

# Minute of Meeting

Midlothian Council  
Tuesday 1 April 2025  
Item No 5.1



## Midlothian Council

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 25 February 2025	11:00 am	Council Chambers, Midlothian House/Hybrid

### Present:

Provost McCall (Chair)	Deputy Provost Bowen (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Parry (Council Leader)	Councillor Cassidy (Deputy Council Leader)
Councillor Alexander (virtual)	Councillor Curran
Councillor Drummond	Councillor Imrie
Councillor McEwan	Councillor McKenzie
Councillor McManus	Councillor Milligan
Councillor Pottinger (virtual)	Councillor Russell
Councillor Scott	Councillor Smaill
Councillor Virgo	Councillor Winchester

### Religious Representatives:

Anne-Theresa Lawrie	
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### In attendance:

Dr Grace Vickers, Chief Executive	Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place
Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships	Morag Barrow, Director of Health and Social Care: Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership, Chief Officer to Midlothian Integrated Joint Board

Fiona Clandillon, Head of Development	Nick Clater, Head of Adult Services, Chief Social Worker
David Gladwin, Chief Financial Officer / Section 95 Officer	Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions
Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place	Alan Turpie, Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer
Magnis Inglis, Principal Officer, Workforce, Policy, and Pupil Placements	Gary Thomson, Senior Finance Business Partner
Gillian Cousins, Communities Officer	Hannah Forbes, Democratic Services Officer
Louise Middleton, Democratic Services Officer	Maria Perez, Democratic Services Officer
Janet Ritchie, Democratic Services Officer	Nicola Thorburn, Democratic Service Officer

## **1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

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The Chair, Provost McCall, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chair advised that the meeting was open to the public and would be webcast live.

There were no apologies submitted.

The Chair passed on the sad news that Mary Stalker, who was Penicuik's First Citizen of the Year, died last month. Mary Stalker was well known for her successful campaign in keeping Ladywood Leisure Centre open, was an employee of Midlothian Council and a Home Help for over 20 years.

The Chair congratulated Midlothian Council's Ageing Well Coordinator, Vivian Wallace, who was awarded a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the King's New Year's honours list.

The Chair congratulated Lorna Greig of Roslyn who was awarded an MBE for her work with the Brownies in Loanhead, where she has been involved for 50 years.

The Chair congratulated William Lumsden of Dalkeith who was awarded an MBE for his service to the Scottish whisky industry.

The Chair thanked Donald Cameron, one of Midlothian Council's Environmental Health Officers, who will be retiring in March with 40 years' service to the Council.

## **2. Order of Business**

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The order of business is as per the agenda.

### 3. Declarations of interest

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Councillor Milligan declared an interest in Item 9.5 on the Private Agenda and said that he will leave the meeting at that point.

### 4. Deputations

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No deputations.

### 5. Minutes of Previous Meetings

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Item No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
5.1	<b>Minute of Midlothian Council Meeting of 17 December 2024</b>	<b>Executive Director Place</b>
<b>Outline and Summary of Discussion</b>		
<p>The Minute of the Meeting of Midlothian Council held on the 17 December 2024 was submitted for approval.</p> <p>Councillor Smaill raised concerns regarding the response from the Member of Parliament (MP) in relation to the £20m commitment to Mayfield, made by the Prime Minister in 2024. Councillor Smaill asked the Council Leader to respond to the letter to ensure a review of the entitlement of Mayfield to £20m. The Council Leader confirmed they have met and written to the MP for Midlothian and agreed to continue to search for funding that could be committed for Mayfield and Midlothian. The Council Leader agreed to write to the MP again to encourage them to contact Westminster regarding funding for Mayfield.</p> <p>Elected Members raised an item from the action log, the surveys for Education were to be presented to the Business Transformation Steering Group (BTSG) and Elected Members have yet to have sight of these. Elected Members stated that they are being asked to support a capital spend in an area unsupported with all the information required to make a decision. The Executive Director Place confirmed building condition surveys for Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and the non-education estate have been completed. The Executive Director Place advised that the principle in terms of the education estate is to move those properties in category C to category B and this is reflected in the Capital Plan paper on the agenda later today. In relation to capital spend work, this is still being analysed and can be provided, and the costings are within the Capital Plan paper today. The Executive Director Place confirmed that all spreadsheets will be shared with Elected Members.</p> <p>Councillor Parry moved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of Midlothian Council of 12 November 2024, seconded by Councillor Virgo.</p>		
<b>Decision</b>		
The Council approved minute of the meeting of 12 November 2024.		

**Action**

Share all relevant spreadsheets, surveys and information in relation to the Capital Plan with Elected Members – Executive Director Place

Council Leader to write to MP about the funding for Mayfield – Councillor Parry

Item No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Minute Volume Index</b>	<b>Executive Director Place</b>

**Outline and Summary of Discussion**

The Minute Volume Index was submitted for approval.

The Minute Volume Index was moved by Councillor Parry and seconded by Councillor Virgo.

**Decision**

Council approved the Minute Volume Index.

Item No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Action Log</b>	<b>Executive Director Place</b>

**Outline and Summary of Discussion**

The Action Log was submitted for noting.

Elected Members highlighted action number 12 and asked for an update on the search for a site to accommodate Gorebridge High School. The Executive Director Place advised this remained a work in progress. A suitable site was originally being sought within the Gorebridge cluster area, but this had now been expanded to Gorebridge in totality. A further update would be presented by the end of June.

Elected Members emphasised the need to identify a site as there was currently a lack of High School capacity, and this situation would only get worse. Elected Members also highlighted the need to keep the community updated on the progress of work and asked for an update to be brought back to June Council and the Executive Director agreed.

Elected Members thanked the Chief Executive for the work on action number 17 which related to exploring options for polling places and ensuring sufficient disability access at polling stations.

**Decision**

Council noted the Action Log.

**Action**

The Executive Director Place will provide an update on identifying a site for Gorebridge High School by the end of June.

## 6. Questions to the Leader of the Council

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None.

## 7. Motions

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Item No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
7.1	<b>Labour Group Representatives on Committees and Working Groups</b>	<b>Councillor Imrie</b>
<b>Outline and Summary of Discussion</b>		
<p>Councillor Imrie moved an addendum that Councillor Drummond would like to withdraw from the Dean Tavern Trust and will be replaced by Councillor Bowen subject to agreement.</p> <p>The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer advised that a vote for a replacement member would be required. The replacement was agreed by 14 Elected Members.</p> <p>The notice of motion was moved by Councillor Imrie and seconded by Councillor Milligan.</p>		
<b>Decision</b>		
Council approved the motion.		

Item No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
7.2	<b>Response to Storm Eowyn</b>	<b>Councillor Parry</b>
<b>Outline and Summary of Discussion</b>		
<p>The notice of motion was proposed by Councillor Parry and seconded by Councillor Milligan.</p> <p>Councillor Parry explained this motion was to acknowledge the exceptional response by Midlothian Council staff and emergency service partners following Storm Eowyn on 24 January 2025 where wind speeds of up to 119mph were recorded at Hillend. Staff provided essential services, responding to fallen trees and power cuts, and continued to deliver services to Midlothian Council's most vulnerable residents. Councillor Parry also thanks the staff working behind the scenes to deploy resources and ensure residents were kept informed with up-to-date communications.</p>		

Elected Members agreed staff carried out a great job and that this was an opportunity to get feedback on joint working and information sharing and look at any learning opportunities Midlothian Council could gain.

The motion was moved by Councillor Parry and seconded by Councillor Milligan.

#### Decision

Council approved the motion.

## 8. Reports

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
8.1	<b>Financial Monitoring 2024/25 – General Fund Revenue</b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer &amp; Section 95 Officer</b>
<b>Outline and Summary of Discussion</b>		
<p>The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer presented the report for noting.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information on projections of performance against service revenue budgets in 2024/25 and to provide commentary on areas of material variance against budget. The budget performance figures as shown in appendix 1 result in a projected net overspend of £2.168 million which is a slight improvement of £0.032 million from projections at quarter 2. The projected overspend represents 0.7% of the revised budget.</p> <p>Some areas of projected overspend relate to recurring areas of financial pressure or slower than planned delivery of savings measures. The Corporate Management Team have discussed these in depth and, where possible, put in place recovery actions.</p> <p>The projection of the General Fund balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 is £20.965 million, of which £13.126 million is earmarked for specific use leaving a non-earmarked General Fund balance of £7.839 million.</p>		
<b>Decision</b>		
Council noted the report and its recommendations.		

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
8.2	<b>Housing Revenue Account Revenue Budget 2024/25 – 2025/26 and Capital Plan 2024/25 – 2027/28</b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer &amp; Section 95 Officer</b>
<b>Outline and Summary of Discussion</b>		
The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer presented the report for noting and approval.		

The purpose of the report is to provide Council with a summary of expenditure and income to the end of quarter 3 in 2024/25 for the Capital Plan and a projected outturn for both the Revenue Account and Capital Plan for 2024/25 and Capital Plan and Revenue budgets for 2025/26 and indicative budget.

The projected financial performance for 2024/25 is:

- Capital Investment in the year totalling £47.459 million;
- A net overspend of £0.049 million on the Revenue Account;
- A projected HRA general reserve at 31st March 2025 of £35.094 million.

The HRA Capital Plan 2025/26 – 2027/28 provides for:

- £108.605 million for Phases 3-5 of New Build Social Housing;
- £19.5 million for Housing-led Town Centre Regeneration;
- £41.145 million for investment in Energy Efficiency Standards in Social Housing; and £27.134 million for other investment in existing stock and off-market purchases.

The Revenue Budget Reflects:

- An update of the multi-year financial model prepared in line with the Social Housing Investment Plan (SHIP);
- A 4.8% rent increase as approved at Council 21st February 2023;
- A projected HRA Reserve of £35.094 million at 31st March 2025, which will be required to finance the majority of approved investment commitment and is projected to reduce to £1.880 million at 31st March 2040.

Council is recommended to:

- Approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Plan for 2025/26 (appendix D);
- Approve the HRA Revenue Budget for 2025/26 (appendix E);
- Note the indicative HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 as detailed in appendices D and E; and otherwise
- Note the remaining contents of this report.

Elected Members noted the strong stability from the last report whilst noting the rising number of applicants on the housing waiting list.

Elected Members advised that they had visited a new build property and were concerned around the specifications of new homes. Elected Members noted that there was little storage space provided, and attic hatches had been locked, with the reason stated that this was due to the insulation. Elected Members were concerned this suggested a lack of trust in tenants to use spaces appropriately and would like a paper on these issues for a future Council meeting.

Elected Members also raised concern about the installation of air source heat pumps and requested a report showing comparison costs of utility bills when using gas, electricity or heat pumps and a true analysis on the impact on tenants who may be worried about rising costs.

Elected Members queried the number of Housing Officers in comparison to housing stock levels. Elected Members felt an increase in staff within the Housing Service would better serve staff and tenants and asked that a report be brought to Council on Housing Service staffing.

The Executive Director Place noted all points raised and will prepare the reports requested.

Elected Members raised concern about the projected numbers, whilst Midlothian Council is growing in stock the amount allocated to administration and management is flat for the period 2027/28. There is concern that general repairs will fall back this year and Elected Members asked if a sensitivity analysis should be carried out to look at adverse trends and if they eat into projections.

The Chief Financial Officer/ Section 95 Officer clarified the administration and management costs are direct staffing costs that can appropriately be charged to the revenue account. The slight increase is due to inflation in staffing costs.

The report was moved by Councillor McKenzie and seconded by Councillor Curran.

#### Decision

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

#### Action

Prepare a paper for Council detailing the reasons why attic hatches are locked in new build Council properties – Executive Director Place

Prepare a report regarding the installation of air source heat pumps, showing comparison costs of utility bills when using gas, electricity. - Executive Director Place.

Add in the Housing Officers staffing level report and also to the Action Log please

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
8.3	<b>General Services Capital Plan 2024/25 Quarter 3 Monitoring and 2025/26 to 2028/29 Budgets</b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer</b>
Outline and Summary of Discussion		
<p>The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer presented the report for approval. The purpose of the report is to provide Council with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An update of the GSCP incorporating information on further additions to the Capital Plan for approval</li> <li>• Information on the projected performance against budget for 2024/25</li> </ul>		



- Forecast expenditure and income for the GSCP for 2025/26 through to 2028/29
- Update on the Capital Fund

It is recommended that Council:

- Note the inclusion of the projects listed in Section 3.1 in the General Services Capital Plan (GSCP);
- Approve the addition of the new projects to the GSCP, as outlined in Section 3.2;
- Note the forecast outturn for 2024/25 for expenditure, funding and borrowing as outlined in Section 4;
- Note the planned expenditure and funding levels in the GSCP for 2024/25 to 2028/29 (as outlined in Section 5 and shown in Appendices 1 and 2), prior to reaching a financially sustainable outcome from the Capital Plan Prioritisation exercise.

Elected Members agreed to move the recommendations and welcomed the building of a primary school and modular unit for Roslin Primary School.

Elected Members highlighted the need for clearer communication with the public on the plan for Midlothian House as soon as possible. Elected Members also reiterated the need to have full sight of the Capital Plan to assist in the decision-making process in terms of more critical projects.

The report was moved by Councillor Parry and seconded by Councillor Virgo.

#### Decision

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26 &amp; Prudential Indicators</b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer</b>

#### Outline and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer presented the report for approval.

This report was taken to Audit Committee on 24 February 2025 and the main discussion points were:

- Support for relaxation of the current strategy for cash back reserves:
- Concerns over growing economic uncertainty in borrowing costs:
- Concern over extent of borrowing required.
- Concern over the impact of cash back reserves on availability of cash in an emergency situation.

After discussion the Audit Committee were content to support the report as presented.

The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer explained that the 2024/25 strategy was approved by Council on 27 February 2024 and an update was presented to Council on 17 December 2024. Today's report contains one material change to the existing strategy which is to move from fully cash back Council reserves to a position of greater borrowing to allow deferral of longer term borrowing to a time where interest rates are forecast to reduce.

Elected Members are also asked to increase the authorised limit to external debt of £605m, reflecting borrowing requirements to the end of financial year 2025/26. Section 3 of the report provides an update on the position from 2024/25 which is in line with the report from December 2025. The Council's borrowing requirement, based on existing capital plans, sits at £433m to the end of financial year 2028/29. In order to provide flexibility and borrowing at the best rates available previous strategies provided an authorised limit for external debt for the current, and next 4 financial years and Council approved a recommended change to that practice for 2023/ 24 and 2024/25 given current challenges. The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer recommends continuing with that whilst Council works through financial strategies.

Section 5 covers prudential indicators to demonstrate the Council's Capital Plans are affordable and sustainable. Section 6 cover the repayment of loan fund advances.

It is recommended that Council: a) Approve the restriction of the Authorised Limit to the value of the Capital Financing Requirement at 31 March 2026 (£604.957 million), pending finalisation of the General Services Capital Plan Prioritisation;

b) Note that there are no other material changes proposed to the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy (TMIS) for 2025/26 from the strategy currently in place, other than:-

i. to no longer fully cash back the Council's useable reserves – instead, to run down cash balances to support the deferral of borrowing as outlined in Section 4, to allow the Council to navigate past the current interest rate hump; and

ii. to update the Prudential Indicators (Section 5 and Appendix 2), to reflect the revised capital plans;

c) Note the use of the Asset Life method for the repayment of all loans fund advances as outlined in Section 6; and

d) Accordingly approve the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2025/26.

Elected Members approved the recommendations and highlighted that the treasury management performance of Midlothian Council has been fantastic and congratulated the team who continue to work hard for excellent results.

Elected Members queried if Midlothian Council were going to consider the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) aspect at some point. The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer explained the ESG impact was quite complex in terms of understanding how individual banks use the money Midlothian Council puts

out on deposit. Midlothian Council relies on the assessment from external ethical advisors, and while the Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer agreed some evolution on ESG needed to happen, they were content with assessment from external guidance.

Elected Members reiterated again the need for information and sight of the Capital Plan. The Executive Director Place confirmed information has been shared with Elected Members including dashboards, workstreams and dilapidation surveys and they will issue further information to Elected Members as soon as possible.

The report was moved by Councillor Parry and seconded by Councillor McEwan.

#### Decision

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee - Recommendations</b>	<b>Chief Officer, Corporate Solutions</b>

#### Outline and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Officer, Corporate Solutions presented the report for decision.

The purpose of the report is to update on the outcome of the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee review and the regulations that will be laid down by Scottish Government from 1 April 2025.

It is recommended that Council:

- Note that Scottish Government propose to set down regulations in relation to pay and banding changes to take effect from 1 April 2025
- To note that as of 1 April 2025, Midlothian will move from a Band A Council (for the purposes of Councillor Remuneration) to a Band B Council
- To determine if Council should appoint an additional two Senior Councillors from 1 April 2025 (as per paragraph 3.7).
- To determine if the payments to the Civic Head and Senior Councillors remain as per the existing % relative to the Council Leader salary (as per paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10).

The Chief Officer, Corporate Solutions noted an error in the last recommendation and noted the Civic Head is set in regulations and is not determined by Council.

Councillor Parry moved the report with the amendment that Senior Councillors remain at 8 and pay is set at 75% of the Council Leader's salary, seconded by Councillor Milligan.

**Decision**

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.6</b>	<b>Fees and Charges</b>	<b>Chief Officer, Corporate Solutions</b>

**Outline and Summary of Discussion**

The Chief Officer, Corporate Solutions presented the report for decision.

The purpose of the report is to provide Council with the proposed fees and charges table for 2025/26 for consideration and approval.

It is recommended that Council:

- 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.

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions noted a change in section 3.33 and Elected Members were asked to note that the individual learning accounts from Skills Development Scotland no longer exist, but reassured Elected Members there are concessionary rates for those on benefits, including pensioners and help is provided for those who cannot afford to pay in lump sums by paying in instalments and if people meet the No One Left Behind criteria, courses can be funded through that.

Councillor Parry moved the recommendations, and this was seconded by Councillor Virgo.

**Decision**

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.7</b>	<b>Medium Term Financial Strategy</b>	<b>Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer</b>

**Outline and Summary of Discussion**

The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer presented the report for decision.

The purpose of the report is to provide Council with the budget position for 2025/26 to allow discharge of their statutory duties to set a balanced budget for 2025/26. The report also provides budget projections for financial years 2026/27 through to 2028/29 and planning assumptions for future Council Tax increases.

Council is recommended to:

- a) Note the key messages in the Accounts Commission Local Government Financial Bulletin 2023/24
- b) Note the position relating to Scottish Government funding for Councils in 2025/26 and the associated grant settlement for Midlothian Council.
- c) Approve a 5% uplift in Foster Care Fees for 2025/26 and agree the principle of an automatic annual uplift in line with pay inflation
- d) Approve an allocation to Midlothian Integration Joint Board (MIJB) for 2025/26 of £71.086 million in respect of delegated services (subject to final confirmation of the distribution of Scottish Government Funding)
- e) Approve the 2025/26 base budget as shown in table 6, sections 3.30–3.35 and detailed in appendix C.
- f) Approve prioritisation of Transformation Blueprint work as outlined in section 3.40.
- g) Approve savings as outlined in sections 3.42 to 3.44
- h) Approve a 10% increase in Council Tax rates for 2025/26 (sections 3.46-3.47). Council Tax bandings are shown at appendix B.
- i) Approve indicative Council Tax increases of 9% in 2026/27, 8% in 2027/28 and 5% in 2028/29 (sections 3.46-3.47).
- j) Approve the utilisation of £4.093 million of earmarked General Fund Reserve to balance the 2025/26 budget (section 3.48)
- k) Approve that any additional funding provided by the government to support Council financial pressures will be used to displace the use of General Reserves which can subsequently be earmarked to support transformation work (section 3.49)
- l) Note that the projected budget gap over the life of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) through to 2028/29, assuming Council support all recommendations in this paper, is £8.891 million
- m) Note that a further MTFS report with updated financial projections with a specific focus on progress with Transformation Blueprint work and the General Services Capital Plan will be presented to Council on 24th June 2025.
- n) Otherwise, note the remainder of the report.

Elected Members agreed the Council's financial challenge remains, but it has been vastly reduced with more money from Scottish Government for public services. It was noted that Midlothian Council is the fastest growing Council in Scotland and as such the Council will have higher costs for this financial year and next. Elected Members confirmed the rate for Council Tax in Midlothian Council will rise by 10% in the next financial year and residents will expect the Council to prioritise views on this basis. Residents who took part in consultations told Midlothian Council they wanted to retain leisure centres and for community resources to remain open. Residents also wanted investment in roads and green spaces, so Midlothian Council have increased the budget for these in the next financial year. Residents requested investment in Health & Social Care and, whilst Midlothian Council's allocation to the Integrated Joint Board remains high, this will still need careful monitoring as there remains a funding gap. Midlothian Council have also invested in uplifting foster care allowance for the second year in a row.

Elected Members considered it important to note the combined % of National Insurance increase and net costs, increased budget to Adult Social Care, increased budget to roads and landscape amount to 9.5% just for those ring-fenced budgets. Residents will be paying more but Midlothian Council are delivering more however

the Council are spending more than received and this will mean further efficiencies and methods to generate income may be required. Consideration will be given to commercial services, for example if there are low numbers at leisure centres, consideration may be given to reducing opening hours. Elected Members noted the public interest and petitions to save leisure centres and swimming points and emphasised that Midlothian Council are of the same principle and encouraged members of the public to use the facilities available to them.

Elected Members also highlighted the cooperation between Group Leaders and Trade Unions within Midlothian Council and were grateful for the collegiate nature.

Councillor Parry moved the recommendations in advance of an anticipated amendment relating to the saving proposal for Lets and Charges for After School Clubs and added an additional recommendation to incorporate the anticipated costs from that, and from the previous paper to be drawn from reserves.

Elected Members agreed the financial position is difficult, the Scottish Government settlement reduced the budget deficit, and this was further reduced by some other costs including yield from packaging tax. However, a number of additionalities were introduced and the floor payment, as fastest growing authority in Scotland, still required Midlothian Council to hand back the equivalent of 3% or £1.9m to provide stability. It was also noted that whilst the Integrated Joint Board funding is very generous there remains a risk of not covering underspend fully.

Elected Members referenced item 3.40, the Transformation Blueprint Work on Income Generation. Elected Members requested that all the income generation ideas that were brought forward as savings proposals are rolled into a Transformation Programme and, as a Council, we recognise the importance of looking into these ideas of the Council making more money rather than cutting services, introducing services to bring in more income to help mitigate the imbalance between the 22% rise in Council Tax over the last 10 years versus the 54% rise in inflation. Elected Members asked that all income generation is pulled together into a programme and the Council identify appropriate resourcing to realise, in its initial stage, business cases for each of those plans to bring forward to Council to determine whether Council go ahead with those or not so that when it comes to next year budget decision Elected Members have that information to hand.

Councillor Virgo requested an amendment to 3.43, Lets and Charges for After School Clubs. Whilst understanding the reasons behind this Elected Members considered it critical to highlight that the 35% variance move from 85% subsidy to 50% subsidy is a 300% increase in rents for providers of after school clubs and this could be catastrophic for some providers. Councillor Virgo asked if this could be phased to allow for prudent planning and communication and recommended 10% this year, with expectation of further movement in further years, with engagement with providers and noting the impact this change will have on the sustainability of providers. Councillor Virgo confirmed 10% this year with the variance in MTFS covered from reserves at this time.

The Chief Financial Officer/Section 95 Officer clarified that the savings proposal was £171k, the recommendation reduces that to £41k so adding £131k to the budget

which is to be funded from reserves.

The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer confirmed the Leader of the Council accepted the changes to the motion.

Elected Members suggested writing to the Scottish and Westminster Government asking for additionality noting that even with 10% increase in Council Tax the Integrated Joint Board still has a £2.5m budget gap. Councillor McManus confirmed he has written to the Cabinet Secretary to highlight the difficulties faced with the Integrated Joint Board and that they would circulate that letter to Elected Members

Councillor Parry moved the recommendations, and this was seconded by Councillor Virgo.

#### Decision

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

#### Action

Circulate letter to Group Leaders that was sent to the Cabinet Secretary to highlight the difficulties faced with the Integrated Joint Board to Elected Members – Councillor McManus

Council Leader to write to UK and Scottish Governments about the pressure increased National Insurance employer contributions are having on the budget and Integrated Joint Board pressures – Councillor Parry

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.8</b>	<b>Audit Committee Recruitment of an Independent Member</b>	<b>Chief Internal Auditor</b>
Outline and Summary of Discussion		
<p>The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions presented the report for decision, highlighting that it had been approved at Audit Committee on 24 February 2025 with no changes.</p> <p>Council is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve the change to the Scheme of Administration for the Audit Committee to recruit for 2 Independent Committee Members.</li><li>• Approve the change to the Scheme of Administration for the Audit Committee members to appoint a permanent Committee Chair from within all Audit Committee members.</li><li>• Approve the permanent move to specifying the Audit Committee meeting schedule of 4 meetings a year, whilst still allowing additional meetings to be scheduled.</li></ul>		

- Approve the introduction of a payment of a fee of £200 per Committee attended for each Audit Committee up to a maximum of £1,000 per annum for Independent Audit Committee members.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Corporate Solutions for the report and opened for questions.

Councillor McEwan moved the report and thanked the Audit Committee and Officers for their work. The report was seconded by Councillor Smail.

The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer advised that two of the recommendations involve a change to the Scheme of Administration, which forms part of the Standing Orders. Standing Order 3.2 notes that 10 Elected Members must approve the amendment and therefore asked Council for a show of hands in favour of the change.

#### Decision

17 Elected Members voted in favour of the amendment to the Scheme of Administration and Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
8.9	<b>Standing Orders Working Group update and schedule of meeting dates 2025/2027</b>	<b>Chief Officer Corporate Solutions</b>

#### Outline and Summary of Discussion

The Chief Officer Corporate Solutions presented the report for decision, which includes updates to the Standing Orders, the proposed meeting schedule for the next two academic years and the agreed process for the recording of private items of meetings of Council and its Committees.

Council is recommended to:

- Approve the updates to the Standing Orders which includes changes to reflect the proposed process for recording private items (subject to approval of the next recommendation below).
- Approve the process for recording of private items as set out in paragraph 3.4 and 3.5 and in doing so agree that the Standing Orders and Scheme of Administration are updated.
- Approve the schedule of meetings dates for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Corporate Solutions for the report and opened for questions.

The report was moved by Councillor Smail and seconded by Councillor Virgo.

Elected Members asked about the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implications of recording private items on MS Teams. The Legal and Governance



Manager/Monitoring Officer advised that GDPR is only applicable where personal information is involved and should only be retained as long as necessary.

Elected Members asked if there were any barriers in keeping the recordings indefinitely, and if this would align with the Council's data retention policy. The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer advised that once the minute is approved at the next meeting, the minute becomes the official record of the meeting. After that point the recording would no longer be required and should be deleted in line with the retention schedule.

Elected Members requested that the retention period for the recording is amended to 12 months. The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer and Chief Officer Corporate Solutions advised that if that is what the Council deem necessary then there are no issues in retaining the recording for 12 months.

The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer advised that Standing Order 3.2 notes that 10 Elected Members must approve the amendment and therefore asked Council for a show of hands in favour of the change.

#### Decision

16 Elected Members voted in favour of the amendment to the retention period and Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
8.10	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Transition Funding 2025/26</b>	<b>Executive Director - Children, Young People and Partnerships</b>

#### Outline and Summary of Discussion

The Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships presented the report for decision, which seeks Council's agreement to approve the continuation of delegated authority to Executive Directors to allocate funding to projects for UK

Shared Prosperity's transition year of funding 2025/26.

Council is recommended to:

- Delegate authority to the Executive Director Place and Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships in their role as Chair of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Board to allocate UK Shared Prosperity transition funding 2025/26 in line with funding conditions.
- Agree that an update on the UK Shared Prosperity transition funding 2025/26 will be brought back to Council at a future date.
- Note outcomes of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2022-25 programme.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships for the report and opened for questions. No questions were submitted.

The report was moved by Councillor Parry, and they asked that Directors implement this decision swiftly to avoid any further delays and impact to the third sector. The report was seconded by Councillor Cassidy.

**Decision**

Council approved the report and its recommendations and amendment.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.11</b>	<b>Use of Glyphosate Update Report</b>	<b>Chief Officer Place</b>

**Outline and Summary of Discussion**

The Chief Officer Place presented the report for decision, requesting permission from Council for the Recycling and Greenspace service to apply glyphosate to control weeds from the beginning of March 2025.

Council is recommended to approve an expansion of the time period with which glyphosate can be applied, in order to improve the visual appearance of the local environment in the public realm across Midlothian.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Place for the report and opened for questions.

Elected Members noted their disappointment, and concerns from the public, at having to use glyphosate again this year but also appreciate that it is necessary to keep Midlothian beautiful. Elected Members are satisfied that the way the Environmental Team use the glyphosate is direct and not on food sources. It is hoped that there will be a reduction next year following the great work of the Greenspace and Environmental Team.

The report was moved by Councillor Alexander and seconded by Councillor Cassidy.

**Decision**

Council approved the report and its recommendations.

Report No.	Report Title	Submitted by:
<b>8.12</b>	<b>Standards Commission Decision</b>	<b>Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer</b>

**Outline and Summary of Discussion**

The Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer presented the report for decision, advising that in terms of Section 18 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 and Rule 10.9 of the Standards Commission Hearing Rules, the Council requires to consider, within three months, the terms of a written decision issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland.

Council is recommended to consider the decision of the Standards Commission in relation to complaint reference LA/Mi/4131.

The guidance issued by the Standards Commission on 26 September 2024 confirms that all Elected Members can participate in this discussion regardless of their involvement in the hearing. Elected Members have no right to appeal against this decision but can comment should they wish.

The Chair thanked the Legal and Governance Manager/Monitoring Officer for the report and opened for questions.

While unrelated to this hearing, Councillor Parry expressed their disappointment in the process regarding Standards complaints. The timescales to reach a hearing are too long and do not benefit any of those involved.

Councillor Parry's stated that their personal view is that the Standards Commission have a weak record of not taking concerns or complaints in relation to sexual harassment seriously, either during the process or in their findings and outcomes. The Standard Commission often does not demonstrate the principles of its own code and are not fit for purpose. These points have also been raised at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). Councillor Parry intends to write to the Standards Commission and invite them to meet with her to explain and discuss how they can make both process and outcomes better. If Group Leaders or other Elected Members would like to attend, Councillor Parry would welcome them to that meeting.

Councillor Parry closed by adding that the Elected Members in the Chamber are good people, and that is disappointing when they are all tarnished with bad publicity.

#### Decision

Council decided to note the report and its recommendations.

The public part of the meeting ended at 13:42.

## 9. Private

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### Exclusion of Members of the Public

**In view of the nature of the business to be transacted, the Committee agreed that the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the undernoted item, as contained in the Addendum hereto, as there might be disclosed exempt information as defined in paragraphs 6,8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:-**