32%	398	40%
45-64	1047	48%	279	28%
65+	400	18%	180	18%
Not answered	80			

*Response to Budget Engagement and participants in Capital Residents Survey by gender*

Gender	Budget Engagement		Capital Residents Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	816	37%	486	48%
Female	1340	61%	516	51%
Other	26	1%	3	0%
Not answered	86			

*Response to Budget Engagement and participants in Capital Residents Survey by ethnic group*

Ethnic Group	Budget Engagement		Capital Residents Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>All white groups</i>	2067	95.4%	885	90.3%
Scottish	1446	66.8%	588	60.0%
Other British group	417	19.3%	227	23.2%
Irish	36	1.7%	5	0.5%
Gypsy/Traveller	1	0.0%	0	0.0%
Polish	22	1.0%	22	2.2%
Any other white ethnic group (please specify)	145	6.7%	43	4.4%
<i>All Asian groups</i>	36	1.7%	50	5.1%
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	3	0.1%	11	1.1%
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	14	0.6%	19	1.9%
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	0	0.0%	11	1.1%
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	8	0.4%	5	0.5%
Asian Other (please specify)	11	0.5%	4	0.4%
<i>All black, African and Caribbean groups</i>	15	0.7%	9	0.9%
African, African Scottish or African British	4	0.2%	6	0.6%
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British	1	0.0%	1	0.1%
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	2	0.1%	0	0.0%
African, Caribbean or Black Other (please specify)	8	0.4%	2	0.2%
<i>All other groups</i>	48	2.2%	36	3.7%
Arab	3	0.1%	2	0.2%
Other Ethnic Group and Mixed (please specify)	45	2.1%	34	3.5%
TOTAL RESPONSES			2166	980

*Response to Budget Engagement and participants in Capital Residents Survey by disability / long-term illness*

Disability / Long-Term Illness	Budget Engagement		Capital Residents Survey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	317	15%	291	30%
No	1837	84%	684	70%
Not answered	114		30	