



## **Fees and Charges 2025/26**

### **Report by Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions**

#### **Report for Decision**

#### **1 Recommendations**

On the recommendation of Business Transformation Steering Group, Council is asked to:

- Agree to the implementation of the new, revised and frozen charges as outlined within the report (and the associated policy changes for new and revised charges) from 1 April 2025; and
- Note the final agreed fees and charges register will be published on the Council's website.

#### **2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary**

This report provides Council with the proposed fees and charges table for 2025/26 for consideration and approval.

**Date** Monday 3 February 2024

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### **3 Main Report**

- 3.1** Fees and charges are reviewed annually and presented to Council as part of annual budget setting. The proposed fees and charges table for 2025/26 can be found [online](#) for review. Some charges are statutory, and these are noted on the register. As and when the statutory bodies issue the revised charges these will be actioned for these fees. Other charges are subject to inflationary uplifts and are noted on the register.
- 3.2** Below is a summary of where discretionary charges have been reviewed and has resulted in officer recommendations to introduce new charges, changes from the review and charges that remain frozen, and the rationale for these recommendations.

#### **New charges proposed to be introduced**

##### Roads Services – switch on/off of traffic signals

- 3.3** Road services currently approve road works to include temporary traffic signals for all roadworks which take place in Midlothian. When these works conflict with fixed asset permanent signals permission is granted to the contractor to isolate the signals and then re-energise following works. It is presumed likely that traffic management companies are charging contractors carrying out the roadworks a fee to isolate traffic signals.

New charges are proposed where Midlothian Council would provide this service and isolate the traffic signals and re-energise when the works are complete, charging the contractor a flat fee for switching traffic signals on and off.

Benchmarking has been carried out with other neighbouring Councils and our Local Government Benchmarking Framework family group who also charge for this service. Results show that:

- Edinburgh Council charge a minimum of £165 per switch on and off during weekdays within office hours with increasing fees up to £495 per switch on and switch off for emergency or short notice requests under 5 days.
- East Lothian currently charge for this service out with normal working hours only with a minimum charge of £126 to £191 for emergency requests.
- Clackmannanshire charge a standard fee of £213.40 plus an additional 20% for requests out of hours.

It is proposed to charge a flat fee of £150 per switch on/off during office hours and follow Edinburgh Council's charging scale of 100% increase from office hours to out with office hours and 200% increase from during office hours to emergency.

The proposed scale of charges per switch on or off are set out below:

Mon to Friday (07:00-16:30 hrs)	£150.00
Mon to Friday (16:30-07:00 hrs)	£300.00
Saturday- Sunday (07:00-19:00 hrs)	£300.00
Public holiday (07:00-17:00 hrs)	£300.00
Emergency (24/7) or short notice (under 5 days)	£450.00

Requests for this service should be submitted a minimum of 5 working days in advance of the required work. Requests should include confirmation that approval has been received from Midlothian Council's Road Services for the works to take place, including times and dates of those works.

The charges proposed are a flat rate and allow for Midlothian Council attendance up to 1 hour after the arranged attendance time. In instances where the switch on/off does not take place within 1 hour of the arranged time a further flat charge of £150 will be applied, with subsequent charges of £150 for every additional hour/part hour thereof. In the case where the Traffic Management system is not set up at the agreed attendance time, Midlothian Council may have to leave site and revisit later; further costs may apply as per the above.

Expected volumes are of approximately 2-4 requests per week, equating to 4-8 site visits.

The isolation/reinstating of traffic lights will be carried out by existing staff. The additional duties may cause an impact on lighting key performance indicators. Currently lighting repairs performance sits between 98-99% of lighting repairs responded to and repaired within timescales. If delivering the service over weekends, an on-call electrician would undertake the work which would involve higher overhead costs however the charges proposed above account for this.

#### Pest Control – bedbugs and cockroaches – new charging scale

- 3.4** In general pest control charges are uplifted by a 5% inflationary rate with the exception of the charge for the additional visit and garden site survey for rats and mice where a 10% increase is proposed to recover the cost of providing the service. Pest control volumes year on year can be difficult to estimate and charges are already at a level to remain competitive against commercial providers costs.

A new scale of charges is proposed for the eradication of bedbugs and cockroaches. The current per room charging model of £155 is considered to have influenced some customers to initially only treat 1 room within the house (the worst affected room) as a cost saving exercise which resulted in perpetuating the infestation and making it more difficult to eradicate the problem/prevent spread to neighbours. The proposed new charging scale, with the removal of the option to treat only one room, introduces new charges for up to 3 bedrooms plus a living room to be treated as well as charges for properties with more than 3 bedrooms.

The new charge is determined per room i.e. (to treat a 3 bedroom property plus living room would equate to a charge of £650.00). For properties over 6 bedrooms, the £810 charge will apply plus a charge of £162.50 for each additional bedroom requiring treatment.

The new charging scale is based on the 24/25 room rate of £155 plus 5% inflation and covers the initial survey and treatment plan of each room.

These figures remain highly competitive against commercial providers costs and aims to encourage complete eradication of problem and prevention of spread.

#### Animal Boarding Fee

- 3.5** A new charge of £147.00 is proposed for animal boarding licence fees (home boarding) where **no inspection** is required by Environmental Health.

The current charge for an animal boarding licence where an inspection is required is £210.00. The new additional charge is a reduced charge covering the cost to provide the service and removes costs for inspection.

#### Private water supplies

- 3.6** Private water supplies are classified as one of two types, each with their respective legislation:
- Regulated (those with commercial/public activity or larger supplies) - The Water Intended for Human Consumption (Private Supplies) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
  - Type B (domestic, owner occupied) – The Private Water Supply (Scotland) Regulations 2006

Midlothian Council is required to maintain a register incorporating all private water supply types.

There are currently 41 Regulated and 27 Type B registered supplies. There is a duty to sample each Regulated supply annually and to undertake risk assessment at least every 5 years. Facility to apply reasonable charge applies in both cases.

Sampling incorporates a prescribed suite of microbiological and chemical parameter testing. Samples are obtained by Environmental Health and taken to Edinburgh Scientific Services laboratory for analysis (which is charged to Midlothian Council). A risk assessment incorporates a site assessment of the full supply from source (borehole, spring, well or surface water) through to collection, treatment and property supply. Risks of potential contamination and suitable control measures are identified through the site visit and subsequent off site assessment/review and shared with persons responsible for the supply. Where sample results demonstrate parameter values above prescribed limits, supply users are informed and may be served with a boil water notice for the protection of public health.

There is a further duty to sample and risk assess a Type B supply when requested by a relevant person.

Currently, Midlothian does not fully recover costs in relation to the assessment of water supplies. The new charges proposed cover the costs to the council to undertake water sampling and associated risk assessments where required. Charges include preparatory work, officers' time on site and associated administrative tasks.

#### Short Term Lets – variation licence

- 3.7** A new charge is proposed for the variation of a short term let licence with an £85 variation fee plus an additional £42.50 for each increase in accommodation for every 4 (or part thereof) persons. The new fee proposed is to capture those who want to amend their licence to accommodate additional people and ensures fair pricing compared to applications.

New charges are proposed for the transfer of a short term let licence to another owner. Since the short term let licence scheme was introduced in 2023 no requests for licence transfers have been received. It is anticipated that transfers of licences may be requested going forward. Resource requirements to process the transfer of a licence would be the same as a material change of a licence. It is therefore proposed to align both charges. Benchmarking was carried out and results show that other local authorities also charge for licence transfers.

For initial and renewal applications for secondary lettings, the following charges are proposed and are charged at the same cost as a material change of licence:

- Up to 4 bedrooms/8 guests – (Fee to consider licence transfer): £300
- 5 - 8 Bedrooms/16 guests - (Fee to consider licence transfer): £350
- 8-12 bedrooms/16-24 guests – (Fee to consider licence transfer): £430
- An additional charge (per additional room/guest): greater than 12 bedrooms or greater than 24 guests – (Fee to consider licence transfer): £35.00

For initial and renewal applications for home sharing or home lettings, the following charges are proposed and are charged at the same cost as a material change of licence:

- 1 bedroom/3 guests - (Fee to consider licence transfer): £110
- 2-3 Bedrooms/9 guests - (Fee to consider licence transfer): £145
- 4 bedrooms/ 9 guests - (Fee to consider licence transfer): £210
- An additional charge (per additional room/guest): greater than 4 bedrooms or greater than 9 guests - (Fee to consider licence transfer): £35.00

### Sport and Leisure – concessionary charging

**3.8** Currently our Access to Midlothian scheme gives our service users free access to a range of sport and leisure facilities including swimming, gym access and exercise classes for users meeting eligibility criteria and receive one or more of the following:

- Personal Independence Payment (PIP) at the enhanced rate for both the Daily Living and Mobility Component.
- Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) at the severe rate and PIP at the enhanced rate for the Mobility Component.
- Attendance Allowance at the higher rate
- Adult Disability Payment (ADP) at the enhanced rate for both the Daily Living and Mobility Component.
- Child Disability Payment (CDP) at the middle or highest rate for the Care component and at the lower or higher rate for the Mobility component.

The scheme allows service users to access services with a carer who is permitted free of charge alongside the service user. Service users in receipt of any of the payments at a lower rate than detailed above may qualify for concessionary rate access.

Concessionary rate access is applied for those who receive:

- Income support/Universal credit
- Standard Employment and Support Allowance
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Working Tax Credit
- War Widows/Bereavement Allowance

It is proposed to move to a minimum concessionary charge for service users who access our services free of charge to align with our minimum pricing structure for Midlothian Active Choices (MAC) of £2.30 per visit as a pay as you go option. The proposed charge would still permit carers to attend free alongside the service user.

The proposed charges bring us in line with other Local Authorities who only offer concessionary prices and do not offer free use of facilities.

From data covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> of Oct 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2024, 620 service users (people who met eligibility criteria) accessed leisure facilities free of charge across leisure sites during this period.

The total usage across various leisure facilities between this period by the 620 service users was 16,666 visits with 13,541 of those visits accessing Tonezone (6,108), Swimming (6,096) and our Health suites (1,337). 2,392 visits included an additional person (carer) alongside the service user.

The table below shows the total number of visits per each site, along with the percentage of visits at each site and the number of service users accessing those sites. It should be noted that some service users use more than 1 site.

<b>Leisure site</b>	<b>No of visits</b>	<b>% of visits</b>	<b>No of service users accessing sites</b>
Danderhall Leisure Centre	118	1%	13
Gorebridge Leisure Centre	692	4%	71
Loanhead Leisure Centre	2,768	17%	216
Newbattle Community Campus	5,328	32%	284
Newtongrange Leisure Centre	996	6%	57
The Lasswade Centre	3,863	23%	225
The Penicuik Centre	2,901	17%	121
Total visits	16,666		

To note, Midlothian Snowsports Centre and Dalkeith Community Campus are not included in the Access to Midlothian Card Scheme.

- 286 service users accessed facilities alone without an additional person (carer).
- 22 service users accessed facilities only with an additional person (carer)
- 312 service users accessed facilities either on their own or at times with an additional person (carer).

Moving away from free access might put further pressures on our Health and Social Care services however by offering concessionary access to qualifying Midlothian residents will minimise direct impact on service users.

## Review of existing charges

### Building Standards

- 3.9** Benchmarking was undertaken with other Local Authorities and a 5% inflationary increase proposed across all Building Standards fees to continue to align with other Local Authorities.

It is proposed that the Building Standards Service continue to use the nationally adopted construction industry rates (estimated cost of construction work per square metre) taken from the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) to estimate the cost of building works required to calculate the fee for building warrant applications. Our [Midlothian Cost Index](#) sets out the minimum estimated costs per square metre for domestic works (houses and flats) and non-domestic works (commercial, industrial and agricultural) allowing the estimated cost of works to be determined by total floor area multiplied by estimated cost by square metre. The Midlothian Cost index ensures that building warrant applications fees are accurately determined by development type and based on the value of work and provides a consistent charging method. The Midlothian Cost Index is published on our website alongside our statutory detailed [Building Standards fees](#) and will be updated for 2025/26 to reflect changes to construction industry rates made available by BCIS.

Benchmarking was undertaken with East Lothian and West Lothian Council who also adopt this method.

### School meals – review and uplift of existing charges

- 3.10** A 10% increase is proposed across all school meals (primary, secondary and adult).

Benchmarking was carried out with neighbouring authorities, Edinburgh, East Lothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian and our Local Government Benchmarking Framework family group. Results show that Midlothian is charging less than all other authorities benchmarked.

The average charge for primary school meals and secondary school meals is £2.47 and £2.65 respectively.

The proposed 10% increases align more with neighbouring authorities and contributes to the cost of providing meals where food costs have seen significant increases due to inflation over recent years. It should be noted charges for school meals have not been increased since 2019/20.

The current 2025/26 budgeted cost per meal is £3.22. This includes nursery, school, adult, breakfast and lunch club meals. This is an average cost across all meal types because the same facilities and staffing are used for all meal preparations. The actual cost to the Council of producing school meals only will be higher than £3.22 because nursery and breakfast club costs will reduce the average figure.



### Café and vending machine products

- 3.11** A 10% increase is proposed across all products sold at our cafes, vending machines and basket service. Charges were frozen last year, and increases have been determined as a result of covering the increase of food costs.

### Burial and cemetery fees

- 3.12** A 5% increase is proposed across all charges for burials, purchase of lairs, foundations, monuments, plaques and exhumation to remain in line with other authorities.

Benchmarking was undertaken with neighbouring authorities (Edinburgh, Borders, East Lothian) and Local Government Benchmarking family group (Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, Angus, Clackmannanshire, West Lothian and East Renfrewshire).

The average adult interment charges for neighbouring authorities is £1,046. The average adult interment charge from our LGBF group is £1,024. Results show Midlothian is averagely priced in comparison to both groups.

The average full lair charges for neighbouring authorities is £1,159 and the average full lair charges from our LGBF group is £1,113. Results show Midlothian is averagely priced in comparison to both groups.

### Allotments – review and uplift of existing charges

- 3.13** A 5% increase is proposed for allotments fees to £120 per year and £60 for a concession charge. There is good demand for allotments which exceeds supply.

Benchmarking has been carried out across neighbouring authorities where data was available, Edinburgh Council currently charge £161 per year, Scottish Borders, £52 per year and East Lothian Council £52 per year. The average charge across these areas is £89. Midlothian is already charging well above average in comparison.

No other information could be gathered from our Local Government Benchmarking family group. These Local Authorities either do not publish their charges on site and/or sites are managed by an allotment association.

### Greenspaces – park and event field hire

- 3.14** A review of events charges and associated fees for events that occur in the Council's Parks and Greenspaces was undertaken last year where charges were significantly increased to align with other authorities. Further benchmarking was undertaken this year, and an inflationary 5% increase is proposed to remain aligned to other authorities.

Benchmarking information is limited for BBQ hiring facilities. The proposed increase of 5% would continue to align Midlothian with West Lothian Council after fees were uplifted last year.

Similarly, benchmarking information is limited for outdoor space hire as a direct comparison (events, fairground, circus). Work was carried out last year to review all event field hire, circuses and fairgrounds.

For event field hire, charges were benchmarked against Edinburgh Council charges for small events at city park sites as the closest direct comparison and East Lothian's large open space charges for commercial use. The average charge per day is £336. A 30% increase was applied to charges for 24/25 to bring charges in line with other authorities. A proposed inflationary 5% increase is proposed to continue to align charges.

For fairground hire, benchmarking was carried out with East Lothian, Scottish Borders and Renfrewshire Council. The average charge for Fairgrounds (up to 10 shows/stands) is £187 per day. Fairgrounds (up to 20 shows) is £373 per day. Fairgrounds (over 20 stands/shows) is £586 per day. A proposed inflationary increase is proposed to continue to align charges. A 100% increase was applied to charges for fairground hire for 24/25 to bring charges in line with other authorities.

For Circus space hire, benchmarking carried out with Scottish Borders and Renfrewshire Council show that Midlothian charge similar for circus space hire. It is likely other authorities charge per event hire which would show Midlothian are averagely priced in comparison. A 30% increase was applied last year to align with other local authorities. An inflationary rate is proposed to continue to align.

Charges for our Ranger services were restructured as part of last year review of charges, no increases are proposed to encourage uptake of ranger sessions.

#### Road Services road permits – review and uplift of existing charges

- 3.15** With the exception of footway crossing permits and access protection marking all permits are mainly aimed at developers and/or commercial businesses. Permits such as material road occupation, skip and scaffolding may be aimed at businesses but also members of the public.

Table and chairs permits are mainly aimed at hospitality businesses and would include small local cafes.

Benchmarking was undertaken with neighbouring authorities and our Local Government Benchmarking family group. After permits were brought more in line with other authorities last year, results show that Midlothian are either averagely priced or charging higher for table and chairs permits, cabin/storage, skip, hoarding, material/road occupation and scaffolding permits.

Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) up to 5 days show Midlothian as slightly under charging compared to other authorities but TTROs over 5 days show Midlothian as charging higher than other authorities.

In comparison benchmarking against other authorities for crane permits, footway crossings, access protection markings and hoist access tower permits show Midlothian as charging below average.

Due to different scale of charges for excavations it is not possible to carry out a direct comparison for some excavation permits. However, for those charges where a close comparison can be made, Midlothian are charging under the average of other authorities.

Recognising that Midlothian is the fastest growing Council, it is proposed to increase those permits aimed solely at developers/larger commercial businesses/utility companies by 100%. This would put Midlothian at the higher end of charges compared to other authorities.

A 5% increase is proposed for those permits already in line with other authorities but where members of the public would be affected by a higher increase.

A 20% increase is proposed for those permits where in comparison to other authorities Midlothian are undercharging.

A 50% increase is proposed for Access Protection Marking to cover the cost of providing the service.

#### Waste – New housing developments

- 3.16** The ordering of new waste and recycling bins and boxes for new housing developments are processed as part of our street name and numbering processes. These charges are aimed at property developers only. Developers are charged for the costs of providing waste and recycling containers for new build housing. This covers the initial capital purchasing cost of the containers, delivery and administration.

A 90% increase was applied to these charges last year. A further 25% increase is proposed this year to £250 per full set of bins and boxes (excluding the garden waste bin which is part of additional charges to customers who sign up to the garden waste service).

**Council, when it acts as a property developer, will also be subjected to these costs.**

#### Garden Waste

- 3.17** In February 2024, Council agreed to uplift garden waste charges to £42/year, to take effect in year 2025/26. It is proposed to uplift this charge to £45 for 2026/27.

Benchmarking was carried out across all 32 Councils and shows an average charge of £45 per permit with 12 Councils charging between £30 to £45 and 11 Councils charging between £45-£60. It should be noted that some of these Councils may offer a year round collection.

Council should note that as the promotion for garden waste sign commences in January of each year, any change to charges needs to be agreed in this financial year to take effect for next.

Customer uptake over the last two years has remained steady with 18,361 customers subscribing to the garden waste service in 2023 and 18,516 in 2024.

## Licensing – civic government

**3.18 Taxi licences:** A review across all licence charges and charging scales has been undertaken this year with detailed benchmarking carried out across our neighbouring authorities and our Local Government Benchmarking family group authorities. Proposed percentage increases vary across all taxi licence types and have been uplifted to align with other authorities, ensure the costs of providing the service are met and introduce a more consistent charging scale. Results of benchmarking in general highlighted that:

- For taxi driver licence first application charges, Midlothian sit near the average charge of £160 across all authorities (Midlothian currently £143).
- For taxi licence applications, Midlothian sit above average at £563 (combining our 1st and 2nd fee) with the average charge across all authorities of £463.
- For private hire car driver first application licences, Midlothian charge £102 which is under the average charged across all authorities at £161.
- For private hire car licence applications, Midlothian sit above average at £547 (combining our 1st and 2nd fee) with the average charge across all authorities £460.

Benchmarking results showed that in general Midlothian's renewal fees are lower than other authorities with 4 out of 10 Councils benchmarked charging the same charge for taxi licence 1 year renewals as applications and 6 out of 10 authorities charging the same for private taxi licence 1 year renewals as applications.

It should be noted that application and renewal fees for licences should reflect the cost to the Council of processing the application. Costs for a new application and renewal require the same level of resource and time to process.

In addition, from the benchmarking carried out no other authorities offer a charge for a 2 year licence renewal or offer a split taxi licence 1st and 2nd fee.

It is therefore proposed to remove the offer of a 2 year licence. 2 year renewals are licences rarely applied for. It is also proposed to combine both the 1st and 2nd taxi licence fees into one combined fee to streamline the administration and payments process.

To introduce a more consistent charging structure, whilst covering the cost of providing the service including monitoring and “spot checks” throughout a 3 year licence period as required, all 3 year renewal licence charges have been calculated at a 75% increase rate from the cost of the application/1 year renewal fee.

All licence renewal applications have been increased to the same charge as first/initial applications.

**3.19 All other civic licences:** a review across all other licence charges and charging scales has been undertaken this year and benchmarking undertaken against Edinburgh, East Lothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian Council. Proposed percentage increases vary across all licence types and have been uplifted to align with other authorities, ensure the cost of providing the service are met and introduce a more consistent charging scale. Results of benchmarking in general highlighted that:

In general, Edinburgh Council charges are higher than any other authority benchmarked mainly due a variety of scales of charging for different locations. It is therefore difficult to directly compare these licence types.

Comparing benchmarking information directly to East Lothian and Scottish Borders, Midlothian are charging less for window cleaning, street trader and houses of multiple occupation licences.

For public indoor sports licences, metal dealers, second hand dealers, later hours catering, knife dealer, venison dealer and public entertainment licences, Midlothian are in line with these authorities or charging above.

In terms of renewals, both Scottish Borders and East Lothian charge the same for applications and 1 year renewals and therefore in comparison Midlothian are undercharging for 1 year renewals across all licences. As a result, it is proposed to align with other authorities and ensure cost recovery of providing the service and increase renewals to the same fee as applications. It should be noted that application and renewal fees for licences should reflect the cost to the Council of processing the application. Costs for a new application and renewal require the same level of resource and time to process.

To introduce a more consistent charging structure, whilst covering the cost of the providing the service including monitoring and “spot checks” throughout a 3 year licence period as required, all 3 year renewal licence charges have been calculated at a 75% increase rate from the cost of the application/1 year renewal fee.

Various licence fees have been uplifted by a 5% inflationary rate where the fee is already at a level to recover costs.

#### Environmental health

**3.20** Charges across Environmental Health for caravan site applications, animal licences, immigration certificates and food certificates vary from 5% inflationary charge to 80% charge to cover the cost of providing the service.

For permanent caravan site licence applications, a 5% increase is proposed to applications with one exception of a 40% increase in renewals with site inspections per pitch from £8.80 to 12.30, this aligns with the cost for first licence pitch inspections due to the same time and resource involved in the process.

For animal licences, benchmarking was carried out with neighbouring authorities and results show that Midlothian are undercharging for animal licensing fees:

- Licence fees for breeding of animals: Edinburgh charge: £372, West Lothian £322 and East Lothian £200.
- Commercial animal boarding: East Lothian charge £69.00, Edinburgh £308 (with £140 for renewal).
- Pet shop: West Lothian charge: £322, Edinburgh £436.
- Dangerous wild animals: West Lothian charge £138.57, East Lothian £138

It is proposed to increase charges to an average charge across those authorities and where required increase to cover the cost of providing the service.

For immigration/health/food certificates, immigration certificates have been increased by an inflationary rate of 5%. Food export certificates (with or without inspections requirements) have been increased by 5% and 30% to reflect the true cost of providing the service.

Certificate of Compliance for street trading vehicles under Section 39 Civic Government Scotland Act have been increased by 34% to align with the food hygiene certificate charge under section 50 at £131.00. Resourcing requirements and costs are similar for both and therefore increased to ensure costs are met.

### Sport and Leisure

- 3.21** An inflationary rate of 5% is proposed across all fees within sport and leisure including hiring of pitches, halls, Tonezone memberships, Midlothian Access Card (6-12 month) and our general facilities including swimming, exercise classes and hiring of facilities and equipment.

Charges across sport and leisure facilities have remained static since 20/21. A standard inflationary rate is proposed across all sport and leisure charges this year pending a further review of charges during 25/26 as part of the Councils Transformation Blueprint.

All charges under the Snowsports centre have remained static since 20/21 and previous to 20/21 charges were uplifted between 1-3%.

All fees for snowsports have been reviewed and a 10-20% increase is proposed to cover the costs of operating the service with the exception of a 30% increase for private lessons for racing taking into account the additional set up costs and requirements of a specialist instructor.

In addition, it is also proposed to remove the combined charge for family lessons (1.5 hours) for two adults and 2 children and any additional children due to no demand over the years for this service.

No increases are proposed for our Alpine Coaster rides which recently went live during 2024.

## Library

**3.22** Benchmarking was carried out with Edinburgh, East Lothian, West Lothian, Inverclyde, Angus and Clackmannanshire Council. Increases between 4-25% are proposed for printing and photocopying to align with average charges across these authorities. Benchmarking results show that:

The average charge for printing is:

- 23p for A4 black and white
- 68p for A4 colour

The average charge for photocopying is:

- 26p for A4 black and white
- 60p for A4 colour
- 50p for A3 black and white
- £1.00 for A3 colour.

Charges for fax sending and use of image for publication have generally remained static since 2019/20. Customer demand for faxing and use of publications images are very low and faxing is only available in one of our libraries. It is proposed to increase these charges by 10% to 25%.

## Registrars

**3.23** A review of charges was undertaken across our citizenship's ceremonies and civil marriage/partnerships ceremonies.

The current charge for a private citizenship ceremony (£80) with or without guests has been replaced by a new tiered structure to now offer a ceremony charge with or without guests and an option of an express ceremony to ensure charges are more proportionate:

- Citizenship Ceremony (private) with no guests at £100.00
- Citizenship Ceremony (private) with guests at £140.00
- Citizenship Ceremony (private), express options within 5 working days, 2 guests at £150.00

A benchmarking exercise was undertaken with other Local Authorities and ceremony charges increased to reach a competitive price.

The current standard charge for civil marriage/ partnership ceremonies during office hours at £305 has been replaced by a new two tiered structure to offer the customer a reduced charge for a small ceremony with no guests. The two tiered structure is proposed to encourage uptake of office hour ceremonies whilst ensuring the charge is proportionate to that of a larger ceremony with guests.

- Civil Marriage/Partnership in office during office hours (Ceremony room) with no guests at £205.
- Civil Marriage/Partnership in office during office hours (Ceremony room) with guests at £355.

Benchmarking was carried out with other Local Authorities and civil marriage/partnership ceremonies are increased to align with other authorities as well as ensuring the costs are met to provide the service. (including, upkeep of the ceremony room).

A new charge is proposed for proof of life documentation at £15.00 to recover the cost of providing this service which is currently delivered free of charge. Benchmarking was carried out with other local authorities who are charging for this service.

With the exception of the new proposed scale of charges set out above, changes to the remaining registrar fees are minimal. Charges proposed align with neighbouring Local Authorities after benchmarking was carried out or cover the cost of service being provided. No increases are proposed for baby naming ceremonies and renewal of vows to encourage uptake of these services.

Further work is in progress to develop a wider ceremony offering maximising the opportunities across the Midlothian estate, to increase income levels. A proposal will be presented later in 2025/26 for consideration.

#### Street naming and numbering

**3.24** Benchmarking was carried out with Edinburgh, East Lothian, Scottish Borders, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and Clackmannanshire. Against all Councils benchmarked, Midlothian are at the higher end of charges for street naming and numbering. A sample of benchmarking results show:

- For naming of new street Midlothian charges are £500, Edinburgh, £333, East Lothian, £300, Scottish Borders £187, Inverclyde £150, Renfrewshire £190 and Clackmannanshire £187.
- For naming/numbering new properties Midlothian charges are £150, Edinburgh, £75, East Lothian, £79.70, Scottish Borders £96, Inverclyde £50, Renfrewshire £80 and Clackmannanshire £96.

A 5% increase is proposed to reflect increase in staffing costs/inflation.

#### Adult Health and Social Care

**3.25** The guidance for care charges for 25/26 has yet to be published however as in previous years there is an expectation the charging guidance will be amended to take into account the inflationary increase in welfare benefits. The effect of applying the inflationary increase to charging guidance is to increase the charging income by approximately the same amount.

For example, in April '24 an inflationary increase of 6.7% was applied to welfare benefits. Consequently, the COSLA guidance set out in increase in the threshold for charging of 6.7%. Since individuals' benefit income also increased by 6.7% the net result will have been an increase of charging income of approximately 6.7%.



The UK government is uplifting benefits by 1.7%. It is not known if the same increase will apply to devolved benefits. Assuming a 1.7% uplift is applied to all benefits this will result in an increase in charging income of approx. £16.3k. (1.7% of £960k).

Care charges have not been increased for several years in Midlothian. The table below uses the uprating applied to benefits since 2011 and applies this to the current care charge and what the charge would currently be if it was uplifted in line with benefits.

Charge	Current Rate	Last Increased	Rate if uplifted as per benefits
Care Charges (Hourly)	£12.40	April '20	£15.65
Telecare	£4.00	April '20	£5.05
Transport (per journey)	£1.00	April '18	£1.34
Day Services	£3.15	April '18	£4.24
Cherry Road Meals	£2.50	April '12	£3.95

It should be noted that as charging is capped it does not necessarily follow that an increase in rates will result in proportionate increase in income and this is discussed further below.

### 3.26 Care Charges

Currently 417 individuals receive non-residential chargeable services and are above the income threshold and therefore pay towards their services. The financial assessment caps the amount an individual has to pay in charges and 80% of the clients who pay charges are charged the maximum amount. This means if the hourly rate were to be increased only 20% of the users that pay charges would pay more. Any percentage increase may not also be fully realised as it would be expected that an increase in charges would draw more people into the cap of charges.

The hourly charge for non-residential care provision is £12.40 per hour. The rate was last increased in April 2020 and if it had been increased in line with benefits would currently be £15.65. The table below sets out the additional income that could be realised by an increase in this hourly charge:

- Estimated charging income FY 24/25 = £960k
- Uncapped charging income FY 24/25 = £255k (26.6% of total income)

Increase in Charges	Revised Rate	Additional Income	Notes
1.7%	£12.61	£4.3k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
3%	£12.77	£7.7k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
5%	£13.02	£12.8k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
10%	£13.64	£25.5k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
20%	£15	£38.3k	Applied to 75% of uncapped income to account for more people falling within the cap on charges
26.1%	£15.65	£46.6k	<i>Rate if uplifts had been applied as per benefits</i>  Applied to 70% of uncapped income to account for more people falling within the cap on charges

The Midlothian Charging Policy currently sets the taper amount to 70% of excess income (the income after disregards have been applied). This means that 30% of excess income is not liable for charging. This taper could be increased and would result in the additional income as the maximum amount people could be charged would increase. The table below sets out the income that could be expected taking into consideration that the 20% of people paying less than the maximum amount would not see an increase in charges.

The taper Midlothian applies is in line with other Local Authorities. Any changes in the taper would have a material impact on the available income of individuals who are charged for services. It should be noted that someone on full benefits is likely to be assessed as requiring to pay care charges so increasing the taper would reduce their income for daily living costs. Consequently, it should be expected there would be significant opposition to increasing the taper amount.

Taper Amount	Additional Income	Notes
70%	-	Current taper amount
75%	£51.4 k	Assumes increase in overall charging income by 6.7% - reduced by 20% for clients under the cap
80%	£109.8 k	Assumes increase in overall charging income by 14.3% - reduced by 20% for clients under the cap

## Telecare Charges

- 3.27** Currently there is a flat rate charge for Telecare Alarms of £4 per week. This is not financially assessed. The rate was last increased in April 2020 and if it had been increased in line with benefits would currently be £5.05.

Analogue to Digital work continues to progress. The digital network addresses the risks associated with the aging analogue system however there are known additional costs. The Integrated Joint Board (IJB) and specifically Midlothian Council have supported our Midcare team during the transition from analogue to digital which has included the additional costs associated with sim cards required for digital. Our current timeline to conclude this switchover is December 2025.

The weekly charge will rise to £6.50 per week. As a 62% increase this may not be palatable however these costs are well documented and have been previously agreed by Midlothian Council. This will of course impact on the anticipated income generation beyond December.

Mitigations for the risks around clients opting out as a result of rising costs are being addressed through communications with clients during switchover and for all new clients so that information is consistently known. Additional income that would be realised through an increase in charges is as follows:

- Total charging income = £320k

Increase in Charges	Revised Rate	Additional Income	Notes
1.7%	£4.07	£5.4k	
3%	£4.12	£9.6k	
5%	£4.20	£16k	
10%	£4.40	£32k	
20%	£4.80	£64k	
26.3%	£5.05	£84.2k	<i>Rate if uplifts had been applied as per benefits</i>

## Day Service Charges

- 3.28** Currently there is a charge for attendance at Adult Day Services of £3.15 per day. This generates around £32k income per year. Increasing the charges will only result in an increase in income in 20% of the cases due to 80% of clients already being charged the maximum amount. Any percentage increase may not also be fully realised as it would be expected that an increase in charges would draw more people into the cap of charges.

Additional income that would be realised through an increase in charges is as follows:

- Total charging income = £32k (23/24 figures)
- Uncapped charging income = £28.8k (90% of total income)

Increase in Charges	Revised Rate	Additional Income	Notes
1.7%	£3.20	£0.5k	
3%	£3.24	£0.9k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
5%	£3.31	£1.4k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
10%	£3.47	£2.9k	Applied to full amount of uncapped income
20%	£3.78	£5.2k	Applied to 90% of uncapped income to account for more people falling within the cap on charges
34.6%	£4.24	£8.0k	<i>Rate if uplifts had been applied as per benefits</i>  Applied to 80% of uncapped income to account for more people falling within the cap on charges

#### Transport Charges

**3.29** Currently there is a charge for transport to Adult Day Services of £1 per journey. The maximum charge is £11 per week which is half of standard rate PIP / DLA mobility component when the charges were introduced. This generates around £31k income per year.

The current charge was set in 2018 and has not been increased since then. Had charges been increased in line with benefits the current charge would be £1.34.

As the standard rate PIP / DLA mobility component in 24/25 is £26.90 there could be a rationale to increase the maximum charge per week from £11 to £13.45, an increase of 22.2%.

The estimated additional income that would be realised through an increasing the cap and the charges is as follows:

- Total charging income = £31k (based on FY23/24)

Increase in Charges	Revised Rate	Additional Income	Notes
1.7%	£1.02	£0.5	Full effect of increase applied
3%	£1.03	£0.93k	
5%	£1.05	£1.55k	
10%	£1.10	£3.1k	
20%	£1.20	£6.2k	
34%	£1.34	£10.5k	<i>Rate if uplifts had been applied as per benefits</i>

### Day Centre Meals (Cherry Road)

**3.30** Currently there is a flat rate charge for meals at Cherry Road day service of £2.40 per day. This is not financially assessed. The current charge was set in 2012 and has not been increased since then. Had charges been increased in line with benefits the current charge would be £3.95.

Additional income that would be realised through an increase in charges is as follows:

- Total charging income = £7,000

Increase in Charges	Additional Income	Notes
1.7%	£120	Daily Charge £2.44
3%	£210	Daily Charge £2.47
5%	£350	Daily Charge £2.52
10%	£700	Daily Charge £2.64
20%	£1,400	Daily Charge £2.88
64.6%	£4,522	Daily Charge £3.95  <i>Rate if uplifts had been applied as per benefits</i>

### Respite Charges

**3.31** During 23/24 Carer's funding was used to ensure the majority of respite (up to equivalent of 6 weeks residential care) was non chargeable. Consequently only a negligible proportion of care charges be for respite care and in these cases is appropriate for the normal care charging policy to apply.

#### Summary

**3.32** It is anticipated that as a result of changes in benefits rates and a consequential update of the COSLA charging guidance the following additional income will be realised in FY24/25.

- Care Charges £64,000

The following table summarised the potential additional income that could be realised by increasing care charges.

<b>Charges</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>In line with benefits</b>
Care Charges	4,300	7,700	12,800	25,500	33,300	46,600
Telecare Charges	5,400	9,600	16,000	32,000	64,000	82,200
Day Service Charges	500	900	1,400	2,900	5,200	8,000
Transport Charges	500	930	1,550	3,100	6,200	9,900
Day Centre Meals	120	210	350	700	1,400	4,340
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10,820</b>	<b>19,340</b>	<b>32,100</b>	<b>64,200</b>	<b>110,100</b>	<b>151,040</b>

The following table summarised the potential additional income that could be realised by increasing the taper amount for charging from 70%.

<b>Taper Amount</b>	<b>Additional Income</b>	<b>Notes</b>
70%	-	Current taper amount
75%	£51.4 k	Assumes increase in overall charging income by 6.7% - reduced by 20% for clients under the cap
80%	£109.8 k	Assumes increase in overall charging income by 14.3% - reduced by 20% for clients under the cap

### **No changes to charges**

#### Lifelong Learning and Employability

**3.33** No increases are proposed for Code A and G courses (all levels) and a 3-4% increase proposed only for Codes C to F. Proposed fees aim to ensure courses remain affordable during the cost of living crisis and encourage uptake. Proposals aid in delivering the priorities and targets set out in the Single Midlothian Plan to increase the number of adults participating in adult learning and increase qualification levels.

It should be noted that customers registering for qualifications who meet the criteria (in low paid work, no qualifications above a certain level etc) qualify for an Individual Learning Account from Skills Development Scotland of up to £200.

### Bonnyrigg District Heating Scheme

- 3.34** It is not proposed to change the charges at present due to an ongoing feasibility study.

### Travel and Fleet Services

- 3.35** It is proposed to freeze the charge for non-entitled travel school bus pass currently at £245.00. This will be reviewed as part of the Client Transport workstream contained within the Transformation Blueprint. Other charges within this service are statutory capped charges where charges are already at the maximum.

### Planning

- 3.36** Most fees across our planning service are statutory and no increases are proposed at present. The Scottish Government have indicated there may be some changes to statutory charges during the summer of 2025 however there is no further information at this stage. The fees register will be updated when changes to statutory charging are announced.

In relation to pre-application planning advice, there are no plans at present to review the Planning Charter fees prior to April 2025 however the charter will be reviewed during 25/26 ahead of April 2026.

### Car Parking

- 3.37** No increases are proposed across our car parks.

Car parking charges at Vogrie Country park are proposed to remain at £3.00 to stay aligned to local competitors in Midlothian and other local authorities.

Charges for car parking within Dalkeith town centre (St Andrews Street and North Wynd) remained static since their introduction in 2011/12 until 24/25 when a 50% increase was applied to up to 3 hours and 25% increase over 4 hours stay.

Benchmarking was carried out with neighbouring authorities and our Local Government Benchmarking Framework family group where data was available. With the exception of Edinburgh Council, increasing charges would put Midlothian above all other authorities benchmarked. Car parking fees will be further reviewed as part of our parking strategy.

Car parking volumes gathered from NSL show that the total number of car parking sessions for 22/23 was 30,439, 23/24 was 33,442 and 24/25 to the beginning of December 2024, 23,445. Volumes for 24/25 are estimated to be 34,880 and similar to that of previous years.

Wider work is ongoing to develop a Council Parking Strategy and is anticipated to be presented to members in 2025/26.

### Electric vehicle charging

- 3.38** Benchmarking was carried out with neighbouring authorities, Edinburgh, East Lothian, West Lothian and Scottish Borders and our Local Government Benchmarking family group. Data shows Midlothian is averagely priced in comparison.

For slow/fast chargers, the average charges across LGBF group is £0.45. For neighbouring authorities, the average charge is £0.40.

For rapid chargers, the average charge across LGBF groups is £0.78. For Neighbouring authorities, the average charge is: £0.60.

No further increases are proposed this year to remain competitive with our local authorities near the area. Electric Vehicle charging will be reviewed as part of the EV strategy during 25/26.

### Trade waste

- 3.39** It is proposed to freeze Trade Waste bin collection and bin leasing charges pending a review of charges later this year. It is expected that a freeze of charges will encourage uptake of the service.

Benchmarking was carried out with neighbouring authorities, East Lothian and Scottish Borders and our Local Government benchmarking family group.

For weekly bin collections (240 litre) (residual), the average charge for neighbouring authorities is £337, average LGBF group charge is £365. Midlothian are currently averagely priced in comparison.

For weekly bin collections (240 litre) (residual) charity, the average charge for neighbouring authorities is £337, average LGBF group £280. Of the authorities benchmarked only 2 out of 7 Councils have a reduced charge for businesses operating as charities. The average of those two authorities is £189, making Midlothian above average in direct comparison, however well below average in comparison to those authorities who do not have a reduced charity rate.

For weekly bin collections (240 litre) (recycling), the average charge of neighbouring authorities is £300, average LGBF group £294. Midlothian are currently averagely priced in comparison.

For weekly collections (660 litre), Midlothian are currently charging below the average of other local authorities. However, only approximately 7% of our customer base receive 660 litre bin collections and therefore no increases proposed to encourage uptake.

### Bulky Uplifts

- 3.40** The charging structure for bulky uplifts was reviewed last year and a new set of charges approved in line with other authorities after benchmarking was carried out.

No increases are proposed for bulky uplifts to embed the new charging structure and encourage uptake of the service. Additional benchmarking was carried out this year to ensure we continue to align with other authorities.



## Statutory fees

- 3.41 Licence charges within trading standards are statutory. There may be changes to statutory charges around April 2025. The fees register will be updated when any information is available.
- 3.42 Landlord fees are statutory. There may be changes to statutory charges around April 2025. The fees register will be updated when any information is available.

## **4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)**

### **4.1 Resource**

Each service is individually responsible for implementing the recommended fees and charges. Charges are aligned to cost recovery so it is not anticipated that any additional resource will be required to implement. The approved fees and charges register will be published on the Council's website.

### **4.2 Digital**

The Customer Service Platform project is ongoing and a key output from this is to rollout online payment processes that are available 24/7. The review of fees and charges has identified a number of areas that would benefit from an online payment option to improve the customer experience, reduce staff time processing manual payments and allow for greater visibility on income and volumes of transactions. These service areas will be added to the existing workplan and progressed through the 2025/26 financial year.

### **4.3 Risk**

The Council is facing significant financial pressure. The report outlines the rationale for the proposed changes to fees and charges. To do nothing would present significant risk in some areas where, for example, maintaining current charges with no increase means cost recovery is not being achieved; and in other areas where to do nothing would result in a missed opportunity to generate income for the Council.

### **4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)**

A separate IIA has been produced for the recommendations and will be revised following approval at Council to include any changes from the recommendations. Following on from this, where a change to fees and charges results in a policy change or redesign of existing process, the service area that is responsible for this will complete a more detailed IIA at the point of policy development/process redesign. The IIA is available for review [online](#).

### **4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)**

See Appendix A

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A – Additional Report Implications**

## **APPENDIX A – Report Implications**

### **A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan**

Not applicable

### **A.2 Key Drivers for Change**

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

### **A.3 Key Delivery Streams**

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

### **A.4 Delivering Best Value**

Not applicable

### **A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders**

All service areas listed in the fees and charges register have been consulted to inform the recommended changes.

### **A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

Not applicable

### **A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach**

Not applicable

### **A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development**

Not applicable

## **APPENDIX B**

Draft register of charges 2025/26 for publication – available to review on the Council's website: [Fees and Charges 2025-26 DRAFT | Fees and charges 2025-26 DRAFT](#)