



FEEDBACK ON MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL SAVINGS PROPOSALS

More than 1,800 people commented on Midlothian Council savings proposals to help bridge a budget gap of £13.87million in 2023/24 rising to £25.94million by 2027/28.

- 1,459 online responses
- More than 350 HaveYourSay email comments
- 61 written comments

Strongest opposition (most comments against)

- **Libraries savings: 601 comments**
- **Reducing instrumental music tuition: 495 comments**
- **Cutting the devolved school management budget (teacher numbers) and general education cuts: 215 comments**
- **Cuts to school library service: 174 comments**
- **Reducing the rangers service: 185 comments**
- **Cuts to grants and Third Sector: 104 comments but many from umbrella organisations such as Third Sector Interface**
- **Local opposition to cuts to commercial bus services 51 and 111, for example: 115 comments**

Please find below a summary of each of the main savings proposals feedback, including number of responses, sentiment, concerns raised and examples of typical comments.

Some savings proposals, mainly those around discretionary fees and charges for services, did not generate a great deal in the way of comment and therefore no report has been produced for those.

More general feedback such as other income generation ideas can be found at the end of this report.

Respondents' names have been removed unless commenting on behalf of a named organisation.

Councillors have been supplied with all comments under each of the savings proposals to help inform their budget decisions.

Savings proposals and comments for our neighbourhood 'Place' services including parks, libraries and recycling

Libraries proposals:

Remove staff from libraries: Each library would eventually either be self-service, run by community volunteers or closed.

Adopt e-book service: Shift the focus on libraries to online services and do not replace or refresh the books or other materials on offer to customers.

Feedback summary: 601 comments with less than handful identified as in general favour of any cut. Remainder, including from staff members, library users, children and professional bodies, strongly opposed stressing public libraries and staff vital community assets, offering safe, warm spaces and free access to information, culture, learning and social opportunities. Closing libraries would adversely impact disadvantaged groups and have knock on effect in areas such as educational attainment, mental health and wellbeing.

Examples of comments:

Comment 1

I am writing to express my concern about the implementation of "self-service" across Midlothian's public libraries as part of Midlothian Council's proposed budget cuts.

Midlothian's public libraries and the people who work in them are an incredibly important part of society, offering vital access to information, culture and learning. In addition to the valuable service libraries offer in terms of book provision, they provide vital *person-to-person* support in giving access to PCs and the internet, Bookbug sessions for children and families, homework support, a means of engaging with local democracy, job seeking services and other support that is not available anywhere else.

Libraries and the teams who work in them are worth far more than the sum of their parts. The people who work in the libraries are integral to the community spirit of these important service hubs in Midlothian.

Comment 2

The number of children living in poverty has risen to 1 in 4. These vulnerable children do not seek support from community hubs/charitable food banks - they go to libraries, warm, safe spaces where they are not judged.

Families facing financial hardship cannot afford to buy books - libraries provide free access to books and knowledge in an environmentally friendly manner. A library book can be read, 10, 20, 100 times before being recycled, donated or sold as withdrawn stock.

Children living in poverty cannot access extracurricular activity clubs or expensive holiday clubs but can attend free library events.

Who 'sees' vulnerable children when school is closed - library staff.

Libraries are so much more than shelves of books.

Charges, fees and income proposals:

Increase Civic Licencing Fees by 50% to cover actual costs.

Feedback Summary: 10 comments with five against increasing the licence fees and five in favour for income generation. Those against include the Loanhead Gala Day organisers who argue the entertainment licence fee is already prohibitive.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Public Entertainment Licences – Along with the organisers of other galas and similar events in Midlothian, we have argued for several years that the current scale of charges (which has already increased very substantially from the fees which applied a few years ago) is highly unfair in that it levies the same fees on community events organised by local voluntary, not for profit, organisations as are charged for commercial events run by businesses with a view to generating a financial return. Any review of licensing fees must finally include the introduction of either different scales of fees for community and commercial events, or alternatively, other mitigations to protect community events. It is understood that such arrangements are in place in other local authority areas.

Comment 2

Some items, such as licensing fees being set to cover costs, I support.

Increase burials charges to the Scottish average

Summary: Seven online comments with four in favour of an increase and three against any increase.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I think a small increase in burial fees is also acceptable given the fact that obviously many very difficult and unpleasant decisions need to be made.

Comment 2

Absolutely shocking increasing burial charges paying for a funeral is hard enough, have you no shame Midlothian Council?

School crossing patrols proposal:

Remove school crossing guides from controlled (traffic lights) and zebra crossings

Feedback summary: 103 and petition of 30 signatories to save the service. Nine comments identified as in agreement with the proposal and one suggests volunteers could take on the duties. Remainder against largely on road safety grounds.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I currently use the zebra crossing at main street Newtongrange at the Welfare park every school day throughout the year. I appreciate this service as it's a busy road and I regularly see drivers who appear not to see pedestrians waiting to cross and speed through it I feel our children would not be safe without the presence of a school crossing patrol officer and it would only be a matter of time before a child was injured or worse.

Comment 2

I agree. I am not a parent but I certainly think parents and other responsible adults should teach children how to push a button and wait for the green man, and other appropriate road crossing behaviours. How do these children make it safely across the road at other times and in other locations?

Community events and facilities savings proposals:

Stop funding Christmas lights

Stop supporting gala days and events

Feedback summary: Please note Christmas lights and gala days comments grouped together. 55 comments. 21 in favour, some suggesting looking for alternative funding models such as sponsorship. Remainder against largely on grounds erodes community spirit.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I believe that such things as nicely planted borders, cut grass and Christmas lighting, lift the spirits of the people and encourage a pride in the towns that we live in. Without these simple provisions we are going to live in very grey towns indeed!

The gala days are part of our heritage and history, the input from the council is already minimal but with no input at all this could kill them altogether.

Comment 2

End all funding and support to communities in setting up and taking down Christmas lights. The council could look at both sponsorship or charging communities as alternative ways to pay for this service.

Yes good idea especially if it comes to a choice between Christmas lights and other far more essential services like staffed libraries and school crossing patrols. Sponsorship sounds like a good idea here, would the Council be willing to provide any advice to communities in this regard? I expect there will be calls to retain this service on the grounds that it gives the community a boost to have Christmas lights. We get more of a boost from properly staffed libraries and safe road crossings for our children.

Stop maintaining Dalkeith Bowling Green

Feedback summary: 15 comments. Six respondents in favour of charging, four in favour of the saving, four against, one suggesting if well-used then keep maintaining. Those against the saving concerned about losing the last council run green in Midlothian, which they say is a well-used resource by local community.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Good afternoon, I have noticed that the council are considering stopping the maintenance of our bowling green in Kings Park. This green has been a part of Dalkeith for well over 100 years and I think could be the last council run green in Midlothian. I along with many of my friends have been members of this green for several years. A few of us are now retired and bowling is one of the few recreational hobbies available to us. It is a really special sport which anyone of any age can participate in. As we get on in life we desperately need friends and companionship. Our bowling club is more than just bowls. We all try to encourage children and anyone to join us and take up this beautiful game .I completely understand how difficult it must be to try and make cuts but feel the savings you would make by stopping maintenance would not in any way compensate for the demise of our older community. We need this green and appeal to you for your kind and considerate attention.

Comment 2

Looking at other ways of supporting communities to fund Christmas lights and Gala days is also sensible and maintaining Dalkeith Bowling Green should be a charge to members/users not council tax payers generally.

Parks and green spaces proposals:

Reduce shrub bed maintenance or grass over some shrub beds

Feedback summary: 18 comments, seven comments are against the cut and remainder broadly in favour with some stating on basis communities can take over the maintenance.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

For both sections concerning shrub bed maintenance and grass cutting of public areas. The council must maintain these otherwise such areas will begin to look run down which will lead to further degradation.

Comment 2.

Re flower beds and gardens, try and get local groups to take on maintenance of these. I would be happy with other locals to look after the flower bed opposite Parkend on the corner of Bank Street, Penicuik for example. Think creatively and look at how our communities can thrive, adopt a more business model charging this who can afford it more.

Reduce how often grass areas are cut

Feedback summary: 36 comments with 10 against, 24 in favour, two suggesting a compromise in terms of cut numbers and one asking if sharing the service with a neighbouring authority has been explored.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Looking for Shared Services Opportunities - i.e. with other Councils in the Lothian or Borders. I am thinking opportunities to share services - e.g. parks service and grass cutting, or administration of certain benefit services or call centres.

Comment 2

I believe that such things as nicely planted borders, cut grass and Christmas lighting, lift the spirits of the people and encourage a pride in the towns that we live in. Without these simple provisions we are going to live in very grey towns indeed!

School buildings and council properties proposals:

Close 7 primary schools' community spaces during school holidays

Feedback summary: 20 identified comments, with 16 against the saving. Comments include two from Gorebridge Out of School Care service and two from parents using this service. Making the saving would potentially see the club close with the loss of 8 jobs. This, in turn, would adversely impact on more than 70 families who rely on the club's breakfast and after school services not to mention holiday club users. Parents also saying rely on clubs in those schools while they go to work. One comment in favour only if alternative provision available in areas affected, another asked if service providers pay fair market share. If not, may be in favour of the saving. Remaining two (both same wording) in favour of saving.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Proposed closure of schools during holidays:

This will have an absolutely profound effect on the provision of childcare which uses these schools as there are no other suitable spaces, resulting in no holiday childcare for primary school aged children. If this is the case, it is likely that the term time provision from Gorebridge Out of School Care will no longer be financially viable, removing even term time wrap around childcare. Without either or both of these it is likely that many local parents, including myself, will be unable to continue to work, and it directly contravenes the Scottish Government's plans around out of school care. This would also be likely to have a significant impact on the number of children using the local nursery, because if parents can't work they won't put their children into nursery until they have government-funded places.

Comment 2

If there are community hubs etc within affected areas with for groups during holidays then this may be feasible. If not then no.

Cut the budget to maintain council buildings (not housing)

Feedback summary: Five comments, only one in favour of the saving. Remaining three against with two citing greater costs will be incurred in long run.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

This seems like an unwise move as failure to maintain buildings will inevitably incur greater costs in the long run and may have safety implications.

Comment 2

I agree

Roads, footpaths and transport proposals:

Delay gritting footpaths (currently from 5.30am) until 7.30am

Feedback summary: 45 comments with majority against because of risk of slips and falls for people going to work and school.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

What about those who have to leave early to get to work? They would face hazardous pavements if using those that are currently gritted.

Comment 2

Delay gritting footpaths until 07:30am.

Not a good idea but a compromise could be 06:30 am.

End grants for commercial bus services

Feedback summary: 115 comments (one response on behalf of 39 signatories). All against cuts to end grants with serious concerns raised by users of the 51 bus and the 111. Removing the 51, responders argued would effectively end bus services for those living in Pathhead, isolating vulnerable, elderly and those without alternative transport. Same concerns for the 111. People also arguing we should be encouraging use of public transport to support the council's green agenda.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I have been informed that there is some discussion happening about the bus service in Pathhead.

This seems to be one of the first services to be discussed every time the council announces even more cuts from Scotland's Government.

There are about 1000 residents in and around this village with more houses planned to be built. At least half of these folk are elderly and use the bus for shopping, hospital visits, dentist appointments etc. we have bus passes but without a bus they are useless. Also we have a thriving school full of kids with their bus passes. Again useless.

Our bus service is the only public transport available to us.

The train service to the borders while helping folk around the A7 as an alternative to the bus is unavailable to us. Are there any possible cuts there?

While I realise the council has difficult decisions to make, I must sincerely ask you not to withdraw our only public transport. It will affect the mental wellbeing of many residents young and old.

Comment 2

Removal of funding to bus service 101, this is the only direct route from Penicuik to Ashley Ainsley Hospital and the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. In this case can the service 15 which runs to the Bush Estate be reconsidered to cover Penicuik.

Stop Community Transport funding

Feedback summary: 57 comments including from HcL Exec Committee, Forward Mid and the Community Transport Association. One comment in favour of cutting this funding. Remainder deeply concerned no service for people who cannot use ordinary bus services because of disabilities etc will isolate the most disadvantaged and stop them accessing clubs, amenities and other services.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Community bus transport is vital to people with disabilities and older people and cutting that service again diminishes people's life and health and wellbeing. Encouraging public transport is meant to be the way forward for environmental purposes so cutting services seems illogical.

Comment 2 – Extract from HcL Exec Committee letter

As part of the saving plan for 23/24 onwards for Midlothian Council there has been an announcement on proposed cuts that will impact greatly on HcL services- with 100 percent of the funding being withdrawn– this will have a devastating impact on the services we can provide -impacting on over 4000 of the most vulnerable and isolated people in Midlothian if these cuts go ahead- please support us to continue to support others.

Waste and recycling proposals:

Close Penicuik recycling centre

Feedback summary: 87 comments, 86 against closing and one non-committal. Arguments for keeping the centre open include an increase in flytipping if it were to close, loss of recent financial investment in the centre, increased demand with influx of new builds in the town, queues at Stobhill likely if Penicuik was to close and residents having to drive to Stobhill inconvenient and harmful to the environment.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I object very strongly about the proposed closure of Penicuik Recycling Centre. Houses of great amounts have been built and still being built in Penicuik, so a recycling centre is a must. As someone older I can manage to take somethings for recycling, but if closure goes ahead, I will have to pay to have it removed. That means pensioners will take a hit again. They do a good job in Penicuik and always keep the yard clean and tidy. Penicuik has been allowed to have houses built everywhere without infrastructure. For the biggest town in Midlothian, it is being sorely neglected. Hope you agree in some aspects of this.

Comment 2

Penicuik Recycling Centre – what sense is there in closing this facility and having hundreds of people travel across the county to Stobhill. During Covid when this was the only option, there were huge queues taking an hour to get in sometimes. Do you think that people are going to do this on a regular basis? I doubt it very much. It's a ten mile trip to Stobhill, costing petrol and time and I believe that people will not do it. This will result in more dumping of items at a cost of cleaning it all up eventually. Could it not even remain open at the weekends when it is probably busier?

Increase charges for the garden waste collection service

Feedback summary: 26 comments, 8 comments, six state would pay extra, three against, two unclear and one suggesting we should adopt Fife's policy of putting food waste bags in with garden waste, and not charging for the service.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I don't love having to pay extra money for garden refuse but appreciate that not everyone has a garden and therefore yes I would pay £37

Comment 2

The fee we pay for our garden waste pick up is more than Edinburgh city council. We live in a development which there are many throughout Midlothian that pay private factors fees for our grass cutting, playpark care and general maintenance. What exactly are the council doing for their money?

Public toilets proposal:

Close all five stand-alone public toilets in Midlothian

Feedback summary: 40 comments with two in favour and other suggesting compromise by closing less than five or outsourcing maintenance and staffing. Concerns raised include impact on people with disabilities, elderly and vulnerable and reduced footfall in town centres. One comment suggested unlawful while another argued, would cause further longer term issues, if the council closes other public buildings like libraries and leisure centres.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I am particularly concerned about the closure of public toilets. There will be members of the public that need to use facilities when they are in their towns. We should be promoting people being on the high street, not giving them a reason to not attend. How do you think this may impact the elderly or children?

Comment 2

Why choose to close all 5 public toilets and not just 2 or 3? These all seem needlessly drastic when smaller changes might make as much financial sense but still lessen the impact on the general public.

Staffing proposals:

Share or cut two trading standards officer posts

Feedback summary: Eleven comments found all in favour of retaining the Trading Standards posts. Comments include those from the trading standards team outlining the impact of cutting this service and losing the specialist knowledge of two staff members. The Chartered Trading Standards Institute has also commented raising serious concerns the council would not meet its statutory requirements if the posts were eliminated.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Trading standards cuts. As a Midlothian resident, this concerns me. The team do a lot of work for the county. Who is going to deal with the fall out when we have underage children buying cigarettes and vapes? When a child dies or is seriously hurt because an unsafe product is in the shops? When the vulnerable consumer is scammed for all their savings, or heaven forbid a bird flu outbreak or a case like foot and mouth disease.

Comment 2 – Extract from Chartered Trading Standards Institute

.... we feel that the proposal to cut the Trading Standards workforce within Midlothian by two-thirds would potentially put the Council at risk of being unable meet a host of its statutory responsibilities, including under the Consumer Scotland Act 2020; and it could also damage the people and businesses of Midlothian.

Midlothian Trading Standards has a critical role to play in enforcing over 250 pieces of legislation vital to protecting the public.

Cut five full-time equivalent property and facilities posts

Feedback summary: Three specific comments against leaving these cleaning posts vacant as first line of defence in schools against infection etc. And finally, one comment also raised concerns that the majority of cuts to staffing levels are in front-line services.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

...these are cleaning posts in schools. Cleaning is the first line of defence against viruses such as covid, flus etc. There are also some pupils who have severe and life threatening allergies too

Comment 2

- . **The proposed cuts in staff seem to focus on front-line services.**

There is too little detail in the public domain to be absolutely clear but from what has been presented online the proposed staff cuts amount to an annual saving (2023/24) of around £5m of which only proposed reductions in Benefits Administration (around £70k) and an internal audit to save one FTE (£55k) might be considered as 'back office' posts. That would suggest that **more than 97% of proposed staff reductions are in front-line services** the loss of which will have the most direct effect on the quality of life of Midlothian residents

Cut two full-time countryside rangers posts

Feedback summary: 185 comments, some of behalf of multiple signatories, in favour of retaining the full rangers service. Many comments from volunteers who work with the team. Comments also from professional bodies including the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association. Concerns around increased grounds maintenance costs, diminished green spaces, general loss of much loved team, end of ranger events including Outdoor Festival, negative impact on biodiversity goals.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

It is with incredulity and disbelief that I have learned of the proposal to cut back on the excellent Midlothian Ranger Service. At a time when so much focus is on wellbeing and mental health, countryside education, greener options etc to decimate the facilities, amenities, maintenance of walkways and educational opportunities that this Service provides and contributes to is a disgrace. All sections of the local population as well as large numbers of visitors and tourists benefit from what is provided by the Midlothian Ranger Service and of course visitors and tourists bring income into the area. Midlothian residents who volunteer in large numbers to work with the Service will no longer be able to do so to the same extent, if at all, so inevitably the areas previously mentioned will fall into disrepair and may eventually close / disappear completely. The value of what this Service brings to Midlothian cannot be measured purely in £'000s and if it could it would certainly be a lot more than the possible saving of £75000 so please have a serious rethink of this proposal

Comment 2

I have found out today about the plans to reduce the number of rangers from 3 to 1, whilst continuing to provide the same amount of work with the help of volunteers. I think this is a terrible idea. It will be impossible for one person to keep up with all the outstanding work, manage and recruit new volunteers and organise a work plan. Safe volunteer programmes require adequate risk assessments (paperwork), work assessment (paperwork) and volunteer management. It will be impossible for one person to keep up with this. In addition, volunteer engagement can only happen when representatives are present during work days, which will be impossible. This is a time where we need to focus on encouraging more people to enjoy nature for their own wellbeing (mentally and physically). It is also a time where we need to support biodiversity. I can't see how one person will be able to maintain walk ways and cycle paths (even with volunteers), coordinates non-native invasive plant control and ensures appropriate volunteer engagement and care. I would ask you to strongly reconsider your ranger cuts and reverse the decision to cut numbers at all.

Police:

Stop funding the Midlothian Community Action Team

Feedback summary: 69 comments, majority in favour of retaining the MCAT service on the basis Police presence needed or criminal and anti-social behaviour will increase.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I would also further like to highlight my concerns in relation to proposals to cease funding for the Midlothian Community Action team. This collaboration with police Scotland provides a vital local service to ensure our families and children live in a safe community. With dwindling support and services being offered to our young people, anti-social behaviour will be left to fester and at the hands of locals to police. A truly horrifying proposal which shows a complete lack of awareness of the benefits and preventative action this collaboration provides for our community.

Comment 2

Police – whilst I agree that Police Scotland should be proving policing – losing these Police officers is only going to mean that crime, local disputes etc will increase and not be dealt with effectively. Will these officers be replaced by Police Scotland?

Savings proposals for Education and Communities

Community and Third Sector funding proposal:

Review council grants

Feedback summary: 104 comments against cuts. Open letters from number of third sector organisations such as Third Sector Interface. This section includes some comments in support of Midlothian Sure Start, Play Therapy Base, Home Link Support Service and various other organisations.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

[Read the Third Sector Interface letter](#)

Comment 2

[Read the Midlothian Federation of Community Councils letter](#)

Education proposals:

Reduce the Instrumental Music Service

Feedback summary: 495 comments, vast majority strongly against the savings proposal. Arguments for retaining the full funding levels included breaching equal opportunities by depriving poorer families who cannot afford private tuition, music makes children more 'well-rounded' by improving social and interpersonal skills, jobs will be lost, and by limiting/withdrawing lessons in primary and up to S3, pupils in S4 upwards will not have enough time to become proficient enough to pass SQA exams.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Comment 2

Reduction in non-statutory early years' provision

Feedback summary: 66 comments about cuts to early learning with all but one identified as opposed. Please note comments on cuts impacting one of the council's main early learning providers, Midlothian Sure Start, are listed under Third Sector savings proposal HaveYourSay. Respondents concerned the early years' proposal further disadvantages poorest families and will impact on attainment, equity of opportunity etc. Many blanket comments opposed to all education cuts and these have been captured separately.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I am also sad to read that many teachers will lose their jobs e.g. music tuition. Not all children flourish in the traditional "academic" subjects and many excel in the expressive art areas of the curriculum such as music. Having this removed from schools means lost opportunities for our young people to develop a talent and have it nurtured by specialists.

Comment 2

I would like to express my concern about the above cuts and the detrimental effect this will have on all children in Midlothian. My 3 children have each had a fantastic experience being introduced to a variety of musical instruments in Primary school. They all still play now and this has such a positive effect and I believe is an essential part of their education. The music teachers we have are all fantastic and go above and beyond to help each child learn and I have no doubt that many children will miss out if this fantastic service is cut.

End P4 swimming programme

Feedback summary: 182 comments, the majority of which are against ending P4 swimming. Those against say unfairly targets disadvantaged children, swimming is a valuable life skill, private lessons hard to get and many leisure centre swimming lessons booked up already.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

To end the swimming programme is ridiculous! Swimming is a life skill and must be learned!!

Comment 2

A more targeted approach seems reasonable. Given that a number of parents pay for private swim lessons, and do so before P4, then beginners only lessons might mitigate against the potential for pupils to compare themselves against peers who are already capable swimmers.

Rationalise Home to School and ASN Transport

Feedback summary: 79 comments. Majority against with concerns around unfairly targeting families with children with ASN, no safe routes to school and commercial buses not having enough capacity/regular service. Arguments of respondents in favour include children and young people now have National Entitlement Cards for free bus travel.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

All pupils now have bus passes, is there a need to still privately transport them to and from school every day, surely this could be a cost saving exercise.

Comment 2

Free transport to be cut for ASN school provisions and this would place vulnerable children at risk of not being able to attend school due to this.

Service reduction in school library service

Feedback summary: 174 comments. Only one comment identified as broadly in favour of the proposal. Deep opposition among remaining with comments around how school librarians are integral to raising attainment, encouraging a love of reading and provide a warm, safe space for many children who may otherwise struggle at school.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

During my many years of teaching in Midlothian, I cannot remember a time when Librarians have had it easy. There has always been something being cutback in schools – quite often affecting the library budget. However, school libraries are so very important to the life of a school. There is such a wealth of resources for the education of all the children / young adults (and I'm not just referring to the books / computers). The importance of Librarians should not be underestimated. The demand on librarians within the school is constant and beneficial to the customers/pupils. I personally, have seen librarians at work in different school libraries. They can be a major contributor to lessons. They have good relationships with the pupils, not only knowing their names, but in many cases, also their needs.

I foresee a massive hole in every Secondary School ethos should Midlothian carry out its 'threat' to remove librarians from schools and the public. Hopefully, the reaction of horror and despair resonating throughout the schools of Midlothian that this proposal has produced will bring Council members to their senses and revise their decision.

Comment 2

Please don't remove librarians, from schools or public libraries. Computers cannot replace the knowledge, advice, kindness and compassion offered by humans. And please don't replace actual books with ebooks, it's not the same and young children will be less inclined to read from a kindle rather than an actual book.

Rationalisation of school estate (a statutory consultation on the closure of St Matthew's RC Primary School).

Feedback summary: 53 comments with many from parents (including parent/teachers association), all strongly opposed to closing what they see as a thriving school with an expanding roll in an area with more new homes soon to be built. Parents angry because the denominational review within last two years concluded the school would stay open. However, minority of comments in favour of the proposal in general with some respondents stating not in favour of denominational schooling in general, others citing costs of keeping a small school open and St Mary's in easy reach.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

[Read the letter from St Matthew's Parent Teacher Association](#)

Comment 2

I would support this. I would suggest the spend on all schools should be compared on an equal basis on a per capita/ per child basis, irrespective of the denomination. Except in special circumstances like in remote parts of the highlands and islands, where it is acceptable in my view to socialise higher costs per capita and justify having smaller numbers of children in a school and accept that there are higher costs per capita to achieve this, no council should accept spending more per capita/ per child

Clearly there are no remote schools in Midlothian so closing smaller schools where the costs per child are higher is a fair way of achieving budget savings.

I am not in support of having different schools for children of different religions anyway (it is divisive for society) so would support this cost saving measure in any case

Rather than commenting specifically on devolved school management budgets involving other staff groups and budgets, reviewing commissioned services etc, respondents have generally commented on 'education budgets' with separate comments around cuts to teacher numbers. Therefore, feedback reports have been produced under 'education budgets' and 'teacher numbers'.

Education savings in general

Feedback summary: 87 comments identified, the majority covering education budgets in general. Those highlighting the devolved budget cut affecting teacher numbers has been dealt with separately. Majority strongly opposed to any cuts to education budgets. Parent councils including Burnbrae, Tynewater, Newbattle, Paradykes and St Andrew's have commented with concerns raised about impact on attainment, already stretched budgets, equity of opportunity and ongoing impact of lockdown during Covid on children's education.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

On behalf of Newbattle Parent Council, I am writing to protest in the strongest terms about the cuts Midlothian Council are proposing to the Education Services. This will have an enormous and lasting impact upon the quality of educational provision and opportunity for young people from across Midlothian now and in the future.

These cuts are about more than budgets, they will have very real and lasting impacts on the education of our children.

While you seek to slash teachers from schools and put our children at risk by extending the distance disqualifying children for transport to school you are ignoring the area where you could make huge savings in Council headquarters streamlining

Midlothian continues to grow at a rapid rate yet the council can only think of cutting the most essential services for our young ones.

Comment 2

I am writing to express my concern for the proposed education cuts Midlothian plan to make in the next academic session.

With the suggested changes, those children already in poverty and the most vulnerable in society are not going to be well supported. The attainment gap will continue to grow. As per GIRFEC legislation, we have a legal (and moral) responsibility to support this cohort. These changes will be hugely detrimental to thousands of our Midlothian families.

Reducing the school day - I would like Midlothian Council to explain to me how they are going to ensure equity for pupils with this proposal. If you reduce the day but other authorities remain the same (no reduction), then our pupils will have less educational input than their peers in other authorities.

I understand Midlothian's need to cut some services and support the cut of extra music tuition, P4 swimming, P5 skiing. I absolutely reject the other proposals and would urge the council to reconsider.

I do not support the proposed cuts and wish my views to be shared during this consultation process.

Increase shared head teacher posts

Feedback summary: 63 comments along with same letter submitted by circa 75 parents and Bilston Parent Council against the savings proposal. Identified one respondent in agreement if head teachers adequately compensated.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I have also read the proposal for Head Teachers to have shared responsibility for more than 1 school. The job of a Head Teacher is to be responsive to the needs of a school, support staff and work alongside pupils and parents. This is something they won't be able to do effectively across 2 schools. I also worry that this proposed change may make the retention of Head Teachers difficult for our authority and not attract the best school leaders as they'll be put off by the enormous workload challenge they'll face. Our schools need strong leadership - this proposal does not support this.

Comment 2

The focus on degradation to services for our children and next generation continues. I've never been in favour of this practice anywhere in the country but the fact that it is being considered to be utilised more in the authority is now seriously concerning. A school should have dedicated leadership – and there should be no stronger statement than that when it comes to our children's educations. Especially when the saving cost is a only measly £17,000 (maximum £27,000).

Reduction in Devolved School Management Budgets involving teachers – teacher numbers would reduce

Feedback summary: 128 comments about cutting the devolved budget and teacher numbers. Majority strongly opposed to cutting teacher numbers with concerns around impact on attainment, already overstretched schools and ability to deliver National Improvement Framework priorities. Concerns also that will impact most on disadvantaged children. .

Examples of comments

Comment 1

The teaching profession is currently at an all time low due to previous budgets cuts, excessive work load, class sizes and poor pay. Schools struggle to provide additional support and budget cuts will only exacerbate the problem. Long term the education of children will suffer and the service Midlothian Schools provide will be insufficient to equip young people with the essential knowledge and life skills that are required. Reducing teacher numbers is a backward step and would be catastrophic.

Comment 2

Reduction in Devolved School Management Budgets involving teachers:

I have concerns around the reduction in teachers which could, as a result mean that the size of classes are increased. I do not think this is a good thing - so many teachers are already currently stretched with the class sizes and needs of the children in classes. If class sizes were to increase, many things would go unnoticed in children's learning, development and health and well being.

Transformation of school week – redesigning the primary school week and review the secondary school curriculum.

Feedback summary: 140 comments with majority against, raising concerns about negative impact on child's education, impact on working parents and/or concerned proposal is too vague. Small number in favour of four day with some stipulations such as no cuts to teacher/pupil contact hours. Others expressing some broad agreement if extended across Lothians or four day weeks adopted by businesses.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I have read that Midlothian Council propose a change to the school day. My assumption is this will be a reduction in hours. I would like to know how Midlothian are going to ensure equity for children with this proposal. If you reduce the day in our authority but it isn't reduced elsewhere, our children will have less schooling hours than others. Over time, this amount adds up and will put Midlothian children at a hugely unfair advantage. While I understand cuts need to be made, I am gravely concerned with this one as believe it will have a direct effect on the prospects of Midlothian children. It will also have a huge impact on already struggling families who need to find additional childcare. All of which, comes at a cost when money is already right due to the cost of living crisis.

Comment 2

Why not close schools on a Friday morning ,then you will save on transport and heating ,the children could get a bit added to their day Monday to Thursday to make up for the Friday.

Savings proposals for sport and leisure, health and social care and other savings

Sport & Leisure proposals:

Stop All Overtime

Feedback summary: Four comments captured but only two relevant to the savings proposal, one for and one against.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

The proposals to stop all overtime for sport and leisure staff will kill the centres. They have skeletal staff as it is and won't be able to operate if overtime is stopped.

Comment 2

Savings with sport and leisure and not healthcare or education please,

Community Asset Transfer or closure of either Newtongrange or Gorebridge Leisure Centre

Feedback summary: 17 comments all against closing either centre or centres in general. Comment came from Forward Mid, the charity support people with disabilities who argue would lead to social isolation, poorer health outcomes. Gorebridge and Newtongrange not being part of hubs seems to be a plus for local users who argue the centres are easily accessible and part of the community.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

I honestly can't believe we are here again. Closing down the only thing open to the general public which promotes healthy lifestyles and mental health, especially in times like these.

Gorebridge Leisure Centre is an integral part of the community and would really be sadly missed, we have proven that this building is needed, even during the pandemic!

The distance to any other centre is unacceptable to expect people to travel to by bus for a workout or meeting in a group etc. Especially with the cost of living crisis.

I honestly think this would be a massive mistake on the council's part. Not to even mention the staff, which some have put their life and soul into the place.

Surely we could come up with maybe some reduced hours etc. until we are in a better position financially and not let this proposal ruin a growing, fantastic community.

Comment 2

I would like to give my opinion on the proposal that the Newtongrange Leisure Centre be closed in the savings required by the council.

I agree that there are hard decisions to have to be made by the council and it is necessary that savings must be made. I just would like to advise that as the Newtongrange Centre is not part of a hub is what makes it popular with customers. It is used by many regulars and I am sure that you can understand that as well as a fitness centre given the clientele are regulars there is a real community spirit there. We enjoy regular exercise as well as connecting together and giving a lot of customers are older there is definitely a strong sense of company and genuine support that sadly is lost in the bigger centres. When the gyms are based in schools the school has the preference over the general public I know of under 5 classes continually being changed as the schools needs are given priority.

Also as a regular gym goer and having used the facilities within the hub the disrespect from the pupils is off putting if your unfortunate to be using the gym when pupils come in you are up against not getting on equipment as pupils are having a carry on on them and it's not a isolated incident getting made fun of by them.

You are also held with times that suits the timetables of the school not just the gym but the other rooms used for classes.

I just feel that there is a need within Midlothian to have leisure centres outwith the educational hubs.

Welfare Rights

Reduction of Welfare Rights Services – reducing the number of Welfare Rights Officers by 0.6 Whole Time Equivalent

Feedback summary: 18 including one from team manager, one joint submission from Welfare Rights Team, one from Justice team, one from a social worker and one from Forward Mid, the disabilities group. One respondent broadly in favour of the saving, remainder against on grounds the service supports the most vulnerable residents to maximise their income. This in turn helps other services as having income reduces stress, increases wellbeing etc.

Examples of comments

Comment

I would like to express my concerns about the alleged cut back proposed to the Welfare Rights Team. If this is correct it really concerns me, especially in the present climate of increased utility bills and cost of living in general. From my experience they are a Team with high demand and their work is essential to maximise clients incomes in order for them to be able to cope with heating their homes and for financial support for carers, who are usually under a great deal of pressure both emotionally, physically and financially. I would hope that consideration is given to the current impact but also the impact of carers potentially relinquishing their support.

Comment 2

Re: the proposed budget cuts, I would strongly urge **not** to agree the reduction of Welfare rights team by 0.6 fte. This is a vital service as the team works hard to assist service users to maximise their income and social work teams, including myself, send a huge amount of referrals following service user assessments. They already operate a waiting list and any reduction would mean a further delay in applying for vital benefits.

.Health and Social Care Integrated Joint Board - Delegated Budget:

IJB Delegated Budget

The council contributes a total of £56,438,000 to the IJB. Members may wish to consider a reduction of their offer to the IJB for delegated services. This should be considered in the context of Scottish Government correspondence on maintaining a minimum cash flat IJB budget plus additional annual funding flowing through the Local Government Finance Settlement as described in sections 3.20 and 4.3 to 4.6 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy – 2023/24 to 2027/28 report.

Feedback summary: 32 relevant comments with majority either in favour of no cut or increasing funding of health and social care services.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

IJB Health and Social Care - this needs to be increased not cut. This is a wider issue than just Midlothian and the Scot Gov need to come up with a proper plan and not just say there is no more money.

Comment 2

...health and social care are crucial components to the foundation of all communities and to take funding from these is to threaten the very fabric of our communities in Scotland.

General comments: 58 general emailed comments not specifically about individual savings. Topics covered included the consultation process, concerns around Destination Hillend, green energy initiatives and other potential income generation ideas.

Examples of comments

Comment 1

Please consider other options - for example, have you looked at the salary cost of top heavy senior managerial posts within the council? Have you chased the contributions that housing developers are supposed to make towards schools, GP surgeries etc. (as historically this was not being chased)? With all the new house building going on in Midlothian, where is all this additional council tax being spent? Have you looked at

the cost of Midlothian office buildings, which look to be mainly empty most of the time with most staff working from home? How much is spent on upkeep /maintenance and heating of these buildings and can this be better spent elsewhere? Rather than cutting up-keep of our parks (already some of the work traditionally being done by the council is being picked up by guerrilla gardeners and other volunteers; don't reduce this further) and making it less safe for our kids to get to school, please look at efficiencies within the council first?

Comment 2

It seems to me that the only reason you need to bridge a deficit is because you insist on proceeding with the destination hillend project. Yes that project might well bring new employment but how many other jobs and services are being sacrificed all over the region. I for one don't see that it is justified.