

Summary of survey findings as at Monday 16 January

Number of responses

- 458 responses to online survey
- [12 HaveYourSay email comments](#)
- [84 captured social media comments](#)

Online survey analysis

[Go to Question 3](#) (What matters most to you, family and community?)

[Go to Question 4](#) (Are there services we could stop or reduce?)

[Go to Question 5](#) (Are there ways we could raise more money?)

[Go to Question 6](#) (What services could be run differently and should we share more services?)

[Go to Question 7](#) (should we raise Council Tax?)

[Go to Question 8](#) (any further comments?)

Question 1: Are you answering the online survey on behalf of themselves or an organisation?

- 90.39% individual responses
- 9.61% on behalf of an organisation

Responses by organisation:

- 1 from Instrumental Music Service
- 1 from a council staff member
- 27 from individuals representing Midlothian Sure Start
- 1 from local resident
- 1 Pathhead Youth Project
- 1 Volunteer Midlothian
- 1 Safe Families
- 1 Midlothian Children and Families
- 1 NHS health visiting Midlothian
- 1 Roslin and Bilston Community Council
- 1 Electric Vehicle Association Scotland (EVA)
- 3 Midlothian Swimming Club
- 1 Play Therapy Base
- 2 Homelink
- 1 Women's Aid Dalkeith

Question 2: In which area to you live or, if applicable, are answering on behalf of:

- Danderhall: 1.56%
- Dalkeith, including Eskbank and Woodburn: 18.30%
- Bonnyrigg: 18.75%
- Gorebridge: 10.27%
- Loanhead: 6.25%
- Mayfield and Easthouses: 7.37%
- Newtongrange: 6.47%
- Penicuik 15.85%
- Other (largely Roslin, Rosewell, Bilston, Lasswade, Newbattle, Cousland, Pathhead, Newbattle, Auchendinny and some answering on behalf of whole of Midlothian: 15.15%

Question 3 on priorities: Thinking of you, your family and community, tell us more about what you think the council's spending priorities should be?

Of the **362** people who responded to this question:

- 41 mentioned sport and leisure facilities/opportunities including swimming and gyms.
 - 188 mentioned 'education', 'schools' or 'early years/nurseries' and 'additional support needs'
 - 35 mentioned 'bins' and recycling' and 'waste/refuse services',
 - 64 mentioned 'services/support' for 'children and young people'
 - 37 mentioned 'housing' and 'house' and 'affordable homes'
 - 123 mentioned 'health and social care' and support for vulnerable people
 - 102 mentioned 'roads', 'potholes', 'road maintenance' and 'road repairs'
 - 41 mentioned 'parks and green spaces'
 - 7 mentioned green energy or energy saving type initiatives
- [For the full list of responses to Question 3](#)

Sport and leisure mentions - summary of the 41 responses to Q3

Some respondents linked the need for sport and leisure, green spaces etc with improving health outcomes such as tackling obesity and poor mental health. However, one mention of creating a trust to manage leisure services and one comment about decreasing spend.

Typical comments included:

- Maintaining leisure facilities is vital. Youngest are struggling with mental health issues following covid. It is vital that they can exercise and clubs are not forced to close as a result of price increases.
- Health & fitness – during the times of uncertainty and an obesity epidemic access to exercise classes and swimming is essential. This is both for physical health but also mental health.
- Difficult but sports and leisure should bear the brunt of the cutbacks.

Education mentions – summary of the 188 responses to Q3

The majority of mentions of schools, education and early years was simply to list as a priority. Some respondents stressed the need for early years funding and focus on those with additional support needs, as well as free school meals. Some respondents wanted music tuition to continue.

Comments included:

- Early years learning very important for struggling families, working parents. Should be one of the priorities in council list.
- Education, in particular support for children with additional support needs as failure to properly support them impacts all children.
- Music and the Creative Arts have played a huge part in our young people's lives, especially through covid. We need musical instrument lessons to be available & accessible in schools to help them thrive in all areas of their learning and as part of their mental well-being.

Bins and recycling mentions – summary of the 35 responses to Q3

General mentions of recycling and bin collections mainly as an 'essential service'.

Support for children and young people – summary of the 64 responses to Q3

Main focus on keeping children safe and providing opportunities for them, including offering facilities such as clubs. Comments more around support for children in general rather than social work interventions.

Comments included:

- Vulnerable groups – abused children, domestic violence etc related things – protecting them, helping them be safe.
- Support activity development for young people, with early steps to help those on the edge of social danger. Earlier identification of mental illness. Apprentice/work experience jobs, especially but not exclusively for younger people.

Health and social care – summary of the 123 responses to Q3

Some respondents linked health and social care with need to protect vulnerable and help families out of poverty. Others focused on benefits of mental health services and comments included need for more GPs.

Comments included:

- Improve access to healthcare, particularly GP services
- Care for the elderly and disabled, GP, nurse and mental health support
- Parents are struggling with poverty, poor mental health and loneliness

Housing mentions – summary of the 37 responses to Q3

Support for more affordable housing but some concerns raised about number of new houses being built in the area.

Comments included:

- Improve housing and increase council housing – no black mould etc – find a way to help people get the housing stock improved (this helps mental health too) – helping people to have safe housing.
- It's concerning to read that Midlothian is the 'fastest growing local authority area in Scotland' with our population predicted to rise 13.8% by 2028....Should we be building so many houses in Midlothian if this is the case?

Roads mentions – summary of the 102 responses to Q3

General mentions although focus on state of roads, including potholes. Concern raised in one comment about commuter traffic and impact on roads in Penicuik.

Comments included:

- Roads need upgraded too and pavements. Lived in Midlothian all my life I'm actually embarrassed at how run down it looks.
- You need to maintain financial resources on mending roads or you will spend more on the cost of being sued for damages.

Parks and green spaces mentions – summary of the 41 responses to Q3

Support for upgrading and improving parks for children as well as creating more active travel networks. One comment around maintaining rather than enhancing parks.

Comments included:

...proper, safe shared cycle/pedestrian infrastructure allowing people access to cheaper modes of transport, more investment in play parks compared to Borders Council. The play facilities are very poor & in Cornbank Park dangerous with the broken roundabout spike still sticking up.

Energy mentions – summary of the 7 responses to Q3

General support for energy help and efficiency measures for those most in need as well as green energy. Links also made to under used council building and waste of energy and need to make housing stock more energy efficient.

Comments included:

- Top 3 priorities should be 1. Education. 2. Elderly Care. 3. Housing building (building more affordable homes, maintenance of existing housing stock and energy efficiency).
- Support for those in greatest need – anyone on low income, in poor housing, using foodbanks. 2. Local services – support for health services, education provision for all, Heritage and Culture. 3. Environment – help residents to reach zero carbon, sustain and increase recycling provision. Y

Question 4: Are there services that we could reduce or stop providing altogether to help save money?

- 337 people answered this question.
- 94 people either answered 'no', 'don't know' or something similar like 'can't think of anything'.
- 3 answered 'yes' but gave no further detail
- 11 suggestions around council buildings such as closing under used buildings if staff working from home
- 28 suggestions around reducing management or staffing levels
- 27 suggestions around being more efficient such as streamlining processes, doing more online
- 14 suggestions around sport and leisure, including changing opening times, sharing services with neighbouring authorities or closing
- 5 suggestions to end Christmas lights and 2 to stop funding gala days/community events
- 4 suggestions to end or cut school transport costs
- 13 suggestions around bin collections and recycling, including charging small amount for recycling centres and increasing garden waste collection charge or stopping garden waste collections.
- 14 suggestions around libraries including reducing opening hours
- 5 comments about focusing on providing statutory services or those who benefit most people
- 12 suggestions around upkeep of green spaces, including less grass cutting and community groups to maintain

[Read the full list of comments to Question 4](#)

Question 5: Are there ways in which the council could raise more money to help keep services running, for example by increasing charges?

- Of the **328** people who responded to this question, 44 answered no or not sure.
- Although not specifically asked about Council Tax in this question a number referred to it, with 26 supporting an increase (with some saying that Bands should be reviewed) and a much smaller number saying that there should be no increase.

There was a wide range of suggestions on where **charges should be increased or introduced**. These included:

- Parking fines
- Litter/ dog fouling
- Charge for certain bin collections
- Hall let charges
- Return of library fines
- Public toilet charges
- Some suggested a small increase in gym/ leisure charges while others suggested the opposite as a way of increasing the number of memberships/ customers
- Suggestions that increasing some charges will only force some clubs to close and reduce income in long term

Other potential income raising:

- Organise and promote events and performances
- Improve access to the leisure facilities - advertise more, reduce the time centres are closed.
- Hot desking facilities for business in council HQ
- More money should be raised from house builders/ developers
- Work more with community groups/split facilities so they can get grants – joint council/community facilities.
- Press the Scottish Government for a fairer funding settlement.
- Introduce a Midlothian card for residents of Midlothian to access services at current rates but increase fees for non-residents.
- Advertise on or sponsor roundabouts.
- Make more use of council facilities such as school and leisure buildings to paying groups during holidays, weekends and evenings.

Other suggested cost cutting:

- Proper procurement resource to allow contracts to be consolidated and renegotiated to provide savings and efficiency.
- Reduce management/ salary costs.
- Improve efficiency by reviewing processes and workflow.
- More district heating schemes.
- Relocate libraries into already open/operating council buildings- shared premises.
- Find economies of scale by providing shared services with other councils.
- Sell council offices.

[For the full list of responses to Question 5](#)

Question 6: What services could be run differently – for example by community groups? And should we share more services with other councils or partner organisations?

- Of the 314 people who responded to this question, 91 answered no, not sure or insufficient information to answer.

Summary of comments on Sharing services with partner organisations

- Not necessarily cheaper - still need to pay Third Sector. Community groups need funding and many are already supported by council funding. Voluntary sector is already over-stretched and needs more support, not more work.
- Partner organisations provide really good value for money so do not cut their budgets. Third sector are a great support.
- Community organisations, with support, can access external sources of funding that the council can't.
- More shared services and hubs - this would benefit wider public too?
- Potential to work more closely with colleges and Edinburgh Uni who have campuses in Midlothian to share resources?
- Share libraries with other council services.
- Street cleaning, grass-cutting etc. could be done in partnership with community groups.
- There are many voluntary organisations that could support with provision of services e.g. in Children and Young people, sport and leisure, green spaces.
- Some suggesting using private organisations/ contracts for some tasks. Others suggesting running services in house will be cheaper in the long run compared to out sourcing.
- Share sports facilities with Scottish Governing Bodies to co-manage.
- If the Council/Government are relying on community groups to deliver essential services, this is unfair and unsustainable.
- Council needs to value qualified staff and not rely on third sector help just because it costs less.

Summary of comments on **Sharing services with other councils**

- Definitely consider sharing services both within the council and other councils.
- Potential to share with East Lothian (mentioned by a number of respondents)
- Shared services with neighbouring councils to make more efficient for all.
- Back office functions like HR, IT, and legal could be shared with other councils.
- Waste collection could be shared between councils.
- Not sharing with other councils - need local accountability.
- Reduce expenses of council physical offices.
- Share management and procedures with other councils.
- Collaborate more to generate ideas, use better practices and share costs of resources.

[For the full list of responses to Question 6](#)

Question 7: We are facing daunting budget challenges ahead. Each 1% rise in Council Tax generates £580,000 of additional income annually for the council. By what percentage, if any, should we raise Council Tax next year?

Of the **311** people who answered the question:

- 0%: 89 (28.62%)
- 1%: 55 (17.68%)
- 2%: 39 (12.54%)
- 3%: 30 (9.65%)
- 4%: 10 (3.22%)
- 5%: 44 (14.15%)
- Other: 44 (14.15%)

Overview of the **44** 'Other' responses:

- By up to 10%: 7 responses
- Marginally less than inflation with exceptions for those most needy: 1 response
- 0.75%: 1 response
- Either no increase or reduce 8 responses
- Either means tested depending on income or charge householders in more valuable properties more in Council Tax: 10 responses (example of response: I think this should be done proportionally to income as the current council tax system is unfair)
- Cost of living type comments: 8 (typical comment: 'cost of living crisis, people can't afford)
- Remaining 9 comments largely either 'no comment, no text, reduce or looking for guarantees increased spending would make a difference to services).

[For the full list of responses to Question 7](#)

Question 8: Do you have any further comments?

137 people answered this question. No main themes emerged although mentions of staffing and management costs, cost of living concerns, general government funding comments, libraries and music tuition.

[Read the full list of comments for Question 8](#)