



**Overview Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)
on
Midlothian Council**

**Medium Term Financial Strategy
- 2021/22 Budget**

12 February 2021



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on Medium Term Financial Strategy

Budget 2021/22

<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy Proposals 2020/21 – 2022/23</p> <p>Budget 2021/22 Financial Proposals</p>	<p>As set out in the budget measures noted on the grid attached to the EqIA that accompanied the Medium Term Financial Proposals 2020/21 – 2022/23 previously presented to Council in June 2019. As updated for EQIA presented to Council on 11 February 2020.</p> <p>As included in the EqIA noted above – no new/additional policy budget proposals are proposed for 2021/22. Reflecting the impact of the Pandemic a number of the savings proposals previously identified for 2020/21 and 2021/22 have been removed or deferred.</p> <p>The conditions of the Scottish Government Grant Settlement for 2021/22 provides funding to Councils who choose to freeze Council Tax at 2020/21 levels. As this is a Scottish Government policy the implication are set out in the Scottish Governments budget documentation, including. Scottish Budget 2021-2022: Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget statement available here:-</p> <p>Scottish Budget 2021-2022: Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget statement - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</p>
<p>Directorate and service area</p>	<p>No new service reduction measures are presented in respect of 2021/22. Uplifts in budget to meet new commitments including early year's expansion, Carers Act and Health and Social Care are funded from Scottish Government and implementation will align to the Scottish Government's Equality Impact Assessment for these policy priorities.</p>

Overview of Budget Investment through the Financial Strategy	<p>The core objective of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23 is that of securing the Council's continued financial sustainability during what is expected to be an ongoing period of financial constraint coupled with continuing service demand pressures and increasing customer expectations. This Medium Term Financial Strategy is an important step-change and one which will provide greater certainty for the local communities we serve and our employees.</p> <p>The budget for 2021/2022 presents no new policy budget reductions to the June 2019 Medium Term Financial Proposals.</p>
Completion Date	15 February 2021
Lead officer	Gary Fairley

Aims and Objectives

The public sector continues to face significant service delivery challenges due to real terms reduced income streams, funding constraints, inflationary cost pressures and additional legislative burdens. In addition the 2021/22 budget is being set in the context of a global pandemic.

Demand for public services in Midlothian continues to increase as a consequence of changes in the size and profile of the county's population with greater numbers of young and older people, those in poor economic situations, and those with disabilities be they physical, sensory, mental health or learning disabilities. The Council must continue to prioritise expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes for those within its communities whilst securing maximum benefit from all available resources.

Accordingly a corporate solution has been progressed to allow the 2021/22 and 2022/23 budgets to be balanced. This allows focus to turn to the next iteration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy required for the term of the next Council elected in May 2022, noting that significant savings are projected to be required over that term to secure financial balance and sustainability. This will allow the Council to ensure that all within its communities, irrespective of protected characteristics, (age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) as well as poor socio-economic circumstances, (The Fairer Scotland Duty), are not unlawfully discriminated against, and that equality of opportunity and advancement of good relations is upheld between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

1. Does the proposed budget affect people?

Yes



No



2. What is/are the reason(s) for Council's proposed budget savings

There are no new savings proposals in the 2021/22 budget. Budget setting reflects a process of continual review of service provision as we seek to realign budgets and redesign services in response to the financial challenge.

3. Impact

Which of the nine protected characteristics* will the proposed budget savings have an impact upon?

Equality Target Group*	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Relevant evidence/ information
Age			<p>Overall Grid previously attached as appendix 2 to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 report presented to Council in June 2019.</p> <p>No new measures/policy proposals to reduce budgets are presented for the 2021/22 budget.</p>
Disability			
Gender Reassignment			
Marriage & Civil Partnership			
Pregnancy and maternity			
Race			
Religion or Belief			
Sex			
Sexual Orientation			

4. Overall Impact of the budget for 2021/2022

Each policy budget proposal presented in the June 2019 EqIA was subjected to an Equality Impact Assessment. No new measures/policy budget proposals have been brought forward for consideration in this budget report for 2021/22.

It remains the case that in June 2019 no measures/proposal areas had any unlawful negative impact identified, and where possible reduction/removal of services will continue to be monitored to establish the actual affect to those within our communities.

5. How will the implementation of proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 savings be communicated to those affected by any changes in 2021/2022?

Information will be available on the Council's web site and communicated to affected businesses/customers/service users by letter, email, etc. In addition, information documents, as required, can and will be made available in different formats and languages on request. If an individual or group require this information in another language or format, then they should email equalities@midlothian.gov.uk or telephone the Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Officer on 0131 271 3658.

6. How will you monitor the impact of the changes proposed? When is the budget due to be reviewed?

Changes will be monitored through Pentana, the Council's performance management system, discussion groups and forums, fees and charges income, and various other methods detailed in the individual equality impact assessments.

7. Please use the space below to detail any other matters arising from the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process.

Midlothian Council is committed to the ethos of the Equality Act 2010 and has considered this through equality impact assessment of all its policy budget proposals.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 and resultant Budget for 2021/22 have, as far as the constraint on resources allows, been developed within the context of the Single Midlothian Plan, ensuring as far as possible that resources are directed towards the key priorities of reducing inequalities in learning, health and economic circumstance outcomes.

If available, mitigating actions for each of the measures previously agreed were outlined in the individual equality impact assessments. Where no mitigating actions are possible it is considered that any negative effects are not unlawful and are justifiable on a benchmarking/inflationary basis. The mitigating actions will form part of the implementation of changes when approved.

In addition, these actions underline the Council's commitment in its Midlothian Equality Plan 2017 – 2021 to tackle inequality and promote inclusion within the limitations of the resources available. These actions also will allow the Council to plan and deliver services which meet the needs of our diverse communities and respond to the changes ahead.