

## **Feedback on top rated ideas, voted on by the public as part of the Council's budget Dialogue 2015**

As part of the consultation held in late 2015 on the Council's budget, residents were invited to submit ideas for how the Council can save money, make services more efficient and generate more income.

Council managers were asked to consider and respond to the most popular, highest rated ideas. For some of these ideas the Council will make or has already made the suggested changes. For some ideas the Council is working with central government to make changes to laws that would allow implementation of these ideas. And for some, after consideration, the Council does not feel the idea would work.

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**Idea:**

Increase the fee for permits that allow developers to install pipes and cables under public roads and pavements.

**Response:**

The fee increase was agreed by the Council and will go into effect by the 2016/17 financial year. The fee will increase from £120 to £260 and will cover full inspection of works to ensure roads are reinstated to an acceptable standard.

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**Idea:**

Rationalise all bus lane times to 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week.

**Response:**

The Council last considered bus lane changes at the meeting of the Transport and Environment Committee in 2014 where it was agreed to continue with current bus lane arrangements. The report considered by the Committee can be viewed online – [Bus Lane Network Review](#).

However, a trial of alternative bus lane times is being undertaken and the results of this will be reported to the Transport and Environment Committee, which may result in changes to bus lane operations.

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**Idea:**

Increase the road bonds held by the Council for utility companies; introduce substantial fines for poor road works by utility companies; increase the liability period for defective road works to ten years.

**Response:**

The limits of inspection and enforcement action are defined by the Scottish Government and the Council does not have the power to set road bonds or levy fines for utility companies.

However, the City of Edinburgh Council is the only Scottish Local Authority to inspect 100% of reinstatement work carried out by utility companies and the Transport and Environment Committee receives quarterly Public Utility Performance Reports on this issue. As a result of their poor performance, the Council has placed the five main utilities on a formal Notice of Failure to Achieve Performance. This process can result in the Scottish Road Works Commissioner issuing fines where road works remain in an unsatisfactory condition.

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**Idea:**

Increase traffic patrols and ticket offences such as speeding and running red lights.

**Response:**

The Council does not have the power to enforce actions in regard to traffic offences – this is a police power. Legislation would need to be passed by Parliament to transfer this power to local authorities.

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**Idea:**

Introduce congestion charging in Edinburgh.

**Response:**

The referendum in 2005 indicated that Edinburgh residents were strongly opposed to congestion charging proposals. The Council has no plans to introduce congestion charging in Edinburgh, but we will continue to listen to public opinion and study other areas where this has been introduced.

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**Idea:**

All parking on Council property should be charged – where the vehicle is private and only used to travel to and from work.

**Response:**

Parking charges have been introduced for all spaces at the Council Headquarters at Waverley Court. The Council will continue to monitor this issue and may introduce further charged parking areas for staff.

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**Idea:**

Merge departments with Lothian Councils to reduce duplication, create efficiencies and save money.

**Response:**

The City of Edinburgh Council is always looking for opportunities to work with our partners and create savings. For example, shared recycling and waste processing facilities are being created with Midlothian Council; and our Information and Communications Technology is provided under a contract that we share with Borders Council. In addition to other benefits, the ICT contract will save the Council a minimum of £45m over seven years.

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**Idea:**

Provide more litter bins.

**Response:**

There are nearly 3,500 litter bins across the city. The Council is reviewing the provision of bins, using wireless sensors to detect how quickly bins get filled. This information will help to identify where more bins are needed and where unnecessary bins can be removed.

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**Idea:**

Introduce a tourist tax.

**Response:**

The recommendations of the Commission on Local Tax Reform, published in December 2015, support the introduction of additional local taxes as appropriate to local circumstances and local authority decisions. The Council is actively seeking the power from central government to introduce a tourist tax. Talks with Ministers are ongoing and the Council remains hopeful that this will be possible.

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**Idea:**

Make Council Tax more progressive, with bigger houses paying significantly more.

**Response:**

The Council does not have the ability to vary Council Tax bands in the way suggested, however the Council recognises and agrees that reform of Council Tax is necessary. The Scottish Government, which can make these changes, has recently stated: "We consider the current Council Tax system as a whole to be unfair." Scottish Government have published plans for the consultation on the reform of local taxation, which will be implemented subject to its re-election.

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**Idea:**

Students should make some contribution towards Council Tax.

**Response:**

The Council does not have the ability to vary Council Tax benefit entitlement in the way suggested. This issue may be considered as part of the Scottish Government reform of local tax.

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**Idea:**

Investigate the true cost of central procurement. Schools (for example) have to buy supplies through a central procurement system maintained by the council. They are not allowed to buy elsewhere even where this is cheaper.

**Response:**

The Commercial and Procurement Services (CPS) function has used, and continues to use, the Council's collective purchasing power to deliver significant savings. When considering one item in isolation, direct sourcing by schools may seem to deliver best value, but if the contracted supplier is not used, the Council may lose the level of discount available through its own contracts. In addition, quality of goods is often assessed as part of a contract agreement and this cannot be guaranteed if purchasing "off contract".

However – if items can be found cheaper than on existing contracts, this should be reported to the Council's procurement team as there are often price comparison clauses in the contracts whereby the supplier has to match the lowest price.