



Jan 14, 2016 13:16 GMT

# Council leader seeks clarification of 'premature' comments by John Swinney

Following yesterday's announcement of a proposed 18% Council Tax increase by the ruling coalition on Moray Council, its leader Cllr Stewart

Cree is seeking clarification from Finance Secretary John Swinney.

In response to the proposed increase, a spokesman for Mr Swinney said that Moray Council's announcement was 'unnecessary and premature', which Cllr Cree thinks might indicate that further adjustments to funding allocations could be in the pipeline.

Speaking today, he said that Moray Council has responded to the Finance Secretary's settlement offer in advance of the January 22 deadline.

"Like all councils we were required to respond to the settlement offer from Mr Swinney by January 22.

"If the settlement was not acceptable – and we knew quite soon after it was received that this was the case – we were advised to inform the Finance Secretary.

"We looked long and hard at how we could meet the savings target demanded by the settlement. Moray Council is ahead of many authorities in making rafts of efficiency savings; we have reduced staff numbers, premises, and reduced services where we could, cutting our annual costs by more than £24million. There is nothing left that would generate the level of savings required, hence our decision to propose an increase in the council tax.

"We informed Mr Swinney of that prior to our announcement and a week ahead of the Jan 22 deadline.

"However, I'm aware that discussions are still ongoing between Cosla and Mr Swinney over the grant allocation, so if by 'premature' he is indicating there could be a change to the figures I'll be very interested.

"Most commentators in today's press agree with us in that the current method of funding local government is not working, and the council tax freeze is unsustainable. When the freeze was introduced in 2007 Mr Swinney promised an alternative system of financing councils, but nine years later we are still waiting. Moray simply couldn't wait any longer."

---

Moray Council area stretches from Tomintoul in the south to the shores of the Moray Firth, from Keith in the east to Forres in the west. The council and its 4,500 employees respond to the needs of 92,500 residents in this beautiful part of Scotland, which nestles between Aberdeenshire and the Highlands.

Famous for its colony of dolphins, fabulous beaches and more malt whisky distilleries than any where else in Scotland, Moray is a thriving area and a

great place to live.

Headquartered in Elgin, the administrative capital of Moray.

## Contacts



**Sharon Dunbar**

Press Contact

Media and Communications Officer

[sharon.dunbar@moray.gov.uk](mailto:sharon.dunbar@moray.gov.uk)

01343 563046

07967 748826



**Peter Jones**

Press Contact

Communications manager

Press, public communications, social media, events, FOI, campaigns,  
crisis comms.

[peter.jones@moray.gov.uk](mailto:peter.jones@moray.gov.uk)

01343 563601

07974 191318