

Local government financial blackhole increased to over £50m

25 Feb 2020



The financial deficits of local authorities increased to more than £50m according to the Local Government Finance Statistics, published today.

Repeated SNP cuts to council budgets have meant that local authorities across Scotland faced a deficit of £53m in 2018-19 which was funded through council reserve funding.

This is a significant increase of over £15m from £38.9m the previous year.

In addition, the publication reveals that council funding reserves are decreasing year on year so that the total reserve funding available to local authorities has fallen by £27m overall.

Despite promising to abolish council tax, the SNP have left councils no choice but to hike bills to fill the hole left by savage cuts from central government.

The latest figures show that in 2018-19 the average cost of a council tax bill was £1,106 before reductions and £973 after reductions. In 2017-18 the costs were £1,069 before reductions and £936 after reductions.

Graham Simpson, Scottish Conservative shadow local government secretary said

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“The SNP government has consistently underfunded local government.

“Councils have been left with no option but to increase council tax on local residents in order to pay for essential services.

“Thanks to SNP budget cuts, the holes in council budgets continue to grow.

“The SNP government must now provide an extra £95m for local government in this year’s budget.

“That is completely reasonable and achievable given the massive funding boost due to arrive from the UK government.

“The SNP has no excuse, they must fund local services properly.”

SNP MSP: Brexit voters are ‘little Englanders’

31 Jan 2020



An SNP MSP has been criticised after he referred to Brexit voters as “little Englanders”.

Richard Lochhead, until recently a senior Scottish Government cabinet secretary, used the “inflammatory” phrase in a statement about the UK formally leaving the EU.

Mr Lochhead represents Moray, an area in which nearly 50 per cent of residents voted to leave.

And even Mr Lochhead’s SNP parliamentary colleague, Alex Neil, voted for Brexit.

The former rural affairs secretary said today: *“The Little Englanders and their opportunist bedfellows in the Conservative Party are inflicting the biggest economic dislocation on Scotland for generations.”*

Scottish Conservative Moray MP Douglas Ross said:

“This is an incredible attack from someone in a position of responsibility.

“He seems to forget one million Scots – including many SNP supporters – voted for Brexit, including nearly 50 per cent of people in Moray.

“His use of the term ‘little Englanders’ is inflammatory and dangerous and – if political opponents used that kind of language – the SNP would be up in arms.

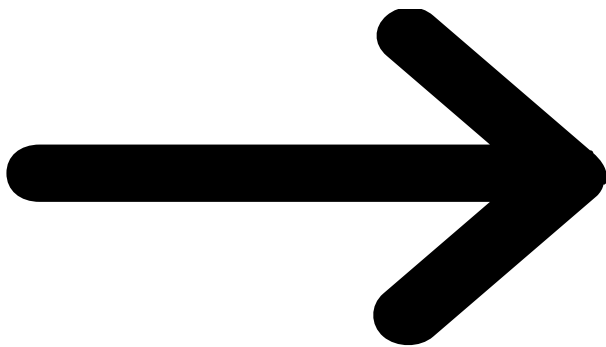
“But like so many statements by nationalist politicians, it is aimed at stoking up feelings among extremists in the hope of creating a gulf between Scotland and England.

“It’s hugely irresponsible, and will never work.”

Sturgeon’s indyref2 pursuit ‘entirely

wrongheaded'

31 Jan 2020



Nicola Sturgeon's vow to keep fighting for another independence referendum is "utterly predictable and entirely wrongheaded", the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The First Minister took to the stage today to tell supporters she would embark on a number of plans to keep the divisive debate going in Scotland.

But she disappointed supporters, including senior politicians in her own party, but pouring cold water on the prospect of a "wildcat" referendum.

Instead, she will look to set up a "convention" on the issue, and double campaign spending on promoting the break-up of the UK.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"This was a downbeat statement from First Minister faced with the reality that will be no referendum anytime soon.

"However, Nicola Sturgeon's determination to plough on with preparations for another vote on independence is predictable, depressing and entirely wrong-headed.

"People across Scotland are sick and tired of her relentless pursuit of a referendum they simply don't want.

"What people do want is action now to improve education, health, policing and all the other services they rely upon.

"On the day we leave the EU they want a government which focuses on Scotland's economy and jobs.

"And they want Nicola Sturgeon to put her referendum plans where they belong – firmly on the backburner.

"We've wasted more than a decade endlessly debating independence. Now we need to put divisive constitutional politics to one side and deal with the real and immediate issues facing Scotland in the 2020s.

“Ms Sturgeon is more than welcome to campaign for independence in her own time.

“But when it comes to being First Minister, it’s surely time for Scotland to demand that she focus on the things that are actually important.”

[SNP’s education record ‘one of unmitigated and continuing failure’](#)

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30 Jan 2020



The SNP’s record on education is “one of unmitigated and continuing failure” after more problems were revealed with school performance, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

At First Minister’s Questions today, Jackson Carlaw challenged Nicola Sturgeon on why standards were falling despite education supposedly being an SNP government priority.

It was reported this morning that the pass rate in 32 of 46 Higher subjects has dropped since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in 2015.

And the Scottish Government’s performance on closing the attainment gap has also come under fire this week, after it emerged ministers were way off course on their own targets for helping poorer pupils.

Despite that, the First Minister claimed education standards were “heading in the right direction” and critics of SNP performance were merely “talking down education”.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Nicola Sturgeon expects pupils, parents and teachers to keep listening to her same lines about how education is her government’s top priority.

“But the evidence shows that record is one of unmitigated and continuing failure.

“It’s clear that the First Minister has many priorities, but not one of them is raising the standard of education in our schools.

“There’s been next to no progress in closing the attainment gap in primary and secondary school when it comes to the key issues of numeracy and literacy.

“And now we learn, thanks to the botched introduction of the SNP’s Curriculum for Excellence, pass rates in the majority of Higher subjects are on the slide.

“That’s the very definition of failure – it’s as simple as that.”

[SNP ensures ‘day of embarrassment’ for Holyrood with pointless debates](#)

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- SNP ensures ‘day of embarrassment’ for Holyrood with pointless debates

29 Jan 2020



The SNP has been accused of embarrassing the Scottish Parliament by ensuring a key parliamentary day has been dominated by “pointless” debates.

MSPs were forced to talk about whether or not to fly a flag on the pavement outside Holyrood today, before the First Minister led yet another debate about independence.

That’s despite a range of domestic challenges, including a crisis in the NHS, plunging standards in Scotland’s schools and a funding fiasco for the country’s police force.

The Scottish Conservatives were even told ministers couldn’t make an urgent statement on policing today because there was no time in the parliamentary calendar.

The party have also blasted the SNP for attempting to overrule the Scottish Parliament’s Corporate Body – an organisation which is meant to politically independent – for the first time in Holyrood’s history.

Scottish Conservative chief whip Maurice Golden said:

“The SNP has ensured a day of embarrassment for the Scottish Parliament.

“What must the rest of the world think when they see the party of government ensuring crucial parliamentary time is abused in this way?”

“Major devolved portfolios like health, education and justice have descended into crisis under 13 years of SNP rule.

“We should be using this time to talk about how to get badly-delayed hospitals open, how to raise standards in schools and how to protect the number of police officers patrolling the streets.

“Instead, the day has been dominated by the nationalists’ childish hobby horses.

“Together with the subservient Greens, the behaviour by the SNP on these issues – from the First Minister down – has been a complete disgrace.”