



Shaping our Future

Choices for Change

It's time to have *your* say!

**We need to change the way council services work.
We need to make savings.
These are some of our options.
*Now tell us what you think.***

www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture

Our Choices for Change

At Midlothian Council, we need to make big changes to the way we work. We need to cut costs and change our services to make sure that we are able to deal with the future demands of a growing and ageing population.

As a result of government funding cuts, our budget gap in 2017/18 is expected to be more than £5.9 million. This will increase in future years and by 2020/21 it is estimated that it will be in the region of £23.8 million.

We need to make some tough choices and we want you to have your say. Over the next few pages, you can see what we currently spend on key council services. We have also set out some of the changes we could make to save money or generate income.

These are not proposals which the council has fully considered or agreed on. They are options which we would like your views on before councillors take any key decisions on future spending.

Please look carefully at the choices for change set out in this paper. You can complete the tick box survey or leave your comments, telling us what you think about each of the options. You can also complete the survey online at www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture

Paper copies of the completed survey can be handed in to your local library or any customer service point in council offices and leisure centres. You can also hand them in or post them to:

Have Your Say, Midlothian Council, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith EH22 1DN.

More information on the consultation is available on our website at www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture You can also give us your comments at any time by emailing HaveYourSay@midlothian.gov.uk or by filling out the comment cards available in local libraries and customer service areas.

Our consultation is open until **Monday 7 November 2016**.

Thank you for taking part in Shaping our Future.

Sections in this consultation paper

	Page No.
Our funding challenge – how we spend your money	4
Our journey so far	6
Next steps	7
Education	9
Health and social care	11
Children’s services	14
Property and facilities management	16
General support services	18
Street cleaning, waste collection and disposal	19
Roads maintenance and street lighting	21
Communities and economic development	22
Libraries and customer services	24
Sport and leisure	24
Travel and fleet services	26
Parks and open spaces	27
Environmental health and trading standards	29
Planning and building standards	30
Council Tax	31
Community safety	33
Housing and homelessness	35
For more information	37

Our funding challenge

How we spend your money 2016/17



Where the money comes from 2016/17

Nearly 80% of council funding comes in the form of a Grant from the Scottish Government

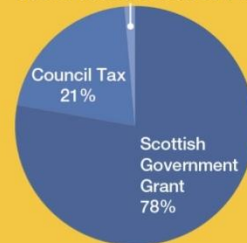
Use of Council reserves **£2.7m** (1%)

Council Tax **£40.6m** (21%)

Scottish Government Grant **£151.5m** (78%)

Total Funding: £194.8m

Use of council reserves 1%



www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture

The scale of the challenge we face in Midlothian continues to grow. The reduction in government funding for 2017/18 is expected to create a budget shortfall of £9.9m.

On current estimates, this is expected to reach £32.8m by 2020/21. We already have a number of ongoing initiatives aimed at bridging some of this shortfall and our projections are based on increasing Council Tax by the maximum 3% per annum allowed by the Government. These measures leave a remaining budget gap still to be addressed of £5.9m in 2017/18 rising to £23.8m by 2020/21.

The impact of funding cuts on services in Midlothian will be substantial - particularly when we also have the challenges of a growing population. This will bring a significant increase in demand on services, including social care, housing and children's services.

Our key challenges...

- **Midlothian's population is 86,200 and growing. By 2037 it will be over 99,000**
- **The number of people aged 75 or over is expected to more than double by 2035**
- **By 2037, the number of households is projected to increase by over 4,000 to 43,300**
- **The number of school places will increase from 12,200 in 2015 to 19,500 by 2035**
- **The number of people living with dementia will nearly double by 2035, from 1,500 to 2,800**

So far, we have made savings by reshaping the council and changing the way we work. This has meant reducing the number of managers and staff, reducing our offices and other property needs and changing the way we buy services. However continuing with changes like these will not be enough on their own.

Because of future financial uncertainty, we have focused on how we will balance the council's budget in the short to medium term, recognising that further savings will be needed. Our aim is to make sure that we spend money on the right areas and on those who need our services most.

You can find out more about our funding challenge, and view or download our easy to read infographic factsheets at www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture

Making savings

Savings since 2010 total £24.8 million with £9.9 million of this delivered in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Every year, the council is legally required to balance its budget. While there is still uncertainty about how much funding we will receive from the Scottish Government, our current financial predictions show we are facing having to make a further £32.8m of savings by 2021. Of the £32.8m required, the council has already agreed savings of £3.5 million with a further £4.8 million possible from increases in Council Tax. This means that significant further savings options need to be identified to close the remaining gap.

Changing the way we work

Regardless of the financial challenges we face, we are committed to embracing change and transforming the way we work. Already, we've been...

- Closing inefficient office buildings, selling surplus properties and relocating staff to more suitable premises
- Reviewing our staffing structures and reducing the number of people we employ
- Introducing new ways of working, using mobile technology and 'hot desking' to reduce the need for office space
- Opening state-of-the-art school buildings which provide fantastic learning and leisure environments for young people and wider communities
- Integrating health and social care services in Midlothian to make sure that everyone gets the right care and support whatever their needs
- Re-balancing care to support older people in their own homes, or a homely setting, for as long as possible, and to make sure that older people have a range of options in our community
- Looking at ways of sharing resources and identifying opportunities for joint working with road services from The City of Edinburgh, Scottish Borders, East Lothian, West Lothian and Fife Councils
- Collaborating with other councils when buying goods and services to reduce costs
- Co-locating our joint Public Protection Office (helping vulnerable children and adults) with East Lothian's. This partnership delivers a more efficient and effective service
- Planning a new waste recycling and combined heat and power plant, in conjunction with The City of Edinburgh Council
- Joining other councils in the area to develop the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal – a major investment project aimed at accelerating economic growth in the area

- Making better use of technology by providing customers with the ability to access services, help and advice online. We are also making savings through ‘channel shift’ – making it easier for customers to access services online, rather than relying on face-to-face visits or telephone calls.

Working with our partners

There are also opportunities for the council to work more closely with health partners through the Midlothian Integrated Joint Board. In this way, people can receive more joined up and efficient health and social care services – services that focus on putting support in place early on when it’s first needed so that issues are prevented from escalating into crises.

The Community Safety and Justice Partnership aims to ensure that Midlothian is a safe place to live, to grow up in, work and visit. We work with our partners to take preventative action to make sure fewer people are victims of crime, abuse or harm; people feel safe in their neighbourhoods and homes. Our highest priorities are dealing with alcohol and drug misuse, violent crime, domestic abuse (violence against women) and crimes of dishonesty. Other priorities include helping to prevent re-offending and dealing with anti social behaviour (including hate crime), road and railway safety, serious and organised crime, supporting children who may be at risk of harm, adult support and protection, home safety, and community involvement in setting and delivering community safety outcomes.

The council is also working with the Police, Fire and other services to explore the option of providing services from one central location in Midlothian.

Next steps

We know that the council will look very different in the future. It is clear that we will need to focus our limited resources on those in the greatest need and work in different ways to achieve outcomes for our customers. As set out in our Single Midlothian Plan, we will continue to focus on our key priorities:

- Learn better - reducing the gap in learning outcomes
- Live longer - reducing the gap in health outcomes
- Improve income - reducing the gap in economic circumstances

We will be a council that:

- prioritises the most vulnerable and those in most need (supporting our most vulnerable children and adults)
- focuses on prevention and early intervention
- encourages independence (assisting and empowering people to live healthy, independent lives)
- listens to communities and involves customers in decisions that affect their lives

- works in partnership, particularly across the public and third sector, to tackle issues and reduce costs while embracing change by using new technologies and adopting different ways of working
- focuses on making efficiencies and investing to save where we can while making sure we don't compromise on public safety.

The following pages provide a range of options for you to consider.

Mark one of the boxes against each option with a **X or tick.**

See page 2 for information on what to do with your completed survey form or complete it online at:

www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture

Education



What we spend (2016/17):

£81.4 million.

What we spend it on:

Schools, early learning and childcare, lifelong learning and employability, arts and creativity, educational psychology, additional support needs and inclusion.

Note: 80% of the Education budget is fixed and pays for a range of statutory functions including the delivery of education, additional support needs and raising attainment.

About this service and how we're improving

We are committed to building a world-class education service in Midlothian. Over the last five years, we have secured an upward trend in young people entering a sustained positive destination – further or higher education, employment or training. The service recently delivered a 3% improvement on last year's figures resulting in 93% of young people reaching positive sustained destinations.

The council is committed to raising attainment overall at the same time as closing the gap between the most and the least disadvantaged. Last year, we secured an improvement of 11.3% at level 4 literacy and numeracy and a 10.6% improvement at level 5 literacy and numeracy from 2011-2015.

We are expanding our early years provision and are on target to fully implement the 1140 hours early learning and childcare, including the opening of the new family learning hub at Woodburn. We are also continuing to roll out 'visible learning' approaches to all schools to help raise attainment.

The new qualifications for S4-6 students have been implemented and last year we saw an improvement of 7.63% from the previous year for one or more awards at Higher; an 8.21% improvement for three or more Highers and an improvement of 5% for five or more Highers by the end of S5.

In 2016-17 we are committed to raising attainment overall, closing the gap between the most and the least deprived children and young people.

Choices for Change

Education

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A1. Invest in education to ensure that we close the gap between the most and the least disadvantaged within our community, preventing additional costs later in their lives.					
A2. Review our legislative requirement to provide transport to high schools.					
A3. Review the current level of support for staff development and training.					
A4. Review the devolved school management scheme					
A5. Review charges for instrumental tuition.					
A6. Review the provision and cost of school meals.					
A7. Address a growing pupil population by either extending existing schools or building larger primary schools.					

What this might mean

This would mean that we invest in raising the bar overall for all pupils at the same time as closing the attainment related poverty gap. In order to do this we could review how we deliver instrumental tuition, secondary school transport, staff training and the devolved school management scheme.

Previously in Midlothian, there was a charge for instrumental music tuition which could be reinstated.

Free home to school transport for secondary pupils would be provided for those pupils who live at a distance of at least 3 miles from school.

A reduction in the devolved school management budget would require a reduction in non-teaching staff and the supplies and services budget.

Although any increase in the cost of school meals would not apply to free school meals, it would mean an average primary school meal would increase by 60p per week. A move to a cafe style menu would reduce the cost of preparing meals but would remove the option of a balanced hot meal.

Other comments or suggestions?

Health and social care



What we spend (2016/17):

£36.9 million

What we spend it on:

Services to older people, people with disabilities, mental health needs, substance misuse problems and people involved in offending behaviour.

About this service and how we're improving

New Integration Joint Boards have been set up across Scotland to provide a more joined up approach to the delivery of adult health and social care services delivered by the NHS and local councils. The **Midlothian Integration Joint Board** takes the key policy decisions for these services in your area. The key aim is to provide better quality services which are more affordable and cost-effective.

How we're making your views count

We consulted widely during 2014 and 2015 on the new Midlothian Strategic Plan for Health and Care. We don't want to appear to be repeating this consultation but we would welcome your comments on adult care services.

We'll share your feedback with the Midlothian Integration Joint Board and, with their agreement, reshape plans to reflect your views where we are able to do so. Midlothian Council and the Midlothian Integration Joint Board remain fully committed to working in partnership with local people.

What the council can decide

While Midlothian Council continues to provide and commission adult social care services the responsibility for planning and deciding how to use the budget now rests with the Midlothian Integration Joint Board (from April 2016).

This means that while we can decide how much money to provide to the new Board, the council does not have the authority to decide which services should be provided.

We will have no choice but to provide the Integration Joint Board with less money than in 2016-17. It would be helpful if we could also advise them of your views about how spending in health and social care should be reduced.

We have already gained the Board's agreement that the social care budget will be reduced by £1.5 million in 2017-18. This will be achieved by reducing the cost of individual care packages. We will do this by changing how we meet individuals' needs. For example, people who receive overnight care may manage instead with 'telehealthcare' – new technology used to monitor personal safety.

Any changes to individual care packages will only be made following discussion with service users and their families.

Choices for Change

Health and social care

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
B1. Reduce the demand on social care by developing preventative approaches within communities, to support people to live independently for as long as possible.					
B2. Work with the Integrated Joint Board to improve reablement and recovery services through greater use of technology, to support people to live independently.					
B3. Increase charges for personal care and housing support.					
B4. Introduce charges for transport to day centres and day services.					

What this might mean

People who use community based services could be asked to manage with fewer days or less support. This would help reduce staffing and transport costs but may put further pressure on families or increase the demand for council care at home services. There could also be a reduced level of support for people to deal with their addiction problems.

The Integration Joint Board will need to very carefully consider the impact of the service reductions listed above. Some reductions may well lead to a rise in costs elsewhere - e.g. reducing day services may lead to more expensive care at home services. These reductions may leave vulnerable people at risk. They may also have a particular impact on people who are already struggling as a result of living with long term health conditions and trying to manage on a low income.

Other comments or suggestions?

**What we spend (2016/17):**

£15.5 million.

What we spend it on:

We have a legal duty to provide advice, guidance and assistance to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need within the community.

About this service and how we're improving

Our aim is to provide a service that improves families' lives by giving them the support they need, when they need it. Within children's services we have three areas of work which are inspected and regulated under the Care Inspectorate. Family Placement is a team of social workers who assess, recruit, train and offer ongoing support to foster carers, prospective adopters and kinship carers. Our residential service consists of 3, 4-bedroomed houses for our most vulnerable young people as well as an outreach service for those young people at high risk of being accommodated. Hawthorn Children's Centre offers additional support to families of children affected by disability and families who require some additional support with their parenting or through statutory forms of intervention.

To date we have made substantial savings within children's services. In 2013/14 we made a £29,000 reduction and in 2014/15 we reduced our overall budget by £797,000.

Looking to the future

Our new children's services structure will be implemented in the autumn of 2016, bringing in £300,000 of savings. We aim to have a much more efficient service and, through ongoing engagement with our partner agencies and the voluntary sector, we aim to achieve less duplication of work and a clear pathway for service users depending upon their level of need.

We are also working tirelessly to reduce the amount of residential school placements and external foster placements. Our aim is to have, where appropriate, every Midlothian child both living in and being educated within Midlothian.

We aim to identify and support families at the earliest opportunity and, for those families who are unable to have their children remain in their care, the new service is designed to make sure that the children quickly reach their permanent destination within a fostering, kinship or adoptive family.

What we could do

C1. Reduce demand in children's services by continuing to develop early intervention and preventative approaches which achieve greater efficiency, both in working practices and use of resources.

Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	-------------------	----------	-------------------

What this might mean

Previous transformational activities have focussed on reducing residential school placements and external foster placements and it is our aim to support families at the earliest opportunity. A continuing focus on preventative approaches and ongoing engagement with our partner agencies and the voluntary sector should see less duplication of work and a clear pathway for service users depending on their level of need.

Other comments or suggestions?

Property and facilities management



What we spend (2016/17):

£11.2 million

What we spend it on:

Council owned buildings and community facilities, building and council house maintenance, building cleaning and management, professional technical fees including construction and design services, and energy management.

About this service and how we're improving

An ongoing programme of office efficiencies includes hot-desking and space planning which has resulted in several buildings being closed, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds in rates, utility bills, insurance, maintenance, etc.

We have been utilising developer's contributions towards building new facilities to replace the old, reducing high maintenance costs and introducing more efficient operating systems.

Service reviews in janitorial, catering, maintenance and estates continue to reduce staffing costs while improving customer focus.

The introduction of energy initiatives, including the external wall insulation programme, carbon reduction plans, solar power production and more efficient building utility controls are cutting our energy costs.

We're also working to develop the service by exploring ways to maximise use of the council's property and land.

Choices for Change

Property and facilities management

What we could do	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
D1. Consolidate council and NHS backroom staff, where appropriate, to share buildings and running costs.					
D2. Introduce further energy management controls in our properties allowing remote monitoring of energy consumption.					
D3. Review how we manage facilities services in our larger schools/ community hubs.					
D4. Explore opportunities to generate income from selling goods and services					

What this might mean

Bringing together staff groups allows efficiencies in shared running costs. However it means that they are located in a single location which is possibly less accessible.

By controlling energy management remotely we can cut out wasteful use such as heating being left on in empty buildings.

In our larger community hubs we have both janitorial and leisure staff doing similar roles in different areas. Our aim is to work more efficiently together by sharing the staff across service areas.

Other comments or suggestions

General support services



Support costs

The council plans to make further savings in its general support costs, which currently total £13.2 million (2016/17). This covers finance, human resources, legal, digital services, business services and other central support costs. A recent review of our support services brought about savings of £1.7 million as the result of management restructuring, process improvements and staff changes.

We're also making savings through 'channel shift' – making it easier for customers to access services online, rather than relying on face-to-face visits or telephone calls. As part of this we are providing more information online, reducing the need for paper based communication. This includes the introduction of a committee management system to modernise the way the council conducts its meetings.



Staffing costs

We have been reviewing staffing structures at all levels for the last few years. We have already reduced the number of managers and other posts, and are still reviewing all services to see where we can make more efficiency savings. We are also taking measures to reduce sickness absence and improve productivity and flexibility across the workforce.



Accommodation costs

We've been reducing the number of office locations and other buildings the council owns to cut costs. By managing space more efficiently and changing the way we work, we've reduced the amount of offices we need.

Choices for Change

General support services

What we could do

E1. Continue to review and make reductions to our support service, staffing and accommodation costs.

Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Other comments or suggestions

Street cleaning, waste collection and disposal



What we spend (2016/17):

£7.2 million.

What we spend it on:

Litter and street cleaning, refuse collection, recycling and waste disposal, including recycling centres.

More about this service and how we're improving

We recently reviewed our street cleaning service to make sure we are providing the best possible service. We have a statutory requirement to provide a defined standard of service for street cleaning.

The council is working with Zero Waste Scotland looking at ways to maximise the amount of waste that can be recycled. A food waste collection service has been introduced and we have invested in a food waste processing plant at Millerhill in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council.

What we could do	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
F1. Review the green (garden) waste service, exploring the options of reducing the frequency of collection or charging for the service					
F2. Reduce the frequency of our grey bin collections (general household waste) from fortnightly to every 3 weeks. (Weekly food waste and fortnightly recycling collections would not be affected).					
What this might mean					
<p>Experience from other councils and our own studies suggest that most households have enough capacity to fully recycle and that a change to the frequency of waste collection can be accommodated utilising existing wheeled bins.</p>					
Other comments or suggestions?					

Roads maintenance and street lighting



What we spend (2016/17):

£4.7 million.

What we spend it on:

Council owned roads, bridges and pavements, road repairs, street lighting and winter maintenance (gritting roads and pavements and snow clearing), school crossing service.

More about this service and how we're improving

Midlothian Council is currently working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh, West Lothian, East Lothian, Scottish Borders and Fife Councils to reduce office based staff, share office space and roads maintenance equipment.

The condition of the road network has remained generally steady over recent years. Money is being saved by investing in greater use of mechanised methods for gritting and snow clearing.

The council is already replacing older streetlamps with energy efficient LED lighting, where it is cost effective to do so. These new streetlights automatically dim overnight, to help reduce energy consumption even further.

Choices for Change

Roads maintenance and street lighting

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
G1. Reduce spending on roads maintenance.					
G2. Reduce the amount of winter gritting and snow clearing, concentrating on priority areas.					

What this might mean

A reduction in spending on roads would result in less resurfacing of roads and footpaths; the time taken to carry out pothole repairs would increase and it would take more time to carry out drainage repairs and renew road markings.

A reduction in winter maintenance would result in less gritting of car parks, increased reliance on mini tractors to clear snow from footpaths, and restricting the number of locations where we place grit bins.

Other comments or suggestions?

Communities and economic development



What we spend (2016/17):

£4.7 million.

What we spend it on:

Community planning, neighbourhood planning, grants to local groups and organisations, welfare rights, targeting support to our most disadvantaged communities, support for new start-up and growing businesses, promoting inward investment, co-ordinating EU and other funding programmes.

More about this service and how we're improving

We are committed to supporting and developing communities. The new Community Empowerment Act has established a basis for further significant partnership working between the council and local communities.

A review of the council's economic development team has been prompted by the impact of the new Borders Rail Line and the demand for Business Gateway support for new start up and growing businesses.

An independent review of the council's welfare rights and advice services is underway.

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
H1. Reduce grants to local groups and organisations.					
H2. Review the services provided by the welfare rights team.					
H3. Reduce our contributions to local and regional organisations that support/ promote business and tourism.					

What this might mean

Reducing grants to local groups and organisations will impact on the voluntary sector and lead to a reduction or closure of some of the services they provide.

A reduced welfare rights team could only cover the more acute cases of hardship.

Reducing support for business and tourism would have an adverse impact on tourism and other business sectors in Midlothian in the form of reduced investment, fewer jobs, loss of competitive edge and greater level of business failures.

Other comments or suggestions?

Libraries and customer services



What we spend (2016/17)

£2.2 million

What we spend it on:

Libraries, council contact centre, customer hubs and reception areas, registration of births, marriages and deaths.

Choices for Change

Libraries and customer services

Our libraries and customer services have already saved £120,000 this year but need to find a further £230,000 in savings from April 2017 to meet an overall savings target of £350,000 by 2018.

To meet these targets, we are looking at making changes to library opening hours, introducing electronic 'self-service' facilities at some libraries, providing more customer service hubs and online services. You can find out more, and give us your views on these ideas, in our separate 'Shaping our Future – Libraries and Customer Services' consultation.

Visit www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture to complete the survey online or pick up a copy from your local library or customer service point in council offices from late September 2016.

Sport and leisure



What we spend (2016/17):

£2.1million

What we spend it on:

Managing leisure centres, swimming pools, sports pavilions, sports pitches and Midlothian Snowsports Centre. The service also provides active lives, sports development and health and wellbeing.

More about this service and how we're improving

The service has been working on improvements including introducing online booking and payments to improve customer service as well as making savings. New initiatives at the Snowsports Centre at Hillend aim to create an all year round attraction, which should improve tourism and generate greater income.

Service reviews are also underway to improve staff efficiencies, by combining reception and janitorial duties in the larger centres.

The service has invested in shared sports facilities at Penicuik and the Lasswade Centre and work is underway at Newbattle Centre as part of the new school and community complex.

Choices for Change

Sport and leisure

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
J1. Increase charges for sport and leisure by up to 10%.					
J2. Close underused or inefficient and ageing sport and leisure facilities and buildings.					
J3. Review leisure centre opening hours.					
J4. Review our concessionary charging policies.					

What this might mean

An increase to charges for sport and leisure could add less than £3 a month to the premium 'tonezone' membership. It would also mean higher facility costs for our local clubs and associations that use our premises.

Closing leisure centres during the day would mean that they would be open early morning and in the evening, but would close in the middle of the day when it is quieter.

The move towards combined facilities such as at Penicuik and Lasswade allows the council to provide a higher quality and wider range of services to meet the needs of customers and talented sportspeople using fewer, but better equipped, facilities.

A review of concessionary charging policies could, for example, mean increasing the age at which concessionary rates apply for older people

Other comments or suggestions?

Travel and fleet services



What we spend (2016/17):

£1.1 million.

What we spend it on:

Supported buses, community transport, school and welfare transport, bus shelters, vehicle maintenance.

More about this service and how we're improving

We're already carrying out a comprehensive review of these services. We're speaking to the providers of community transport to look at ways of improving services and reducing costs; reviewing welfare transport, and reviewing our vehicle fleet to look at ways of further reducing costs - for example reducing vehicle hire and maintenance.

We're also reviewing our arrangements for business travel and reducing the amount of journeys our employees need to make. We're using lower cost, more environmentally friendly forms of travel for essential journeys, wherever possible – public transport, electric vehicles, pooled vehicles and bicycles.

Working with partners, the council is encouraging people to use alternative forms of transport, particularly buses and trains.

Choices for Change

Travel and fleet services

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
K1. Review bus and supported travel grants.					
K2. Remove the taxi card system and supported 'Ring and Go' services.					

What this might mean

The changes to travel support would reduce travel options for all, including disabled people and people in rural communities and disabled people would no longer have support to access regular bus services.

Other comments or suggestions?

Parks and open spaces



What we spend (2016/17):
£2.3 million.

What we spend it on:
Parks, country parks, countryside, walkways, landscaping, playing fields, open spaces, floral displays, garden assistance programme, support for community events, Christmas lights.

More about this service and how we're improving

Midlothian has four 'green flag' awards for its parks and is looking to secure a fifth. We are also continuing to develop more efficient ways of cutting our grass areas. We have introduced more play facilities for disabled children, we're developing play areas within schools, and working with local communities to develop areas for recreation and relaxation.

We are also looking to develop further opportunities for young and disadvantaged people to learn new skills within landscaping.

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
L1. End our contribution towards the upkeep of the Pentland Hills Regional Park.					
L2. Reduce the number of grassed areas that are cut regularly – turning some areas into rough grass.					
L3. Review sports playing fields, removing those which are underused.					

What this might mean

A recent survey for the Pentland Hills suggests that the majority of people using the walks and other facilities are from the City of Edinburgh, with the proportion of visitors from Midlothian being relatively small.

Reducing grass cutting would mean that existing grass areas would be kept to a reduced standard and the loss of amenity and the visual impact may be a concern.

Midlothian has more playing fields per head of population than most other council areas. Reducing the overall number of playing fields would also allow the council to improve well used pitches by introducing playing surfaces with all-year-round, easier to maintain grass/artificial alternatives.

Other comments or suggestions?

Environmental health and trading standards



What we spend (2016/17):
£0.9 million.

What we spend it on:

Public health protection, housing standards, general public health, environmental crime, contaminated land, food safety, occupational health, consumer protection, animal health and welfare, weights and measures, safety of consumer products, age restricted sales, counterfeit goods and consumer credit.

More about this service and how we're improving

In 2016 the trading standards services of Midlothian and East Lothian Councils joined to form a single service for the two council areas. This will result in a better level of service for the same costs and increased experience and knowledge in both council areas.

Choices for Change

Environmental health and trading standards

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
M1. Review the services within environmental health to ensure we deliver on our statutory public health duty and identify other areas for savings.					

What this might mean

For some services, customers may need to use private sector companies.

Other comments or suggestions?

Planning and building standards



What we spend (2016/17):

£0.8 million.

What we spend it on:

Preparing strategic and local plans for new development, determining planning applications, conservation of natural and heritage resources, planning enforcement, enforcement of building regulations, dangerous buildings, licensing of premises.

More about this service and how we're improving

The planning service has recently been the subject of a service review to boost efficiency and make savings. The building standards team has reduced staff in the past few years while retaining high levels of performance. Midlothian is one of the fastest growing communities in Scotland and reductions in this area could have significant impact on our economy and our ability to attract people and businesses to the area.

Choices for Change

Planning and building standards

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
N1. Review capacity within planning and building control services to make sure we meet our regulatory requirements and identify other areas for savings.					
N2. End agreements to secure expert advice on matters of archaeology and biodiversity.					

What this might mean

A review of planning and building control services may mean longer waiting times for applicants. Such delays would also be a disincentive for businesses to locate and/or grow within Midlothian.

Ending agreements to retain advice on archaeology and biodiversity runs a risk that historic sites could be adversely affected or lost, and natural heritage features damaged or lost.

Other comments or suggestions?

Council Tax



What we collect

Council Tax is the local charge on all households and helps pay for local services. The tax is set by us to help the council fund local services such as schools, libraries, leisure facilities and refuse collection.

Nearly 80% of council funding comes as grant from the Scottish Government. 21% comes from Council Tax. This amounts to £40.6 million of the £194.8 million in funding Midlothian Council receives to pay for its services.

Council Tax has been frozen since 2007. For 2017/18, the Scottish Government has capped any increase in Council Tax to 3%, which for Midlothian would raise £1.2 million of additional income.

In addition, Government is implementing changes to Council Tax bands which will see properties in Bands E-H pay more tax (between 7.4% and 22.5%) to fund investments in educational attainment.

About this service and how we're improving

There are now more ways to pay Council Tax, with the improved council website allowing customers to make online payments 24 hours a day. Telephone payments can also be made at any time. We continue to encourage Direct Debit payments for customer convenience, with 74% choosing to pay this way.

What we could do

The rules have changed around Council Tax for empty properties. Currently, the council gives a discount between 10% and 50% on houses left empty for long periods of time but now the charges on those houses could vary up to 200%.

Council Tax bandings F-H are to increase from April 2017 specifically for education contributions in Scotland.

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
P1. We could increase income by charging more for long term empty homes.					
P2. Would you support a 3% increase in Council Tax to help support the delivery of essential services?					

What this might mean

At present, long term empty houses have a 90% Council Tax charge which can be increased to 200%. It could also encourage owners of these houses to bring them back into use.

A 3% increase would see the Band D Council Tax increase from £1,210 to £1,246, an increase of £36 per annum.

Other comments or suggestions?

**What we spend:**

£0.9 million.

What we spend it on:

Community safety activities are focussed on tackling antisocial behaviour and co-ordinating partnership activity to counter alcohol and drug misuse, violent crime, crimes of dishonesty, violence against women and girls, re-offending and serious and organised crime.

The council has already agreed to reduce the community safety budget by £375,000 from 2017/18 with the decision to stop funding the Midlothian Police Community Action Teams.

About this service and how we're improving

Everyone has the right to feel safe in their community and it is unacceptable for people to be afraid or intimidated when going about their day-to-day business. Tackling antisocial behaviour and promoting community safety are key priorities for Midlothian Council community safety team.

The team includes the community mediation service to help residents resolve community disputes. This service aims to work with those in dispute to reach a resolution at an early stage, preventing problems from escalating.

The team leads and co-ordinates the work of the Community Safety and Justice Partnership. The partnership's aim is to ensure that Midlothian is a safe place to live, to grow up in, work and visit. We work with our partners to take preventative action to make sure fewer people are victims of crime, abuse or harm and that people feel safe in their neighbourhoods and homes. Our highest priorities are dealing with alcohol and drug misuse, violent crime, domestic abuse (violence against women) and crimes of dishonesty.

Other priorities include helping to prevent re-offending, dealing with anti social behaviour (including hate crime), serious and organised crime, road and railway safety, supporting children who may be at risk from harm, adult support and protection, home safety, and community involvement in setting and delivering community safety outcomes.

The council continues to work closely with partner agencies to reduce costs and integrate services.

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q1. Change to a co-located partnership for community safety with other partners.					
Q2. Carry out a complete review of how we provide community safety services.					

What this might mean

We could explore co-location with Police Scotland and/or Scottish Fire & Rescue and/or the Scottish Ambulance Service. Partnership would mean a sharing of resources and savings from that, and from any duplication of work by those agencies.

Other comments or suggestions?



What we spend (2016/17):

All funding for council house building and improvements comes through the council's Housing Revenue Account [HRA] (income from council house rents) and Scottish Government grant funding.

Homelessness: £1.6 million
HRA: £25.5 million

What we spend it on:

The cost of providing temporary accommodation in Midlothian is significant at over £1 million annually. Demand remains high despite a reduction in overall recorded homelessness in recent years as a result of actions taken by the council to prevent and reduce homelessness.

About this service and how we're improving

During the financial year 2015/16 council tenants paid £21.9 million in rent payments for council houses and lock up garages. Just over half this income is used on managing and maintaining the housing stock.

Rent payments are used to fund the development of new council housing and major investment.

On average, Midlothian Council tenants pay lower rent charges than similar sized councils and are lower than the Scottish average.

Tenants and applicants were consulted on four options on rent charges, with bigger increases allowing more funding for more new council housing. The most popular choice was a 6% increase, but as many tenants had chosen lower increases, a 5% increase for the next three years has been agreed.

Choices for Change

Housing and homelessness

What we could do

	Strongly agree	Agree	No strong opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
R1. Take people out of bed and breakfast accommodation and place them into purchased houses and unused, suitably converted council buildings.					
R2. Increase income by selling underused garage sites to developers or making alternative use of them for council house building.					

What this might mean

Homelessness - While we intend to keep investing in options for temporary accommodation, including individual houses and houses in multiple occupation, we will buy properties, and re-use other suitable council buildings for homeless households. We are currently re-tendering contracts for bed & breakfast providers to improve standards and reduce costs.

Garages - A significant number of council garages are not leased and provide no income. Those that are leased do not cover the costs. Alternative use of these sites could be considered, such as new house building or allotments.

Other comments or suggestions?

For more information

Visit www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture for more information or to complete this survey online. Our separate **Libraries and Customer Services survey** is also available online or pick up a copy from your local library or customer service point.

You can also email comments and suggestions to: HaveYourSay@midlothian.gov.uk or join the conversation on social media. Find us on Facebook and Twitter – @Midgov @MidLibraries #MidFutureShape

If you prefer, write to us at Have Your Say, Midlothian Council, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1DN.

Communicating Loud and Clear

We are happy to translate on request and provide information and publications in other formats including Braille, audio or large print.

Contact: 0131 270 7500 or email: enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk

Easy Read materials

An 'easy read' guide to the Shaping our Future consultation campaign is available at www.midlothian.gov.uk/shapingourfuture or telephone 0131 271 3178 for a copy.

To help Midlothian Council better understand the views of residents across our communities, please take time to complete the following:

1. Are you? Male Female Prefer to use my own term
Prefer not to say

2..What year were you born?

3. Which of the following best describes your ethnic origin?

White - Scottish White – other British or European

White – other (please advise)

Mixed/multiple ethnic origin Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

African Caribbean (or Black)

Other ethnic group (please advise)

4. Do any of the following restrict your daily activities?

Impaired hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Impaired or partial sight/blindness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	Problems with physical mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
No disability or health problem that restricts my daily activities			<input type="checkbox"/>

5. What's your employment status?

Full-time paid employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Part-time paid employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government sponsored scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking after home and family	<input type="checkbox"/>
Full-time carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary unpaid work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Permanently unemployed due to sickness or disability			<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What is your relationship status?

Single (never married)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Living with partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>	Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

7. What town, village or community do you live in?

8. How long have you lived in Midlothian?

Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 to 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------------	--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------

9. Is your home:

Owned outright	<input type="checkbox"/>	Owned with a mortgage or loan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shared ownership	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rented from Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rented from a housing association	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rented from a private landlord	<input type="checkbox"/>
Live with others (family or friends) who own the house or pay the mortgage/rent			<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please advise)	<input type="text"/>		

Thank you for completing this survey